

This dissertation examines the genesis and the main features of current Saudi Arabia and, in the first place, the development of its domestic policy and foreign relations in the period following the Gulf War 1990-91. My research breaks new ground in that it attempts to place the dynamics of Saudi state in the wider political context and explain it by factors that have a key role in the current shape of the Kingdom and its future progress.

The first chapter functions as an historiographical overview of Saudi royal family and deals with the main pillars of its power: Salafi ideology, Oil, and Military. It is almost impossible to research Saudi Arabia without mentioning its puritanical interpretation of Islam and the development of its ideology in the aftermath of 9/11. Within this context, I also examine the life and teaching of Muhammad ibn cAbd al-Wahhab, contemporary position of his religious inheritors in society, and the new ways Salafists developed to export their doctrine all over the world. The second chapter deals with Saudi Arabian domestic opposition that has power to contribute to state's destabilization. I explore its various shapes, from Sunni political activism, liberal criticism, Shi'ite opposition, tribal opposition, to militant jihadi ideologies, and examine the leading figures: Safar al-Hawali, Salman al-cAwdah, Muhammad al-Mascari, Usama ibn Ladin and Hasan al-Saffar, among others.

The third chapter deals with Saudi Arabia's foreign policy. Saudi Arabia has challenging security problems. Self-reliance is politically difficult and militarily impossible. Within the Saudi foreign policy I closely examine relations with the U.S., the most important partner of Saudi Arabia, and Iran and Iraq. Both are natural rivals of Saudi Arabia for power and influence in the Gulf region and very real external threats to its national security. I also pay attention to Saudi relations with other states of the Arabian Peninsula, Russia, and China.