

## **Abstract**

This thesis focuses on the religious and ideological aspects of the foreign policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It seeks to understand the dynamics of this foreign policy and its correlation with the state religion, Islam.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia plays a highly significant role in the Islamic world. Two major factors that contribute to this situation are the presence of two major Muslim shrines (in Mecca and Medina), and the country's huge oil reserves. Saudi Arabia's religious stature and significant economic potential places it well and truly on the world stage.

Saudi Arabia's foreign policy is based on historical, geographical, religious, economic, security, and political factors, and is activated in a number of geo-political circles, including the Gulf and wider Middle East, the 'Arab world', the 'Muslim world', and internationally. The Islamic circle is a very important arena in which the country exercises its foreign policy as it claims to be a leader in the Muslim world.

The religious basis of Saudi politics is generally very stable and contributes to the perception of Saudi Arabia in parts of the Islamic world as a 'bearer of divine grace'. The Kingdom portrays itself as a conservative state guided by the ideological norms of Islam and promotes their proliferation and protection.

Saudi Arabia has been among the major allies of the United States of America for half a century, but the events of 11 September 2001 marked a turning point in the popular view of Saudi Arabia in the West, which thereafter linked Saudis with global terrorism.