



# **The King's Messenger: Prince Bandar bin Sultan and America's Tangled Relationship With Saudi Arabia**

*David B Ottaway*

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The story of the last thirty years in the complex relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia centers around its principle actor: Prince Bandar, the controversial longtime Saudi ambassador.

"Just how oil, arms, and Allah have served over time either to bind or sunder the United States–Saudi Arabia relationship is the focus of this book," writes David Ottaway, who has chronicled the "special relationship" over the course of more than three decades at the *Washington Post*. No two governments and societies could be more different, and yet we have been bound together since 1945 by vital national security interests, based on a simple quid pro quo: Saudi oil at reasonable prices in return for U.S. protection of the House of Saud from all foreign foes.

However, the balance points of the relationship—often tenuous even in peacetime—have been fractured by the attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent U.S. invasion of Iraq: the price of oil has skyrocketed and Saudi Arabia has been powerless to stop its rise; the Iraq war has unleashed the prospect of a Shi'ite-dominated regime allied to Iran on Sunni Saudi Arabia's borders; and militant elements within Saudi Arabia are ever more threatening. Not since the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran has the House of Saud felt itself in such peril, and the Saudis have not forgotten the inability, or unwillingness, of the United States to save the Shah.

Nobody has been more emblematic of the Saudi-U.S. relationship, nobody has been at its center for longer, than Prince Bandar, the first Saudi royal ever to serve as ambassador to Washington. David Ottaway's frequent access to the prince has allowed him unparalleled insight into the complex geopolitics that govern and have governed Saudi Arabia's long dance with the United States, and his book, coming at a crucial juncture, explores what new common ground may be found between the two countries, and what may ultimately pull them apart.

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