

A country as insignificant as Saudi Arabia before oil would have mattered little to the world. In the 1950s, as oil wealth began to pour in, the Saudi princes wanted the same sorts of conspicuous consumption enjoyed by other world millionaires. When they first brought in automobiles (for themselves), the Wahhabi clergy were outraged, considering camels good enough for pious Muslims. Cameras and, later, television, were also on their list of harmful items for Saudi culture.

The Saudi rulers coopted the clerics by making a deal: they would share this wealth with the Wahhabis and the Wahhabis would only control and punish the behavior of ordinary Saudis. Then, as the oil wealth poured in, the Wahhabis grew more ambitious----and international. They established thousands of Wahhabi schools (brainwashing academies for boys) throughout the Muslim world, as far away as Indonesia, once a very mildly Muslim country.

Schools were set up in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Africa, and across Central Asia, attended by the boy children of the poor who could not afford public schools. Not that public schools in much of the lesser-developed world are much good, but they try to teach more than memorizing the Koran.

Promising students were identified and given "scholarships" to get higher degrees in Saudi Arabia itself, primarily in theology (Muslim theology). Such students then returned to their home countries where they set up more schools and also terror cells, ready to take on the world. They also trained imams who were sent even to the Western world to established mosques among ever-larger communities of Muslims.

The Western world paid little attention to this increasing radicalization because we were all engaged in a struggle with atheist Soviet Union, which was also busy attempting to subvert the Muslim world into becoming Communist. At the height of the Cold War, the Soviets succeeded in bringing Egypt, Syria, and Iraq into their sphere as clients. This was during a phase of Muslim modernization where secular dictatorships tried to bring their backward cultures into the real world. It did not last long. The West prevailed and the Soviet Union collapsed.

The West's attempt to plant western-style republics in the Muslim world never succeeded, regardless of how much money we poured into this process. Instead, the problems of bad governance, corruption, economic backwardness, poor work ethic, and sterile educational systems, all conspired to convince radical Muslims that only Islam was the answer to these problems. They are in this phase now, and we see the results: violence, chaos, and hordes of refugees running for their lives.

Saudi Arabia should be blamed for much of the disorder in the world. Their religion and religious universities with degrees in Muslim theology produced Osama bin Laden, creator of Al Qaeda. Saudi money, private and government, supported Al Qaeda and the 19 terrorists who attacked America on 9-11. Saudi money (they unconvincingly deny that it is government money) created, supported, and still supports, ISIS.

As the world increasingly replaces petroleum with renewables (already beginning), oil wealth will decline. The Saudis have nothing else to sell that the world wants. And as the last of the Saudi brothers, one after the other, who ruled the country must transition power to the next generation, the country's security is in danger.

It would make sense to free women from their captivity, women who now comprise more than half the university graduates. But the Wahhabis would never permit this. They have their own religious police force that makes the lives of young people, particularly women, a misery.

National security is another problem. Oil money has paid for two armies: one national and the other protectors of the Saudi family (thousands of members). Neither is much good, despite a fortune spent on training. Without our protection, Iraq, Iran, or Israel could easily overrun them.

If the new generation of Saudi rulers is to keep their heads, they will have to purge the Wahhabi police and Wahhabi establishment. The new young Deputy Crown Prince wants to try. Unfortunately, those police are experienced in decapitating enemies. They will not go quietly.

678 words

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