



# America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier (Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies and Cultures (Paperback))

By Robert Vitalis

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Now newly updated, *America's Kingdom* debunks the many myths that now surround the United States's special relationship with Saudi Arabia, also known as "the deal": oil for security. Exploding the long-established myth that the Arabian American Oil Company, Aramco, made miracles happen in the desert, Robert Vitalis shows how oil led the US government to follow the company to the kingdom, and how oil and Aramco quickly became America's largest single overseas private enterprise. From the establishment in the 1930s of a Jim Crow system in the Dhahran oil camps, to the consolidation of America's Kingdom under the House of Fahd, the royal faction that still rules today, this is a meticulously researched account of Aramco as a microcosm of the colonial order.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

“A devastating critique of the US-Saudi relationship.”—Tariq Ali, *Guardian*

“A scholarly and readable book on the interaction between Saudi society and Aramco, the US oil giant that had its beginnings when the Saudi government granted its first concessions to Standard Oil of California in 1933. Combining history with political geography, Vitalis sheds a bright light on the origins and less savory aspects of the Saudi-US relationship.”—*London Review of Books*

“Groundbreaking is a word too often used in assessing historical scholarship. Yet its application to Robert Vitalis’s book is nothing less than a necessity. The result of painstaking research in not only heretofore unused but previously unknown records, the book makes a major contribution to a variety of fields: international history, US-Saudi relations, business history, American race history, and more ... Those seeking to explain the present US place in the world should consider it essential reading.”—*American Historical Review*

### From the Inside Flap

America's Kingdom debunks the many myths that now surround the United States's "special relationship" with Saudi Arabia, or what is less reverently known as "the deal": oil for security. Taking aim at the long-held belief that the Arabian American Oil Company, ARAMCO, made miracles happen in the desert, Robert Vitalis shows that nothing could be further from the truth. What is true is that oil led the U.S. government to follow the company to the kingdom. Eisenhower agreed to train Ibn Sa'ud's army, Kennedy sent jets to defend the kingdom, and Lyndon Johnson sold it missiles. Oil and ARAMCO quickly became America's largest single overseas private enterprise.

Beginning with the establishment of a Jim Crow system in the Dhahran oil camps in the 1930s, the book goes on to examine the period of unrest in the 1950s and 1960s when workers challenged the racial hierarchy of the ARAMCO camps while a small cadre of progressive Saudis challenged the hierarchy of the international oil market. The defeat of these groups led to the consolidation of America's Kingdom under the House of Fahd, the royal faction that still rules today.

This is a gripping story that covers more than seventy years, three continents, and an engrossing cast of characters. Informed by first hand accounts from ARAMCO employees and top U.S. government officials, this book offers the true story of the events on the Saudi oil fields. After America's Kingdom, mythmakers will have to work harder on their tales about ARAMCO being magical, honorable, selfless, and enlightened.

### From the Back Cover

"Vitalis takes a revisionist look at U.S. corporate involvement in the founding of Saudi ARAMCO (the Saudi's took control of the firm in 1980) and ARAMCO's racial hierarchies, which are similar to those existing in the oil and minefields of the United States. While ostensibly writing a work of political science, Vitalis has crafted a narrative that fits in well with the recent trend of giving U.S. history international context." --Library Journal

"A brilliant, original, and stimulating book, America's Kingdom rewrites the history of America's relationship with Saudi Arabia. Placing the relationship in a wider context of U.S. business interests abroad, Vitalis offers a radically new view of the motives and methods that shaped America's decisive encounter with the Arab world." --Tim Mitchell, New York University

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#### **Robert Polk:**

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