ARAB NEWS
The Voice of a Changing Region
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2030

45TH ANNIVERSARY

45 Moments that changed the Middle East

For Arab News' 45th anniversary, we look back at our part in more than four decades of history, including 45 events that made an impact

45 moments that changed the Middle East

To mark the 45th anniversary of Arab News, we decided to look at 45 historic events and their impact on the region since we began on April 20, 1975

For Arab News' 45th anniversary, we bring you '45 moments that changed the Middle East,' a series that looks at the historic events that shaped the region since our paper was founded on April 20, 1975. Besides looking at how Arab News covered these events, our staff members and correspondents around the world will be writing about their larger impact. Starting on the back page of today's paper, we will look at one event every day until June 4 (in order of this timeline).

Don't want to wait? All events will be online today at *www.arabnews.com*.



Bill Clinton with Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat at the signing of the Oslo Accords, Sept. 13, 1993. AFP

1


Nov. 19, 1977
Egyptian President Anwar Sadat becomes the first Arab leader to visit Israel, in a bid to bring about peace between two countries locked in conflict since Israel's foundation 30 years earlier.

2


Sept. 17, 1978
After 10 days of talks at Camp David, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin sign a historic treaty ending three decades of conflict between the countries.

3


Feb. 11, 1979
An Islamic revolution ousts the shah and transforms Iran from a pro-Western monarchy into a disruptive anti-Western theocracy that to this day remains at odds with the US and the rest of the region.

4
Nov. 20, 1979
About 260 armed extremists seize the Grand Mosque in Makkah, beginning a two-week siege that leaves hundreds dead and causes a reversal of modernization from which Saudi Arabia is only now recovering.

5


Dec. 24, 1979
The Soviet Union invades Afghanistan, triggering an ultimately pointless conflict with mujahideen guerrilla forces that rages for nine years and claims more than a million lives.

6
Sept. 5, 1980
The Saudi government becomes the sole owner of Aramco, the world's largest oil company, which had begun the 1970s American owned.



7
Sept. 22, 1980
Iraqi aircraft bomb 10 air bases in Iran, launching a brutal war between the two neighbors that drags on for eight years and costs up to a million lives.

8
May 25, 1981
The Gulf Cooperation Council is created at a conference in Abu Dhabi, bringing together the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait to work together in their best mutual interest.

9
Sept. 16, 1982
Lebanese Christian militiamen enter the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut and, as Israeli troops look on and block exits, embark on a 36-hour massacre of Muslim men, women and children.

10
Oct. 23, 1983
Two suicide truck bombs kill 241 US Marines at their barracks in Beirut and 58 French paratroopers stationed nearby.

11
Aug. 8, 1984
At the Los Angeles Summer Olympics, Nawal El-Moutawakel becomes the first Arab/Muslim woman (and Moroccan) to win a gold medal, in the 400-meter hurdles.



Moroccan Nawal El-Moutawakel on the podium after receiving her gold medal at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Getty Images



The south tower of New York's World Trade Center collapses after being hit by a hijacked plane on Sept. 11, 2001. AFP

12
Feb. 8, 1985
Arabsat-1A, the Arab world's first satellite operated by the Riyadh-based Arabsat, is launched using an Ariane 3 rocket from a base in Kourou, French Guiana.

13


June 17, 1985
Saudi Prince Sultan bin Salman blasts off as a payload specialist aboard the space shuttle Discovery on NASA mission STS-51G, becoming the first Arab, Muslim and royal in space.

14


Dec. 9, 1987
An Israeli tank transporter hits a car near the Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, killing four Palestinians and triggering six years of deadly riots and protests that became known as the first intifada.

15


Oct. 13, 1988
Egyptian author Naguib Mahfouz becomes the first Egyptian and the first writer with Arabic as his native tongue to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

16


Dec. 21, 1988
Pan Am Flight 103, en route to New York, is blown up by a bomb hidden in a suitcase and crashes on the Scottish town of Lockerbie, killing all 259 passengers and crew and 11 residents on the ground.

17
Oct. 22, 1989
After 23 days of talks brokered by Saudi Arabia, the Muslim and Christian members of the Lebanese Parliament produce the Taif Agreement, a national conciliation charter designed to end 15 years of civil war.

18


Nov. 9, 1989
Jubilant German crowds on both sides of the Berlin Wall began tearing down this hated symbol of the Cold War that has divided the city and Berliners for almost three decades.

19
Aug. 2, 1990
In the early hours of the morning, Saddam Hussein's Iraqi forces invade Kuwait, and his refusal to withdraw prompts a US-led aerial offensive, otherwise known as the First Gulf War.

20


Dec. 3, 1991
Egyptian politician Boutros Boutros-Ghali is appointed the sixth secretary-general of the UN, becoming the first Arab and the first person from Africa to hold the post.

21
Sept. 13, 1993
Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization sign the first of the twin Oslo Accords, which leads to the creation of the Palestinian Authority.

22
June 25, 1996
A truck bomb destroys the Khobar Towers building in Saudi Arabia housing coalition forces enforcing the southern no-fly zone over Iraq; 19 US personnel and one Saudi citizen are killed.

23
March 5, 1998
The Kosovo Liberation Army launches an armed uprising against Serbian rule in the mainly Muslim Yugoslav province of Kosovo, drawing a harsh response from Belgrade and triggering a humanitarian crisis.

24
Sept. 11, 2001
Two hijacked aircraft are flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York. The attack by Al-Qaeda kills thousands and prompts US President George W. Bush to launch the "War on Terror."

25
March 11, 2002
Fifteen young women lose their lives in a fire at their school in Makkah after the religious police prevent girls escaping because they are not wearing abayas or headscarves.

26


Nov. 3, 2002
Recep Tayyip Erdogan unites the leaders of several previously banned Islamist parties to form the Justice and Development Party, and wins a landslide victory in the Turkish general election.

27


March 19, 2003
A US-led coalition launches an air assault on Iraq over accusations that it possessed weapons of mass destruction, leading to the Iraq War and the downfall of Saddam Hussein.

28
Feb. 14, 2005
Rafic Hariri, Lebanon's former prime minister and the architect of the Taif Agreement that ended the 15-year Lebanese civil war, is killed by a massive bomb hidden in a van on Beirut's Corniche.



29
Jan. 9, 2007
Apple's Steve Jobs unveils the iPhone, a revolutionary three-in-one music player, phone and Internet device that changes the way the world works and plays.



Saudi Aramco President and CEO Amin Nasser launches the energy giant's IPO on the Riyadh Tadawul on Dec. 11, 2019. AFP

30
Sept. 15, 2008
The collapse of Lehman Brothers leads to a stock market crash that balloons into a global financial crisis, causing a debt crisis in Dubai the following year.



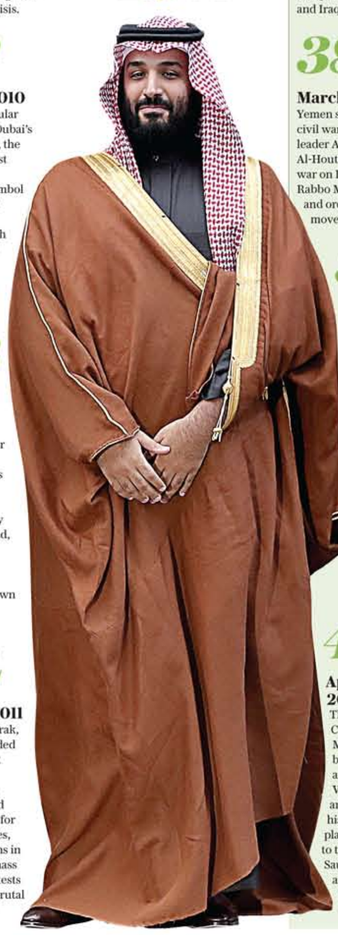
31
Nov. 14-15, 2008
Saudi Arabia begins participating in G20 meetings at the Washington Summit, where King Abdullah and other state leaders discuss ways to deal with the global economic crisis.

32
Jan. 4, 2010
The spectacular opening of Dubai's Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest tower and a powerful symbol of economic recovery in the aftermath of the global recession, is televised around the globe.

33
Dec. 17, 2010
Protesting street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi sets himself on fire in the Tunisian city of Sidi Bouzid, unwittingly igniting what would become known as the Arab Spring.

34
Feb. 11, 2011
Hosni Mubarak, who succeeded Anwar Sadat as Egypt's president in 1981 and held on to power for three decades, finally resigns in the face of mass popular protests against his brutal and corrupt regime.

VISION رؤية 2030



35
March 15, 2011
Nationwide protests against Syrian President Bashar Assad's Baathist regime escalate into civil war after security forces kill protesters in the city of Deraa.

36


May 2, 2011
Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, long sought for planning the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, is killed by US Navy SEALs in a raid on his secret compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

37


June 29, 2014
Terrorist group Daesh declares the formation of a caliphate, imposing its extreme interpretation of Islam on territory it has conquered in Syria and Iraq.

38
March 22, 2015
Yemen sinks into all-out civil war after Houthi leader Abdul Malik Al-Houthi declares war on President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi and orders troops to move on Aden.

39
Sept. 2, 2015
The shocking photograph of the body of 3-year-old Syrian Kurd Aylan Kurdi, washed up on a Turkish beach, briefly focuses world attention on the refugee crisis.

40
April 25, 2016
Then Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announces Vision 2030, an ambitious and historic strategic plan designed to transform the Saudi economy and reduce its dependence on oil.

41


June 5, 2017
Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE and Bahrain cut diplomatic ties with Qatar, closing borders and airspace and imposing an economic blockade that remains in place to this day.

42

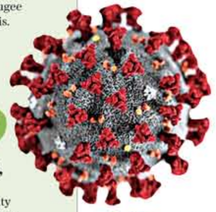

June 24, 2018
As part of the sweeping reforms introduced under Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia's women are able to take to the road behind the wheels of their own cars in public for the first time.

43


April 11, 2019
Thirty years after he seized power, Sudanese dictator Omar Bashir is overthrown in a military coup following months of popular protests against his regime.

44

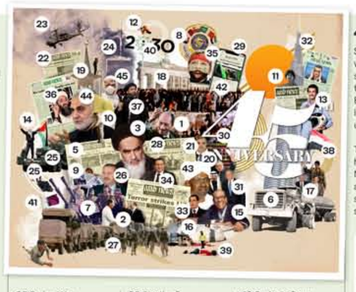

Jan. 3, 2020
Qassem Soleimani, the feared commander of Iran's clandestine Quds Force, dies when missiles from a US Reaper drone strike two vehicles leaving Baghdad International Airport.

45


March 11, 2020
The World Health Organization declares COVID-19 a pandemic after "alarming levels of spread and severity," leading to a stock market crash and worldwide lockdowns.

On the cover

1 Egypt's Anwar Sadat visits Israel
2 Camp David Accords
3 Iranian Revolution
4 Siege of Makkah
5 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan
6 Saudi Arabia acquires Aramco
7 Iran-Iraq War
8 GCC created
9 Sabra and Shatila massacre
10 Hezbollah and the 1983 Beirut bombing
11 Nawal El-Moutawakel's Olympic gold
12 First Arab satellite launched
13 Prince Sultan bin Salman in space
14 Palestine's first intifada
15 Naguib Mahfouz wins Nobel Prize in Literature
16 Bombing of Pan Am Flight 103
17 Taif Agreement for Lebanese peace
18 Fall of the Berlin Wall
19 First Gulf War
20 Boutros Boutros-Ghali appointed UN chief
21 Oslo Accords
22 Khobar Towers bombing
23 Kosovo conflict
24 9/11
25 Fire at a Makkah girls' school
26 The rise of Erdogan's AKP
27 US war on Iraq
28 Assassination of Rafic Hariri
29 Birth of the iPhone
30 Global financial crisis in 2008
31 Saudi Arabia attends its first G20 summit
32 Dubai's Burj Khalifa opens
33 Arab Spring
34 Egypt's Hosni Mubarak resigns
35 Syrian War
36 Death of Osama bin Laden
37 Rise and fall of Daesh
38 Yemen's Civil War
39 Death of Aylan Kurdi
40 Vision 2030
41 Qatar boycott
42 Saudi women allowed to drive
43 Sudan's Omar Bashir overthrown
44 Strike on Iran's Qassem Soleimani
45 Coronavirus pandemic



On the cover: The '45 moments that changed the Middle East' collage on Arab News' cover is by Mexican illustrator **Axel Rangel García,** who works for the illustration agency Illozoo. His work has also appeared in POLITICO Europe and Forbes Mexico.

45 moments online

Scanning this QR code will bring you to the entire special series '45 moments that changed the Middle East,' which begins today in print and runs every day until June 4.

The series includes videos, historic photos and Arab News pages from the past, along with analysis by our staff, correspondents and special guests.

Spotlight
SPECIAL COVERAGE

45TH ANNIVERSARY

How Arab News was born

Hisham and Mohammed Hafiz launched Saudi Arabia's English-language daily on April 20, 1975

Tarek Mishkhas Jeddah

Brothers Hisham and Mohammed Hafiz had a dream: To publish a daily, English-language newspaper in Saudi Arabia. In 1972, they began to seriously discuss how they might turn that dream into a reality.

Almost everyone they spoke to was skeptical about the idea. Undeterred, in 1974, they pushed ahead with their plans and began to buy the equipment they needed. They also hired Ahmad Mahmoud to be the newspaper's first editor-in-chief, and sent him to Pakistan to hire a team of journalists.

The first issue of Arab News, a 16-page tabloid, was published on April 20, 1975, from a small garage in Jeddah. Thanks to its instant popularity, and the quantity of advertising it generated, by the end of August it had blossomed into a broadsheet.

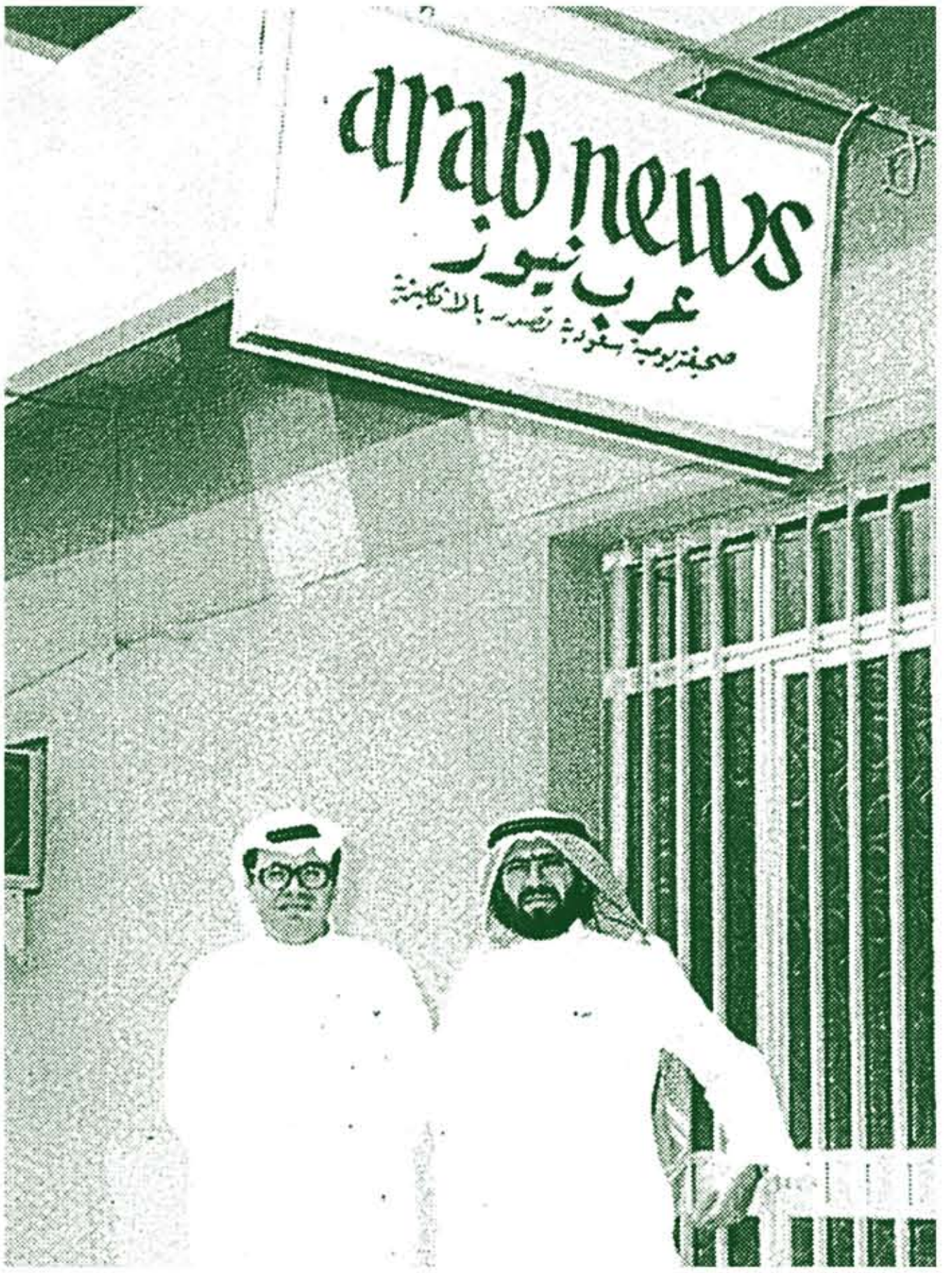
The late Farouk Luqman, who died in July 2019 at the age of 84, was there at the beginning and became editor-in-chief 18 years later. In his book "Globalization of the Arabic Press," he told the story of the Hafiz brothers and their incredible journey, which began with the launch of Arab News and grew into the biggest publishing house in the Middle East. He revealed that in the early days the newspaper had only six employees, including the editor-in-chief.

"We were doing everything, from writing stories to translating news and laying out pages," said Luqman, who was managing editor at the time of the launch. The entire operation was based in the garage — from writing, editing and layout to advertising and administration.

"We worked until dawn preparing the first issue and the publishers stayed with us all the time until we finished and printed," Luqman said. "They were true journalists and often pointed out mistakes, even spelling errors."

Newcomer Arab News was in direct competition with the renowned International Herald Tribune, which was published in Paris, and the Lebanese Daily Star, both of which went on sale in Saudi Arabia the day after initial publication.

According to Luqman, Arab News proved popular not only with Europeans and Americans but also Asians and Africans.



The Hafiz brothers went on to publish over a dozen newspapers and magazines, but Arab News retained a special place in their hearts. AN

During an interview in 2005, Mahmoud, the first editor-in-chief, recalled the offer of the top job caught him off guard.

"One fine morning in 1974, I got a call from Mohammed Ali Hafiz asking me to meet him and his brother," he said. "At that time I was with Al-Madinah Arabic newspaper. They told me about their project and, in the same breath, offered me the post of editor-in-chief. That took me completely by surprise."

Mahmoud added that he did not have much time to ponder the offer as the Hafiz brothers told him the first issue would roll off the presses within six months.

"I did accept the offer, but I made it clear that I had no experience in English journalism," he said. The response of the Hafiz brothers was: "When one is a journalist, one will always be a journalist."

Like all new arrivals, Arab News had its share of teething problems. Following some trial dummy runs, Mahmoud — assisted by Luqman, who had experience of English-language journalism — encountered a series of niggling problems as they tried to put this new and novel venture to bed every night.

"There were challenges and trials, but with youthful determination and zest we did our best and overcame them," Mahmoud said. "Arab News came out in difficult circumstances. As it was the first of its kind, we had to face up to the fact of limited news sources, a dearth of photographs, inadequate manpower and poor printing quality. Despite all this, surprisingly, the paper was well received."

Despite the large number of additional successful publications launched by the newspaper's publishers in the past 45 years, most notably Asharq Al-Awsat, Arab News retains a special place in their hearts.

We worked until dawn preparing the first issue and the publishers stayed with us all the time until we printed.

In a letter to readers, the Hafiz brothers wrote: "The solid base of Arab News, financially and its journalistic success, paved the way for the birth of other successful papers and magazines, of which the majority are still being read today."

As for the distinctive green-tinted paper on which Arab News is printed, that tradition began with its Arabic sister paper, Asharq Al-Awsat. In 1978, when the Hafiz brothers launched the pan-Arab newspaper, which is published and printed in London and other European cities, they wanted to make it easy for readers to find their paper on newsstands.

Noting that almost all of the hundreds of newspapers available in a variety languages are published on white paper, they decided to print theirs on green stock so that it would stand out. Later, Arab News began to follow its sister paper's example, using green paper for its front page.

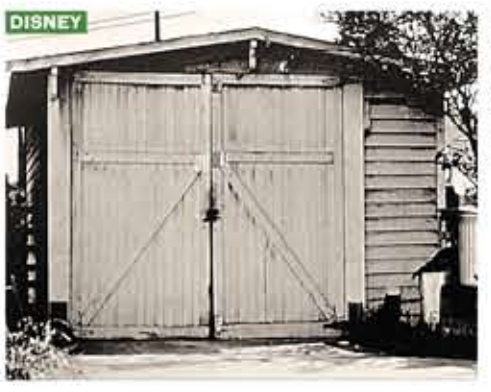
INNOVATION

The world's best startups began in a garage

Rawan Radwan Jeddah

Arab News is in good company with Apple, Amazon and Disney.

All startups must begin somewhere, and many of the world's largest — Microsoft, Dell, Google, Amazon, Apple and Disney — all started in a simple garage. On April 20, 1975, brothers Hisham and Mohammed Hafiz turned a dream into reality by establishing a startup that continues to prosper 45 years later.







Many of today's biggest companies were founded tiny garages. Getty Images

Who would have thought that the first English-language newspaper in the Kingdom would have begun in a garage big enough to house half a dozen or so employees? The garage was located in the Al-Sharafiyah neighborhood in the heart of Jeddah, home to many businesses, showrooms and luxury residential buildings at the time.

The area was a busy district bustling with life. It was home to Broast, the first fried chicken restaurant that became a staple in every Jeddawi's weekend cheat meal, known today as Al-Baik.

The garage was located in Al-Sawani building, located near the Egyptian Embassy, Nas for Classic Luxury cars, Saeed Appliances, Al-Nu'man stationary and bookstore and the Rock Garden, a park in the middle of a residential neighborhood with walkways and seating areas for families to enjoy.

Four Linotype machines, a line casting machine used for printing, four Linotype operators, the editor-in-chief and a proof-reader were the only occupants of the garage. Articles were produced, translated and composed on the machines. The printing press was in the hall-shaped building next to the garage.

In 1982, the newsroom moved to the Al-Madina Printing and Publishing building in Al-Faisaliyah district, a landmark building not far from the former location. The residents of the city called it the "Sharq Al-Awsat and Arab News building." For many of the workers who recall those hectic first years, the memories of the small printing garage are still fresh in their minds, as they were part of a flourishing future that carried the legacy of two dreamers.

Forty-five years later, and with six bureaus spread across two continents, Arab News is still considered the "first Saudi English daily" that developed into "the voice of a changing region."

Arab News 45TH ANNIVERSARY special edition

A unique newspaper with a distinctive international dimension

MOHAMMED FAHAD AL-HARTHI

My experience of working as editor in chief of Arab News was both rich and unique. The newspaper reaches a large audience in the region and internationally, and exerts an important influence on the media landscape.

I have worked on a number of publications produced by the Saudi Research and Marketing Group, but my experience with Arab News was different because its audience is different — it targets English-language speakers. It was also the first newspaper launched by SRMG.

It is a fact that anyone who works at Arab News develops an emotional connection with the newspaper that lasts forever. It is a unique publication created by a team made up of many nationalities, and this gives it a distinctive international dimension.

I have many fond memories of my time with Arab News, but the most vivid is the launch of its political dialogue forum. Through the forum, we were able to initiate discussions about a number of important issues with foreign ambassadors in Saudi Arabia. Such dialogue is important not only to encourage interaction,



Mohammed Fahad Al-Harthi was Arab News editor in chief from Jan. 5, 2013 to Sept. 25, 2016

but also because of the issues that it highlights.

Arab News also acts as a link between the foreign and local media; many international agencies and other news outlets turn to the newspaper for reliable news, information and opinions from inside the Kingdom. This helps it to maintain a network of relationships with foreign media outlets, provide a neutral stance and attempt to convey the facts from Saudi Arabia.

I still work for the same group, on an important English-language media project that I was proud to launch: The About Her website. It focuses on Arab women, Saudis in particular, and aims to share with the world a more accurate view of these women, rather than the more common — and unfair — stereotype that continues to prevail in many places.

Women in the Kingdom are increasingly empowered as a result of the recent, significant changes and developments in Saudi society, which have attracted a great deal of media attention. This is what motivated the development and launch of About Her. I am happy to say the website has been very successful and attracts a large audience.

LAUNCH

An insider's view of the early years of Arab News

Veteran journalist Roohul Amin was one of the first to join the newspaper's editorial team

Aamir Saeed Karachi

"We worked in complete harmony," said Roohul Amin as he recalled his experience working for Arab News in its early days.



Left: Roohul Amin, right, with Khaled Almaeena, seated center, and other members of the staff at the newspaper's old building in Jeddah's Al-Faisaliya district. Arab News Archives

Below: The newspaper used to run quiz competitions in the past and there would be thousands of entries. The group's general manager of the time, Ahmad Mahmoud, left, and Roohul Amin, center, are seen at the draw of lots being conducted to pick the winners. Arab News Archives

The veteran journalist was among the first to join the newspaper's editorial team. He played a part in some of the most memorable events in the publication's history, and to mark its 45th anniversary, he shared his memories of some of them.

Amin arrived in Saudi Arabia in 1975, the year the paper was launched. He came from Karachi, where he had worked at the Pakistan Press International news agency. Just three weeks before moving to the Kingdom, he got married.

The first Arab News office was in Jeddah's Sharafiya district. Amin worked there as a copy editor.

"It was a small space," he said. "Everyone sat together in a single room — from publishers to office boys. Later, the office moved to Al-Faisaliya district, where we had a simple but elegant building."

The printing process, he said, was time consuming in those days because it used Linotype machines, a "hot metal" typesetting system that created blocks of metal type. The flow of local news was little more than a trickle, he added, so the newspaper had to rely on stories from the news wires to fill its pages.

The editorial staff had to work hard to meet their deadlines, Amin said, using old-fashioned equipment. As the technology evolved, however, computerized design and layout was introduced, and Arab News moved from its original eight-column page format to a six-column design. Later, an Apple Macintosh computer system was added, which improved workflow and helped to streamline the production process.

"Being a subeditor requires full commitment and responsibility, which we all understood," said Amin. "Though we didn't face any major obstacles to our work, we always made sure that nothing was published that went against Islam and its core values/teachings."

Amin is proud of his work with Arab News during a time that included eras and events such as the Cold War, the fall of the Soviet Union, the unification of East and West Germany, the post-Thatcher years in the UK, the fall of the Marcos regime in the Philippines, the rise of the Congress Party in India, the tragedies of the Gandhi family, and the days of Bhutto and Gen. Zia in Pakistan.



A page from the newspaper's 20th anniversary supplement on April 20, 1995. AN

He said he developed good relationships with his fellow journalists, and with the staff working on the graphics desk. He described his experience of working under a number of editors in chief, including Ahmad Mahmoud, Mohammed Al-Shibani, Abdul Qader Tash, Farooq Luqman and Khaled Almaeena, as enjoyable and profitable.

Amin, in turn, became a respected figure among his bosses and his co-workers, all of whom paid tribute to his conscientious approach to work.

"There was great coordination with one another and we always helped each other," he said. "We used to share our viewpoints with one another, but we always respected the other person's views."

Such was Amin's dedication to the newspaper, some of his friends called him the "soul and spirit" of Arab News. On weekends, he often drove coworkers to Makkah. These were memorable trips, he said, which he remembers fondly. He is proud of the great friendships he developed with other members the production team, whose creativity he always admired. In particular, he said, he was fascinated by the work of veteran cartoonist Mahmoud Kahil.

Of course, there were some hard times, he said, but when things were challenging, everybody pitched in and worked as a team, creating a bond of true friendship of which he will be forever proud.

During the First Gulf War, for example, Amin remembers how reporters and subeditors worked hard to cover events taking place on the northern borders of the Kingdom, ably supported by their colleagues in the office in Jeddah. Khaled Almaeena, the editor in chief at the time, was among the team of senior reporters covering events from the border as Saddam Hussein's army invaded Kuwait.

The work was hard, Amin said, but with the support of other subeditors the team was able to ensure that readers were kept up to date with the latest news and developments. To help accomplish this, some Arab News staffers chose not to go home but to remain in the office working incredibly long hours. They realized how important it was at such a crucial time in the history of the nation and the region to maintain the flow of breaking news from the northern front. Sometimes, he said, staff remained in the office 24 hours a day to keep up with events. Their first priority, he added, was to be certain of the factual accuracy of the stories that came to them.



Such was Amin's dedication to the newspaper, some of friends called him the 'soul and spirit' of Arab News.

Over time, Arab News evolved and grew.

"Later, the setup expanded and I wanted to move from Jeddah to Riyadh," said Amin. "I was fortunate to get a chance to do so."

He went on to work for Urdu News, a sister publication of Arab News, and left Saudi Arabia in 2000. He now lives in retirement in Karachi. His son, Mashhood Amin, has followed in his father's footsteps and is part of the Arab News team.

Amin congratulated the newspaper on reaching its 45th anniversary. He said he was impressed by the recent launches of its online Pakistan and Japan editions, and hopes it will continue to flourish. His experience while living in the Kingdom was excellent, he added, and he misses the country — especially being so close to the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah.



Reflecting on all my dreams, and on this occasion of the 45th anniversary of Arab News, the paper known as the 'Green Truth' played a huge role in female empowerment.
Lina Almaeena, Shoura Council member

1980S EDITOR

Typewriters and pencils

How it was working for the newspaper in the late 1980s and early 1990s



Saudi troops (above) celebrate victory after the Battle of Khafji during the Gulf War. Getty Images

Alaa Abdel-Ghani Cairo

I started working for Arab News in Jeddah in June 1988, 13 years after it was launched.

HOW WE WROTE IT


arab news
Fahd denounces Iraq's 'most horrible aggression'
Kingdom demands pullout, return of Al-Sabah
U.S. issues global call to defend Gulf

Fahd denounces Iraq's 'most horrible aggression' as Kingdom demands pullout, return of Al-Sabah
Front page, Friday, August 10, 1990

The newspaper, which at that time had no other offices, was published from a three-story building, in the quaint neighborhood of Al-Faisaliya, that was flanked by Square Bridge and Al-Fao supermarket.

The paper's slogan was "The Middle East's Leading English Language Daily." The Arab News logo atop the front page was written in lower case letters in an arabesque style.

I worked as an editor and editorial writer. One editorial was published each day, seven days a week.

At the time I was the only Egyptian working for Arab News. The rest of the staff were mainly Indian and Pakistani. Perhaps this explains why the newspaper's target readership was mainly the large expatriate communities from the sub-continent, along with Filipinos.

When I started, the staff was all-male. Four women, all Saudis, joined a few years later. Their physical presence on the premises was a new and bold step, because up until then the only women in the Saudi workforce were teachers or medical staff in hospitals.

Those first women employed by Arab News were all editors, and they worked in a small room set aside for them.

I worked under three different editors-in-chief, each of whom brought a different approach to the post. Khaled Almaeena focused on promoting the newspaper, Farouk Luqman was the paper's engine room, while Abdul Qader Tash had to play catch-up because he previously worked on Arabic-language publications. We addressed them as Mr. or Ustaz or Dr., followed by their first name.

One of my colleagues at Arab News was Jamal Khashoggi. I didn't know him well but he was big in physique and heart, an affable character and very down to earth.

Arab News was part of what was then called the Saudi Research and Marketing Company. The founders and owners of the publishing business, brothers Hisham and Mohammed Hafiz, humble as they were, would pray with the staff, usually at Maghreb times.

Arab News had two main rival publications in the Kingdom: The Saudi Gazette and the Riyadh Daily. The former was a formidable publication that kept us on our toes as we competed with it. The latter ceased publication in 2004.

When I started working for Arab News, there were no computers, internet, or mobile phones in the office. Reporters wrote their stories on typewriters. Sub-editors edited ticker stories, mostly from Reuters, the Associated Press and Agence France-Presse.

Sub-editors used pencils and rulers to draw pages on dummies that were six columns wide and 32 cm deep. We would manually count the number of lines, and sometimes words, in a story to try to ensure that it was neither too long nor too short for the space it had to fill.

The copy was then given to the proofreaders who crowded around a long, rectangular table in the basement on which sat piles of paper. To speed things up, we would send the stories to the basement in tube chutes. One night the stories got stuck in the tube, holding up the newspaper's midnight deadline.

After proofreading, the stories were printed on strips of bromide that were pasted by the layout staff onto newspaper-sized dummies, ready for the printing process.

In the early 1990s there was a sea change in journalism: The advent of the computer in the office.

Experts from the Kingdom and other countries were brought in to show us how to use the new contraptions, but it was a slog for many of us. We had to throw away our pens and paper, set aside many of our hard-earned manual-editing skills and learn what was essentially a new way to work.

There was one brief odd spell during my time with Arab News, during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Saddam Hussein had captured Kuwait in a matter of hours and was marshaling thousands of troops on the Saudi border. But for at least the first 10 days we could not publish a word about what was happening because we were barred from criticizing other Arab countries.

We never had a fashion page in those days and could never even dream of having one. When we published a photo of a woman wearing, for example, a blouse, we had to use photo-editing software to cover her arms down to her wrists. The same technique was applied to plunging necklines and skirts deemed too short.

When I left Arab News and Jeddah in 1997, I continued writing editorials for the newspaper from Cairo but it was never quite the same as actually being there in the office.

Alaa Abdel-Ghani is former deputy editor-in-chief of the Egyptian English-language newspaper Al-Ahram Weekly and an affiliate professor of journalism at the American University in Cairo.

PUBLISHING

Wild female dreams in 1990s Saudi Arabia

How Arab News helped support a teen's hopes for women in the Kingdom

Lina Almaeena Jeddah

"Wild Female Dreams" is the title of my article as a teen editor in chief of the Jeddah Girls Gazette in 1995. Writers and contributors were dynamic high-school friends and family members. My uncle Tariq was our mentor and publisher.



It took 25 years for all my teenage dreams to come true. My first dream turned into reality on June 24, 2018, when women were allowed to drive, not just their cars but also the country's development. It was one of the most liberating feelings I have ever experienced, simple as it may have seemed to women living outside the Kingdom.

I dreamt in my article about women in the police force, only to see in 2018-2019 women progress as far as joining security services, drug enforcement and military jobs, with possible ranks from private soldier to sergeant in the army's branches of ground, navy and air defense.

My third dream, as simple as it may have seemed, related to the sense of modesty for women. In the 1990s, there were no women in retail, and salesmen dominated female apparel outlets. The campaign in 2008, headed by Reem Assad and aimed at replacing salesmen with women in lingerie shops, made waves and eventually victory was achieved by a royal decree in 2011.

My fourth dream was to buy tickets to attend a local match in Saudi Arabia. That came true in January 2018 when I attended the first local match in King Abdullah Aljohara Stadium between Alahli Club and Al-Batin FC. It was an ecstatic feeling with beautiful and respectful cheering crowds, eroding certain segments' fears regarding a possible catastrophe with women attending games in stadiums.

My fifth dream was to switch on the TV and watch girls play basketball. That came true in 2017 when Jeddah United women's basketball team participated as the first local team under the Saudi Arabian Basketball Federation in the fourth Arab Club tournament in Sharjah, the UAE, and winning the tournament's sportsmanship award.

As I reflect 25 years later on the Jeddah Girls Gazette article, I realize I had listed six dreams, of which the last long-awaited one came true in August 2019: The lifting of a travel ban for women without a male guardian. Even though the travel permit was not a personal issue, I still felt the relief for many women of all ages with various circumstances. Widows who had to get permission from their sons was an ironic example.

Twenty-five years may seem like a long time, but in the context of women's evolution, and considering the young age of Saudi Arabia as a country united in 1932, it is considered a fast pace. I say that now since all restrictive walls have fallen.

That is not how it felt years ago, with continuous frustrations and limitations, especially as a teenager. But women have endured and struggled for decades all over the world; in Saudi Arabia, it took less than five years since the announcement of our Vision 2030 reform plan on April 25, 2016, for transformation to take place.

A famous Japanese proverb states that a vision without an action plan is a daydream, but an action plan without a vision is a nightmare. I am proud and humbled to say we have one of the most promising and empowering visions. Vision 2030 has enabled 50 percent of the population to play an active part in nation-building.

That is not to say women did not contribute prior to that. If I just look at my immediate family, my mother Samar Fatany was one of the first TV and radio presenters in the Ministry of Information in the 1970s.

During her 35 years at the ministry, she was the chief broadcaster of the English section at the Jeddah Broadcasting Station, a columnist for Arab News and the Saudi Gazette, and a participant in many local and international conferences. She also has four publications to her name, the last titled "Modernizing Saudi Arabia," published in 2013.

Times have changed, indeed. It was only in 2013 that women joined the Shoura Council. I am honored to have joined the 2016 second term for women on the council as I strive to recommend reformist legislation and participate in a friendship committee that communicates with parliamentarians around the world.

Reflecting on all my dreams, and on this occasion of the 45th anniversary of Arab News, the newspaper known as the "Green Truth" played a huge role in female empowerment. It was one of the first papers that hired women in a mixed environment. It was the only local paper that was happy to cover our first women's street basketball tournament in 2006-2007, when all other publications politely refused.

If I were to ask myself what my dreams are today, I would say I dream of more women actively participating in decision-making in Saudi Arabia and the globe. I dream of world peace, I dream of a green planet, but above all in these times, I dream of a healthy planet, conquering COVID-19 and having treatments available for all illnesses.

As we experience the curfew, I also get to do something I was never able to do in the past. I ride my bike safely around my neighborhood before the 3 p.m. curfew and visit the mini-market next to my house.

All I can think about is the last two questions in my article "Wild Female Dreams." Can these dreams be reality? Can the impossible be possible? The answer is a double YES. But we will need a newspaper to document this, and what better one than Arab News to do so. Happy 45th anniversary and many more anniversaries to come.

Lina Almaeena is a member of the Shoura Council, co-founder of the Jeddah United Sports Co., and on Forbes' list of Most Powerful Women in the Middle East. She is also a member of the Top 20 Young Leaders of the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) Region.

Arab News 45TH ANNIVERSARY special edition

OPINION

Diplomats call Arab News an 'indispensable' resource

● Ambassadors share fond memories of Kingdom's first English-language daily

Rashid Hassan Riyadh
Sib Kaifee Islamabad

As Arab News celebrates its 45th anniversary, heads of foreign missions in Riyadh have praised the leading English-language daily for providing indispensable journalism over more than four decades.

Recent challenges, such as the technological and digital revolution, prove that 45 years of success covering a wide range of areas is no small achievement in itself.

With hundreds of thousands of readers around the world, Arab News — the Middle East's leading English-language daily — has every reason to celebrate its 45th anniversary.

The newspaper, known for its objectivity, credibility and professional approach, has come a long way from a modest beginning to become one the most reliable sources of information for people in Saudi Arabia, the Middle East and North Africa.

Thanks to its expanding digital platforms, Arab News is now also read by people across the globe, with two more editions in Pakistan and Japan adding value for its readership.

Moreover, new elements added recently to the paper's columns have drawn positive responses from readers, especially diplomats, businessmen and senior government officials.

Diplomatic Quarter, a weekly column published every Thursday, has become popular among envoys who see Arab News as a highly reliable source of information.

"Packed with information, a window to the world, indispensable, exciting, top quality" were among the remarks made by members of the diplomatic community.

In his message to mark the anniversary, EU Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Michele Cervone d'Urso said: "Happy birthday to Arab News. We have been working very closely on much coverage, including a number of interviews and Arab News journalists traveling to Europe to understand the situation. We welcome the great coverage of EU events by Arab News."

Raja Ali Ejaz, Pakistan's current ambassador to the Kingdom, said: "It's a milestone and I must congratulate its very talented team for bringing the newspaper to a new height. The maturity of the paper can be gauged from the fact that it's become the first choice for every resident diplomat, scholar, politician (and many others).

"I begin my day by going through Arab News, so thank you for making my day every day."

Recalling his encounters with the editorial staff during two visits to the Arab News headquarters, Ejaz said: "It was a wonderful experience in the sense that they had some very candid, forthright and diverse views on matters of regional and international interest. For me it was a pleasant and educating experience."

French Ambassador Francois Gouyette said: "Happy anniversary, Arab News. On this occasion, I extend my sincere congratulations to the team of dedicated professionals.

"Every morning when I arrive at the office, one of my pleasures is to open Arab News and find open windows into the Kingdom, in the region that is dear to me."



Above: A reader in Islamabad catches up on the latest in Arab News.

Below: The newspaper has been a particular favorite of the heads of foreign missions in Riyadh and Jeddah.
Arab News Archives



Indian Ambassador Dr. Ausaf Sayeed said: "Arab News is the leading English daily in the Kingdom and is known for its high-quality journalism, covering both international and domestic news for expatriates and Saudi nationals.

"I have had many fond memories of my interactions with the journalists and editors of the newspaper, and their coverage of important events of the Embassy of India and developments in the bilateral relations between India and Saudi Arabia. On its 45th anniversary, I congratulate Arab News and wish them the very best for the future."

Danish Ambassador Ole Moesby said: "I want to congratulate Arab News — 45 years ago, it was also the day when diplomatic relations between the Kingdom and Denmark started.

"In my tenure of two and half years, I always had a chance to look at Arab News on my computer, iPad and mobile phone, and also have it in my office to read. We really depend on your lovely newspaper," he added.

South Korean Ambassador Jo Byung-wook said: "I start my day reading Arab News, which has the motto 'The Voice of a Changing Region,' and is the Middle East's leading English-language daily and major source of local and international news.

"In all likelihood, the Middle East is the most misunderstood region in the world as many people have stereotypical preconceptions about it. Arab News, through its interested analytical arguments, helps meet demand for trustworthy news about the region and clearly addresses the misunderstandings. I congratulate it on its 45th anniversary," he added.

Chinese Ambassador Chen Weiqing said: "I would like to offer my sincere congratulation to this unique newspaper on its outstanding achievement throughout all these 45 years.

"As a regular reader I found many important commentaries and valuable opinions in this newspaper. In my view, Arab News plays a very important role in introducing the world to the Kingdom and Arab countries, and in introducing the Kingdom and Arab countries to the world," he said, adding this would help enhance relations between China the Middle East.

Ambassador of Malaysia to Saudi Arabia Dato' Abd Razak Abdul Wahab said: "I congratulate Arab News on its 45th anniversary and wish the newspaper to continue its excellence in news reporting."

WHAT THEY SAID



Every morning when I arrive at the office, one of my pleasures is to open Arab News and find open windows into the Kingdom.

Francois Gouyette
French Ambassador



Arab News plays a very important role in introducing the world to the Kingdom and Arab countries.

Chen Weiqing
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Arab News ... is the Middle East's leading English-language daily and major source of local and international news.

Jo Byung-wook
South Korean Ambassador



The maturity of the paper can be gauged from the fact that it's become the first choice for every resident diplomat, scholar and politician.

Raja Ali Ejaz
Pakistani Ambassador



Arab News was the first newspaper to enter liberated Kuwait while the oil wells were still burning.
Khaled Almaeena, former editor in chief of Arab News, looking back on the Gulf War days





Business adverts were common in the 1970s as the Kingdom enjoyed a tremendous economic boom. AN

The adverts tell other stories, exclusive to the rapidly transforming and vibrant Saudi economy, fueled by the flow of oil, which by 1976 had hit a record 3 billion barrels per year.

ADVERTISING

Ads a quirky trip down memory lane

Arab News' ads from the 1970s give us a fascinating — and often humorous — look at Saudi Arabia's past

Jonathan Gornall London

If anyone were in any doubt about the truth of the opening line of L.P. Hartley's 1953 novel "The Go-Between" — "The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there" — they need only take a trip down the memory lane that is the Arab News archive.

Launched on Sunday April 20, 1975, as Saudi Arabia's first English-language newspaper, for the past 45 years Arab News has been the nation's go-to paper of record, covering regional and global events for the benefit of nationals and expats alike.

At the same time, however, it has built an invaluable archive of contemporary coverage of events that serves as a first draft of history for future generations — and a reminder that the past is indeed a foreign country. Perhaps nothing illustrates the gulf between then and now so much as the adverts to be found in the earliest issues of the newspaper, many of which reflect social history in the making.

Issue No. 115, from Aug. 31, 1975, for example, features a flurry of adverts for heavy-duty road-making machinery, reflecting the 1970s boom in highway construction ("We do not operate on the moon (not yet!)," brags E.A. Juffali & Bros, importer of the Barber-Greene range of asphalt-laying machines, "but our machines are worthy of the space age.").

Another ad in the same issue, placed four years before the Iranian revolution and the seizure of Makkah's Grand Mosque by religious extremists, speaks of a relaxed national liberality to which Saudi Arabia is only now returning. "Sexy Musk Oil, another product from Europe," readers are told in an advert next to a story about planned Arab-Israeli peace talks in Geneva, is "the real feminine perfume."

Adverts for perfumes — all, naturally, from Europe — are a recurring theme during the paper's early years, along with an ever-present subtext that will remind social historians that throughout the world in the 1970s, sexism was still the norm. The scent Caron Paris, reads one advert from September 1975, "is the kind of French every woman understands."



Many adverts show how the world has changed. AN

Alongside the ads, in the era of pre-political correctness, cartoons imported from the US tell a similar story (Wife, holding steering wheel, to horrified husband: "Promise you won't laugh when I tell you what I did with the car?").

But the adverts tell other stories, exclusive to the rapidly transforming and vibrant Saudi economy, fueled by the flow of oil, which by 1976 had hit a record 3 billion barrels per year. Throughout the 1970s, the paper's classified ads recorded a period of almost frantic entrepreneurship as businesses large and small sought to profit from the Kingdom's rapid development.

A Bombay-based employment agency, "supplying all kinds of personnel to various employers in the Arab Countries," offers a multitude of professional, skilled and unskilled staff, including "doctors, nurses, engineers, mechanics, drivers, carpenters, masons, typists, clerks, etc." Alongside an advert for suspended ceilings, placed by a company in France, is another offering cranes for hire, complete with "expert American operators."

For those making vast amounts of money from Saudi Arabia's development boom, discreet international banking services are offered by the Foreign Commerce Bank, "your private banking connection in Switzerland." Meanwhile, an American manufacturer of modular, pre-cast concrete and steel structures, "suitable for homes, apartments, offices, warehouses, schools, hospitals, etc.," urgently seeks a distributor in the Kingdom.

On July 16, 1977, many businesses anxiously awaiting the arrival of goods from overseas — increasingly in demand among expats and locals as oil wealth flowed through the economy — would have been relieved to read that three container ships operated by Sea-Land had arrived at the port of Dammam, where "delivery orders are ready for pickup" from the office of agents Rezayat Trading.

Throughout its first decade, Arab News carried regular port-movement notices, which speak eloquently of a nation developing rapidly and heavily reliant on imported goods. On one day in 1977 alone, more than 80 vessels docked in Jeddah and Dammam, carrying everything from chickens, watermelon and wheat to timber, steel and cement.

Other adverts throughout the 1970s serve as reminders of how much the world has changed. In December 1979, 10 years before Nikon produced the world's first commercial digital single-lens reflex camera (if you do not know what that is, ask your grandparents), a half-page advert for a Kodak Colorburst reminds posterity that back then the nearest thing to the still-distant age of instant digital photography were Polaroid-style cameras (again, ask your grandparents).

In a reminder that the first desktop computer, or word processor, had still not arrived to revolutionize the worlds of business and leisure, an advert for a male secretary placed in December 1979 demands 60-70-words-per-minute shorthand — and skill in "IBM typing."

The Apple II, the world's first successful (although by today's standards prehistorically clunky) home computer, had been launched by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak in 1977 (at the phenomenal price of approximately $5,500 in today's money). The first IBM personal computer, however, would not start transforming office life until its launch in August 1981.

For a reminder of just how boxy most cars used to be, look no further than page 5 of the issue of Dec. 5, 1979, where none other than former world champion boxer Muhammad Ali, still two years away from an overdue retirement, promotes the virtues of "seven world champions" from Toyota on behalf of Saudi car company Abdul Latif Jameel. "When it comes to boxing, I am the champ!" Ali declares, with his left fist raised. "But when it comes to cars and trucks, nobody can beat Toyota!"

With hindsight, some adverts are historically poignant. On Dec. 8, 1979, the Lebanon Tourist Office, seemingly optimistic that the devastation of the civil war that had derailed the country's economy was behind it, placed an advert declaring that the formerly popular tourist destination was "back in business, back 'en route'."

Readers of Arab News were urged to come and enjoy Lebanon's 3,797 luxury hotel bedrooms, wide range of sports activities and entertainment, 30 conference halls, 81 banks, absence of currency exchange regulations and "4,000 telex lines to help you take full advantage of the restriction-free trading." But the hope that Lebanon was on the road to recovery was premature. Two years later, Israel invaded the country.

Sometimes, the adverts of the past transcend the everyday. Throughout December 1979, nestling between invitations to visit the second Saudi Arabia Motor Show at the Jeddah International Expo Center to view "America's finest" new cars, and for expats to spend two nights over Christmas at Al-Hada Sheraton hotel, can be found sombre reminders that the Kingdom's path to development and modernization was far from smooth.

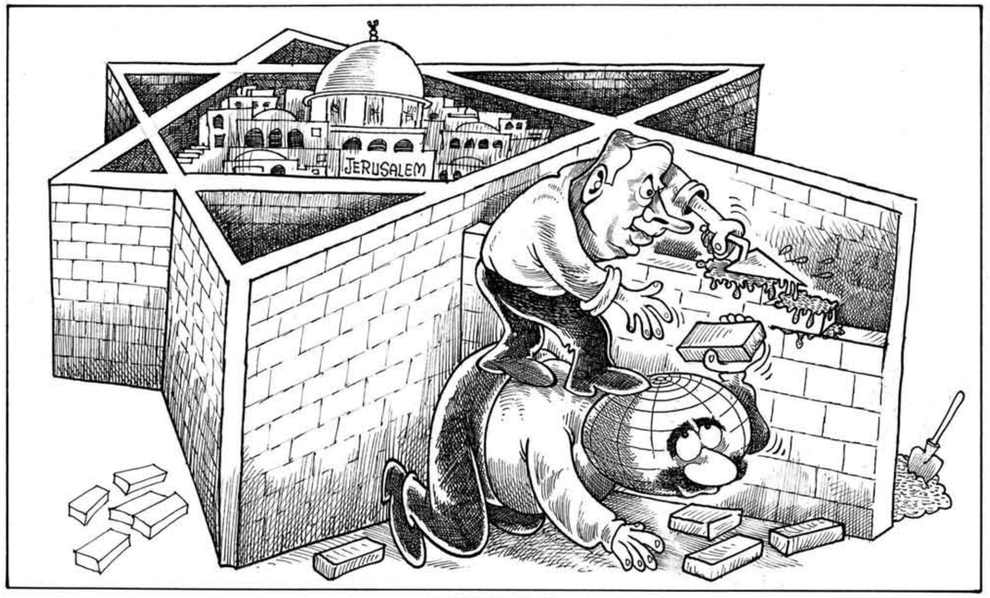


An advert from Dec. 13, 1979 placed by Algosaibi Foods congratulated the royal family after the end of the 10-day siege of the Grand Mosque in Makkah. AN

In the issue of Dec. 13, 1979, published nine days after the end of the 10-day siege of the Grand Mosque in Makkah, several companies took out large adverts congratulating the leadership.

"We rejoice in the resounding victory of the Saudi forces over the band of renegades responsible for desecrating Islam's holiest shrine, the Holy Kaaba," read one half-page advert from Algosaibi Foods, which congratulated King Khalid, Crown Prince Fahd, Prince Abdullah "and the valiant Saudi people."

Within weeks, 63 of the captured terrorists had been executed in eight cities across Saudi Arabia, but the country was to pay a high price for the victory. The seizure of the mosque shocked the entire Islamic world and, coming as it did in the wake of the Iranian revolution, provoked concerns that the Kingdom was embracing Western ways too fast, too soon, leading to a reversal of modernization from which Saudi society is only now recovering.



Mahmoud Kahil, the famous Lebanese-born British editorial cartoonist, was one of the greatest artists to be featured in Arab News. Mahmoud Kahil Archives

CARTOONISTS

Laughing in the darkness

Editorial cartoonists have provided us with much-needed comic relief in bleak times

Hala Tashkandi Riyadh

They say that laughter is the best medicine, and sometimes, when the state of the world is looking overwhelmingly bleak, seeing the funny side is all that is left to do.

One of the most entertaining and fundamental parts of any newspaper are its caricatures, which provide a welcome relief to some of the tensions through a smile.

Arab News boasts some of the top editorial cartoonists in the region. Always on the nose, carefully toeing the line between the appropriate and the barrier-breaking, they have been speaking about how they got into the business and some of the favorite aspects of their work, while also offering advice to up-and-coming artists.

Mohammed Rayes knew from a young age that he wanted to be a caricature artist. "Most people don't have a clear idea of what their life goals are during childhood, but gradually, a person finds themselves attracted to a specific field.

"I found myself drawn to caricature and started drawing for my first publication at the age of 15 when I was still in school," he said.

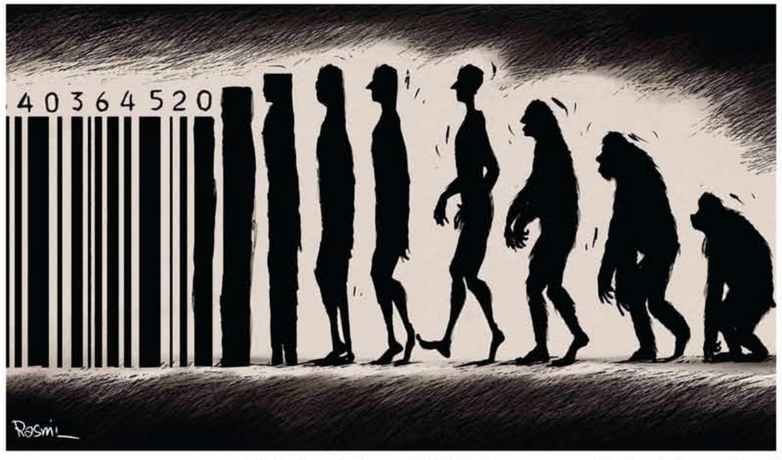
Having worked for the Saudi Research and Publishing Co. for nearly 20 years, his work has been featured in a range of publications, including Arab News' sister paper Asharq Al-Awsat.

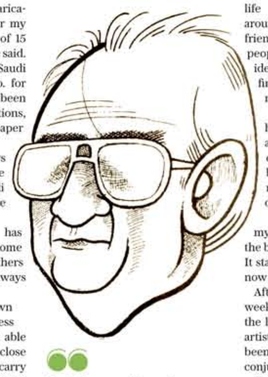
Rayes joined Arab News four years ago and was the recipient of last year's Saudi Media Award in the caricature category.

During his career, he has drawn countless cartoons, some more dark than funny, others more funny than dark, but always thought-provoking.

"Over the years I have drawn many caricatures that express different issues, so I am not able to identify a specific drawing close to me, but some of my works carry cherished memories. Examples are letters of thanks and praise from government officials for drawings that have been published, or thanks from the editorial staff of the newspaper," he said.

He could not pinpoint a single source of inspiration, saying that he found many things in his daily life inspiring. "The community around me, from my family and friends to the general public, even people in the street are sources of ideas. Even situations or issues I find on social media articles in newspapers."





Kahil was at heart a humanist. He cared for the poor, the oppressed and the dispossessed.

Khaled Almaeena, former editor-in-chief, on Mahmoud Kahil.

Amjad Rasmi discovered his interest in caricature while attending the Jordan Institute of Fine Arts in the mid-1990s, but what began as a simple money earner became a way of life.

"The strongest motivation in my life to become a cartoonist in the beginning was the job, frankly. It started out that way at first, and now it is my life," he said.

After getting published in several weekly newspapers, he moved to the local daily press as a full-time artist. Since 2005, his work has been published in Arab News in conjunction with Asharq Al-Awsat.

Known for his unique style and visuals, as well as his signature sense of humor, Rasmi has been recognized internationally for his various published works.

"I am a visual artist before I am a cartoonist. This is reflected in my drawing style in terms of line and perspective, and the importance of color and its connection with the content.

"There are many inspiring things in our lives. The extent to which I feel and get affected by things creates a state of brainstorming. I often try to distinguish between my own reality and true reality by presenting my ideas ... there is a big difference between the two that not many people realize," added Rasmi.



Amjad Rasmi, left, is an internationally recognized cartoonist. Mohammed Rayes, right, is the recipient of last year's Saudi Media Award in the caricature category.



Arab News cartoonists balance barrier-breaking, appropriate content. AN

The impact of the artists of the past still resonate in Arab News' history.

Mahmoud Kahil, the famous Lebanese-born British editorial cartoonist, was one of the greatest artists to be featured in Arab News.

When the Lebanese Civil War broke out, he found himself forced to leave when travel between east and west Beirut for work became too much for him, though he expressed his love for his home country for the rest of his life and often longed to return.

Kahil moved to London in 1978, where he began working with Asharq Al-Awsat, Arab News and Al-Majalla magazine. He also became the chief cartoonist for the monthly English-language journal Middle East International.

He used his cartoons as a means of fighting oppression and wrongdoing. A great supporter of the Palestinian people, he once named Yasser Arafat (the late leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization) as his favorite person to draw, saying that "for better or worse, he is an inspiration, due to his mannerisms, the way he looks and the way he dresses."

Kahil's most lasting and important legacy as a cartoonist was the way in which his work, with remarkable simplicity, familiarized the world with the Arab reality and highlighted issues vital for the Arab people.

He passed away unexpectedly in 2003 at the age of 66, due to complications during heart surgery, but his legacy has stayed very much alive in the continued recognition of his work. In 2015, the American University of Beirut created the Mahmoud Kahil Award, a region-wide accolade to honor Arabs in the field of cartoons, illustrations and graphic design.

Former Arab News Editor-in-Chief Khaled Almaeena, once said: "He (Kahil) was a man of simple taste. His eyes always had a twinkle, and whatever the situation that twinkle stayed in place. Kahil was at heart a humanist. He cared for the poor, the oppressed and the dispossessed. It did not matter what the ethnic or religious beliefs these people held."



We hope that Japan will have a fruitful future and I would like to congratulate Arab News; this is a great opportunity, a moment in history.
Majid Al-Qasabi, the Saudi minister for commerce and investment, at the launch of Arab News Japan in Tokyo

PAKISTAN

Pakistan edition praised for fair and balanced reporting

In just two years, it has carved a niche in the country's challenging media landscape

Sib Kaifee Islamabad

Arab News launched its online Pakistan edition on Feb. 8, 2018. Two years later, it has become the Riyadh-based newspaper's most successful digital expansion project.

It has been hailed by leading officials in Islamabad, academics and journalists as a shining example of fair and balanced journalism. As its parent title in Saudi Arabia celebrates the 45th anniversary of its launch, messages of congratulation have been pouring in from Pakistan.

"Arab News, I feel, will set new trends, with new commitment and new priorities in the region linked with the national interest of Pakistan," said Firdous Ashiq Awan, a special assistant to the prime minister for information and broadcasting.

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said: "We have 4 million Pakistanis living in the Middle East and in the Gulf states, so connecting with them through Arab News (is) very useful."

Sen. Faisal Javed Khan, who is a member of Pakistan's ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf party and oversees its social media operation, said: "Arab News is doing a lot of credible work. We share your website (links) on our Twitter handles."

The promotion of quality over quantity, fact debunking fiction, and attracting readers without sensationalizing stories are the bedrocks on which Arab News was built. It was the Kingdom's first English-language daily, and the Pakistan edition carries on this tradition through the practice of ethical journalism, while diligently navigating the country's complexities and its vibrant media landscape.

"The difference between Arab News and other media is that it doesn't believe in sensationalism," said Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry, who inaugurated the Arab News Pakistan bureau last year. "It is focusing on serious issues. This is what we expect from a serious media group like Arab News."



The Pakistan edition has landed several major scoops with its investigations. AN

Arab News arrived on the Pakistani media landscape as part of the newspaper's ongoing global and digital expansion. With the aim of reporting news from across Asia, it hired a team of skilled journalists and assembled a network of freelance contributors.

During its short life so far it has delivered several scoops, published important investigative reports, brought intriguing and public-interest stories to the fore, and helped bridge the information gap between the Middle East and Pakistan. All of this while highlighting the rich, diverse cultures of both regions for a growing readership, and maintaining an impeccable, untainted track record of credibility.

Arab News Asia Bureau Chief Baker Atyani said: "Stories about the Middle East and Arabs have always appeared in Pakistan's media. But what's new here is we are trying to present it through our own eyes and not through the eyes of the international media."

He also highlighted the technical innovations that the Pakistan edition is implementing.

"The second thing we are trying to introduce in the market is to digitalize the news story in a new (video) format (and present it) in less than 90 seconds," he said.

The instant success of Arab News Pakistan, spearheaded by its bureau chief, encouraged bosses in Saudi Arabia to launch a second international edition. This went live in Japan in October last year, in both English and Japanese editions.

"The way that officials, and even the prime minister's office, have (embraced) our content says a lot about the veracity of our news", said Arab News Pakistan Managing Editor Javeriah Abbasi.

The backbone of Arab News Pakistan's success is its talented team of reporters, editors and social media producers who sort through the news, checking facts and covering developments as they happen. It resists the temptation to publish news stories based on existing media reports from other outlets, instead striving to carve out a niche of its own in a challenging media landscape.

"I think there is a lot of information out there. There is a lot of clutter," said senior online editor Wajahat Ali. "What Arab News is trying to do is bring clarity out of that clutter. We are trying to find information gaps and provide information to our readers that is as authentic as possible."

Mohammed Ishtiaq, also a senior online editor, added: "Arab News always looks toward a story with an objective eye."

Reporter Aamir Saeed said: "Arab News has allowed reporters to explore fresh angles that the local media usually ignores."

Social media producer Sehrish Ghaffar, a core member of the publishing team, said that Arab News Pakistan "is encouraging women to participate in the field of social media, which is the front line of any news network in this digital world."

Her colleague, Farheen Fatima, said that it has empowered women by expanding the media spotlight.

JAPAN

When Arab News arrived in Japan

Ali S. Itani Tokyo

On Oct. 21, 2019, Arab News did something no other media outlet from the Arab world has done: Launch a dedicated online edition in Japanese, as part of its ongoing global expansion.

The launch, which took place in Tokyo the day before the enthronement of Emperor Naruhito, was a reflection of the cordial business, trading and cultural relations between Saudi Arabia and Japan.

The news website, www.arabnews.jp, which is available in both Japanese and English, focuses on enabling an exchange of information between Japan and the Arab world in a number of fields, including business, current affairs, and arts and culture.

Speaking at the launch ceremony, Kono Taro, the Japanese minister of defense, said: "It will be good to have news in Japanese so many Japanese can read about the Arab world.

"We need to know what people in the Middle East are actually thinking, what is happening on a daily basis, and we didn't have a source for that, but now Arab News is in Japan."

Kono reacted with great encouragement when Faisal J. Abbas, the editor-in-chief of Arab News, raised the idea of a Japanese edition of the newspaper when he met Kono, at the time the minister of foreign affairs, for an interview in July, 2019. Japan hosted the G20 last year, before a historic handover of the presidency to Saudi Arabia for 2020. The Kingdom is the first Arab and Islamic country afforded the honor.

The Japanese edition of Arab News is the first international edition published in a language other than English, and the second after the successful launch of Arab News Pakistan edition. The launches are in line with what Abbas described as "part of our more digital, more global direction."

"Japan is a long-time, reliable strategic partner and friend," Majid Al-Qasabi, the Saudi minister for commerce and investment, said during the launch in Tokyo.

"Since 1955, business has been great between the two countries. We appreciate all the cooperation, the partnerships and the business with the Japanese community. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a special relationship, especially the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, with the new Emperor.

"We hope that Japan will have a fruitful future and I would like to congratulate Arab News; this is a great opportunity, a moment in history."

Koike Yuriko, the first female governor of Tokyo, also congratulated Arab News at the launch of the Japanese edition. She is no stranger to the Middle East and the Arab world: she spent five years in Cairo in the 1970s, and studied Arabic at the American University in the Egyptian capital, graduating in sociology.





Above: Governor of Tokyo Yuriko Koike at the launch of Arab News Japan in Tokyo. AN

Left: Ali Itani, region head for Japan of Arab News, Faisal J Abbas, the paper's editor-in-chief, and Abe Shinzo, the Japanese Prime Minister in Riyadh. AN

Less than three months after its launch, Arab News Japan was quoted by Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Motegi Toshimitsu during a press briefing. He cited a special report by the newspaper titled "How Arabs view Japan," which was based on a survey conducted by Arab News in conjunction with YouGov. The report, which asked more than 3,000 Arabs in 18 countries for their views and perspectives on Japan, was widely circulated in the Japanese media.

Arab News Japan was also in a unique position when former Nissan CEO Carlos Ghosn fled from Japan to Lebanon while facing allegations of financial improprieties in his business activities. It was able to deliver regular updates and reports about the case, including exclusive interviews carried out in Lebanon, to the Japanese people in their own language.

We need to know what people in the Middle East think. We didn't have the source for that, but now Arab News is in Japan.

Kono Taro, Japan's defense minister

This year began with a landmark visit by Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo to Saudi Arabia to discuss matters of State with King Salman in Riyadh and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in AlUla.

Arab News produced extensive coverage of the three-day visit to the region, including a special edition printed to mark the occasion. In addition, the newspaper was honored when the prime minister personally thanked the editor in chief for the launch of the Japanese edition during a private meeting, at which Abe was presented with a special hand-drawn cover in Japanese welcoming him to the Kingdom.

Ali Saleh Itani is the region head for Japan at Arab News and oversees ANJP.

CONGRATULATIONS NOTE FROM MBC CHAIRMAN

As a region, it's important to tell our own stories

This anniversary comes as the MENA region finds itself at the forefront of the global media landscape

Waleed Al-Ibrahim

Prior to the 1990s, before cable and satellite offerings started to fragment audiences, television was considered "community entertainment" that helped create a sense of identity. But, as audiences became more niche, this shared experience started to dissipate. Certainly, providers were giving viewers content that was considered much more "premium" than before, but oddly enough, something important was lost along the way — perhaps a sense of relatability.

That is why, ever since our first broadcast in 1991, MBC has always kept in mind our responsibility to serve the greater Middle East and North Africa (MENA), region while, at the same time, remaining proudly Saudi — thus catering to all diverse tastes and interests. It is also why, alongside our premium content, we still offer a major proportion of our content for free.

Fast forward to today, and in 2020, MBC is now a global player in the entertainment sector, with the ability to serve multiple audiences. Looking back, we have come a long way because technology and content back in 1991 were a very different story. Satellite television was still in its infancy, for starters.

The world's first satellite service premiered in 1948 in a few US states. By the 1980s, the number of satellite channel subscribers was growing steadily, but slowed by the high cost of satellite dishes. As economies of scale made dishes more affordable and satellite technology improved, audiences grew.

With some of the brightest minds in the Arab world on our team, the future looks bright.

Clearly, the launch of Arabsat's first satellites in 1985 was a turning point for the media industry in the MENA region.

In 1991, MBC was the first private and non-encrypted free-to-air Arab satellite channel with an objective to reach the Arab community around the world through engaging and entertaining content. This desire to pioneer and innovate has stayed with us over the last three decades.

In 1994, MBC moved beyond television broadcasting into radio with the launch of the first private radio station in Saudi Arabia, MBC FM. The success of the station was down to a strategy we have implemented time and time again — using our local knowledge to create premium content tailored to our very own diverse yet specific audience. In the case of MBC FM, it was the combination of Khaliji music, side by side with entertainment and poetry, that helped the station become the top tuned-into station in the Kingdom.

By 2002, it became clear that if we were to continue our expansion and implement our plans to become a major content producer, we needed to be in the middle of our community. With this in mind, MBC relocated from London to Dubai. We had come home, and this greater proximity to our markets and consumers spurred us on to roll out more and more channels. Our move to Dubai Media City coincided with the launch of O3 Production, a company specializing in the production and acquisition of programs, now under MBC Studios.

The year 2003 saw a major increase in new channels, with MBC2 arriving to offer some of the most successful movies from most, if not all, major studios in Hollywood. Launching two months after was Al Arabiya, which quickly established itself as an accurate, trustworthy and credible source of news.

The next decade was equally exciting with the launch of genre-related channels: Kids' favourite MBC3 (2004), the male-targeted MBC Action (2007), youth music showcase Wanasah (2007), romcom specialist MBC Max (2008), MBC Masr (2012), MBC Bollywood (2013), MBC Persia and MBC Iraq (2019).

Diversification and cultural relevance have always been key to MBC Group's growth.

Diversification and cultural relevance have always been key to the MBC Group's growth.

In 2011, we entered the digital era, with Shahid being the first Arab video-on-demand platform in the Middle East. Since then, we have focused on convergence across multiple platforms: On-screen, online, apps, social media, and now the all-new Shahid and Shahid VIP — both witnessing exponential growth.

Our moral and ethical commitments to the community were centralized via the activities of MBC Al-Amal, the group's corporate social responsibility arm, which arrived in 2013.

With so many channels and platforms comes the commitment to provide a lot of quality content, and we have reached a point in time where it is now more important than ever to tell our own stories to the world. This is why we created MBC Academy and MBC Studios in 2018 — to nurture and promote our own talent to produce films and series good enough to travel and compete globally.

As we move forward, MBC will continue its commitment to the MENA community by creating channels and producing premium content tailored to the needs of our audiences. We will continue to innovate and invest in the future. In particular, we will continue to invest in our youth with projects and initiatives.

With some of the brightest minds in Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Arab world on our team, the future looks bright. And we cannot wait to see where the future generations will take our industry in the region and beyond.

Waleed Al-Ibrahim is the chairman of MBC Group. He would like to congratulate the entire Arab News team on its 45th anniversary — yet another milestone in its history! Here's to many more.



MBC moments

Milestones in the company's history

1991

Founding of MBC, the first private, non-encrypted free-to-air Arab satellite channel.

1994

Saudi Arabia's first private radio station, MBC FM, goes to air.

2002

Relocates from London to Dubai and launches O3 Production.

2003

Introduces MBC2, offering Hollywood movies, and Al Arabiya news channel.

2004

The kids' channel MBC3 joins its offerings.

2007

The male-targeted MBC Action and youth music showcase Wanasah are added.

2008

The launch of MBC Max, MBC's second free-to-air channel specializing in Western movies.

2011

Launches Shahid, the first Arab video-on-demand platform in the Middle East.

2012

MBC Masr is created for the Egyptian market.

2013

The arrival of MBC Al-Amal, the group's corporate social responsibility arm.

2018

MBC Academy and MBC Studios are created to nurture and produce talent.

2020

The future looks bright for the next generation, with new shows like "Ahlan Simsim".



45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
The Camp David Accords
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**

NOV. 19, 1977

When Sadat went to Israel

The Egyptian president made a bid for peace, but his visit outraged the region



Then Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, the first Arab leader to visit Israel, pictured at Tel Aviv airport in November 1977. AFP

HANI HAZAIMEH
JEDDAH

It was 1979 when I first heard of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, and unfortunately it was not a pleasant occasion. That was when he decided to make peace with an enemy state of the Arabs, and took the initiative solely to sit down with Israeli leaders and sign a peace treaty, later known as the Camp David Accords.



At the time, there was an Egyptian man working at a bakery in our neighborhood in Zarqa, Jordan. Of course, for a 13-year-old boy, a peace treaty was meaningless as I had no idea what that meant and had no interest in politics. All I knew was that the people in our neighborhood started yelling and screaming in the streets: "Sadat is a traitor."

Following the steps of my elders, I ran to the Egyptian baker and shouted in his face "Sadat is a traitor," without even knowing what that word meant. But as I grew older I became more aware, especially because my country, Jordan, is directly involved in the Arab-Israeli struggle and the Palestinian cause, and because the repercussions of the Israeli occupation of Palestine were immensely devastating not only to Jordan but to the whole region.

I read so many articles about Sadat's legacy in order to understand what informed his ideology. He remains a controversial figure in the Middle East. Praised as a prophet and cursed as a traitor, neither his death in 1981 nor the passage of time have resolved the ongoing debate about the man and his legacy.

Some of the controversy over Sadat arises from an even bolder move, when Egyptian troops broke through the Bar Lev Line — a chain of fortifications built by Israel along the eastern bank of the Suez Canal after it seized Egypt's Sinai Peninsula during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war — on Oct. 6, 1973.

The dramatic crossing electrified a country demoralized by its defeat in the 1967 war. Although Egyptian troops fared less well once the element of surprise had passed and the war raged on for several weeks, even temporary success against a country that had been Egypt's foe for 25 years allowed Sadat to consolidate his leadership domestically.

He was being seen as a brilliant strategist, since his limited war against the Israelis resulted in the Egyptians regaining control over the Suez Canal, in what the Egyptian military to this day considers its principal victory in the modern era.

Sadat's emergence on the world stage, however, remained tied to his political success in Egypt. He dismantled many of the socialist features of the Egyptian state, and in so doing he impressed Western leaders with his sincerity, weakened his opponents and enriched his friends. Several times during US-mediated peace negotiations with Israel, Sadat slipped a secret copy of his "fall back" positions to the US president.

Sadat also applied his mastery of symbolism to international relations. His decision to go to Jerusalem was breathtaking in its effect, and his landing on Israeli soil on Nov. 19, 1977, irrevocably changed the nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In one gesture granting the Israelis the recognition they had been demanding for decades, Sadat at the same time won an American commitment to aid Egypt in recovering the lands it had lost in war.

Sadat's unilateral decision to go to Jerusalem and address the Israeli parliament was surely the most dramatic of his life. It was an absolute defiance of two widely accepted principles of inter-Arab diplomacy. The first was that no direct negotiations with Israel should take place as long as the latter continued to occupy Arab lands. The second was that if any negotiations did take place, the Arabs should conduct them collectively rather than individually.

Sadat was the first Arab leader to break these rules, and by doing so he triggered anger not only among Arab leaders but also among the public, who took to the streets in masses, accusing him of betraying the Arab consensus. His decision was dramatic not only because it utterly transformed the Middle East, but also because it was a supreme act of faith.

He decided to play his primary card — recognition of Israel — out of a conviction that the US, and particularly President Jimmy Carter, would not allow his effort to be in vain. The gesture becomes even more impressive when one considers that the great trust that Sadat and Carter had in each other had developed after only a single set of meetings between them.

Although he will always be remembered for his courageous leap toward peace, Sadat's ultimate legacy remains uncertain. The negotiations he started did not result in the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict, nor did they create a prosperous Egypt.

But it is worth remembering that Sadat's political skill brought enormous benefit to his country. Egypt now has peace on its eastern border, and faces no serious military threats from any direction. It has received tens of billions of dollars in US aid over the last two decades, which it has used to modernize its army and thoroughly improve its national infrastructure.

Even small Egyptian villages are now connected to the electric grid, and in the country, credit for that is seen to lie with Sadat rather than the US. Egypt also has emerged as the leading state in the Arab world and the region.

Faced with a crumbling and inward-looking economy oriented toward the Soviet Union, Sadat laid the groundwork for Egyptian prosperity, even if it has not yet arrived. He truly led his country, and it was his tragedy that, perhaps, he got too far ahead of the people he was leading.

Hani Hazaimeh, a senior editor at Arab News, first heard of Sadat as a teenager growing up in Jordan.

Although he will always be remembered for his courageous leap toward peace, Sadat's ultimate legacy remains uncertain. The negotiations he started did not result in the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict, nor did they create a prosperous Egypt.

HOW WE REPORTED IT


Kirmanis retains power in Greece
Sadat, Begin pledge to end state of war
Pilgrimage enters final stag

Egypt and Israel made a mutual unwritten pledge on Monday to end their state of war in an unprecedented agreement aimed at achieving a negotiated peace settlement. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Prime Minister Menachem Begin made the declarations separately in the climax of a historic first visit to Israel by an Arab leader that spurred hope for an Arab-Israeli peace.

From a wire story on Arab News' front page, Nov. 22, 1977


arab news
Sadat, Begin pledge to end state of war
Pilgrimage enters final stage
Kirmanis retains power in Greece
King honors Hajj delegations
Pilgrims celebrate 2nd day of Eid
Cut and mail
and save on subscription rates for
Arab states considering move against Sadat
6,000 feared killed in India

SUMMARY

On Nov. 19, 1977, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat became the first Arab leader to visit Israel, in a bid to bring about a lasting peace between two countries locked in conflict since the foundation of Israel 30 years earlier.

Only four years earlier, Sadat had ordered Egyptian troops into the Sinai Peninsula, triggering an Arab-Israeli war. But on Nov. 20, he and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin spoke at a joint press conference in Jerusalem, announcing an end to hostilities and pledging to work toward peace in the Middle East.

The meeting was a stepping stone to the Camp David Accords in September 1978, which led to the signing of the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty in Washington in March 1979.

In October 1978, Sadat and Begin were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

But as Arab News reported on Nov. 22, 1977, the peace initiative angered many Arabs, who saw it as a betrayal of the Palestinians. Egypt was ejected from the Arab League, and during a military parade in Cairo in October 1981, Sadat was assassinated by extremists opposed to the treaty.

Key Dates



Nov. 11, 1977
After Sadat announces intention to visit, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin addresses Egyptian people from Jerusalem, pleading for 'no more wars, no more bloodshed.'



Nov. 19, 1977
Sadat becomes first Arab leader to visit Israel, addressing parliament: 'Before us today lies the chance for peace — a chance that, if lost or wasted, the plotter against it will bear the curse of humanity and the curse of history.'



Sept. 5, 1978
At invitation of US President Jimmy Carter, Sadat and Begin arrive at Camp David for 10 days of talks.



Sept. 17, 1978
Begin and Sadat sign framework for peace at White House.



Oct. 27, 1978
Sadat and Begin jointly awarded Nobel Peace Prize.



March 26, 1979
Sadat and Begin sign Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty in Washington.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
Iranian Revolution
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**


arab news

YES...

11,000 perish in Iran quake

Naif, Jordanian minister view security cooperation

Summit reaches decisive stage

Arab, Israeli positions are breakthrough at summit

WALL TO WALL

SEPT. 17, 1978

Camp David's flawed peace

The accords between Egypt and Israel may have led to a Nobel prize, but the failure to fully realize them fueled extremism







Top, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, right, chats with Israeli Premier Menachem Begin as US President Jimmy Carter looks on at Camp David, the US presidential retreat in Maryland, on Sept. 6, 1978. Ray Hanania writes that Sadat was naive to trust Begin, who orchestrated the 1948 Deir Yassin massacre, still commemorated by Palestinians, above right. The accords failed to end Israeli settlements, above left. AFP

RAY HANANIA
CHICAGO

When Egypt's President Anwar Sadat went to Jerusalem hoping to prevent future wars and resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict through negotiations, he did so believing a comprehensive peace would not only include Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, but most importantly Israel agreeing to withdraw from the occupied territories and allow for a Palestinian state.



During his lengthy speech to Israel's Knesset (Parliament), Sadat said: "I have not come here for a separate agreement between Egypt and Israel ... Even if peace between all the confrontation states and Israel were achieved, in the absence of a just solution to the Palestinian problem, never will there be that durable and just peace upon which the entire world insists today."

Sadat never lived to see how right he was about how Israel's refusal to withdraw from the occupied territories would fuel a surge in extremism, create more violence, disrupt his own nation and make regional peace impossible. Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin's sole purpose was to remove the military threat posed by Egypt, divide the Arab "confrontation states" and block demands for Palestinian statehood.

Sadat was naive to trust Begin, one of the Middle East's most vicious terrorists. Begin orchestrated some of the most heinous civilian atrocities during the 1947-1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, including the massacre of nearly 100 civilians in the small Palestinian village of Deir Yassin.

That massacre, with pregnant women butchered and bodies thrown into the village water well, shocked the Arab population of Palestine, prompting a refugee flight of fear. Before his Knesset speech, Sadat visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, which ironically is built on Deir Yassin's remains.

He was being wooed by Israel and the US, and treated like a distinguished head of state, for making peace with Israel. He toured the US in 1978 and was feted at dinners in several major American cities, including Chicago, where I joined 500 other Arab Americans protesting his "surrender."

The Camp David Accords won Sadat and Begin the 1978 Nobel Peace Prize but scorn in the Arab world. The Arab League reacted by removing Egypt as a member and moving its headquarters from Cairo to Tunis.

Israel's strategy was clear to everyone but Sadat. He signed the accords after 12 days of intense negotiations in 1978 (Sept. 5-17). But just weeks before, Begin inaugurated the settlement of Ariel, which has become a symbol of Israel's continuing war against Palestinian statehood and the center of settlement expansion.

Despite the disconcerting reality on the ground, Sadat went ahead and signed a formal peace treaty with Israel at the White House on March 26, 1979, officially ending the conflict between the two countries.

When you look at the five fundamentals of the accord, only two were actually achieved. Egypt did get the Sinai Peninsula back, under demilitarized conditions, and the two countries ended their state of war and established diplomatic relations.

But three conditions were never met: Meetings to resolve the Palestine question with Jordan's involvement stalled; the introduction of Palestinian self-government in the West Bank and Gaza in five years (by 1983) failed; and an end to Israeli settlements never even began.

The accords were never allowed to stand in the way of plans to entrench Israel's hold on the occupied territories. When US President Jimmy Carter lost re-election on Nov. 4, 1980, and Sadat was assassinated while reviewing a military parade on Oct. 6, 1981, Begin was given the green light to close the door on Sadat's "dream."

Despite differences, US President Ronald Reagan followed up on Carter's Middle East peace vision and proposed a "freeze" on settlements in August 1982, urging Israel to grant Palestinians "autonomy" as a step toward statehood.

Begin's reaction was swift. On Sept. 2, 1982, with Carter and Sadat out of the way, Begin led a Knesset move to consolidate Israel's hold on the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Golan Heights, increasing the Jewish settler population. Israel, the Cabinet declared, will "reserve the right to apply sovereignty over the territories at the end of the five-year transition period" of Palestinian "autonomy" that was specifically envisioned in the Camp David Accords.

In 1978, the settler population was only 75,000. By 1990, it tripled to 228,000. Ironically, while the accords were supposed to create an environment of hope and optimism, the failure to advance them beyond the return of the Sinai created a fatalism that fueled extremism.

Although peace between Egypt and Israel remains, the failure to achieve peace with the Palestinians has kept the accords as little more than a formal version of an armistice agreement, and relations between the two countries are defined by military cooperation.

Ray Hanania was the publisher of an Arab American newspaper in the early 1970s, The Middle Eastern Voice, and an activist for Palestinian rights serving as President of the American Congress for Palestine.

HOW WE WROTE IT


Summit reaches decisive stage

Mr. Carter's experiment with solely moral coercion as an instrument of peace, while commendable, failed to produce any results because it failed to take into consideration all the variables in the complex Middle East 'equation.'

From an Arab News editorial, Sept. 18, 1978

SUMMARY

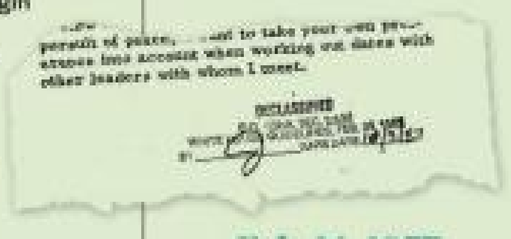
On Sept. 17, 1978, after 10 days of intense negotiations at the Camp David US presidential retreat, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin signed two historic documents that ended three decades of conflict between their countries and appeared to offer the first real chance of peace in the Middle East.

As Arab News reported at the time, the talks went to the wire, with 'suspense and uncertainty about the outcome' until the last moment. Thanks to the efforts of US President Jimmy Carter, however, Begin and Sadat finally agreed on the Camp David Accords — frameworks for peace in the Middle East and a treaty between Egypt and Israel.

A month later, Sadat and Begin were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and in March the following year they signed the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty. Many in the Arab world, however, saw it as a betrayal of the Palestinians. Egypt was suspended from the Arab League, and in 1981 Sadat was assassinated by extremists opposed to the treaty.

While a fragile peace between the two countries remains, hopes that the accords would resolve the Palestinian problem have yet to be fulfilled.

Key Dates



Feb. 14, 1977
US President Jimmy Carter writes to Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to express his commitment to finding 'a lasting peace settlement in the Middle East.'

Oct. 21, 1977
In a handwritten letter, Carter appeals to Sadat for help: 'The time has now come to move forward, and your early public endorsement of our approach is extremely important — perhaps vital.'



Nov. 11, 1977
After Sadat announces his intention to visit Israel, the latter's new Prime Minister Menachem Begin, above, addresses the Egyptian people from Jerusalem, pleading for 'no more wars, no more bloodshed.'

Aug. 3, 1978
Carter writes private letters to Sadat and Begin, proposing that they meet.

Sept. 5, 1978
Sadat and Begin arrive at Camp David for 10 days of talks.



Sept. 17, 1978
At 9:37 p.m., Carter, Begin and Sadat board presidential helicopter Marine 1 and fly from Maryland to the White House. At 10:31 p.m., Begin and Sadat sign the framework for peace.

Oct. 27, 1978
Sadat and Begin are jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

March 26, 1979
Sadat and Begin sign the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty in Washington.

Oct. 6, 1981
Sadat is assassinated in Cairo by Islamist extremists opposed to the treaty.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
Siege of Makkah
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**


arab news

Bakhtiar said quitting; Army cancels support

Sadat, Brown end talks

Mosque unit appeals for Iran restraint

Martyr or murderer: Pakistan dilemma





SUMMARY

On Feb. 11, 1979, an Islamic revolution changed Iran from a pro-Western monarchy into an anti-Western theocracy. Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi had always relied on Western support, but many Iranians chafed at his rapid program of westernization. The first demonstrations erupted toward the end of 1977, and over the following 14 months the slow-motion collapse of the shah's authority culminated in his overthrow and the return from exile of Shiite religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini.

The most immediate consequence was the seizure of the US Embassy in Tehran by revolutionary students, who held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days. But in the long term, the revolution turned a close ally of Washington into its sworn enemy, triggering a bitter enmity with consequences for the region that echo to this day.

Far left: Protesters hold a poster of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini aloft during street demonstrations against the shah in January 1979. Left: Anger erupts outside the US Embassy.
AFP, Getty Images

Key Dates



Feb. 18, 1978
Demonstrations and riots erupt in cities across Iran, triggering months of increasingly violent protests.

Sept. 8, 1978
More than 80 are killed and hundreds injured in Tehran when security forces open fire on demonstrators in Jaleh Square on a day remembered as Black Friday.



Dec. 2, 1978
Ayatollah Khomeini, in exile in France, orchestrates the Muharram protests, bringing millions onto the streets calling for the shah's removal and Khomeini's return.



Jan. 16, 1979
The shah and his family flee Iran, never to return.



Feb. 1, 1979
Khomeini returns to a rapturous welcome from millions of supporters and, days later, appoints an interim revolutionary government.

Feb. 11, 1979
The military lays down its arms and the government of Prime Minister Shapour Bakhtiar, appointed by the shah, collapses. Bakhtiar, who attempts to organise a counter-coup from exile in France, is later assassinated.

Nov. 4, 1979
Angered by Washington's refusal to return the shah for trial from the US, revolutionaries seize the US Embassy in Tehran and hold 52 Americans hostage, left, for 444 days.

FEB. 11, 1979

The revolution that sparked Iran's hostility

After hijacking popular protests, the Islamic Republic launched a campaign to destabilize the region

DR. MAJID RAFIZADEH
LOS ANGELES

The year 1979 is one of the most pivotal in modern history due to the Islamic revolution in Iran, an event that reverberated beyond the country's borders and fundamentally altered the Middle East's political landscape, affecting geopolitical alignments four decades later.



Since some politicians and policy analysts continue to misunderstand the Islamic Revolution or underestimate the commitment of the Islamic Republic to exporting its revolutionary ideals, it is critical to shed light on the underlying causes and the long-term impact it has had domestically, regionally and globally.

Before the revolution, most Iranian people were struggling to set up a representative and democratic system of governance. They were dissatisfied with Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi due to the widespread political and financial corruption and huma rights violations. Many people in Iran were also discontent with American foreign policy because of the 1953 coup when the Eisenhower administration and UK Prime Minister Winston Churchill decided to overthrow the first democratically elected government in Iran, which was led by nationalist Prime Minister Mohammed Mosaddegh, and reinstate the shah, who had built a close alliance with Washington and the West.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini took advantage of this situation and capitalized on the people's grievances to seize power. In 1978, periodic demonstrations and protests began to erupt as ordinary people and various oppositional groups — including the Marxists, modernist Islamists, religious fundamentalists, constitutionalist liberals, leftists and reformists — came together. But the international community did not believe that these protests could result in the revolution of 1979. This is more likely due to the fact that the shah was successful in creating a desirable image of himself outside Iran as a king who enjoyed legitimacy and the support of the Iranian people.

Khomeini's party had an edge over other political parties because the shah, like many others at this time, did not view the clerics as a threat. Instead, he invested significant political capital in cracking down on other political institutions, such as the nationalists, Marxists and leftists. This allowed Khomeini's party to thrive, and it became one of the most powerful and best organized groups in the country. It could operate through enormous networks such as mosques and religious organizations.

Ultimately, Khomeini's fundamentalist organization co-opted the revolution in February 1979. After the shah fled the country, the vast majority of Iranians voted for the Islamic Republic because they did not conceive that Khomeini's religious party would be capable of committing the atrocities it ultimately came to carry out, or that it would have such an unrelenting hunger for power. Instead, the country thought it was on a smooth path toward democracy, with no expectation of returning to the shah's era.

Once the clerics had hijacked the revolution, their key objective became the consolidation of power. This was fulfilled primarily through two important landscapes: The hostage crisis and the brutal crackdown on the Iranian population. This revealed the regime's determination to show to its own people that it was not afraid of shedding blood in order to achieve its objectives.

Thousands upon thousands of people from other political or religious parties were ultimately tortured and executed. The regime established dozens of "death commissions," which were run by people such as Ebrahim Raisi, who later ran for president, and Mostafa Pourmohammadi, who was served as minister of justice under President Hassan Rouhani. According to human rights groups, the death commissions were major players in the execution of some 30,000 political prisoners in a four-month period in 1988. Those killed were accused of having loyalties to anti-theocratic resistance groups, mainly the People's Mujahedin of Iran.

The Islamic Republic also broke international laws by instigating the 1979 hostage crisis, in which 52 Americans were detained and humiliated for 444 days. This was a turning point in US-Iran relations and it empowered Iran's hard-liners, ultra-conservatives and Principlists. It gave them the platform to further consolidate their power, crush the remaining leftists, liberals and secular groups inside the country, and present to the world the Islamic Republic's defiant and revolutionary nature.

Tehran's regional policies became anchored in exporting its revolution to other nations; increasing its influence through military adventurism; asymmetrical warfare; pursuing a sectarian agenda by inciting Shiites against Sunnis; the sponsorship of proxies and terror groups from Yemen to Iraq; and thwarting the objectives of other regional powers, particularly Saudi Arabia. Tensions in the region intensified as a belligerent, assertive and revolutionary dimension was added to Tehran's foreign and regional policies.

Finally, the Islamic Republic not only vied for regional dominance, but also absolute exertion of leadership in the Muslim world. And, since Saudi Arabia is considered a critical regional power, the cradle of Islam and home to its two holiest cities, Makkah and Madinah, Tehran became determined to undermine the Kingdom's national, geopolitical and strategic interests in the region. As a result, antagonism toward Saudi Arabia became one of the core pillars of the mullahs' regional policy.

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh, an Iranian-American political scientist who is a columnist for Arab News, was born in Iran a year after the revolution. Several of his family members, including his father, were tortured by the regime for criticizing the ruling mullahs.

HOW WE WROTE IT


Mosque unit appeals for Iran restraint

Makkah's World Supreme Council of Mosques appealed to the people of Iran to exercise self-restraint in a spirit of Islamic brotherhood and understanding.

Farouk Luqman on the front page of Arab News, Feb. 12, 1979



45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East

TOMORROW
The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**







Juhayman Al-Otaiba, pictured left in 1979, led the attack on the Grand Mosque, seen during the attack with smoke billowing from it over Makkah, above. AFP

SUMMARY

On Nov. 20, 1979, the first day of the Islamic year of 1400, tens of thousands of worshippers converged on the Grand Mosque in Makkah for the once-in-a-lifetime chance to experience the dawning of a new century in Islam's holiest place.

But within moments of the completion of fajr, the first prayer of the day, joy turned to horror as gunshots rang out across the courtyard. The Grand Mosque, Islam's holiest sanctuary, had been seized by a group of 260 heavily armed religious fanatics. It was the beginning of a bloody siege that would last two weeks and, coming as it did in the wake of the Iranian Revolution, would lead to a setback in modernization from which Saudi society is only now recovering.


arab news

BULK & BAG CEMENT

King in pray in Mecca

Mosque renegades smashed; 135 killed

Who else has...

NOV. 20, 1979

The siege of Makkah

Long a taboo topic, the full story of the attack on the Grand Mosque only recently came to light

RAWAN RADWAN
JEDDAH

Shrouded in secrecy and rarely discussed, the 1979 siege of Makkah nevertheless had severe repercussions for Saudi Arabia, with many of my generation growing up largely unaware of the high price we were paying for the extremist attack.



Nov. 20, 1979 was the first day of a new century in the Islamic calendar, one that was witnessed by tens of thousands of worshippers who had just completed their Hajj ritual.

Ringing in the new year with early morning prayers, the worshippers on their once-in-a-life-time pilgrimage were shocked to hear gunfire and then a demand to pledge allegiance to the so-called Mahdi. This figure is referred to as the Messiah in several passages of the Hadith (Prophet's sayings), although Islamic scholars are divided over the meaning.

It wasn't until I was 16 and in my junior year of high school in 2002 that I first heard of the siege. On the 23rd anniversary of the attack, I opened the Friday edition of the local newspaper Okaz and saw two pages featuring graphic black-and-white images of a mosque with smoke pouring from its minaret, and a photograph of a man with piercing eyes and a disheveled look. It was then that I learned the name of the extremist behind the horrendous attack: Juhayman Al-Otaibi. Curious by nature, my interest began to grow.

For years there was little information to be found in Saudi Arabia about the seizure of the Grand Mosque. However, when the Internet was introduced, search engines provided me with the means to know more — but still it wasn't enough.

It was only in September 2019 that a highly anticipated interview with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on CBS's "60 Minutes" shed more light on the matter. Speaking to Norah O'Donnell, the crown prince explained how two events in 1979, the Iranian Revolution and the Grand Mosque siege, halted progress in Saudi Arabia.

"After 1979, it's true, we were victims, especially my generation that suffered from this a great deal," said the crown prince. "We were living a very normal life like the rest of the Gulf countries. Women were driving cars, there were movie theaters in Saudi Arabia."

I knew this interview would encourage others to re-examine this event. In 2019, on the 40th anniversary of the attack, I was working at Arab News and was able to carry out a proper investigation as lead reporter on an online Deep Dive that looked at the siege in detail. The special report was a way of answering all the questions still on my mind.

As our team reported, Al-Otaibi was among 260 heavily armed religious fanatics who seized the Grand Mosque and sparked a standoff with Saudi forces that lasted for more than two weeks. Well trained and ruthless, the extremists launched the siege by locking the mosque's gates, trapping an estimated 100,000 worshippers inside for more than four hours.

Over the broadcast system normally used for prayers, they told those inside that the so-called Mahdi, Al-Otaibi's brother-in-law Mohammed Al-Qahtani, was there to rid the world of evil and return Islam to its true path. The Kingdom, prospering and developing into a modern nation, was deemed evil by Al-Otaibi, Al-Qahtani and his followers.

Thus began one of the bloodiest battles the Holy Mosque of Makkah has seen in centuries. The unbelievable events that unfolded are still difficult to believe, as many of our sources recounted, including Prince Turki Al-Faisal, head of Saudi intelligence at the time; a pilot from the Royal Saudi Air Force who flew over the mosque; and the grandson of a hostage who escaped with many others through star-shaped windows in the Safa-Marwa gallery.

For the first few days, the Saudi forces pushed into the mosque and a battle ensued. The events played out like a scene from an action movie, with the Saudi forces forcing the religious extremists back. Faced with the final assault, Al-Otaibi and his followers barricaded themselves in the basement, making it more difficult for the Saudi forces to reach them.

During the battle, Al-Qahtani was killed, along with more than 100 extremists. In the final stages, Saudi forces launched gas before they entered the labyrinth of tunnels under the mosque, where they captured Al-Otaibi and his remaining followers, including women and children.

When the siege finally came to an end, the mosque's walls were riddled with bullets, and more than 25 innocent worshippers lay dead. More than 450 soldiers were wounded, and 127 lost their lives. In Al-Otaibi's group, 117 were killed and hundreds arrested, with 63 later executed. In January 1980, Al-Otaibi was executed along with 14 of his followers in Makkah.

In an Arab News report from Dec. 5, 1979, titled "Lessons of Makkah," the writer concluded: "It is safe to say that the fact that they chose the Holy Kaaba for their attack is prime proof of the false nature of their call. We can only describe them as a gang of brainwashed religious fanatics, trained to believe in society's deviation from Islam in the existence of their 'expected Mahdi' who they claim would 'bring justice to the world.'"

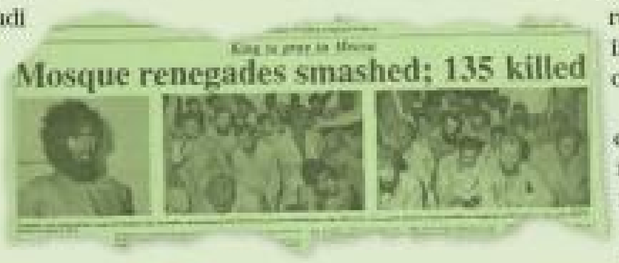
The aftermath was grave. While I was not alive to witness it, the siege of Makkah changed the psyche of Saudi society, with repercussions for many in my generation. In the wake of the siege, the religious police were empowered, and the Kingdom's steady modernization was put to a halt. School curriculums, everyday activities and social norms were drastically changed.

Although Saudi Arabia — religiously conservative, yet peaceful — rejected Al-Otaibi's violent call for the "return to the true religion of Islam," many felt pressured to conform to changes taking place in their communities.

The search for answers never stopped. It was only when Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman vowed to return the country to "moderate Islam" 2017 and referred to pre-1979 Saudi Arabia in his CBS interview, that it began to make sense.

Rawan Radwan, regional correspondent for Arab News based in Jeddah, has a keen interest in Saudi history. For more than 15 years, she has carried out research into the siege of Makkah, and for the 40th anniversary in 2019, she was lead reporter on an Arab News Deep Dive that recreated the event in detail (https://www.arabnews.com/juhayman-40-years-on).

HOW WE WROTE IT


King in pray in Mecca

Mosque renegades smashed; 135 killed

Television showed pictures of the 170 renegades who were captured, huddled on the floor of a prison in Makkah, filthy and bedraggled.

From a staff story on Arab News' front page, Dec. 5, 1979

Key Dates

Nov. 20, 1979
A group of religious extremists led by Juhayman Al-Otaibi, a former corporal in the Saudi National Guard, seizes the Grand Mosque in Makkah.

Nov. 23
For the first time in centuries, no Friday sermon is preached from the Grand Mosque. The ulema issues a fatwa authorizing force against the militants on holy ground if they reject an opportunity "to surrender and lay down their arms."

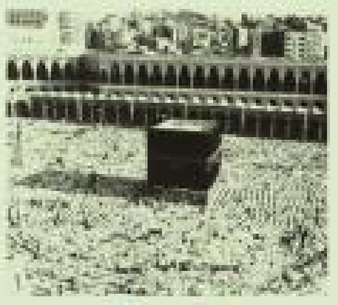
Nov. 24
After hours of bloody fighting, troops retake the Safa-Marwa gallery, driving Al-Otaibi and the surviving insurgents into the warren of interconnected rooms under the mosque.



Dec. 3
At the start of the final assault, gas is dropped into the basement maze through holes drilled in the floor of the courtyard. This triggers 18 hours of bitter fighting before the final stronghold is breached, 15 days after the siege began.



Dec. 5
King Khalid addresses the nation, thanking Allah for His support in crushing the 'seditious act of sacrilege.'



Dec. 7
Call to noon prayer brings thousands of worshippers to the mosque for the first time in three weeks. Many have camped out all night for a historic ceremony that is broadcast to other Islamic states.



Jan. 9, 1980
Interior Ministry announces that 63 captured extremists have been executed in eight different cities. Al-Otaibi is among the 15 executed in Makkah.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East

SAUDI ARAMCO

TOMORROW
Saudi Arabia completes buyout of Aramco
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**



This picture, taken in the early 1980s, shows Afghan anti-Soviet fighters with their primitive arms in the eastern parts of the country. The Red Army fought a losing war against them. AFP

DEC. 24, 1979

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan

The conflict between the Cold War powers turned the country into a terrorist breeding ground

RAHIMULLAH YUSUFZAI
PESHAWAR

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on the eve of Christmas 1979, an attempt to salvage the floundering Afghan communist regime, triggered events with far-reaching consequences in the region and beyond.



Military intervention fueled the long conflict between the Cold War foes, the Soviet Union and the US, which backed rival Afghan sides. For the next nine years, the Red Army fought a losing war against Afghan mujahideen fighters supported by Afghanistan's neighbors, Iran and Pakistan, Western countries, China and most of the Arab world.

Soviet forces withdrew by Feb. 15, 1989 under the terms of the Geneva Accords. Since Moscow was unable to provide the critical military and economic assistance that had sustained the communist regime in power, President Mohammad Najibullah was forced to quit in April 1992 and the mujahideen captured power.

However, the mujahideen's failure to restore peace and stability due to their infighting offered the Taliban a chance to seize power. Though foreign fighters, including Arabs such as Al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden, had come to Afghanistan to take part in the earlier Afghan jihad against the Soviet forces, the Taliban regime allowed them to stay for ideological reasons.

The Soviet invasion was aimed primarily at propping up the communist regime weakened by infighting between the Khalq and Parcham factions of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan and preventing the US from gaining influence in its neighborhood. The move alarmed neighboring countries, particularly Pakistan, which feared it would be invaded next since the Soviet Union could attempt to intervene in its Balochistan province and reach the warm waters of the Arabian Sea. Meanwhile, Iran, which was seeking to consolidate its February 1979 Islamic Revolution, was apprehensive about Soviet intentions due to past hostility in their relations.

In the wider Middle East, the Soviet invasion caused uncertainty as Arab countries traditionally close to the US tried to figure out Moscow's next move. This was the first time the Soviet Union had invaded a country outside the European bloc and signalled a new aggressive trend of Soviet expansionism. There were also worries the presence of Soviet forces in Afghanistan could embolden communist and radical elements in the region.

Except for the pro-Soviet radical Arab states, such as South Yemen, Syria, Algeria and Libya, as well as the Palestine Liberation Organization, most countries in the Middle East sided with the US. Saudi Arabia and Egypt spearheaded support for the Afghan mujahideen, breaching their relationship with the Soviet Union for many years. Riyadh restored diplomatic relations with Moscow in 1992.

The Soviet invasion also had other repercussions. As the Cold War intensified, more countries drifted toward the two blocs. Several Middle Eastern countries were among 65 nations that joined the US-led boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics. Diplomatic relations were broken and trade relations suffered. It took years to repair the damage and restore the relationship to near normalcy.

For Middle East nations, a worrying development was the radicalization of citizens inspired by the call for jihad in Afghanistan.

In 1979, Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, the Palestinian Islamist teacher, played an instrumental role in issuing a fatwa (edict), along with several well-known Muslim scholars, declaring jihad the individual obligation of every Muslim. This was a departure from the established Islamic law that made it the prerogative of the Muslim state and the ruler.

The fatwa prompted many Arabs, including those living comfortably in the West, to travel to Pakistan en route to Afghanistan to join the war against the Soviet forces. Among them was the billionaire Bin Laden, who not only joined the fight, but also devoted his considerable wealth to funding the mujahideen.

In time, the term Afghan-Arabs was coined to describe the mostly Arab veterans of the war in Afghanistan. Those who returned home after the Soviet forces' pullout or at other times tried to recruit and organize others to wage war against governments in their native states.

Afghan-Arab fighters had their biggest impact in Algeria, where Djafar Al-Afghani led an armed campaign, and in Egypt, where Ayman Al-Zawahiri and Mohammad Showky Al-Islambouli inspired violent attacks against the government.

Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi and other militants who heralded the so-called Islamic State, or Daesh, also trained and fought in Afghanistan. Many war veterans headed to Bosnia-Herzegovina to fight in support of Muslims against the Serbs and Croats. All these insurrections eventually collapsed, but not before causing significant damage in terms of life and property, and forcing targeted states to adopt tough coercive measures that at times invited criticism.

The defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and its subsequent breakup in 1991 reinforced the perception among jihadists that if one superpower could be humbled, so could others. It was this belief that encouraged militant fighters to take on the US and its allies after the coalition invaded Taliban-ruled Afghanistan in October 2001 to avenge the Al-Qaeda-directed 9/11 attacks.

Rahimullah Yusufzai is a senior political and security analyst in Pakistan. He was the first to interview Taliban founder Mullah Mohammed Omar and twice interviewed Osama bin Laden in 1998.
Twitter: @rahimyusufzai

For Middle East nations, a worrying development was the radicalization of citizens inspired by the call for jihad in Afghanistan.


arab news
KATO
Fahd calls for Palestine state, criticizes Camp David peace

SUMMARY

On Dec. 24, 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan following the overthrow and assassination of Nur Muhammad Taraki, the man installed by Moscow the year before as leader of its puppet regime in Kabul.

It was the beginning of an ultimately pointless bloody conflict with the guerrilla forces of the mujahideen that would rage for nine years, claiming the lives of 15,000 Soviet troops and more than a million Afghans, and ending in Moscow's humiliating withdrawal from the country.

The conflict, which became a proxy war between the Soviets and US, had dramatic geopolitical consequences. Arguably, it hastened the breakup of the Soviet Union, which collapsed in 1991. It also created a breeding ground for terrorism, leading to the rise of Osama bin Laden, who fought alongside the mujahideen.

HOW WE REPORTED IT


Abdo Yamani tells Austrians
'Force Russians out'

Concerted pressure from democratic countries could force the Soviet Union to pull its troops out of Afghanistan, Information Minister Muhammad Abdo Yamani told Austrian newsmen in Riyadh on Sunday.

From a wire story on the front page of Arab News, Feb. 4, 1980

Key Dates



April 27, 1978
Afghan President Mohammad Daud Khan is killed in a Soviet-backed military coup that installs a modernizing communist government, triggering an Islamic insurgency.

Dec. 5, 1978
Coup leader and Afghan president, Nur Muhammad Taraki, signs a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union.



Sept. 11, 1979
Taraki is deposed by a rival communist faction led by former ally Hafizullah Amin. Taraki is murdered the following month on Amin's orders.

Dec. 24, 1979
Moscow, fearful that Amin is in talks with the US, sends troops into Afghanistan.

Dec. 27, 1979
Russian special forces storm the presidential palace in Kabul, killing Amin.



Dec. 29, 1979
Soviets install Babrak Karmal, the exiled leader of a faction of the Marxist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, as head of government.

Feb. 15, 1989
Soviet Union pulls out the last of its troops after nine years of war.

1992
Saudi Arabia restores diplomatic relations with Moscow.

Dec. 25, 1991
The communist flag is lowered for the last time over the Kremlin as Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev resigns and hands power to Boris Yeltsin, the first leader of the newly formed democratic Russian state.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
The Iran–Iraq War
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**

SEPT. 5, 1980

Saudi Arabia's Aramco takeover

The Kingdom's gradual acquisition of the oil company guaranteed its future success

FRANK KANE
DUBAI



The 1970s was the decade in which, in the words of one of the leading policymakers of the era, Saudi Arabia became "masters of our own commodity" — the owner and operator of its gigantic oil industry, with all that meant for the economic development of the Kingdom and the well-being of its citizens.

The decade began with the Arabian American Oil Co. — a consortium of four US oil giants, holding an exclusive concession to develop Saudi Arabia's most precious resource; it ended with an agreement to create Saudi Aramco, owned and operated by the Saudi government as the leading force in Middle East and global energy markets.

By 1980, Aramco was set on the path that enabled it, nearly four decades later, to become the most valuable company in history, in the biggest ever sale of shares on a stock exchange with last year's record-breaking initial public offering on Saudi Arabia's Tadawul.

But — and this is crucial to understanding the events of the 1970s — the process by which the Kingdom acquired ownership of Aramco was unlike many of the fractious confrontations in the Middle East oil industry in that era.



A 2019 billboard in Riyadh advertises the Aramco IPO. AFP



SUMMARY

Aramco began the 1970s as an American-owned company, but by the end was fully owned by the Kingdom, and was a vital part of its economy and the global energy industry. The transformation — achieved without the upheaval that many other Middle East countries suffered through oil industry nationalization — was the start of the process that culminated in last year's successful initial public offering as the most valuable company in history. It has proved to be a defining event in Saudi history.

By the early 1970s, Saudi Arabia was a strong weight in the global energy balance.

Whereas countries such as Libya, Iraq and Iran had simply confiscated American assets without compensation, leading to instability in global energy and geopolitics, Saudi Arabia negotiated the purchase of shares from the US owners in a gradual process that ensured good relations between the two countries. In the case of the Kingdom, the process was called "participation" rather than "nationalization."

Ali Al-Naimi — then a rising star in the Aramco establishment, who later became its first Saudi president — encapsulated the era in his autobiography "Out of the Desert": "The fact that the transfer didn't involve an overnight nationalization of assets, as happened in several oil-producing countries, was a tribute to the sound judgement and good negotiating faith on the part of the country as well as the oil company owners."

The man at the sharp end of the negotiations was a young lawyer who had been fast-tracked by King Faisal into high government office. Ahmed Zaki Yamani — author of the "masters of our own commodity" quote — was petroleum minister in 1968 when he told an oil conference in Beirut that it was the Kingdom's ambition to acquire 50 percent of Aramco from its American owners. The number would change as the decade wore on, but the ambition remained the same: To get control of Aramco.

As Arab News columnist Ellen Wald wrote in "Saudi Inc.," her recent history of Aramco: "It was a matter of what was in the best interests of Saudi Arabia and what he (Yamani) could convince the Americans was in their interest as well."

By the early 1970s, Saudi Arabia was a strong weight in the global energy balance. Demand for oil was booming, and American oilfields were not able to meet it. Saudi Arabia was spoken of for the first time as the "swing" exporter, the most important producer with capacity and reserves to help meet global demand at the turn of a pump wheel.

At a meeting of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in Vienna in 1972, Yamani was presented with an offer by the Americans to purchase 20 percent, some way off his initial demand for half of Aramco. But negotiations eventually led to agreement that Saudi Arabia would buy 25 percent, and eventually 51 percent. Control had been ceded — in principle — by the Americans.

At the same OPEC venue the following year, the process was accelerated by external events. The 1973 war between Israel and Arab countries broke out just before the oil ministers arrived in Austria, and the meeting was conducted in emergency conditions.

As oil historian Daniel Yergin described in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book "The Prize": "The three decade old postwar petroleum order had died its final death."

Arab countries, led by the largest oil producer Saudi Arabia, hiked the price of oil dramatically — to more than double the $5 per barrel it had been selling at previously. More significantly, it cut production and imposed an embargo on countries, including the US, which were supplying Israel with military equipment to fight the war.

The resulting turmoil in global economies and energy markets changed everything. By 1976, power had moved inexorably away from the independent oil companies to the producers, led by Saudi Arabia.

At a meeting in Panama that year, Yamani was in no mood to delay any longer. The Kingdom wanted a commitment from the Americans to sell all their remaining shares. By mid-March the deal was done, effective 1980, and Saudi Aramco was officially renamed eight years later.

The price that the Kingdom paid for the shares was never revealed, but speculation at the time suggested that around $2 billion passed hands. Last December, publicly listed Aramco was valued on the Tadawul at roughly 1,000 times that.

Wald told Arab News: "The real reason Aramco was able to become the successful company it is today is that once it became a Saudi firm, the oilmen continued to control it and its money, as opposed to government bureaucrats. This was unique among national oil companies."

Frank Kane has written about the oil industry in the Middle East for the past 15 years, the last three as senior business columnist for Arab News.

HOW WE REPORTED IT



At 8 a.m. yesterday Saudi Aramco was a $1.7 trillion company. Thirty minutes later the oil giant was worth nearly $1.9 trillion as it made its debut on the Tadawul, the Saudi stock market in Riyadh.

From a story by Rashid Hassan on the front page of Arab News, Dec. 12, 2019

Key Dates



May 1933
Saudi Arabia signs an oil concession with the Standard Oil Co. of California (SOCAL), and its subsidiary CASOC begins to survey for oil.



March 3, 1938
Commercial oil production begins from Dammam No. 7.

Jan. 31, 1944
CASOC's name is changed to Aramco (Arabian American Oil Co.).



1988
Ali Al-Naimi, who worked his way up through the oil company from office boy to president, becomes the first Saudi CEO, and the company is renamed Saudi Aramco.



Sept. 14, 2019
Drones attack Saudi Aramco's facility in Abqaiq and Khurais, temporarily interrupting production. Both the US and Saudi Arabia say Iran was behind the attack.



Dec. 11, 2019
Saudi Aramco shares rise 10 percent above its IPO price on its stock market debut, becoming the most valuable listed company in history.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East

TOMORROW
The founding of the GCC
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SEPT. 22, 1980

The Iran-Iraq War's lingering aftermath

Sparked by the Iranian Revolution, the brutal conflict led to two Gulf wars

SIR JOHN JENKINS
LONDON

I joined the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office in September 1980, two weeks before Iraq invaded Iran and started the bloodiest war in modern Middle Eastern history. Perhaps a million combatants and uncounted civilians died. Four decades later, we still live with the consequences.



There had always been tensions between the two countries. But 1979 had really set the scene. That was the year that changed everything. The shah was overthrown, Juhayman Al-Otaibi seized Makkah's Grand Mosque, Zia-ul-Haq executed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, an Islamist insurgency in Syria accelerated, and the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. These events ushered in a new and alarming era of turbulence and instability.

For the Middle East, the subsequent outbreak of hostilities between Saddam Hussein's Iraq and revolutionary Iran became the defining event of the period. It represented a clash between two competing versions of modernity: The Baathist dream of mystical Arab nationalism and Ruhollah Khomeini's heterodox reimagining of Islamism, based on a mythical past and deriving legitimacy from a reactionary interpretation of clerical authority. Both systems were harshly repressive. And each had their true believers.

Iraq thought itself to be stronger, especially after the revolutionaries in Iran had purged the generals and Tehran's traditional sources of military supply in the West dried up. But Iran, surfing a wave of popular enthusiasm, proved more resilient than expected. The war became an attritional stalemate. Khomeini refused all appeals to bring the conflict to an end until he was finally forced to do so in 1988, after horrifying losses on both sides.

For much of this period, I had a ringside seat as a young diplomat in Abu Dhabi. The impact on the Arab states of the Gulf was huge. They feared the expansion of the Iranian revolution into their territories. This was the most serious challenge these states — most of which only achieved independence between 1961 and 1971 — had ever faced. Their domestic institutions and military capacities were still weak. And Iran represented both a material and an ideological threat. It is hardly surprising that they chose to financially support Iraq, which was Arab, Sunni-ruled, populous, educated and a familiar (if sometimes overbearing) neighbor.

The end of the war in 1988 left Iraq with massive debts to other Gulf states, particularly Kuwait, and widespread damage to essential infrastructure, particularly in the south. Saddam decided to recoup his losses by bullying Kuwait, which refused to buckle. That led him to invade on Aug. 2, 1990. He may have thought he could do a deal that would have left him in control of Kuwait's northern oil fields. Instead, he suffered a catastrophic defeat that left his military aspirations in tatters, his weapons programs subject to international supervision and the economy crippled by sanctions, which tore apart the fabric of Iraqi society. The uprisings that followed in the Shiite south and the Kurdish north — neither successful in a conventional sense — helped set the scene for the way in which Iraq reconstituted itself along sectarian and ethnic lines after Saddam's eventual fall in 2003.

In Iran, the myth of the war as one of exemplary national resistance at a time of isolation has endured powerfully, at least within the regime and its supporters. It has fed a narrative of victimization that already had deep historic and cultural resonance among many Shiites. It also led Iran to double down on a strategy of so-called mosaic defense and proxy warfare, designed to compensate for conventional military weakness. It does not in any way seem to have reduced Tehran's appetite for destroying Israel and ultimately bringing its neighbors under Islamist rule.

And this is the context within which Saudi Arabia operates today. The war had a direct impact on the Kingdom, as the US and other Western forces mobilized on Saudi soil to confront the invasion. It was this that led elements of the so-called Sahwa to confront the government and set Osama bin Laden irrevocably on the path to 9/11.

The overthrow of Saddam in 2003 was widely seen as a belated sequel to 1991, when coalition forces had failed to follow the fleeing Iraqi army all the way to Baghdad and had instead allowed Saddam and his loyalists to regain domestic control outside the Kurdish areas. But 2003 was, in practice, a victory for Iran — as was the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001.

And this story isn't over. The Taliban is back, Iraq remains in turmoil, and Iran itself is now perhaps coming up against the limits of its own competence both domestically and externally, where the consequences of overextension may now be starting to appear.

If Khomeini had not been expelled from Najaf in 1978; if the shah had not had cancer; if Saddam had reacted more calmly to Iranian provocations in 1979; if Khomeini had agreed to a cease-fire after the recapture of Khorramshahr; if Saddam had not then gambled on an invasion of Kuwait; if Iran had become a more normal country, then we should be living in a different world. But we're not. More's the pity.

Sir John Jenkins is a senior fellow at Policy Exchange. He served as First Secretary at the British Embassy in Abu Dhabi from 1983 to 1986, Head of Chancery at the British Embassy in Kuwait from 1995 to 1998, Ambassador to Iraq from 2009 to 2011 and Ambassador to Saudi Arabia from 2012 to 2015.



Iranian soldiers prepare a mortar launch onto Iraqi soil during the Iran-Iraq War on Dec. 9, 1980. Getty Images

SUMMARY

On Sept. 22, 1980, Iraqi aircraft bombed 10 air bases in Iran, launching a brutal war that would drag on for eight years. The immediate trigger for the war was Saddam Hussein's fear that the 1979 Iranian Revolution would be exported to Iraq.

In 1981, the land war escalated into what became known as the Tanker War when Iraq began attacking ships bound to or from Iranian ports. Iran reciprocated, attacking oil tankers from neutral countries and leading the US Navy to introduce a convoy system to protect shipping. By the time the conflict ended in stalemate and a UN-brokered peace deal in 1988, it had cost the lives of up to 1 million people.


Gibson
arab news
ROLACO
Iraq attacks 10 bases; Iran strikes back at 2
BP buys LPG from Petromin
Arafat said mediating
Gold hits $-month record
Oil market unaffected by clashes
URDCO

HOW WE WROTE IT

Only a few weeks ago, observers were wondering whether Iraq and Iran would soon be fighting a border war. Today, with this question answered, another one arises: Will such a war remain a limited one, or will it grow into an all-out conflict?

From an editorial in Arab News on Sept. 23, 1980


Total blackout in Iran
Iraq attacks 10 bases; Iran strikes back at 2

Key Dates

March 10, 1980
Following anti-government riots inspired by Iran's Islamic Revolution, Iraq demands Iran withdraws its ambassador.



April 9, 1980
Iraq executes Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir Al-Sadr, a supporter of Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and his sister.

Sept. 17, 1980
Saddam announces Iraq is withdrawing from the 1975 Algiers Accord, under which Iraq and Iran agreed to resolve their border disputes.

Sept. 22, 1980
Iraqi air force bombs Iranian airfields.



Sept. 23, 1980
Iraqi troops cross the border into Iran.

April 14, 1988
US frigate the USS Samuel B. Roberts hits a mine laid by Iran in the Gulf.

July 3, 1988
The US warship USS Vincennes accidentally shoots down an Iranian airliner, killing all 290 people on board.

July 17, 1988
Iran accepts UN Security Council Resolution 598, which calls for an end to the fighting and a return to pre-war borders, and requests a cease-fire.

Aug. 6 1988
Under pressure from the UN, US and Arab allies such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq finally agrees to cease-fire.



Aug. 8, 1988
Resolution 598 comes into effect, ending the war.

Aug. 24, 1988
Iran-Iraq peace talks begin.

February 1991
The UN peacekeeping force sent to monitor the cease-fire in August 1988 finally withdraws.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
The Sabra and Shatila massacre
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**



Sheikh Zayed, right, then leader of the UAE, welcomes Saudi King Khaled to Abu Dhabi for the 1981 GCC conference. Sheikh Rashid, then ruler of Dubai, is on the left. National Archives

MAY 25, 1981

The founding of the GCC

The union of six Gulf states has accomplished much of what it set out to do

ABDEL AZIZ ALUWAISHEG
RIYADH

When, in January 1968, Britain announced its intention to leave the Gulf by 1971, it sent shock waves throughout the region. The search intensified for a new and more reliable security architecture. It took several steps, ending with the formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on May 25, 1981.



The first step was the formation of the UAE. During the three years between the British announcement of its impending withdrawal and the actual termination of its protectorate and military presence in the Gulf on Dec. 16, 1971, six emirates succeeded in forming the United Arab Emirates, which was founded on Dec. 2, 1971. Ras Al Khaimah, the seventh emirate, joined a few months later. Bahrain and Qatar contemplated joining the union for a while, but in the end bowed out, despite efforts by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Britain to persuade them.

The search continued for a larger framework to include the rest of the Gulf states. Sheikh Jaber Al-Sabah of Kuwait championed the renewed efforts. In May 1976, he formally called for the establishment of the GCC during a visit to the UAE, whose President Sheikh Zayed strongly supported the idea. In November 1976, in Muscat, a security framework that would have also included Iraq and Iran was discussed but abandoned because of fundamental differences over the concept, especially between Iran and Iraq.

Efforts continued to establish the GCC without those two countries. Saddam Hussein of Iraq tried to hinder those efforts and the Soviet Union was also opposed, but progress continued, especially after the revolution in Iran in February 1979 produced a clerical regime explicitly seeking to export its brand of revolution and undermine the security of its neighbors. The new regime in Tehran formed armed groups in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia to carry out its agenda, making it imperative to close ranks to meet the new threat.

In October 1979, in a meeting held in Taif, Saudi Arabia, the general framework of the GCC was agreed, but differences remained on some issues. Some favored focusing on security and military integration — even a formal military alliance — while others wanted the new organization to emphasize soft power and economic integration. In 1980, Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal was given the task of bringing the different views together and leading the exercise of drafting the charter, supported by Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah (the current emir of Kuwait), Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Mubarak, and others. A flurry of meetings of ministers and experts took place in the early months of 1981, in Kuwait, Riyadh and Muscat, to finalize the draft, which was adopted by the heads of state on May 25, 1981, in Abu Dhabi, in the first formal meeting of the new organization.

The GCC Charter was a compromise between the different formulations discussed for the new group. It did not privilege a particular emphasis, but called for "coordination and integration between member states in all fields, leading to their unity." The reference to unity as a goal was important to guide the work of the organization. The reference to "all fields" gave the impetus for the formation of institutional structures dedicated to different branches of integration, including political, economic and security.

Today, the GCC Secretariat employs more than 1,000 staff from the six member states and hosts the main policymaking divisions of the organization. Its work is aided by about 30 specialized entities that deal with specific issues. There are economic organizations such as standards, patents, intellectual property and investment, as well as military and security organizations.

Since its inception in May 1981, the GCC has undoubtedly accomplished a lot of what it set out to do four decades ago. Economic tools, such as the free trade area, which was set up in 1983, the customs union (2003) and the common market (2008), have created great synergies between member states that have led to improved efficiencies and wide and dynamic markets. In 1981, the combined gross domestic product (GDP) of the six member states was just shy of $200 billion, and most GCC states were performing poorly in economic and social indicators. At that time, most GCC states had just shaken off British rule, which had lasted more than 200 years for some, impoverished their economies, and ossified their political and social development. As a result, they were underperforming economically and needed the solidarity and support of other GCC members. Today, the combined GCC GDP is about $1.6 trillion — an eight-fold increase over 1981. Other significant achievements were also made, including the establishment of the unified military command in November 2018 and the GCC police force in 2014.

However, a lot remains to be done to reach the goal of "unity" cited in the charter. The 40th summit, held in Riyadh last December, identified several areas that need to be re-energized to enable the organization to reach that goal. One area that was referred to in the 40th summit was the reform of the GCC's institutions, including the GCC Secretariat and the 30-odd other entities in its orbit. Governance in particular needs to be overhauled to provide more transparency, accountability and efficiency. The emerging and almost existential challenges that the region faces require new ways of doing things. Business as usual is no longer adequate. King Salman's vision for the GCC, which was adopted by all leaders in December 2015, started that process, but the pace of change has not been fast enough.

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SUMMARY

On May 25, 1981, the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf was created at a conference in Abu Dhabi, bringing together the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait in the conviction that 'coordination, cooperation and integration between them serve the sublime objectives of the Arab Nation.'

The six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), as it came to be known, was formed as an economic bloc, but its creation reflected a growing concern for security of the region in the wake of the Iranian Revolution.

Over the four decades since it was founded, the members of the GCC have not always seen eye to eye — in 2014, a rift opened between the GCC and Qatar.

But the raft of economic, legal, security and political agreements, securing collaboration across fields ranging from energy, agriculture and telecommunications to customs, education and judicial cooperation, stand as testament to the value of an organization that, in the words of its original charter, continues 'to effect coordination and integration between member states in all fields, leading to their unity.'

HOW WE WROTE IT



Optimism expressed recently about the goals and achievements expected to accrue from the deliberations of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) during its summit in Riyadh has proven to be well founded.".

From an Arab News editorial on Nov. 12, 1981 after the second GCC summit in Riyadh

Key Dates

May 25, 1981
The charter of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf is signed by the heads of state of the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait at a conference in Abu Dhabi.

Nov. 11, 1981
GCC leaders sign a unified economic agreement at their second summit in Riyadh.



Oct. 15, 1985
Peninsula Shield, a joint GCC defense force, is established at headquarters at Hafr Al-Baatin in the northeast of Saudi Arabia.

Jan. 1, 2003
A GCC customs union is created.

Jan. 1, 2008
Introduction of the GCC common market.

March 5, 2014
Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain withdraw ambassadors from Doha, accusing Qatar of failing to abide by the agreement not to support 'anyone threatening the security and stability of the GCC whether as groups or individuals.'



Dec. 8, 2014
The GCC announces the formation of a regional police force, based in Abu Dhabi, at its annual meeting.



June 5, 2017
Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt cut diplomatic ties with Qatar, accusing Doha of collaborating with Iranian-backed terrorist groups.

Feb. 1, 2020
Following an extraordinary meeting of all six health ministers in Riyadh, the GCC issues a coronavirus statement introducing preventive measures at all borders.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
When US Marines were bombed in Beirut
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SEPT. 16, 1982

The Sabra and Shatila massacre

The Beirut atrocity shed light on the complex regional dimensions of the Lebanese Civil War

EYAD ABU SHAKRA
LONDON

The Sabra and Shatila massacre of 1982 was one of the most significant milestones in Lebanon's recent turbulent political history. In that massacre, a force from a Lebanese Christian right-wing militia entered the south Beirut neighborhood of Sabra and the nearby Shatila Palestinian refugee camp and murdered hundreds of people (some sources claim more than 3,000), mostly civilian Palestinians and Muslim Lebanese.





The shocking scene of the Sabra and Shatila massacre in Beirut in September 1982. Getty Images

The militiamen entered the neighborhood — where many Palestinian leaders resided — and the camp when the Israeli occupation forces were already in control of the Lebanese capital following the invasion of 1982.

Some sources have recorded that, from approximately 6 p.m. on Sept. 16 to 8 a.m. on Sept. 18, the mass murders were carried out in plain sight of the Israeli forces. Indeed, sources have also claimed that the Christian militias were even "ordered" by the Israelis to "clear out" the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) fighters from Sabra and Shatila, as part of their advance into predominantly Muslim west Beirut. Later reports suggested that, while the Israelis had received reports of the atrocities, they took no action to prevent or stop them.

Coming at the height of the Lebanese Civil War, the massacre summed up several elements and shed light on the complex regional dimensions of the war.

Sectarianism has almost always been at the core of the conflicts that guided the changing maps and power balance in Lebanon. Even before the First World War defeat of the Ottoman Empire — of which present-day Lebanon was a part — the area of Mount Lebanon went through scattered sectarian confrontations, beginning in 1840 and culminating in 1860 in massacres that led to a French military intervention. However, the reaction of the Ottomans was decisive in containing the French advance, and so were the joint efforts of major European powers.

The political outcome was the creation of the autonomous Mount Lebanon district in 1861. It was governed by a Christian Ottoman official, whose appointment would be ratified by the European powers. But, after the defeat of the Ottomans in the First World War, the Paris Peace Conference of 1920 annexed several areas to Mount Lebanon, including Beirut, as well as putting the new enlarged Lebanon under French Mandate.

In the new Lebanon, the Christian-majority population of Mount Lebanon was hugely diluted as a result of the annexation of major Sunni and Shiite cities and areas. However, the Christians felt that the French Mandate would be enough for them to dominate the political scene. That assumption was proven wrong, however, especially following Lebanon's independence in 1943. By then, the three Muslim sects (Sunnis, Shiites and Druze) had become, by many estimates, a clear majority. Furthermore, the tide of Arab nationalism rose as a result of the Palestinian "Nakba" in 1948, which rapidly radicalized Arab politics. The Palestinian refugee problem added to grievances in host countries like Lebanon and Jordan.

Radicalization was further enhanced by the Arab defeat of June 1967, which gave rise — as well as enormous credibility — to the Palestinian resistance movement (the "feda'yeen"). Later, in the fall of 1970, following battles between the feda'yeen and the Jordanian army, the Palestinian resistance movements switched their headquarters from Amman to Beirut.

Lebanese Muslims, Arab nationalists and leftist leaderships stood by the Palestinians and made common cause with them. On the other side, the Christian political elites and masses became apprehensive that the emerging alliance posed a deadly threat to their dominant position and, subsequently, the country's regime, identity and sovereignty.

I lived through those days and remember them well. In 1973, the Christian-led Lebanese Army attempted to contain the feda'yeen's power in the camps, but the Muslim-leftist uproar against the army paved the way for the imminent civil war. Soon enough, the Christian militias were being openly armed and trained by some army officers, while leftist and Arabist militias secured arms and training through the Palestinians and some Arab regimes.

The war broke out in 1975 and continued, through different phases, until 1990.

The Israeli invasion in June 1982 was intended to finish off the Palestinian military and political infrastructure, and establish a "friendly" regime in Beirut. This was done by militarily forcing the Palestinian resistance movements out of Lebanon and handing the Lebanese presidency to Bachir Gemayel, leader of the Lebanese Forces, the most powerful Christian militia, in August 1982. Gemayel, however, was assassinated on Sept. 14, before taking the oath of office. His assassination in a major explosion in Beirut shocked the Christians and enraged their militias, which retaliated by attacking Sabra and Shatila just two days later.

By this time, the Arab world was weak and deeply divided following Egypt's recognition of Israel, which resulted in an Arab boycott. The Israelis were, thus, able to collude in this massacre without fearing any substantial Arab reaction. In fact, it was the global furor against the massacre that led, in 1983, to the establishment of a commission chaired by Sean MacBride, the assistant to the UN secretary-general and president of the UN General Assembly at the time. The commission concluded that Israel, as the camp's occupying power, bore responsibility for the violence, and that the massacre was a form of genocide.

The reaction against the massacre was strong, even in Israel itself. Also in 1983, the Kahan Commission was appointed to investigate the incident. It found that Israeli military personnel, despite being aware that a massacre was in progress, had failed to take serious steps to stop it. The commission also deemed Israel indirectly responsible, and that Defense Minister Ariel Sharon bore personal responsibility "for ignoring the danger of bloodshed and revenge," thus forcing him to resign.

Eyad Abu Shakra is managing editor of Asharq Al-Awsat.
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HOW WE WROTE IT



Pope John Paul II, his voice cracking with emotion, condemned the 'ruthless' massacre of Palestinian refugees.
From a story on Arab News' front page, Sept. 20, 1982

SUMMARY

On Sept. 16, 1982, Lebanese Christian militiamen entered Beirut's Sabra neighborhood and the nearby Shatila refugee camp and — as the Israeli troops that had invaded Lebanon three months earlier looked on, blocked exits and illuminated the scene at night with flares — embarked on a 36-hour massacre of Muslim men, women and children that left hundreds dead and shocked the world.

Independent witnesses, including Western journalists, were horrified to discover that many victims, including babies, had been mutilated before they died. Estimates of the number of dead range from more than 400 to several thousand, but exactly how many died will never be known. Many corpses were spirited away from the site by the killers.

As Arab News reported a few days later, the massacre, carried out "with the connivance of the Israeli invaders, drew worldwide reactions of horror," including in Israel, where police used tear gas to disperse hundreds of people protesting outside Prime Minister Menachem Begin's home.



Gemayel's assassination in a major explosion in Beirut shocked the Christians and enraged their militias.

Key Dates

Jun. 6, 1982
Israel invades Lebanon and lays siege to Beirut.



Sept. 1, 1982
Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) fighters withdraw from Beirut under supervision of international peacekeeping force.



Sept. 11, 1982
International peacekeeping force withdraws from Beirut.



Sept. 14, 1982
Phalangist president-elect Bachir Gemayel is assassinated. Muslims are blamed, but it later emerges that the killer is a fellow Maronite, motivated by factional Christian infighting.



Sept. 16, 1982
Authorized by Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, Christian Phalangist militiamen enter Sabra and Shatila, ostensibly to root out any remaining PLO fighters. Instead, they embark on a massacre.



Dec. 16, 1982
UN General Assembly 'condemns in the strongest terms the large-scale massacre of Palestinian civilians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps' as 'an act of genocide.'

Feb. 9, 1983
Israel's Kahan Commission finds that the state of Israel bears 'indirect responsibility' and Sharon himself 'personal responsibility' for the massacre.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
Olympic gold for El-Moutawakel
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**



The US Marines barracks after the attack, above; a US Marine on guard outside the US Embassy after it was bombed in April that year, below. AFP

SUMMARY

On Oct. 23, 1983, 241 American soldiers were killed and dozens wounded as a result of the suicide bombing that targeted the Marines in Beirut, in what was described as the largest non-nuclear explosion since World War II.

This suicide bombing was the second of its kind witnessed by the Lebanese capital after the first suicide bombing in April that year that targeted the American Embassy and killed 63 people, including 17 Americans at the embassy and its surroundings.

The bombers were associated with Iran and a movement that called itself the Islamic Amal Movement. Its Lebanese leader, Hussein Al-Moussawi, affirmed his association with the Iranian revolution and that the ties of the movement with the Iranian revolution were like the ties of "a nation with its leader."

The two explosions came at a time when Lebanon was witnessing a civil war in light of an Israeli occupation that reached Beirut and the entry of multinational forces into Lebanon to protect its capital. The withdrawal of the American and then the French forces after the two attacks left Beirut open to the chaos that brought with it more killing and destruction.

OCT. 23, 1983

When US Marines were bombed in Beirut

A suicide attack on a troop compound signalled Iran's emerging role in Lebanon's conflict

NAJIA HOUSSARI
BEIRUT

It was about 6:25 on the morning of Oct. 23, 1983 when the Lebanese capital Beirut and its surrounding suburbs were shaken by the sound of a massive explosion.



People thought that it was an earthquake, but seven minutes later the city and its surroundings were again shaken by a second violent blast.

At the time, I was working for the Lebanese newspaper As-Safir as a war correspondent. Beirut was besieged by clashes erupting on the axes of its southern suburb, the mountain and the Kharoub region, between the Progressive Socialist Party and its allies on the one hand, and the Lebanese forces on the other, or what was known as the Mountain War.

The south was witnessing armed resistance against the Israeli occupation by Lebanese fighters who were involved in leftist parties and previously in Palestinian factions. The multinational forces, including the Americans, French and Italians, were still stationed in Beirut in the wake of the withdrawal of fighters and the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization as a result of the Israeli aggression on Lebanon and Israel's occupation of Beirut in 1982.

After a few minutes, it became clear that the Marines' headquarters on the Beirut Airport Road and the headquarters of the French paratroopers in the Jinnah area had been hit by two explosions caused by two unknown suicide bombers. They had stormed the two fortified headquarters with two trucks loaded with tons of explosives.

It was Lebanon's second unprecedented suicide bombing, after the first that targeted the American Embassy in the Ain Al-Mraiseh area in Beirut six months earlier, on April 18, 1983.

The damage was enormous at the headquarters of the Marines. Four layers of cement had collapsed and been turned into a pile of rubble, flames were still burning, and there were a lot of screaming, blood, body parts and confusion. This is what has stuck in my memory, and what we journalists could see amid the chaos.

The Marines were partying the night before, Saturday, with the Megaband music group that had come from the US to entertain them. The explosion occurred while they were sleeping.

No party claimed responsibility for the bombings that day, but the As-Safir newspaper published a statement it received a few days later, in which the "Islamic Revolution Movement" claimed responsibility.

About 48 hours after the bombing, the US accused the Amal Movement and its splinter, the Islamic Amal Movement, led by Hussein Al-Moussawi, of being responsible for the bombing. According to information published by local newspapers at the time, "The bombing arrangement took place in Baalbek, and the truck used for the explosion was seen parked in front of an Amal Movement center."



The American vice president, George H.W. Bush, visited Lebanon the day after the attack and said: "We will not allow terrorism to dictate or change our foreign policy."

Syria, Iran and the Amal Movement then denied involvement in the two attacks.

France responded to the attack on its forces by sending eight military jets to bomb the Sheikh Abdullah barracks in Baalbek, where "Iranian elements are stationed." It declared at the time that "the raids killed 200 people."

An Islamic Amal official denied in a statement that "Iran had a compound in the Baalbek region," but stressed that his group's association with "the Islamic revolution in Iran is the association of a nation with its leader and we are defending ourselves."

On Nov. 23, the Lebanese Cabinet decided to cut off its relationship with Iran and Libya. The Lebanese Foreign Minister at the time, Eli Salem, said that the decision "was taken after Iran and Libya admitted that they have forces in the Bekaa."

As-Safir newspaper quoted a diplomatic source as saying that "relations with Iran have worsened due to the illegal interventions, practices and activities it carried out on the Lebanese scene, despite the many warnings."

The October bombings were the strongest indication of the reversal of the balance of regional and international power in Lebanon and the emergence of a growing Iranian role in the conflict on Lebanese soil.

"Before 1982, Beirut embraced all kinds of opposition, the educated elite, that is, the velvet opposition, and the armed opposition whose members were being trained in Palestinian camps or training camps in the Bekaa and the south," strategic researcher Walid Noueihed told Arab News.

"The Iranian opposition to the Shah was one of these. Beirut was an oasis for the opposition with regional and international consensus until 1982, when Israel invaded Lebanon and besieged Beirut and pushed toward the exit of the Palestine Liberation Organization, according to an international agreement that required Israel not to enter Beirut in exchange for the Palestinians leaving Lebanon."

Noueihed explained that while the Palestinian factions left Lebanon, the Lebanese fighters who were part of the PLO in Lebanon did not. Most of them were Shiites who formed the reservoir of Lebanese leftist parties.

He said that "the bombings of the Marines' headquarters and the French paratroopers led to the withdrawal of the multinational forces from Lebanon, and Beirut became, for the second time, without protection. New resistance operations increased according to ideologies unrelated to the left. The Islamic Amal Movement and its slogans to confront Israel came out into the open."

In 1985, Hezbollah announced its birth, defining itself as "a jihadi organization leading a revolution for an Islamic republic." This party received support from parties on the Lebanese and Palestinian left, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union. "We began to witness the liquidation of national resistance symbols, and we thought that the intention was to exclude all forces from the resistance field and limit it to one party, that is, Hezbollah," Noueihed said.

"Iranian influence crystallized with the violent fighting that took place between Hezbollah and Amal, which claimed dozens of casualties and ended with Hezbollah assuming control in light of the Syrian military presence in Lebanon," Noueihed said. "Beirut turned into an arid city abandoned by hundreds of writers, intellectuals, researchers and media to Europe for fear of being liquidated."

HOW WE WROTE IT



Acts of violence in Lebanon, not matter how sanguinary and heartsickening, have become almost routine for that country.

From an Arab News editorial, Oct. 24, 1983

Najia Houssari, our writer based in Beirut, was a war correspondent for the Lebanese newspaper As-Safir when the US Marine barracks were bombed.

Key Dates



Aug. 24, 1982
A multinational US, French and Italian peacekeeping force is sent to Beirut to oversee withdrawal of Palestine Liberation Organization fighters.

Sept. 10, 1982
US Marines withdraw.



Sept. 14, 1982
Lebanese President Bachir Gemayel is assassinated.



Sept. 16-19, 1982
Christian militia, assisted by Israeli troops, massacre hundreds of Muslims in Sabra and Shatila refugee camps.

Sept. 29, 1982
US Marines return to Beirut.



April 18, 1983
Seventeen Americans are among 63 killed in a bombing of the US Embassy in Beirut.



Oct. 23, 1983
Truck bomb kill 241 US personnel and wounds 128 more at Marines' compound in Beirut. Second truck bomb kills 58 French paratroopers stationed a few kilometers away.



May 30, 2003
A US court rules that the truck bombing was ordered by Iran and carried out by Hezbollah.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
First Arabsat satellite launched
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AUG. 8, 1984

El-Moutawakel's Olympic win

The athlete was the first Arab Muslim woman (and Moroccan) to win a gold medal

LINA ALMAEENA
JEDDAH

Before the recent suspension of international flights, specifically on March 1, I was touring the Olympic Museum in Lausanne with the Riyadh United women's basketball team by invitation of the former Swiss President Ueli Maurer.





Moroccan athlete Nawal El-Moutawakel celebrates her gold-medal win at the Los Angeles Olympic Games in August 1984. Arab News published her winning picture on its front page. Getty Images

The museum takes you on a tour through interactive exhibits, from the Ancient Games in 776 BC to the father of modern Olympics, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who helped establish the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Paris on June 23, 1894.

It was 1896 in Athens when the first modern Olympic Games took place, with 14 countries but no female competitors. In the next Olympics, in Paris in 1900, women were allowed to participate for the first time, in ankle-length skirts, but were limited to a few sports: Sailing, golf, tennis and croquet.

It was not until 1928, at the Olympics in Amsterdam, that women were allowed to compete in track and field. Fast-forward more than 55 years to the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, where Nawal El-Moutawakel won the 400-meter hurdle, becoming the first Arab Muslim woman (and Moroccan) to win a gold medal. Newspapers around the world marked this milestone, with Arab News publishing her winning picture on its front page.

Even though I was very young to remember that event, her legend is a landmark in the accomplishments of Arab and Muslim female athletes. When she won, King Hassan II of Morocco called her to congratulate her, and he declared that all girls born that day were to be named in her honor.

As I reflect on my own experience as a nonprofessional athlete growing up in Saudi Arabia, I will say that I come from a family who integrated sports in our lives from a young age. My siblings and I played tennis, football and even cricket with my father.

I was also a student in Saudi private schools, which meant that I had opportunities to practice sports. But I found my passion in basketball. My uncle Tariq was my first basketball coach; he bought several rims and placed them in all family garages. In 2003, I gathered my high-school teammates to form a local basketball team. It led me to establish the Jeddah United Sports Co., which became the first accredited sports academy in Saudi Arabia. The Jeddah United and Riyadh United women's teams have participated in sports exchanges around the globe.

Saudi women began accomplishing their own milestones in sport. In 2008, Arwa Mutabagani was appointed the first female board member of the Saudi Equestrian Federation. Her daughter Dalma Malhas won a historic bronze medal at the Summer Youth Olympics in Singapore in 2010.

In May 2012, I made it to the base camp of Mount Everest with 10 Saudi women headed by Princess Reema bint Bandar, the current Saudi ambassador to the US, in an effort to raise awareness of breast cancer and the importance of physical activity for prevention and treatment.

And in June 2012, Saudi Arabia joined the rest of the world in sending female athletes to the London Summer Olympics: Wojdan Shaherkani participated in judo, and Sarah Attar ran the 800-meter sprint. Attar may have been the last runner, but she got a standing ovation from 80,000 people.

Saudi Arabia's ambitious Vision 2030 was announced on April 25, 2016. Among its strategic objectives is the promotion of sports and physical activities. This includes increasing the proportion of individuals exercising to 40 percent from 13 percent, enabling Saudi athletes to achieve high performance in different sports; and expanding their exposure at international sporting games.

In 2017, the Ministry of Education approved a physical education program for girls in public schools, and in 2018 women were allowed to attend sports events in stadiums, once limited to men.

At the Rio de Janeiro Olympics, there were twice the number of Saudi female athletes. At those Games, Sara Ahmed from Egypt became the first Arab female medalist in weightlifting when she won bronze, while fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad, who won bronze in the team saber event, was the first US athlete to compete in a hijab at the Games.

On May 3, 2017, the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) announced the lifting of its ban on players wearing the hijab, a significant move because it is through the FIBA basketball World Cup that nations qualify for the Olympic Games.

In March 2019, another milestone of inclusion took place in the Special Olympics in Abu Dhabi, when Saudi Arabia's Special Olympians won 18 gold medals in various sports. For the girls' basketball team, the Saudi Olympic Committee collaborated with the renowned Help Center, a nonprofit organization that empowers, supports and trains girls and boys with intellectual disabilities.

Jeddah United was tasked to recommend players who were not intellectually disabled, who were then integrated with athletes with intellectual disabilities to form the Saudi women's unified basketball team. It was implemented according to the 4P concept: Public-Private-People-Partnership. The Saudi women's unified basketball team made history, winning the only undefeated gold medal at the 2019 Special Olympics in Abu Dhabi.

Later that year, Saudi women made a historic appearance at the sixth GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) Games in Kuwait, winning two gold medals in fencing.

In the Ancient Olympic Games in Greece, athletes competed in one event: A foot race for men. Who could have imagined then the course of development leading to an Arab Muslim female runner winning gold at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics?

Now, as we are in lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics have been postponed along with many other sports events, we must maintain high spirits and look at the glass half full, with another extra year for preparation and training for 2021. May God protect humanity and the universe at large.

Lina K. Almaeena, a member of the Shoura Council, is co-founder of the Jeddah United Sports Co. and is on Forbes' list of the 200 Most Powerful Arab Women.

SUMMARY

On Aug. 8, 1984, Nawal El-Moutawakel, the only female athlete in Morocco's delegation to the Los Angeles Summer Olympics, took 54 seconds to win the inaugural women's 400-meter hurdles event.

As the first Arab and Muslim woman (and the first Moroccan) to win Olympic gold, and later as the first Muslim woman elected to the International Olympic Committee's executive board, she inspired future generations of female athletes in the Middle East to achieve further sports milestones.

Those milestones include the lifting of bans on wearing the hijab in sports leagues, and the participation of Saudi female athletes in the Olympics in 2012. Under the Kingdom's Vision 2030 reform plan, the wider participation of women in sports is likely to take them to even greater heights.

HOW WE REPORTED IT



With golden run in 400m hurdles

Arab girl makes history

LOS ANGELES, Aug. 9 (Agencies) — Nawal El Moutawakel of Morocco ran her way into Olympic history here by winning the Games' first ever 400-meter hurdles for women, momentarily eclipsing further U.S. dominance of track and field on the 11th day of competition.

Africa is something else. It will encourage more Arab women in sports."

Moutawakel's win has made her a national heroine overnight. Thousands of Moroccans stayed up all night with ears glued to their radios to hear the news of the diminutive 22-year-old's win — greeted by

The 22-year-old from Casablanca, tears in her eyes, ran a lap of honor waving her country's flag handed to her from the crowd after a victory in 54.61 seconds, just outside the world record.

From a story on the front page of Arab News, Aug. 10, 1984



arab news

Saudi Navy shields territorial waters

Riyadh keeps to OPEC quota

Arab girl makes history

Iranian oil platform hit

Fighting erupts near Beirut

Sri Lanka clashes continue

U.S. damaged ties, Moscow says

Senate rejects Mitterrand plan

Rome court to try Iranian hijackers

The wonderful world of microsurgery coming

Key Dates

1900
Women are allowed to participate in the Olympics for the first time at the Paris Games; Switzerland's Helene de Pourtales becomes the first female gold medalist (her team won for sailing); Britain's Charlotte Cooper is the first individual champion (for singles tennis).

Aug. 8, 1984
At the Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, Nawal El-Moutawakel wins the 400-meter hurdle, becoming the first Arab Muslim woman to win a gold medal.



June 2012
For the first time, Saudi Arabia sends female athletes to the Olympics, held in London: Wojdan Shaherkani (judo) and Sarah Attar (track), who receives a standing ovation as she crosses the finish line.

Aug. 10, 2016
At the Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Sara Ahmed wins a bronze medal in weightlifting, making her Egypt's first female Olympic medalist.



Aug. 13, 2016
Fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad, the first US athlete to compete in the Olympics wearing a hijab, wins a bronze medal in the team saber event at the Rio Olympics.



April 25, 2016
Then-Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman launches Vision 2030, which includes widespread participation in sports.

May 3, 2017
The International Basketball Federation lifts its ban on players wearing the hijab.

March 20, 2019
The Saudi women's unified basketball team wins a gold medal at the 2019 Special Olympics in Abu Dhabi.

October 2019
Saudi Arabia sends its first female national teams to participate in the sixth GCC Women's Games in Kuwait.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
Prince Sultan in space
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**

FEB. 8, 1985

The Arab world's first satellite

Arabsat-1A launched into orbit, marking the start of the region's burgeoning space age



NIDHAL GUESSOUM
SHARJAH, UAE

The current Arab space age can be credited to Arabsat, the pan-Arab satellite communications organization. In February 1985, Arabsat launched the first of a series of satellites (16 over the next 35 years). By 2020, the Arab world had at least six space agencies, dozens of satellites (some replacing others over the years), three astronauts who have spent time on space stations, and a probe that will soon go to Mars.





The first Arabsat satellite launches aboard an Ariane rocket in French Guiana on Feb. 8, 1985. Supplied

Arabsat is known mostly for satellites that carry hundreds of television and radio channels covering the Middle East, half of Africa and most of Europe. But in addition to the various space communications services it provides (including satellite telephony and broadband internet), Arabsat should be known as a pioneering and hugely influential organization. It was founded in 1976 by Arab League states and it started to launch geostationary telecommunication satellites in February 1985. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait hold slightly more than half its shares (36.7 and 14.6 percent, respectively), while the rest is held by 19 other Arab states.

The Arab world must pool its financial and human resources to pursue and execute next-generation space projects.

We can refer to 1985 as the Arab world's (first) year of space, with the launch of Arabsat-1A, which unfortunately malfunctioned but was quickly replaced with Arabsat-1B, the latter being launched during the historic trip of Saudi astronaut Prince Sultan bin Salman aboard NASA's space shuttle.

In the three decades that followed, Arab states established space agencies (from Morocco in 1989 to the UAE in 2014) and launched many satellites, for either collective or country-specific purposes, mainly telecommunications or remote sensing. Iraq was the first Arab state to launch a satellite for itself (in December 1989), becoming the 10th nation in the world to have one in orbit.

Arab space efforts took a quantum leap in 2014, when the UAE announced plans to build a probe to Mars, which is scheduled to launch in July 2020. In 2018, it launched KhalifaSat, the first high-resolution remote sensing satellite to be fully constructed by Emiratis. Then, in 2019, it sent an Emirati astronaut, Hazza Al-Mansouri, to the International Space Station — the first Arab to go to space since 1987 and only the third in total. Other space achievements, albeit smaller, have been made in the region: Universities and research institutes have built CubeSats and had them sent to space; Saudi Arabia contributed to a lunar communications relay satellite that was launched in support of the Chinese Chang'e-4 mission to the far side of the moon; and a private Saudi company, Shammas, inaugurated BadrSat, the first Saudi satellite owned by the private sector.

Space science and technology has become an essential field for countries seeking to develop their infrastructures and human resources in various areas, including academic, technical and economic. Arab states have understood the strategic nature of space and have invested millions or even billions of dollars in various programs.

In addition to information and telecommunications, there are a number of strategic, educational and commercial benefits to space science and technology programs.

Strategically, governments must monitor their lands for both natural and human activity, ranging from environmental changes to illegal activities such as smuggling, not to mention military actions.

Educationally, when involved in space projects, students learn to design satellites and instruments and tackle current problems by using the rich data that one can obtain with satellites. Furthermore, the skills that students acquire through such projects can serve them in a wide range of careers. The burgeoning Arab space age needs a broad base of young experts and enthusiasts who tomorrow will be innovating in both basic and applied space research. This requires the engagement of a whole ecosystem of institutions of various kinds.

Commercially, satellites can provide high-definition broadcasts, broadband internet and telephony, real-time imaging of special events or actions (including search and rescue operations), and many other profitable and/or critical ventures. A number of space organizations, including some in the Arab world, have started to compete in this arena.

The next major milestone that the Arab world, especially the Gulf region, will need to reach is the building of a launch facility, from where rockets carrying satellites and probes can take off.

HOW WE WROTE IT



Price Set • Bahrain 150 Fils • India 3 R. • Jordan 500 Fils • Kuwait 150 Fils • Lebanon 3

Arabsat orbits earth after perfect launch

Washington Bureau

The Arabsat system will provide improved communications to all 22 Arab countries with over 8,000 telephone circuits, and eight regional and domestic television channels, including a community television channel.

From a story by Arab News' Washington bureau on the front page, Feb. 10, 1985

SUMMARY

On Feb. 8, 1985, the first Arabsat satellite launched into orbit aboard a French rocket, marking the Arab world's entry into space. While Arabsat-1A malfunctioned, it was soon followed by Arabsat-1B, deployed by Saudi Prince Sultan bin Salman on his historic trip to space aboard NASA's Discovery shuttle.

Arabsat's telecommunications satellites now carry hundreds of television and radio channels to the region, while the region's space programs play essential roles in urban planning and military surveillance. With billions of dollars in investment, the field of space science and technology has become an essential field for growth in the region, as Arab countries plan missions that will reach across from the international space station to Mars.

While six Arab states have established space agencies or institutions and some of them (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and the UAE) operate their own satellites, none have space rocket launch capability or astronaut training facilities.

Such efforts and facilities could be set up regionally. Indeed, calls have been made for the creation of a pan-Arab space agency — similar to the European Space Agency — to coordinate and operate new, ambitious and collective programs. Such a regional agency would help reduce the costs of satellite and probe construction, launch and operation, as well as train astronauts and young experts.

The Arab world should follow its own Arabsat example, when it worked collectively to provide satellite telecommunications to 21 states. Now it must pool its financial and human resources to pursue and execute next-generation space projects.

Space programs (technology and exploration) have much to offer to the Arab world at this juncture of its scientific, technical, economic, educational, and cultural development. Space programs now play essential roles in urban planning, land observations and uses, military surveillance, etc. More intangibly, space programs give a nation geopolitical prestige and — quite importantly — inspiration and education avenues for its youth.

Arabsat was a big success in various ways. Now is the time for the Arab world to follow up that achievement by collectively setting a clear, multi-faceted and future-looking space strategy.

Nidhal Guessoum, an Arab News columnist, is a professor of physics and astronomy at the American University of Sharjah, UAE.
Twitter: @NidhalGuessoum

Key Dates

عرب سات
ARABSAT

Feb. 14, 1976
Arabsat, largely funded by Saudi Arabia, is founded by 21 member states of the Arab League, with its headquarters in Riyadh.

Feb. 8, 1985
Arabsat-1A, Arabsat's first satellite, is launched by a French Ariane rocket from a base in French Guiana.



June 17, 1985
Arabsat-1B launches aboard NASA space shuttle Discovery, along with Saudi Prince Sultan bin Salman, the first Arab, Muslim and royal in space, who successfully deploys it a day later.



Oct. 30, 2018
The UAE launches KhalifaSat, the first satellite built entirely by Emiratis.

Nov. 4, 2018
The Saudi company Shammas announces that it will fund the Kingdom's first privately owned satellite, BadrSat.



April 11, 2019
SpaceX launches Arabsat-6A with the world's most powerful rocket, Falcon Heavy, in what is the rocket's first commercial launch.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East

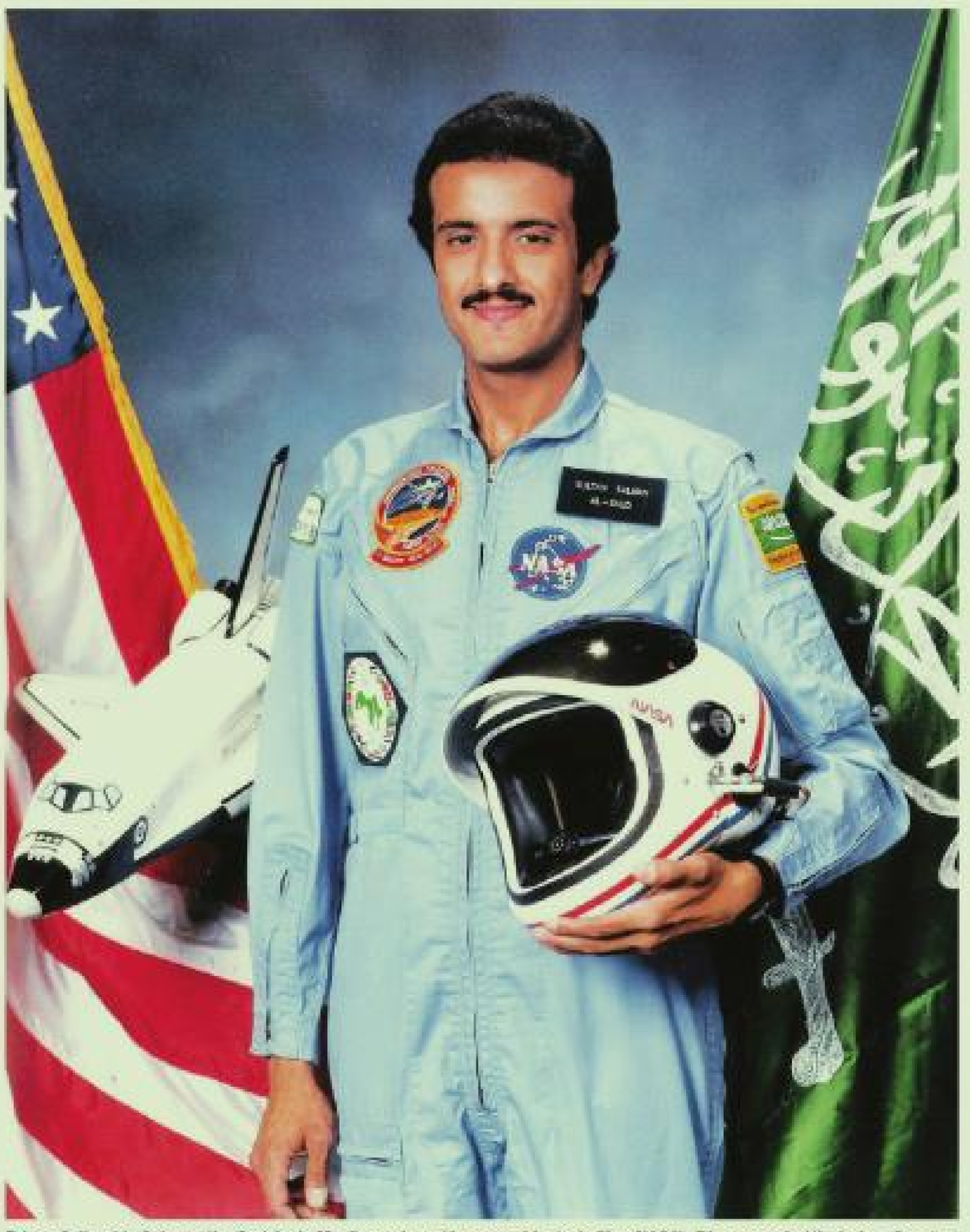


TOMORROW
The first Palestinian intifada
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**

JUNE 17, 1985

Saudi prince's journey into space

Prince Sultan's NASA mission inspired a generation of Arabs, including UAE astronaut Hazza Al-Mansouri



Prince Sultan bin Salman, the first Arab, Muslim and royal in space, blasted off on NASA's Discovery shuttle, below. Supplied

MOHAMMED NASSER AL-AHBABI
DIRECTOR GENERAL, UAE SPACE AGENCY

The history of the Arab world in astronomy dates back to the 9th century, when Arabs were renowned for their work during the Islamic Golden Age. During this time, the House of Wisdom, which supported astronomical research, was established in Baghdad by the Abbasid caliph, Al-Ma'mun.



Arabs and Muslims have a great legacy in astronomy, with a large number of astronomical works available to date.

In the late 8th century, Muhammad Al-Fazari was the first astronomer to build an astrolabe as an aid to finding the qibla; in the 9th century, Muhammad Al-Khwarizmi developed the book "Zij Al-Sindhind," which contains tables for the movements of the sun, moon and planets; and in the 11th century, Omar Khayyam documented the most accurate year length.

Long after the Islamic Golden Age, Arabs have reclaimed their tradition in astronomy, reviving the space sector in the region.

On June 17, 1985, Saudi Prince Sultan bin Salman became the first Arab and Muslim to travel to space, spending seven days in orbit and helping to deploy a satellite for Arabsat with NASA. The prince served as a great inspiration, making a mark in the region and the entire world.

Prince Sultan's experience had a great impact on the UAE, in particular, a country that has demonstrated a strong commitment to space since the time of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan in the 1970s. Then, the visionary Sheikh Zayed met three astronauts from the Apollo 17 mission team: Gene Cernan, Ronald Evans and Harrison Schmitt. Sheikh Zayed played a key role in driving the UAE's interest in space and emphasized the importance of exploring space for the benefit of humanity.

In 1988, Sheikh Zayed met with Prince Sultan following his return from space, and asked about the smallest details of the prince's journey. Sheikh Zayed saw incredible potential in exploring space and also had a far-sighted vision of the UAE's capabilities in the space sector. The UAE, proud of Sheikh Zayed's avant-garde thinking, embraced his vision of exploring space.

Sheikh Zayed's vision and Prince Sultan's historical milestone were the stepping stones for driving the UAE and the region's enthusiasm in exploring space. Since then, the UAE has been working on ambitious space projects, establishing a leading position for the region within the global space sector.

The UAE has made major achievements in the space sector, which include establishing the UAE astronaut program, launching 10 satellites, signing more than 30 agreements to support the space sector, and attracting investments worth $6 billion in the space economy.

Among the UAE's great milestones was the launch of the first Emirati astronaut into space. Hazza Al-Mansouri traveled to the International Space Station (ISS) in September 2019, carrying out experiments and inspiring UAE youth to become future space pioneers.

Al-Mansouri's passion for space and desire to pave the way for future generations to explore it was brought on by Prince Sultan. As a young student, the future astronaut saw a photo of Prince Sultan, the first Arab in space, in his fourth-grade schoolbook — a turning point in his life.

Since then, Al-Mansouri has been pursuing his dream of exploring space. He was not only the first Emirati and third Arab to travel into space, but also the first Arab to make the journey to the ISS. His mission came 30 years after the launch of Syrian Mohammed Faris into space in 1987, and 32 years after Prince Sultan traveled to space in 1985.

Al-Mansouri was selected as part of the UAE astronaut program, which is developing a national team of astronauts to take part in scientific and manned space missions. In its first round, the program received more than 4,000 applicants, highlighting the passion of the UAE's youth for the space sector.

The second round of the program has also gained interest among people from different backgrounds and various age ranges, with the youngest applicant just 17, while the oldest is 60.

Following the success of Arab astronauts, the UAE is continuing its work to enhance the Arab world's leading position in space, and is planning to launch the Emirates Mars mission this year to help gain a better understanding of Earth and its atmosphere.

As part of its efforts to encourage collaboration among Arab countries and enhance the Arab world's contribution to the global space sector, the UAE has launched the Arab Space Cooperation Group to consolidate Arab capabilities in the space industry, and enhance the region's contribution to science research and development.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia share a mutual interest in the space sector and an eagerness to share knowledge and experience. Recently, the UAE Space Agency signed an agreement with the Saudi Space Commission, chaired by Prince Sultan to further cooperation in space activities for peaceful purposes, building technical and scientific capabilities, and exchanging knowledge and expertise.

Following Prince Sultan's footsteps in space is essential for driving innovation, raising people's awareness of the space sector, and inspiring youth to follow the same path — a key to having more Arabs join the world's best astronauts.

Dr. Eng. Mohammed Nasser Al-Ahbabi is Director General of the UAE Space Agency and played a key role in its establishment. He recalls watching Prince Sultan's mission on TV and says: 'We all look up to Prince Sultan as a result of his achievements, and we look forward to following the journeys of our new talented and ambitious Arab space explorers.'

SUMMARY

On June 17, 1985, history was made when the NASA shuttle Discovery blasted off from Cape Canaveral, Florida, on its fifth mission, carrying the first Arab, Muslim and royal astronaut — and, along with him, the seeds of a new era of Arab space exploration.

Royal Saudi Air Force pilot Prince Sultan bin Salman, 28, the son of Saudi Arabia's King Salman, spent seven days conducting experiments in space as part of an international crew of seven.

During Discovery's voyage, Prince Sultan also monitored the deployment of Arabsat-1B, the second satellite to be launched by the pan-Arab organization, designed to boost telephone and television communication between Arab nations.

After the space shuttle touched down at Edwards Air Force Base in California, Prince Sultan, having inspired a generation of Arabs to turn their eyes toward the stars, returned to a hero's welcome in Saudi Arabia and the wider Arab world.



Arab News

Discovery puts 1st Muslim in space

Prince Sultan to conduct a number of experiments

Proud day for Islamic world

'Just great'

U.S. warships racing to hijack scene

Ed Al-Fitr today

Mubarak meets Fahd

HOW WE WROTE IT



Discovery puts 1st Muslim in space

Prince Sultan to conduct a number of experiments

Proud day for Islamic world

'Just great'

Prince Sultan bin Salman, now orbiting the Earth aboard Discovery, said today he was doing 'just great.' The view of Earth is 'fantastic,' he remarked.

From a story on Arab News' front page, June 18, 1985

Key Dates



April 1, 1985
Prince Sultan and his Saudi Air Force backup, Major Abdul Al-Mohsin Hamad Al-Bassam, arrive in the US to begin intensive training for the space shuttle mission.

June 17, 1985
Prince Sultan blasts off from Cape Canaveral on board the Discovery, becoming the first Arab in space.

June 18, 1985
Discovery's crew deploys the Arabsat-1B satellite.



June 24, 1985
After orbiting Earth 111 times and traveling more than 4.6 million km, Discovery lands at Edwards Air Force Base, California.

July 22, 1987
Syrian Muhammed Faris becomes the second Arab in space, flying to the Soviet Mir space station.



Sept. 25, 2019
Emirati Hazza Al-Mansouri carries the UAE flag to the International Space Station on an eight-day mission, becoming the third Arab astronaut in space and the first Arab astronaut to set foot on the International Space Station.



Dec. 27, 2018
Prince Sultan is appointed chair of the new Saudi Space Commission.

Summer 2020
Scheduled date of the launch of the UAE Space Agency's Mission Hope probe to Mars, the first step toward a planned human colonization of the Red Planet by 2117.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
Naguib Mahfouz's Nobel
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**

DEC. 9, 1987

Palestine's first intifada

Nonviolent resistance lay at the heart of the movement for self-determination

DAOUD KUTTAB
AMMAN

The intifada (Arabic for "shaking off") was introduced to the English lexicon by many of us Palestinian journalists working with the foreign media in the Middle East. What was being shaken off was the status quo of living under occupation.



Before the intifada began, I was much too young to agree to the job offer that was made to me. With a BA in business from the US, the American-Palestinian owner of Al-Fajr, Paul Ajlouny, thought I could do a good job in bringing business sense to running the Jerusalem-based family newspaper. I did not, and I hated the job.

But while I was busy making ends meet, an English-language sister publication, Al-Fajr English, was being created by Ajlouny's relative Hanna Siniora. At the young age of 25 and still a bachelor, I enjoyed proofreading and was mesmerized seeing Al-Fajr go to press each week. Eventually, I would write my first article and was fascinated to see my byline in print.

The big story at the time was the assassination attempt against nationalist Palestinian mayors by Jewish militants. The return of Mayor Bassam Shaka'a after months of treatment in Europe, and the huge public welcome in the city of Nablus, adorned our front page.

Shaka'a, Hebron Mayor Fahd Qawasmeh and Ramallah's Karim Khalaf (who was badly injured when he tried to start his booby-trapped car), were supporters of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

By the time I left the business job to become a fulltime journalist, Israel had invaded Lebanon, and the PLO's heroic 82-day steadfastness in Beirut, followed by its departure to Tunis, was our main story.

It was in this nationalist atmosphere that my cousin Mubarak had also returned from the US and started the Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence. Along with my brother Jonathan, co-founder of the independent Palestinian human rights organization Al-Haq, they educated people in the occupied territories about how nonviolent resistance works.

While talk of nonviolence was new to many, it was well-received by some key leaders. I remember joining Mubarak and Jonathan in meetings with a student leader at Bir Zeit University named Marwan Barghouti, as well as many meetings with other Palestinian notables such as Faisal Husseini, Sari Nusseibeh and Hanan Ashrawi.

Mubarak's message was quickly being absorbed, and he was getting calls from people from different parts of Palestine suffering from problems with settlers and the Israeli military. Nonviolent protests were taking place a couple of times per week, often with important results.

But while Mubarak's work had not yet become mainstream, it was not long before the Israelis realized what was happening and started tracking him. They arrested him despite the fact that he had a US passport, and despite many protests that were held in Jerusalem on his behalf.

The man who became known as the Palestinian Gandhi lost his case in Israel's High Court and was deported, despite being born in Jerusalem, on orders from right-wing Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. But the literature he distributed, and his ideas about nonviolence and boycotts, lingered.

Palestinian anger erupted on Dec. 9, 1987, in the Jabaliya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, the day after an Israeli military truck collided with a civilian car, killing four Palestinians. While many saw in the clashes with Israelis a public expression of this anger, it was the fact that settlers were continuing to build without any deterrence that led Palestinian youths to fight them with the only freely available weapon to them: Stones, which are abundant in Palestinian towns and villages.




arab news
Troops killed 22 in occupied territories, Arafat says
24 more Arabs shot in mounting upheaval
OPEC may agree to freeze oil prices
Thatcher sees "foreign hand" in riot
Markets faces poll defeat

While the intifada's images were those of young Palestinians, often dressed in black and white keffiyehs, pelting settlers and soldiers with stones, it was the nonviolent actions throughout Palestine that fascinated me.

SUMMARY

On Dec. 8, 1987, a tank transporter being driven by an Israeli soldier crashed into a car in the Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, killing four Palestinians and triggering what became known as the first intifada.

The series of protests that began on Dec. 9 exploded after years of frustration provoked by Israeli oppression in the occupied territories. The uprising cost the lives of 2,000 Palestinians and more than 200 Israelis.

The intifada led to peace talks that saw the creation of the Palestinian Authority and recognition by the Palestine Liberation Organization of Israel's right to exist. Peace, however, proved elusive. In 2000, a second intifada began following the visit of Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon to Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam.

Palestinians throw stones at Israeli soldiers during the first intifada.
Getty Images

HOW WE REPORTED IT


Troops killed 22 in occupied territories, Arafat says
24 more Arabs shot in mounting upheaval

Demonstrators who stoned Israeli troops, hurled petrol bombs, barricaded streets and burned tires over the last week had an average age of about 15.

From a Reuters story on Arab News' front page, Dec. 14, 1987

While the intifada's images were those of young Palestinians, often dressed in black and white keffiyehs, pelting settlers and soldiers with stones, it was the nonviolent actions throughout Palestine that fascinated me.

Perhaps the most visible of these actions was the decision by the people of Beit Sahour to adopt the slogan of American revolutionaries: No taxation without representation. Palestinians living in the town decided to stop paying taxes as long as they had no political power. This drove the Israeli military crazy, and it laid siege to Beit Sahour.

An iconic sign of nonviolent resistance was the decision not to follow Israel when it changed its clocks in April due to summertime. I remember covering stories about Israeli soldiers outside Damascus Gate in Jerusalem stopping young Palestinians and looking at their watches. If they had not changed the times on their watches, the soldiers would use batons to smash them while on the youths' wrists.

The intifada finally ended when US Secretary of State James Baker asked the Palestinians to attend the Madrid peace conference in 1991. The Israelis were represented at the conference by Shamir, who had deported Mubarak. The Israeli delegation's spokesman was current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The Palestinian delegation's spokeswoman was Ashrawi.

Nothing happened as a result of that conference, but a secret agreement worked out in Oslo led to an initial breakthrough that led to the creation of the Palestinian Authority and the return of the PLO to the occupied Palestinian territories.

But that achievement, and the hope of peace that many had suffered for, was wiped out when an extremist Jewish settler assassinated Israel's then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, paving the way for Netanyahu's first term as premier. Things have gone backward for Palestinian rights and aspirations ever since.

Daoud Kuttab is Arab News' Middle East reporter covering Palestine and Jordan. In the 1980s, he was the editor of the only English-language Palestinian newspaper, Al-Fajr, and a freelance correspondent with the foreign media. He has received numerous awards, including Press Freedom Hero from the International Press Institute and from the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Key Dates



Dec. 8, 1987
An Israeli truck crashes into a car in the Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, killing four Palestinians.

Dec. 9, 1987
The Palestinian intifada against Israeli occupation begins, triggered by the previous day's fatal crash.

June 1988
The Arab League announces that it will support the intifada financially.



June 14, 1988
Israeli authorities deport Mubarak Awad, a nonviolent activist known as the Palestinian Gandhi.

Nov. 15, 1988
PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat reads the Palestinian Declaration of Independence at a meeting of the Palestinian National Council in Algiers.

Oct. 30, 1991
Madrid peace conference takes place.



Sept. 13, 1993
The PLO and Israel sign a Declaration of Principles — the Oslo Accord — at the White House.

Jan. 31, 2000
Multilateral talks resume but stall soon after.



Sept. 28, 2000
Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon visits Al-Aqsa Mosque, triggering the second intifada.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
Pan Am bombing
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**

OCT. 13, 1988

Naguib Mahfouz's Nobel Prize in Literature

The author's most important work was banned by Egypt's religious authorities

ABDELLATIF EL-MENAWY
CAIRO

In 1901, the first Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to the French poet Sully Prudhomme. More than 80 years later, on Oct. 13, 1988, the Swedish Academy awarded the prize to Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz. It was the first time it had been awarded to an Egyptian, and also the first time the winner's mother tongue was Arabic. The academy's statement noted that: "To date, Mahfouz has been writing for about 50 years. He is still indefatigable."



It went on: "Mahfouz's great and decisive achievement is as the writer of novels and short stories. His production has meant a powerful upswing for the novel as a genre and for the development of the literary language in Arabic-speaking cultural circles. The range is, however, greater than that. His work speaks to us all."

Mahfouz's life is itself worthy of literary fiction. He was born on Dec. 11, 1911, in Cairo's old city, and was named after the obstetrician who helped deliver him.

At the eastern and western approaches to the Qasr El Nil Bridge, next to Cairo's Tahrir Square, are four famous large bronze lion statues that enthrall me every time I cross the bridge. I used to make this journey twice a week in the early 1990s, and accompanying me was Mahfouz. At that time, we had agreed to jointly write eight articles for Al-Majalla magazine.

I used to pass by his house in Al-Agouza in the morning and we would walk together to Tahrir Square to sit in a small cafe called Ali Baba. We would then define a topic for our next article — he would present his perceptions and points of view about this topic while I took notes. I would then formulate these observations and ideas and present them to him for approval at our next meeting.

The time I spent with him was of special value. It was an opportunity to approach the mind of one of the most important figures in Arabic and international literature. However, I do not claim to have known him deeply; he was by nature very reserved, so I only knew him to a limited extent. I understood why Mahfouz did not want to share his personal life with the public, instead preferring to keep it away from the spotlight. He only got married in the period after he stopped writing following the revolution of 1952. He was able to hide his marriage for 10 years.

Mahfouz was the youngest of seven siblings and, because the difference in age between him and his closest brother was 10 years, he was treated like an only child. He was little more than seven years old when the 1919 revolution took place and this deeply influenced him. He described it in many of his novels, notably in the first part of his "Cairo Trilogy," "Bayn Al-Qasrayn" (Palace Walk).

After graduating in philosophy from Cairo University in 1934, he began preparing a master's thesis on "Beauty in Islamic Philosophy," but changed his decision to focus on literature. However, because literature was not a profession that could provide him with a monthly salary, but was rather a hobby, he worked in several government positions.

Mahfouz began writing in the mid-1930s and his short stories were published in Al-Risala magazine. In 1939, his first novel, "Absth Al-Aqdar" (Mockery of the Fates), was published. It presented his concept of historical realism and was followed by "Radubis" (Rhadopis of Nubia) and "Kifah Tibah" (Thebes at War) to complete a historical trilogy set in the time of the pharaohs.

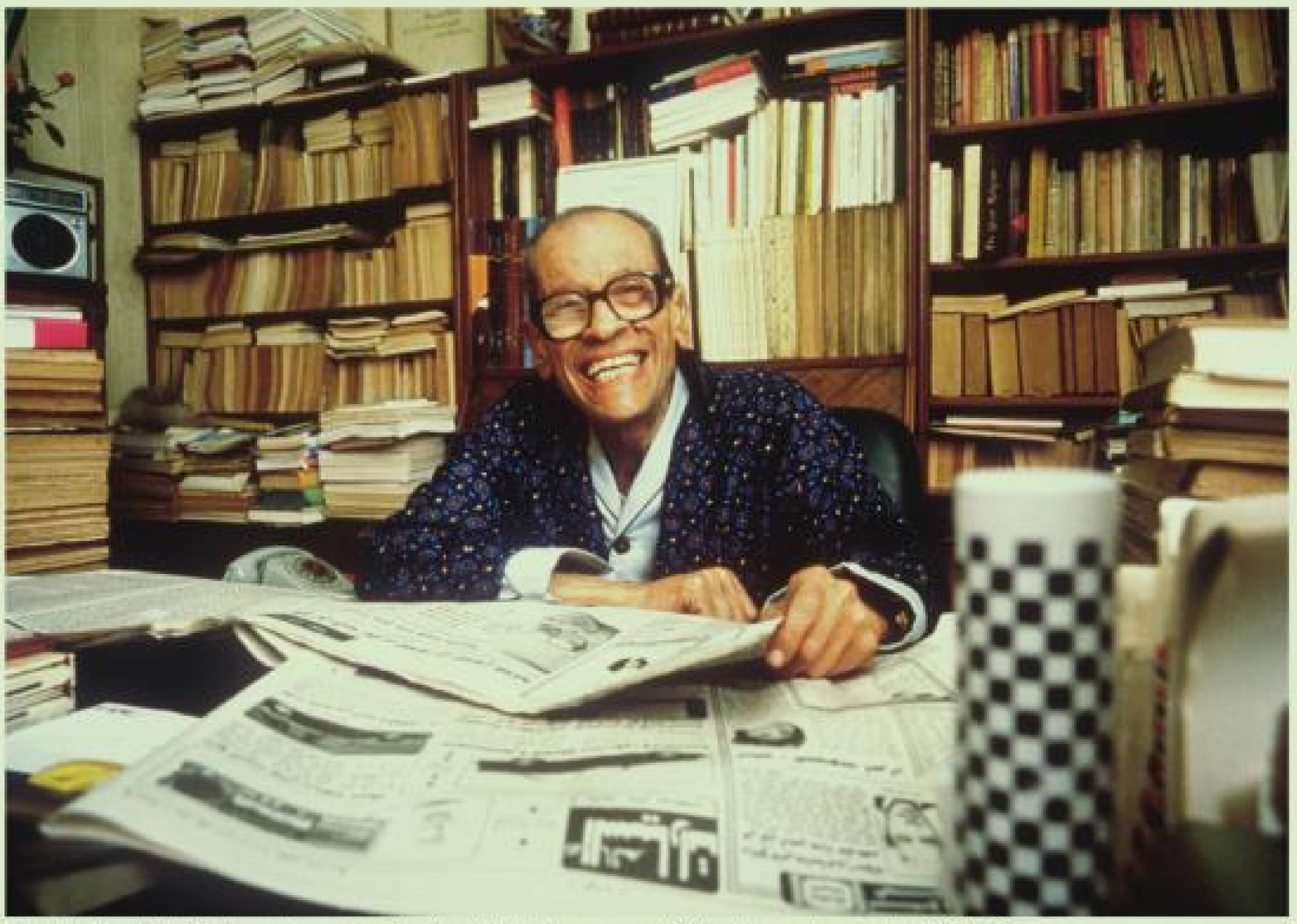
The year 1945 marked the beginning of Mahfouz's line of realistic writing, which he preserved for most of his literary career, reflected through novels such as "Cairo Modern," "Khan Al-Khalili," "Midaq Alley," and "The Beginning and the End." During this phase, his style ranged from the impressionistic to the surrealist, using a pattern of evocative vocabulary and imagery to bind the works together. His exclusive use of stream of consciousness also prevailed, such as in "The Beggar" and "Children of Our Alley." He also excelled in writing novels that covered many generations, such as "The Harafish" and "Arabian Nights and Days."

Many classify "Children of Our Alley," which was translated into English as "Children of Gebelawi," as Mahfouz's most important work. It began to be serialized in Al-Ahram in September 1959, but this was suspended on Dec. 25 the same year due to objections by religious organizations. It was this novel that brought Mahfouz into conflict with Egypt's religious authorities. After its serialization in Al-Ahram, Cairo's religious university, Al-Azhar, refused to allow the work to appear in book form. It took another eight years for it to be published in Beirut. Many years later, this book was the motivation for a 1995 attack on the author's life, in which he was hospitalized with a wound to the neck. This left him partially paralyzed in his right arm.

Behind the scenes of his Nobel Prize award in 1988, it is said that this novel — as well as some other works — ensured he outdid his peers who were also nominated for the award at the time.

"Ahlam Fatrat Al-Naqaha" (Dreams of the Period of Recovery), published in 2004, was a series of writings dictated to his friends. He passed away on Aug. 30, 2006, after receiving myriad well-deserved honors, awards and accolades. His name was given to a number of squares in Egypt, while a museum was last year opened in the writer's honor near his home neighborhood.

Dr. Abdellatif El-Menawy, a columnist for Arab News, is an Egyptian writer and journalist. He was an acquaintance of Naguib Mahfouz.
Twitter: @ALMenawy



Naguib Mahfouz in his Cairo home, above, a few days after the Nobel announcement. Below, his funeral procession in 2006. AFP

SUMMARY

On Oct. 13, 1988, Egyptian author Naguib Mahfouz became the first Egyptian and the first writer with Arabic as his native tongue to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

By then, Mahfouz, 76, had produced a rich and complex body of work, including more than 30 novels and 350 short stories, many of which were adapted for film. For many years, he also wrote a weekly column for Egypt's leading newspaper, Al-Ahram.

The Nobel citation said that, "through works rich in nuance — now clear-sightedly realistic, now evocatively ambiguous" — Mahfouz had created "an Arabian narrative art that applies to all mankind."

His writing also provoked controversy. His 1959 novel "Children of Gebelawi," an allegorical retelling of the stories of the three Abrahamic faiths, was banned and, in 1994, he survived a knife attack by a religious extremist.

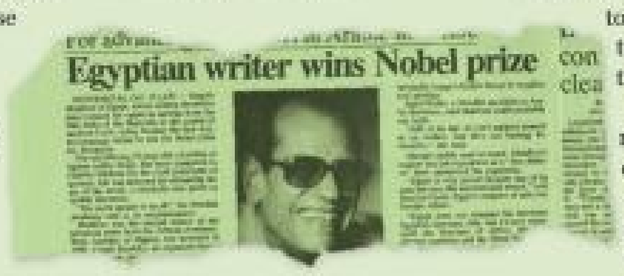
Upon Mahfouz's death in 2006, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak praised the author's "values of enlightenment and tolerance." He would be remembered as "a cultural light who brought Arab literature to the world."



HOW WE WROTE IT

The self-effacing 76-year-old, a habitue of bazaar coffee shops, has been compared to Charles Dickens for his vivid portrayals of poverty.

From an AP story on Arab News' front page, Oct. 14, 1988





Key Dates

Dec. 11, 1911
Naguib Mahfouz is born in Old Cairo, the seventh and youngest child of Abdul Aziz Ibrahim, a civil servant.

1939
Publishes his first full-length novel, 'Mockery of The Fates,' which is translated into English in 2003 as 'Khufu's Wisdom.'



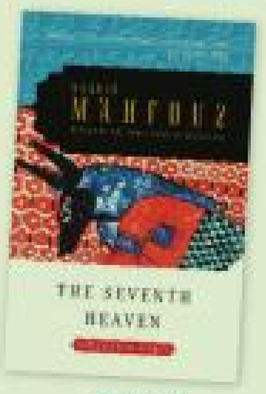
1956
Publishes 'Bayn Al-Qasrayn' (Palace Walk), the first book in the 'Cairo Trilogy,' his most famous works, which follow the fortunes of a Cairene family over three generations from the time of the 1919 revolution. 'Qasr Al-Shawq' (Palace of Desire) and 'Al-Sukkariyya' (Sugar Street) follow in 1957.



1959
His novel 'Children of Gebelawi,' an allegorical retelling of the stories of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, offends religious authorities and is banned in Egypt.

Oct. 13, 1988
Wins Nobel Prize in Literature.

Oct. 14, 1994
Stabbed in the neck by a religious extremist offended by his work, sustaining permanent nerve damage that makes writing increasingly difficult.



2005
Publishes his final major work, 'The Seventh Heaven,' written because 'spirituality for me is of high importance and continuously provides inspiration (and) I want to believe something good will happen to me after death.'

Aug. 30, 2006
Mahfouz dies in Cairo, aged 94.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East

TOMORROW
The Taif Agreement
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**







A policeman surveys wreckage near the cockpit on Dec. 22, 1988, the day after the Pan Am airliner exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing all 259 passengers and crew. AFP

SUMMARY

On Dec. 21, 1988, Pan Am Flight 103 crashed on the Scottish town of Lockerbie, killing all 259 passengers and crew. An investigation found the aircraft had been downed by a bomb in the luggage hold. An alleged Libyan intelligence officer, Abdelbaset Al-Megrahi, was sentenced to life imprisonment for the bombing, serving eight years before he died in 2012.

DEC. 21, 1988

How linked was Libya to Lockerbie?

The truth about the deadliest terror attack in UK history may never be known

ROSS ANDERSON
JEDDAH

The king leads the Saudi delegation at a Gulf Cooperation Council Summit in Manama, there is a new government in Israel, and there is a crisis in Sudan; that Arab News front page could have been published almost any day this year.



Except the Saudi monarch was King Fahd, the Israeli prime minister was Yitzhak Shamir, and another report on the page tells you this was not 2020 but Dec. 23, 1988. Two nights before, Pan Am Flight 103 from Frankfurt to Detroit via London and New York had been blown up by a terrorist bomb as it crossed the border between England and Scotland.

With a death toll of 270 — all 243 passengers and 16 crew, and 11 victims on the ground in Lockerbie, where the aircraft smashed into two residential streets at 800 km per hour — it remains the deadliest terror attack in UK history.

Few events resonate all the way from a small Scottish border town to the White House. This was one such event. Lockerbie, with its 4,000 souls, joined that list of places in the UK and elsewhere — Aberfan, Munich, Srebrenica, My Lai — forever associated in the public consciousness with cruel and senseless loss of life.

Scotland, my country, and Glasgow, my city, are not soft places, nor are the journalists they produce noted for emotional incontinence. But I saw tough, cynical, diamond-hard reporters return from Lockerbie numbed into glazed-eyed silence by the enormity of what they saw there, and full of admiration for the quiet dignity with which its townspeople bore their losses.

Most of the plane's passengers were American, and their relatives flew from the US to identify bodies and possessions. The people of Lockerbie buried their own grief to provide accommodation, food, comfort and solace to the bereaved. Bonds were forged that remain to this day.

When a terror attack was confirmed, the perpetrator identified by Washington was inevitable. The US and the regime of Muammar Qaddafi in Libya had been in a state of undeclared war for years, and American airstrikes in April 1986 appeared only to have incensed him.

US and UK investigators believe Libyan agents in Malta concealed a Semtex bomb inside a radio-cassette player and sent it in a suitcase to Frankfurt, where it was loaded aboard Pan Am Flight 103, and the fate of 270 people was sealed.

With some narratives, paradoxically, it can make sense to work backward — from when Abdelbaset Al-Megrahi, a Libyan intelligence officer and former head of security for Libyan Arab Airlines, died at his home in Tripoli on May 20, 2012, at the age of 60.

More than 11 years earlier, in January 2001, three Scottish judges sitting at a special court in a former US air base in the Netherlands had sentenced Al-Megrahi to life imprisonment on 270 counts of murder for the Lockerbie bombing.

He served more than eight years in two prisons in Scotland, before the Scottish government released him on compassionate grounds when doctors said he had terminal cancer, and he returned to Libya in August 2009. Given three months to live, he lasted nearly three years. Al-Megrahi was, and remains, the only person to be convicted of the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103; with his death, therefore, case closed? Well, no.

The repercussions began soon after the disaster and continue to this day. Pan Am, its security operations exposed as criminally useless, was bankrupt after a year and out of business after two. UN sanctions against Qaddafi and Libya reinforced their pariah status, and the country remains a failed state embroiled in civil conflict.



A scene of devastation in Lockerbie the day after a New York-bound airliner was blown apart by a bomb in the skies above Scotland on Dec. 21, 1988. AFP

HOW WE REPORTED IT



The Town Hall, decorated with festival lights and now hastily converted into a mortuary, was besieged by distraught relatives.

From a Reuters article in Arab News, Dec. 23, 1988

For the rest of us, airline and airport security have intensified on an apparently endless upward trajectory, and we can at least be grateful that an unaccompanied suitcase with a bomb inside can never again travel from Malta through two airports to the skies over Scotland.

Perhaps most significantly, Lockerbie may have marked the beginning of a collapse in public trust in what our governments tell us. Authorities in the US and the UK insist that Al-Megrahi was guilty, and that he acted alone or with a single accomplice. Few believe that.

Major world events — the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the moon landings, the 9/11 attacks — attract conspiracy theorists like iron to a magnet, and Lockerbie is no exception. It was Iran; it was the Palestinians; it was Mossad; it was the Stasi; it was apartheid South Africa.

What makes Lockerbie different is that one of the "theories" is almost certainly fact — which one is anyone's guess. One man more entitled than most to guess is Jim Swire, the softly spoken but determined English country doctor whose daughter Flora, 23, perished on board the plane.

Swire, now in his 80s, has devoted his life to finding the truth about Lockerbie. He met and questioned Al-Megrahi. He met and questioned Qaddafi. He has been a thorn in the side of UK and US authorities for more than 30 years, and he believes to this day that the case against Al-Megrahi was a travesty and a tissue of lies, to cover up some ghastly truth that may never be known.

Then-US President George H. W. Bush set up an aviation security commission in September 1989 to report on the plane's sabotage, and British relatives of the victims met members of the commission at the US Embassy in London in February the following year. A member of Bush's staff told one of the relatives: "Your government and ours know exactly what happened, but they are never going to tell."

And that, surely, for the victims of Pan Am Flight 103, for their still-grieving families and for the people of Lockerbie, was the final insult.

Ross Anderson, associate editor at Arab News, was on duty as a senior editor at Today newspaper in London on the night of the Lockerbie disaster.

Key Dates

Dec. 5, 1988
The US Federal Aviation Authority issues a bulletin warning of an anonymous tip that a Pan Am flight from Frankfurt will be blown up in the next two weeks.

Dec. 21, 1988
Pan Am Flight 103 is destroyed by a bomb over Lockerbie.



Nov. 1991
Alleged Libyan intelligence officers Abdelbaset Al-Megrahi and Lamin Khalifa Fhimah (above) are indicted for murder by US and Scottish authorities, but Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi refuses to allow their extradition for trial.

May 3, 2000
After a nine-year standoff, Qaddafi agrees to allow Al-Megrahi and Fhimah to be tried under Scottish law in the Netherlands.

Jan. 31, 2001
Al-Megrahi is jailed for life. Fhimah is found not guilty.



March 14, 2002
Al-Megrahi (above) loses an appeal against his conviction.

April 29, 2003
Qaddafi accepts Libya's responsibility for the bombing and agrees to pay compensation to each of the victims' families.

Aug. 20, 2009
Al-Megrahi, diagnosed with terminal prostate cancer, is released on compassionate grounds and returns to Libya.



Oct. 20, 2011
Qaddafi is killed by rebel militia while trying to flee after the fall of Tripoli.

March 11, 2020
A Scottish judicial review commission gives Al-Megrahi's family leave to appeal against his conviction, a strong hint that he will be posthumously acquitted.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
The fall of the Berlin Wall
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Then Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal sits between Lebanese Parliamentary Speaker Hussein Al-Hussaini, right, and Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmad Ghassali in Taif in 1989. AFP

OCT. 22, 1989

Taif's peace pact for Lebanon

Saudi Arabia's determination and diplomacy helped bring an end to the Lebanese Civil War

RANDA TAKIEDDINE
PARIS

The Taif Agreement was the outcome of a concerted attempt by Saudi Arabia to bring about an end to the Lebanese Civil War.



Other parties included Syria's Hafez Assad, the US administration, and the various Lebanese factions fighting in the war. Saudi Arabia wanted to find a solution involving all these players to stop the war and bring about an improvement on the 1943 Lebanese National Pact.

This pact was the unwritten agreement between then-President Bechara El-Khoury and Prime Minister Riad Al-Solh that founded independent Lebanon as a multi-confessional state. It was a power-sharing arrangement between Christians and Muslims, whereby the president was always required to be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of parliament a Shiite. The powers handed down were of particular benefit to Lebanon's Christians. The civil war required an adjustment in this equilibrium. It also required an adjustment in Lebanon's relations with the Arab world in a period where Assad was getting more powerful, with the aim of being more influential and hegemonic in Lebanon.

The Taif Agreement was fathered by then-Speaker Hussein El-Husseini, who was hosted by Saudi Arabia in Taif under the guidance of the late Prince Saud Al-Faisal and a Lebanese friend of the Kingdom, who was then a businessman, named Rafik Hariri. The agreement covered political reform, giving full power to the Council of Ministers and greater power to the Muslim prime minister, as opposed to previously, when all powers were concentrated with the Christian president. It established special relations between Lebanon and Syria and a framework to begin Syria's withdrawal from the country. Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al-Sharaa later denied there was a commitment made to Prince Saud to withdraw from Lebanon. It was only after the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri in 2005 that Syria finally pulled out.

Saudi Arabia had, since the late 1970s under Lebanese President Suleiman Frangieh and then Elias Sarkis, joined all Arab and international efforts to bring an end to the war in Lebanon. The Taif Agreement achieved this after it was approved by the Lebanese Parliament on Nov. 5, 1989. Rene Moawad subsequently became president.

(Rafik) Hariri was shuttled between various world capitals to organize a conference in the Kingdom to agree on reform and the election of a president.

When Saudi Arabia pushed for the peace conferences in Geneva and Lausanne in 1983 and 1984, respectively, but failed to stop the war, it continued to mediate with the involvement of the Arab League Tripartite Committee to Lebanon, under the chairmanship of Prince Saud. The representatives from Morocco and Algeria were former foreign ministers Abdellatif Filali and Sid Ahmed Ghozali, respectively, and they were joined by the Arab League's Special Envoy to Lebanon Lakhdar Brahimi. The last committee meeting in Rabat before Taif in 1988 was when these three ministers summoned Al-Sharaa and warned him that they had proof of Syria's arming of both then-Prime Minister Michel Aoun's army and the Lebanese Forces headed by Samir Geagea. Aoun had been appointed interim prime minister by outgoing president Amine Gemayel, who did not accept Assad's diktats. Assad's forces pounded the Christian stronghold of Achrafieh. Aoun, protected by French Ambassador Rene Ala, then left for France to begin his long exile.

Efforts to end the war did not stop and Saudi Arabia worked through two negotiators, Prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz and Hariri. This was the outset of Hariri's political involvement on the Lebanese scene. King Fahd entrusted Prince Bandar to direct efforts for a solution in Lebanon, and Hariri was shuttled between various world capitals to organize a conference in the Kingdom to agree on reform and the election of a president.

Hariri managed to persuade the Lebanese deputies to come to Saudi Arabia, where they were hosted in Taif. They agreed to correct the balance of power and give more influence to the Council of Ministers and the Muslim prime minister.

Saudi Arabia thus took the initiative and helped put the Lebanese Parliament back into action, since negotiations with the militias had failed to achieve peace. The Taif Agreement was concluded, but Aoun never accepted the terms. Following the election of Moawad and his assassination 15 days later — as he was returning from the Lebanese Independence Day celebrations — Zahle deputy Elias Hrawi, who was favored by the Syrians, became president.

One unforgettable sentence uttered by a brilliant French diplomat, having served in Lebanon, still rings true in view of the disastrous situation currently prevailing there: "The political class who made the civil war in Lebanon is still in power, but it cannot succeed in ruling the country."

Randa Takieddine is a Paris-based Lebanese journalist who writes for Arab News. She covered the last committee meeting in Rabat before Taif in 1988 for Al-Hayat and headed its bureau in France for 30 years.


ARAB NEWS
Lebanese MPs agree on charter to end war
U.S. Israel trying to bridge gap on pullout
ANNOUNCEMENT

SUMMARY

On Oct. 22, 1989, 23 days of intensive talks between the 30 Muslim and 32 Christian members of the Lebanese parliament at the Saudi Arabian resort of Taif ended with agreement on a national reconciliation charter, designed to end 15 years of civil war.

Multi-sectarian Lebanon had been plunged into a brutal conflict in 1975 partly because the allocation of parliamentary seats along religious lines, established during the French mandate from 1923 to 1946, had not been adjusted to take account of a shift in demographics in favor of Muslims.

What became known as the Taif Agreement, the result of determined diplomacy by Saudi Arabia and the Arab League, paved the way to peace. As one jubilant MP from east Beirut told Arab News on the day agreement was reached: "We have extricated the tumor from the Arab body and stopped the bleeding which was painful and interminable."

It was a prognosis that was to prove over-optimistic.

HOW WE WROTE IT


Lebanese MPs agree on charter to end war

We have extricated the tumor from the Arab body and stopped the bleeding which was painful and interminable.
Lebanese MP in Arab News, Oct. 23, 1989

Key Dates

April 13, 1975
Fighting between Maronites and Muslims in Lebanon begins when suspected PLO gunmen attack a Christian church in East Beirut, killing four. Phalangists retaliate, killing 30 Palestinians on a bus, triggering widespread fighting.

Oct. 16, 1976
The Arab League summit in Riyadh calls for an end to the civil war and creates the peace-keeping Arab Deterrent Force.

Feb. 7, 1978
Start of the Hundred Days' War in Beirut between Christian militias and the mainly Syrian troops of the Arab Deterrent Force.

June 6, 1982
Israel invades southern Lebanon to halt attacks over the border by the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Aug. 23, 1982
Christian phalangist Bachir Gemayel, former leader of Lebanese Forces Maronite militia, is elected president. The next month, he is killed by a bomb planted by a Maronite Christian.

Sept. 22, 1988
Outgoing president Amine Gemayal defies precedent and appoints a fellow Maronite Christian, Gen. Michel Aoun, as prime minister.



March 14, 1989
Aoun declares war of liberation against the Syrian occupation.

Oct. 22, 1989
The Taif Agreement is reached, but opposed by Aoun.



Nov. 5, 1989
The Taif Agreement is ratified and parliament elects Maronite Christian Rene Moawad as Lebanon's 13th president. That month, he is assassinated by unknown assailants.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
The invasion of Kuwait
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NOV. 9, 1989

The fall of the Berlin Wall

The dismantling of the Soviet bloc symbol was a sign that the Cold War's days were numbered

ROSS ANDERSON
DUBAI

I have a piece of the Berlin Wall. Don't we all? If every "piece of the Berlin Wall" were genuine, the edifice itself would have encircled the globe three times with enough left over to separate the US from Mexico. Nevertheless, no one will persuade me that my chunk of crumbling concrete, stained with the fading paint of a long forgotten graffiti artist, is anything other than the real thing.



Of less dubious provenance are my East German border guard's fur hat and lapel pin, purchased at an impromptu trestle-table market set up by enterprising Berliners near the Brandenburg Gate. These have a back story.

When it became clear that the wall would fall, many of the communist guards (not the most popular of fellows, having been responsible for the deaths of up to 200 of their fellow Germans in the previous 30 years) fled down the broad Unter den Linden avenue, casting off their uniforms for fear of being identified. Ironically, many were subsequently detained, betrayed by the fact that in the unforgiving chill of a German November, they were wearing only underwear.

In September 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain described Adolf Hitler's annexation of the Sudetenland as a "quarrel in a far away country, between people of whom we know nothing." A year later, Britain was at war with Nazi Germany.

On Nov. 11, 1989, no such insular myopia afflicted Arab News, which devoted a large chunk of its front page to events in Germany — "a far away country," certainly, but one where the Cold War played out every day in a single city, with profound implications for the Middle East and the whole world.

If the fall of the wall was inevitable, so too was its construction, which began in August 1961 amid the division of Europe after World War II. Within four years of the conflict ending, the Soviet Union had installed puppet communist governments throughout Eastern Europe, including the new German Democratic Republic, or East Germany.

The Western allies set up a parallel administration in areas they controlled, which became the Federal Republic of Germany, or West Germany. The frontline of this Cold War was West Berlin, a Western enclave surrounded by the communist East.

It was never going to work. As the West prospered, thanks to an influx of Marshall Plan funds from America, the East stagnated, stifled by economic mismanagement and a sclerotic bureaucracy.

Tensions simmered for 12 years, exacerbated by the original "brain drain" of the young, the bright and the ambitious from East to West. In June 1961, East German leader Walter Ulbricht declared: "No one has the intention of erecting a wall." It was the first clue that this was precisely the intention.



On Nov. 11, 1989, West Berliners watch East German border guards, above, demolish a section of the wall. Below, two days before, a woman chips away at it. AFP

SUMMARY

On Nov. 9, 1989, jubilant crowds on both sides of the East-West border began tearing down the Berlin Wall, the hated symbol of the Cold War that had divided Berlin and Berliners for almost three decades.

The wall had been built in 1961 by the puppet communist state installed by the USSR after World War II in occupied East Germany. For 28 years, it stood as the physical manifestation of British wartime leader Winston Churchill's rhetorical prediction in 1946 that the Soviets were intent on drawing 'an iron curtain' across Europe.

Over the years, thousands of East Berliners risked their lives, and hundreds lost them, attempting to defect to West Berlin. In the end, the collapse of the wall, toppled by popular pressure as the communist states of Eastern Europe suddenly began to fall, symbolized the collapse of communism itself. In 1991, just one year after East and West Berlin were reunited, the USSR itself imploded.


Arab News
Kraus offers reforms & free elections



East German troops and police closed the border at midnight on Aug. 12, and the following day — still known in Germany as Barbed Wire Sunday — they began sealing off West Berlin with the beginnings of the wall. By the time it was complete — it went through four iterations, in 1961, 1962, 1965 and 1975 — the wall was more than 150 km long and 4 meters high, with 186 watchtowers, more than 250 dog runs and 20 bunkers.

The Soviet bloc maintained for 40 years that the purpose of the wall was not to keep its people in, but to keep the "fascist West" out — a claim somewhat diluted by the facts. Between 1961 and 1989, more than 5,000 East Germans defeated the wall — whether by tunneling under it, flying over it or simply driving straight through it. The number who traveled in the opposite direction is not thought to be large.

The wall, and all it represented, were a red rag to successive US presidents. Less than two years after its construction, John F. Kennedy told a crowd of 450,000 in West Berlin: "All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin, and therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words, 'Ich bin ein Berliner!'" Pedants (and bakers) pointed out that he had declared himself to be a jam-filled German pastry, but the point was made.

Twenty-four years later, in a speech at the Brandenburg Gate, Ronald Reagan directly challenged Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev: "If you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe … Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"

Reagan did not have long to wait. As he spoke, the Soviet dominoes were beginning to tumble. The communist government in Poland was booted out of office. Hungary dismantled the fence along its border with Austria, and 13,000 East Germans took that route to the West. There was unrest in Czechoslovakia. East Germany's puppet leader Erich Honeker resigned in October 1989, having predicted that the wall would stand for another 100 years. He was, as he had been for most of life, wrong.

In the end, the wall came down even more quickly than it went up. After a bungled press conference by an East Berlin Communist Party official on Nov. 9, apparently relaxing the regulations on travel to the West, thousands of jubilant East Germans massed at the wall and demanded that the crossing gates be opened. The more enterprising climbed on top, where they were joined by their brothers and sisters from the other side. Vastly outnumbered and without orders (their commanders were equally confused), the guards simply stood aside. The wall had fallen.

The beaming, blond-haired young man at the immigration counter in Berlin's Tegel Airport was friendly but firm. "No need!" he declared. "No need to stamp the passport! Today we're one country once more! A historic day!" We all pleaded: "But you don't understand, that's precisely why we want our passports stamped."

Eventually the pfennig dropped. With Teutonic efficiency, desks were set up in one corner of the arrivals lounge, in front of which anyone with a sense of history queued up to have their passports stamped with that day's date — Oct. 3, 1990, the day Germany was reunified.

In central Berlin, although the wall had been gone for less than a year, the only sign that it had ever been there was a narrow scar slicing through the heart of the city; the only sign, that is, until you crossed from what had been West into what had been East.

The former was vibrant, a riot of color, and the parties seemed to have been going on since the previous November. The latter was grey — the streets were grey, the buildings were grey, even the people were grey, their faces blighted for a dull pallor betraying decades of poor diet.

Since then, the old East Germany has been playing catch-up, at an eye-watering reunification cost of €2 trillion ($2.14 trillion), but with considerable success — best personified by Angela Merkel. Brought up in the East German city of Leipzig from the age of 3 months, and a member of the official communist youth movement at the age of 14, she is now the right-wing chancellor of Germany. Reagan would be proud.

Ross Anderson, associate editor at Arab News, was on duty as a senior editor at Today newspaper in London the night the Berlin Wall came down. He visited Germany the following year, and was in Berlin on reunification day, Oct. 3.

HOW WE WROTE IT


Momentous events in East Germany

Twenty-eight years after locking its citizens in one of the largest prisons ever constructed through the Berlin Wall, the East German regime has given in to the irresistible pressure of freedom.

From an editorial in Arab News on Nov. 11, 1989

Key Dates

Aug. 12, 1961
Walter Ulbricht, East German Communist Party leader, orders construction of a wall to separate East and West Berlin.



Aug. 13, 1961
Construction of the Berlin Wall begins.



June 26, 1963
In a speech in West Berlin, US President John F. Kennedy says: 'Today in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is "Ich bin ein Berliner"'.



June 12, 1987
US President Ronald Reagan, visiting West Berlin, calls on Mikhail Gorbachev, leader of the USSR, to 'tear down this wall.'



Nov. 9, 1989
The East German government lifts travel restrictions, and crowds begin dismantling the wall.

Oct. 3, 1990
West and East Germany are reunified as the Federal Republic of Germany.



Dec. 25, 1991
Gorbachev resigns as president of the Soviet Union, replaced by Boris Yeltsin as president of the new state of Russia.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
Boutros Boutros-Ghali appointed secretary-general of the UN
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AUG. 2, 1990

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait



Saddam's 'horrible aggression' led to the Gulf War, creating lasting divisions in the Arab world



An Allied helicopter patrols over the burning oil fields in Kuwait in 1991. Getty Images **Left, Arab News at work during the Gulf War, from left: Wahib Ghurab, Maher Abbas, Khaled Almaeena and Saeed Haider, the Eastern Province bureau chief. The windows are taped in case of explosions nearby.** Picture supplied by Khaled Almaeena

KHALED ALMAEENA
JEDDAH

I was in Baghdad a mere two months before Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait on Aug. 2, 1990. I was there with a group of editors and journalists accompanying the late King Fahd to the 17th Arab Summit in the Iraqi capital on May 30, 1990. I saw Saddam up close, with only a couple of feet between us.



At that time there was no inkling that he would invade Kuwait. Yes, there were rumblings of discontent and disagreements over Kuwait's ownership of Bubiyan Island — but nobody imagined that two months after hosting the Arab leaders, his tanks would roll into Kuwait in what King Fahd rightly described as Iraq's "most horrible aggression."

The invasion of Kuwait set off a chain of events with repercussions that continue today. It shattered forever the idea of Arab unity and fragmented the Arab world. That world never recovered, never returned to "normal" after the Gulf War.

There were countries that did not side with Saddam, but they remained quiet and this led to a deepening of suspicions that lingered in the unfortunate post-1945 Arab history. Those suspicions had become reinforced, embedded and fixed in the minds of the Arabs. There was mutual suspicion of each other's intentions. While the Palestinians, the Jordanians and the Yemenis did not openly support the invasion, their wait-and-see policy angered the Gulf states.

Could we say that today's problems in our region have their roots in the 1990 invasion of Kuwait? I would say yes. Most of the Arab world's issues today are a direct result of Saddam's aggression. First, the invasion led directly to the destruction of Iraq. And those responsible were the Iraqi government and, more specifically, Saddam. It was Saddam who gave the excuse to forces that wanted to break up an Arab state. If Saddam had not invaded Kuwait, there would very likely have been no Al-Qaeda, no Daesh. The Kuwaiti invasion was the ultimate moment for those who wished to see Arabs violently disagreeing with, and actually fighting, each other.

I remember an insightful piece I read in London's Daily Telegraph in 1968 about differences that had cropped up during that year's Arab Summit. It included a quote that is still relevant: "The Arab world, despite its brimming coffers, lacks one thing that money cannot buy — leadership."

Coming back to the invasion and how we at Arab News covered it, I was awakened by a phone call on the morning of Aug. 2, 1990. Mohammed Ali, the teleprinter operator at Arab News, was on the line. In those days, the teleprinter brought us the news, sometimes in trickles and sometimes in floods. Ali told me that information was trickling in about Kuwait being invaded by Iraqi troops.

I jumped out of bed, dressed and headed straight to the office at around 6 a.m. We called a couple of other staff members and started reading the reports. In those days, communication was far from quick. There was no Internet and no mobile phones. To get a firsthand report of what was actually happening, I called one of my friends in Kuwait who had worked with the Arab Times. He said: "Yes, I see Iraqi tanks in the streets. There is no resistance from the Kuwaitis." We maintained contact for about three-and-a-half hours before his phone went dead.

Armed with all the information and leads, I sat with the editorial team and discussed the next day's edition. However, there was an order from the Ministry of Information telling newspapers not to write about the invasion. From the editor in chief's point of view, this was a great story, but there were directives not to use it.

I was unwilling to take no for an answer, so I got in my car with my colleague Khaled Nazer and we went to the office of the-then Minister of Information Ali Al-Shaer. Once there, I begged and pleaded with him, saying how important it was to report the story, but he refused to budge. For me, it was the darkest day in my life as a journalist.

Luckily, there was an Islamic conference taking place in Cairo at the time, and we used that story as a way to discuss the rumblings and tensions along the border between Iraq and Kuwait. That was it.

The next day, however, we began reporting details of plundering and rampaging by Saddam's troops in Kuwait. I told the publishers how important it was for the paper to have a full team close to the Saudi border with Iraq in addition to the office we already had in the Eastern Province.

On Aug. 8, I went to the Eastern Province and, by September, we had a full team in place. It included Wahib Ghorab, Khaled Nazer, Mohammed Samman, Saeed Haider, Maher Abbas, Hani Naqshbandi, the photographer Giovanni Pasquale, and an American intern, Aldo Svaldi. By that time, an army of international journalists had arrived in the Eastern Province. The liberation of Kuwait was still a couple of weeks away.

When the late King Fahd addressed the nation and the world on Thursday, Aug. 9, 1990, we were given detailed coverage of the invasion. Our front-page headline the following day was: "Fahd denounces Iraq's 'most horrible aggression'."

From the Eastern Province, we began writing reports, war dispatches, and human interest stories. Everything was new to us and our circulation soared. The "Green Truth," as Arab News was known in those days, became the most sought-after publication, the go-to source.

International journalists from Voice of America, the BBC and CNN visited our offices, and we formed lifelong friendships with many of them. They were surprised by our knowledge, keenness and openness. There was even a story about a small burger joint that was making Scud Burgers, named for the missiles that Saddam was using to attack the Kingdom. None of my staff was allowed to feel any less important than those high and mighty foreign journalists. I made sure of that.

Arab News was the first newspaper to enter liberated Kuwait while the oil wells were still burning.

Khaled Almaeena was editor in chief of Arab News for almost 25 years, serving two terms, from May 1, 1982 to Feb. 20, 1993 and from March 1, 1998 to Oct. 8, 2011.

SUMMARY

On Aug. 2, 1990, the Iraqi army swept into Kuwait, overwhelming resistance in two days, driving the government into exile in Taif, Saudi Arabia, and executing hundreds of Kuwaitis who resisted.

Relations between Iraq and Kuwait, which had supported Baghdad financially during the Iraq-Iran War, had deteriorated rapidly in the previous months. In addition to Kuwait's refusal to agree to write off the large debt it was owed by Baghdad, tensions had been building over false accusations by Saddam Hussein that Kuwait was tapping into Iraq's share of the Rumaila oilfield that lay between the two countries.

After Iraq defied UN resolutions demanding its immediate withdrawal, Kuwait was swiftly liberated by a US-led coalition force. However, military intervention stopped short of overthrowing Saddam, leaving unfinished a task that was not completed until the US war on Iraq in 2003.


Arab News

Fahd denounces Iraq's 'most horrible aggression'

Kingdom demands pullout, return of Al-Sabah

U.S. issues global call to defend Gulf

Emergency Arab summit delayed

U.S. defends troops' call and raid

Embargo barrier from storming Iraq

HOW WE WROTE IT


Fahd denounces Iraq's 'most horrible aggression'

Kingdom demands pullout, return of Al-Sabah

U.S. issues global call to defend Gulf

These are deeply sad and dark days for the Arab world, when Arabs find themselves having to act against a sister Arab state to safeguard their own security and restore the legitimacy of the once sovereign state of Kuwait.

From an editorial by Khaled Almaeena in Arab News, Aug. 10, 1990

Key Dates

Aug. 2, 1990
Iraq invades Kuwait.

Aug. 3, 1990
UN Resolution 660 condemns the invasion and 'demands that Iraq withdraw immediately and unconditionally.'



Nov. 29, 1990
UN Resolution 678 gives Iraq an ultimatum to withdraw from Kuwait by Jan. 15, 1991.

Jan. 17, 1991
Saudi F-15s and Tornados take part in the first of a series of allied bombing raids on Iraqi military targets in Iraq and Kuwait.

Jan. 18, 1991
Iraq fires the first of more than 80 Scud missiles it will unleash on Israel and Saudi Arabia during the brief conflict.

Jan. 29, 1991
Iraqi forces seize the Saudi town of Khafji on the Kuwait border, but are driven out after two days.

Feb. 15, 1991
Coalition ground troops cross into Iraq from Saudi Arabia.



Feb. 24, 1991
US and Allied forces enter and begin the swift liberation of Kuwait.

Feb. 25, 1991
A Scud missile hits a US Army barracks in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killing 28 US soldiers.



Feb. 26, 1991
Iraqi forces flee Kuwait, setting fire to oil wells as they leave. Thousands die on Highway 80, the so-called Highway to Death, when retreating troops are attacked by allied aircraft.



Feb. 28, 1991
With Kuwait liberated, US President George H.W. Bush declares a cease-fire and Kuwait's government returns from exile.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
Oslo Accords' peace promise
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**

DEC. 3, 1991

Boutros-Ghali becomes UN secretary-general

Serving from 1992 to 1996, the Egyptian diplomat was the only Arab to assume the role

DR. ABDELLATIF EL-MENAWY
CAIRO

Perhaps no Egyptian diplomat of the second half of the 20th century enjoyed the fame and international status of Boutros Boutros-Ghali. He is the only Arab to assume the role of secretary-general of the UN, with his term lasting from 1992 to 1996.



In Egypt, the name of Boutros-Ghali is often recalled amid the crises the country is now facing, especially regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam issue. The Egyptians, including the simplest of them, know very well that he was the Egyptian official who was most associated with African countries in the country's history. Even his nomination for the office of secretary-general of the UN was primarily supported by a number of African countries.

Boutros-Ghali is one of the most prominent political figures in the history of modern Egypt. His fame went from local to global. The UN faced major worldwide challenges during his term as secretary-general, which coincided with radical transformations on the world scene and was accompanied by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, and the start of the unipolar era and US hegemony. The period also saw the repercussions of the Gulf War, the breakup of Yugoslavia, and the Rwandan genocide.

During his term, Boutros-Ghali successfully developed the working mechanisms of the organization and the means of its interference in conflicts to mitigate them and resolve disputes through peaceful means. He developed a concept for preventive diplomacy and peacemaking efforts, as well as attempting to preserve peace and then support it after conflict ended.

Boutros-Ghali was born in Cairo on Nov. 14, 1922, to a Coptic family. His paternal grandfather, after whom he was named, was the prime minister of Egypt from 1908 until he was assassinated in 1910. Boutros-Ghali once said in a press interview: "I was born in a family linked to government bodies from the beginning." Most of his family was associated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He first assumed the position of acting foreign minister in 1977, succeeding Ismail Fahmy, who resigned from the role following President Anwar Sadat's peacemaking visit to Jerusalem. Boutros-Ghali was reinstated to the position in 1978-79 to succeed Mohammed Ibrahim Kamel, who disagreed with Sadat for similar reasons to Fahmy and quit on the eve of the signing of the Camp David Accords.

Boutros-Ghali remained in his role under Hosni Mubarak's rule and held several other positions, including deputy prime minister, minister of state for immigration, and deputy foreign minister for several months before he became secretary-general of the UN for one term, amid strong opposition from the US.

Despite his career in the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, he only assumed the role of minister of state for foreign affairs and was never named foreign minister. It is no secret to those close to Boutros-Ghali that not being named foreign minister made his heart heavy all his life, even though one of the nicknames the Egyptians gave him was "the father of popular diplomacy."

Boutros-Ghali was elected to the post of UN secretary-general in 1991 and faced great difficulties during his tenure. He wrote about these difficulties in his book, "Five Years in a Glass House," in which he revealed many hidden matters, including America's role in the crises that swept the world at that time. His book also shed light on his souring relationship with Washington, which he described as being content with loud external positions, while pushing the UN into raging battles without providing it with real power or the necessary funds. This souring relationship ultimately cost him his role.

Boutros-Ghali explained that there were several reasons for the US veto against his nomination for a second term, including political pressures related to the 1996 US presidential election, disagreements between the US and UN over issues like the Bosnian War and the Rwandan genocide, and tensions over the outstanding dues of the US to the UN.

After leaving the UN, Boutros-Ghali headed the Organization Internationale de la Francophonie as its first secretary-general. He also chaired Egypt's National Council for Human Rights, before resigning in February 2011 following the outbreak of the Jan. 25 events and the departure of Mubarak.

Among Boutros-Ghali's stances that Egyptians remember the most was when they overthrew the Muslim Brotherhood and he wrote to Ban Ki-moon, the UN secretary-general at the time, saying: "What happened in Egypt on June 30, the day that saw protests demanding the removal of Mohammed Morsi, was a full-fledged revolution, during which a fascist regime in a religious guise was eliminated."

Boutros-Ghali wrote that the role of the UN, with all its mechanisms and components, was to "achieve international peace and security and cooperation between states," and that what it produces must seek to "fulfill its principles and charter to serve peace, security and justice, and fight terrorism." He also wrote that "the people of Egypt revolted to eliminate a fascist regime that had a religious guise and worked to divide society in favor of one faction at the expense of all the other people." He added that the people of Egypt also revolted "to eliminate a regime that deepened discrimination."

Boutros-Ghali passed away on Feb. 16, 2016, at the age of 93, in a hospital in Cairo. He was preparing to travel abroad in a UN air ambulance, which had arrived to transport him from Cairo to Paris to complete his treatment and undergo urgent surgery. However, his fate was to pass away in Cairo, holding on to it until the last breath, as if Egypt refused to let his soul leave its lands — out of loyalty to him and in appreciation for his time and effort. He dedicated his life to Egypt from a young age.

Dr. Abdellatif El-Menawy, a columnist for Arab News, first met Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1983. El-Menawy had just begun his career as journalist at Al-Majalla magazine; Boutros-Ghali was the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. By the meeting's end, a long-standing professional relationship was born.
Twitter: @ALMenawy



Boutros Boutros-Ghali, one of the most prominent political figures in modern Egyptian history. Getty Images


Arab News al Riamiah

Gorby sees wars, catastrophe as USSR breaks up

Ghali takes oath as new U.N. chief

Arabs unite in Washington for peace talks

Cairo admits he planted bomb on his desk

Bodyguard denies shooting trial

Boutros Boutros-Ghali

SUMMARY

On Dec. 3, 1991, Egyptian politician Boutros Boutros-Ghali was appointed the sixth secretary-general of the United Nations, becoming the first person from the African continent to hold the post. He was elected by the Security Council, beating out 14 other candidates.

Earlier in his career, Boutros-Ghali had played a prominent negotiating role in the Camp David Accords, which led to the signing of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in 1979.

But repeated clashes with the US became the overriding theme of Boutros-Ghali's five-year term as secretary-general, which coincided with a number of challenging crises, chiefly in Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Somalia. Although he ran unopposed for re-election in 1996, a US veto meant he became the first sitting secretary-general to be denied a second term.

> **It is no secret to those close to Boutros-Ghali that not being named foreign minister made his heart heavy all his life.**

HOW WE WROTE IT


Gorby sees wars, catastrophe as USSR breaks up

Ghali takes oath as new U.N. chief

> **In his speech to the General Assembly, Ghali made no specific mention of the Middle East, although he is expected to give priority to finding a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.**
> **From an AP story on Arab News' front page, Dec. 4, 1991**

Key Dates

Nov. 14, 1922
Boutros Boutros-Ghali is born in Cairo.



1977
Accompanies Egyptian president Anwar Sadat on historic visit to Jerusalem.



1977-1991
Serves as Egypt's minister of state for foreign affairs.



Sept. 5-17, 1978
Attends the Camp David summit as negotiator in the accords signed by Egypt and Israel.

Dec. 3, 1991
Appointed secretary-general of the UN.



Jan. 1, 1992
Begins five-year term as secretary-general of the UN.



Oct. 3-4, 1993
The UN-mandated 'Black Hawk Down' raid in Mogadishu, Somalia, leaves 19 US troops dead. Boutros-Ghali is blamed by the US for the failure of the mission.

1996
Denied second term as secretary-general of the UN by US veto.



Feb. 16, 2016:
Boutros-Ghali dies, aged 93, in Cairo.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
Khobar Towers bombing
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**

SEPT. 13, 1993

Oslo Accords' peace promise

Hope over the deal was cut short by violence, including the killing of Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin

RAY HANANIA
CHICAGO

As a Palestinian, I grew up under the shadow of the pain and suffering of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israeli violence during the 1947 and 1948 war forced my father's family to flee their homes in West Jerusalem and live for more than two years in the squalor of a refugee camp in Jordan until my father could help bring them to the US in 1951.



My mother and her family in Bethlehem were forced to suffer through constant Israeli military assaults after the war, even though they lived under Jordanian control, and there was an uncertainty about whether they could survive. They fled to the sanctuary and welcoming arms of the diaspora, living in Colombia and Venezuela.

They lost much. And until today, more than 10 acres of family land on my mother's side adjacent to the Israel settlement of Gilo remains under Israeli control and outside our reach simply because we are Christian Palestinians, not Jews.

That cumulative weight of suffering was lifted from me as I sat and watched my hero, Yasser Arafat, shake the hand of our oppressor, Yitzhak Rabin, during the signing of the Oslo Peace Accords at the White House on Sept. 13, 1993.

Rabin was a monster to Palestinians. In January 1988, as a general, Rabin ordered his soldiers to "break the bones" of Palestinian civilians identified as "inciters" at protests against Israeli policy. Rabin was never charged, but his lower-ranking officers faced a public outcry that was covered up by Israel's government and the pro-Israel news media.

Yet, we were willing to set that aside for an Israeli who was willing for the first time to recognize Palestinians as a people — a people denied by all of his predecessors, including Golda Meir, a Milwaukee school teacher who became an immigrant prime minister and once cruelly declared the Palestinians "did not exist."

Yet on Sept. 13, 1993, we were willing to put the pain of the past aside and move forward with a new beginning at "a great occasion of history and hope," as President Bill Clinton declared at the opening of the momentous event.

I remember grabbing a chunk of grass from the White House lawn in front of the stage as a souvenir to place in the program that was distributed to Palestinians and Israelis. We all sat near each other in different groups and sections, Jews and Arabs, with relief as the ceremony began.

The actual peace documents were signed by Israel's Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and the Palestine Liberation Organization's Mahmoud Abbas as Clinton, his Russian counterpart, Rabin and Arafat looked on. Then, with Rabin on his right and Arafat on his left, Clinton nudged the two leaders together and they shook hands.

The Oslo Peace Accords included recognition of certain rights. The Palestinians openly recognized Israel's "right to exist," a major concession at the time, while Israel only recognized that Palestinians would have a process leading to limited self-rule.

Under the agreement, Israel never agreed to recognize Palestinian statehood, but instead vaguely defined Palestinian self-government in the occupied territories and to withdraw its armed forces from much, but not all, of the West Bank.

It was a foundation for a promise that would lead to the creation of a Palestinian state in five years, but that was never written down or documented. It was interpreted.

And yet that was such an overwhelming relief for many, including my family. My wife is Jewish, and we traveled through Israel and Palestine between 1994 and 1995. Although the agreement did not spell out true freedom, it created an atmosphere of hope. Palestinians and Israelis, for the first time, got to know each other as potential friends, not enemies.

But the peace that Oslo promised was quickly cut short, in a large part because of the violence by Israeli fanatics that sparked Palestinian outrage and counter-violence.

After shaking Arafat's hand, Rabin declared: "We who have fought against you, the Palestinians, we say to you today, in a loud and a clear voice, enough of blood and tears ... enough!"

He should have spoken to his own people, though.

On Feb. 25, 1994, only five months after the Oslo signing, Chicago Dr. Benjamin "Baruch" Goldstein, wearing an Israeli military uniform and carrying an automatic weapon, entered the Ibrahimi Mosque and massacred 29 Muslims as they prayed, wounding 125 others.

The massacre prompted a wave of suicide bombings by Hamas militants opposed to the peace process, beginning with an attack at a bus stop in Afula on April 6, 1994, designated by the Israelis as "Holocaust Memorial Day," that killed eight Israelis and injured 55 others. It was considered the first suicide attack, although there had been three other attacks, one during the intifada on July 6, 1989, and two in April and October 1993.

A 27-year-old disciple of Benjamin Netanyahu, Yigal Amir, of the far-right Israeli group Eyal, assassinated Rabin, shooting him in the arm and back following a peace rally on Nov. 4, 1995. Eyal confessed that he killed the Israeli leader because he wanted "to give our country to the Arabs." Rabin's widow, Leah, blamed Netanyahu and Israeli extremists for Amir's actions.

The peace quickly unraveled. Israeli and Palestinian extremists who both opposed compromise escalated their violence. Eventually, Ariel Sharon and Netanyahu took control of the country, quickly peeling back the Oslo promises.

But I will never forget one memory driving with my wife through the Jordan Valley at an Israeli checkpoint in the summer of 1995. The Israeli soldiers handed us a flower and were curious that a Palestinian and a Jew would marry.

"You're the future," the Israeli soldier said with a smile.

It was one of the last smiles I would ever see on the face of an Israeli soldier again.

Ray Hanania, Arab News' correspondent in Chicago, was invited by President Bill Clinton to help promote the Oslo Peace Accords to Palestinian and Arab Americans, meeting with Clinton, Rabin and Arafat, and witnessed the Oslo signing with other Jews and Arabs seated on the White House lawn.



Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres signs the Oslo Accords at the White House on Sept. 13, 1993, as Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, US President Bill Clinton and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat look on. AFP


Arab News
Pact heralds dawn of peace in Mideast
Clinton pledges support, accord with Jordan today

SUMMARY

After the excitement of the Egyptian-Israel peace accords of 1978 and 1979 tapered off, there was an 11-year lull in which peace was stymied. Jordan refused to negotiate with Israel without the latter first agreeing to recognize Palestinian rights. Israel's Prime Minister Menachem Begin refused to recognize Palestinian rights. The peace with Egypt went cold as criticism continued to mount from other Arab countries that Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat had 'sold out' the Palestinians and the Arab cause.

Then came an intervention by US President George H.W. Bush, who sought to capitalize on goodwill in the region after forcing Iraq's Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait during the Gulf War on Feb. 28, 1991. Using friendships among Gulf Arab countries, Bush spoke about the concept of 'territory for peace' and also the 'fulfilment of Palestinian rights.'

It wasn't until Yitzhak Rabin was elected Israel prime minister in 1992 that serious discussions began directly between Israelis and Palestinians leading up to the Oslo Accords, signed in September 1993.





The accords were designed to stop the violence of the First Intifada, right, which erupted in December 1987; that month, violent demonstrations rocked the Gaza Strip, where Palestinian protesters, right, were arrested by Israeli soldiers, far right. AFP

HOW WE WROTE IT

Goosebumps, it was one of those events that gives you goosebumps," said one excited observer at the American Embassy (in Riyadh), where a delegation of dignitaries, academics, and journalists viewed the momentous signing.

Afshin Molavi in Arab News, Sept. 14, 1993


Pact heralds dawn of peace in Mideast
Clinton pledges support, accord with Jordan today

Key Dates

March 6, 1991
After the Gulf War, President George H.W. Bush steps up US involvement in the Middle East, including championing an Arab-Israeli treaty based on the 'territory for peace' and fulfilment of Palestinian rights.



Oct. 30 to Nov. 1, 1991
At the Madrid Peace Conference, US Secretary of State James Baker invites Israel to meet with representatives of several Arab countries to pursue peace and establish self-rule for the Palestinians. Israel objects to direct talks with the PLO, and Palestinians from the Occupied West Bank partner with the Jordanian delegation to explore peace prospects.

Sept. 13, 1993
With President Bill Clinton hosting, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin begin the process of Palestinian self-government, with the Palestinians recognizing Israel and Israel recognizing the PLO and the establishment of the Palestine National Authority. The agreement is signed by Mahmoud Abbas and Shimon Peres.



Oct. 14, 1994
The Nobel Committee awards the Nobel Peace Prize to Yasser Arafat, Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres for signing the Oslo Accords.

Oct. 26, 1994
Progress with the Palestinians opens the door to a peace agreement between Israel and Jordan in a ceremony in the Arava Valley, north of Eilat in Israel and near the Jordanian border.



Nov. 4, 1995
Yitzhak Rabin is shot by an Israeli extremist who Rabin's family claim is a follower of the right-wing extremist politics of Ariel Sharon and Benjamin Netanyahu. Rabin dies the following morning.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
The Kosovo conflict
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**

JUNE 25, 1996

The bombing of Khobar Towers

The second major terrorist attack in Saudi Arabia offered further evidence of Iran's influence

MAHMOUD AHMAD
RIYADH

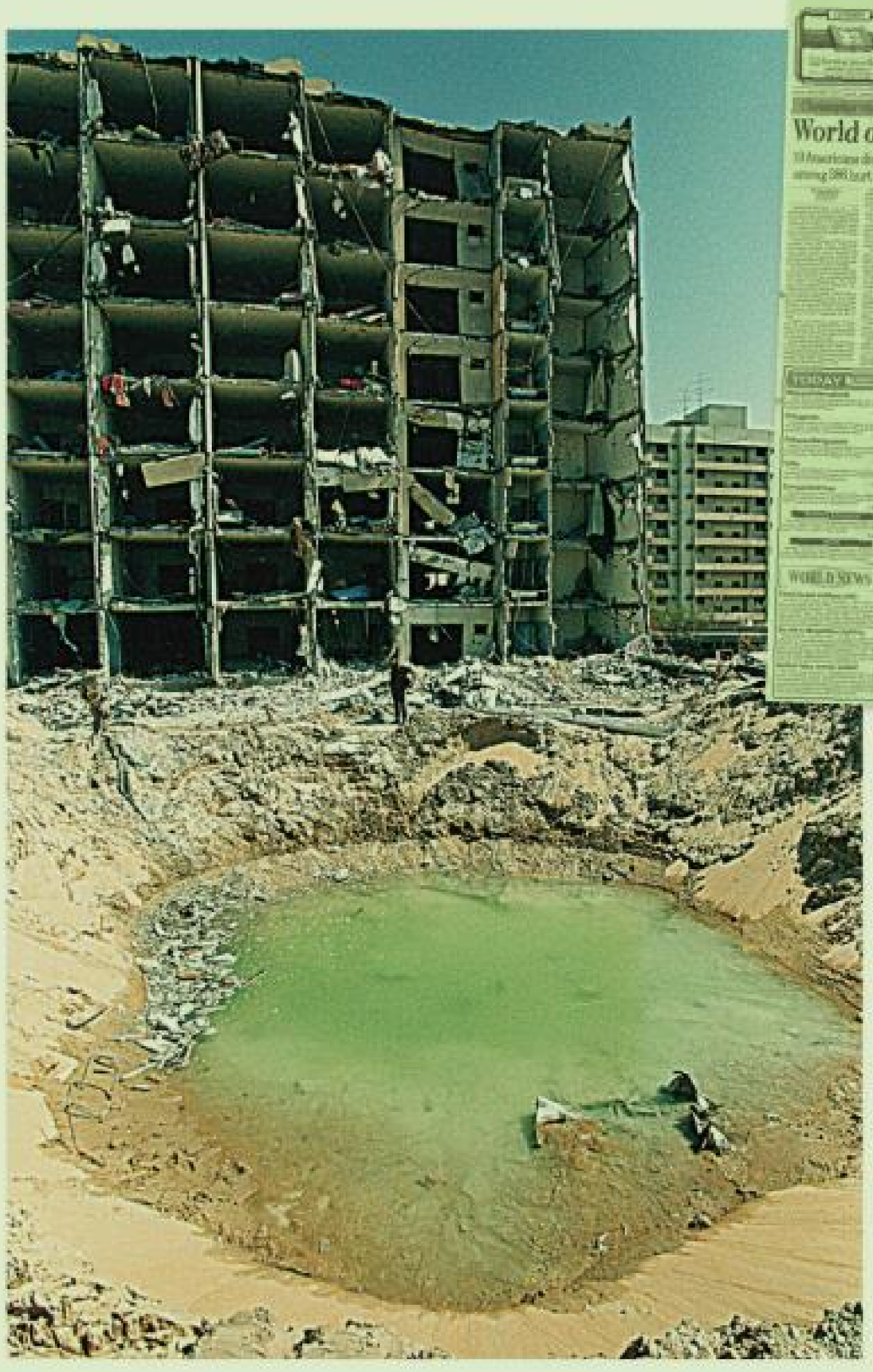
June 25, 1996 — the day when trust was lost and an edifice was sent crashing down. It was the day that brought tears to an evolving friendship. It was the day a residential tower in Alkhobar, hosting soldiers of the coalition enforcing a no fly-zone in southern Iraq after the liberation of Kuwait in 1991, was bombed. It was a day when many things changed.



The news of the bombing — which killed 19 Americans and a Saudi citizen, and injured 498 people of different nationalities — came as a shock to many, as this was the second major terrorist attack in the Kingdom after the siege of Makkah in 1979. Those affected directly by the bombing were left scarred for life, but those who felt its reverberations elsewhere went through a range of emotions that, for some, forever changed their worldview.

Twenty-four years on, I still have memories of the impactful day, of how I lived through the horror from afar. The news itself scared me because of the magnitude of the attack and because it targeted Americans when I was studying in the US. My first thought was whether there would be an adverse reaction, for the Oklahoma bombing on April 19, 1995, was still fresh in my mind.

News of the bombing ... came as a shock to many. Those affected directly were scarred for life.




Arab News
Yale
World outraged at Alkhobar blast
WORLD NEWS

A crater stands in front of Khobar Towers in Dhahran four days after the explosion on June 25, 1996. Getty Images

SUMMARY

On June 25, 1996, 19 US Air Force personnel and one Saudi citizen died when a tanker truck bomb blew the front off an eight-story block of apartments in the eastern Saudi city of Alkhobar. More than 370 Americans were wounded.

It quickly became clear that responsibility for the attack lay with members of the pro-Iran Saudi branch of Hezbollah. But the attack was also proof that Iran was a sponsor of terrorism and a threat to the entire region. Five years later, a US grand jury indicted 14 individuals on murder and other charges. But as US Attorney General John Ashcroft made clear, there was no doubt that 'elements of the Iranian government inspired, supported and supervised' the attackers.

I was in Boston studying English when the Oklahoma bombing took place. At that time, the first piece of news was the arrest of a Jordanian-American man who flew from Oklahoma on the day of the bombing. I still remember the suspicious looks of people on the subway that I used on my way to school.

I was not targeted physically or verbally, but the looks were painful and a sense of distrust was evident. The arrest of Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols later came as a relief to many of us Middle Eastern students abroad. Later, I experienced the same feeling during the Alkhobar Towers bombing, and felt even worse after the 9/11 attacks.

The Alkhobar bombing also left me with a surreal feeling that this was not happening. Meanwhile, most of us had to face questions from those who could not understand why. And there was no escape from the blame. Americans were targeted, and while they had previously been victims of other terror attacks, the difference this time was the location: It happened in Saudi Arabia.

I had moved to the city of Detroit at that time, and we did not have Twitter or social media to receive quick updates on the attack. The Internet was something new. Arabic TV channels were not available at that time. The only source of information was from what we read in American newspapers and heard on US TV channels. Other updates on the attack came from friends who talked to their families back home.

During this period of uncertainty, I remember being asked many questions by my university friends, many of whom could not locate Iran or Saudi Arabia on the map. Most of the time my answers fell short. One comment that sticks in my mind was that of my university history teacher, who remarked with a smile: "When we defend you, you kill us."

The period we lived in, after the Gulf War in 1991, was witnessing a lot of change. The presence of US forces in Saudi Arabia was unwelcome to a segment of society that saw their presence in the land of the Two Holy Mosques as an unannounced invasion. This narrative was widely distributed through the many cassette tapes of famous clerics, who never stopped calling for the withdrawal of American forces and the closure of their military bases.

My first impression, like many of my American friends, was that the Alkhobar attack was by terrorists who were influenced by hate speech. But it was later revealed that Iran was indirectly behind it. Investigations slowly revealed that there was a conspiracy to destabilize Saudi Arabia.

That was not surprising to me, knowing that the Iranian regime has been on a never-ending mission to destabilize Saudi Arabia ever since Supreme Leader Ali Khomeini came to power in 1979.

The regime's main mission was to export its ideology through proxy forces in neighboring countries. What scared me most at that time was that Tehran had managed to do it through its arm in Saudi Arabia, Hezbollah Al-Hejaz, which claimed responsibility for the attack.

Iran is no stranger to sabotage and ill behavior in the region. It is consistently trying to brainwash youngsters in other countries to adopt its ideologies and turn against their own governments.

We have seen how Tehran managed to find a footprint in countries in the heart of Africa and as far as South Asia.

The demonstration of Iranian pilgrims in Makkah in 1987 comes to mind. I watched in horror on TV how they turned the Hajj religious event into chaos, attacking, killing and injuring many innocent pilgrims. I have seen how they burned cars and beat to death police officers on the streets. Similar events happened in Madinah, when they also instigated riots and attacked pilgrims.

A government with an ideology that does not care about sacred places and innocent lives will for sure not feel any sympathy when it directs its minions in the region to carry out such attacks. Iran will not stay calm, and will not deviate from its main goal of destabilizing the region. It is still reaping what it sowed in Alkhobar and other areas. What has Iran gained since 1979 except chaos, war and economic sanctions?

Mahmoud Ahmad is a former Arab News manager. He was a bachelor of marketing student at the University of Detroit Mercy when the Khobar Towers were bombed.

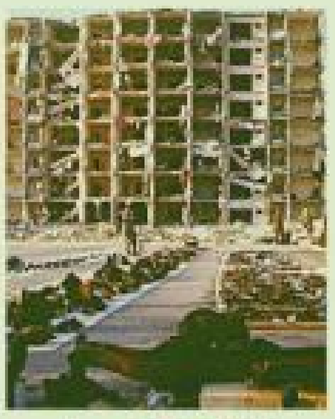
HOW WE WROTE IT


Yale
World outraged at Alkhobar blast
19 Americans die; 147 Saudis among 386 hurt in explosion

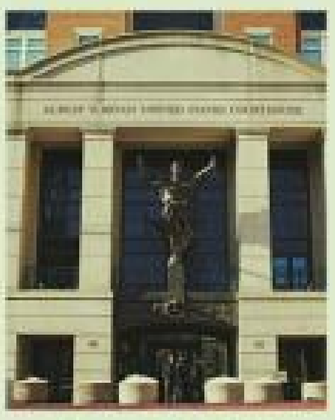
Residents confirmed that the explosion preceded a blinding bolt of light. The flashing light was seen and a thunderous boom was felt as far away as the Petromin district, nearly 25 km from the Iskan complex.

From a story by Saeed Haider in Arab News on June 27, 1996

Key Dates



June 25, 1996
A huge truck bomb is detonated outside a building housing US personnel in Alkhobar, killing 19 and one Saudi civilian.



June 21, 2001
Thirteen Saudis and a Lebanese man are indicted on terrorism charges by a federal grand jury in Virginia.

July 2, 2001
Saudi Arabia says it has arrested 11 of the 13 Saudi suspects, who will be tried in the Kingdom.



Dec. 23, 2006
A federal judge rules that Iran is responsible for the bombing and orders the government to pay compensation of $254 million to the families of Americans who died.

Aug. 26, 2015
Ahmed Al-Mughassil, the man accused of being behind the bombing, is arrested in Beirut and handed over to Saudi authorities.



Sept. 10, 2018
Another US court orders Iran to pay $104.7 million in compensation to 15 injured victims of the bombing.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East

TOMORROW
9/11 For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**





The aftermath of a 1999 bombing in Pec, Kosovo. The conflict began in the former Yugoslavia with an armed uprising by the Kosovo Liberation Army. Getty Images

SUMMARY

On March 5, 1998, after years of peaceful struggle by Kosovo's political leaders for greater autonomy bore no fruit, the Kosovo Liberation Army launched an armed uprising against Serbian rule in the mainly Muslim Yugoslav province.

The rebellion drew a harsh response from Belgrade, which did not discriminate between fighters and civilians, and sent a flood of refugees into neighboring Albania, creating a major humanitarian crisis.

NATO began airstrikes on March 24, 1999, against Serbian military targets as a direct response to Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's campaign against ethnic Albanian Kosovars. The NATO campaign lasted 11 weeks, causing many civilian deaths and heavy damage to infrastructure.

After Yugoslavia accepted a peace proposal in June 1999, UN Secretary-General Javier Solana ordered the cessation of NATO bombing, followed by the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1244, which permitted international authorities' presence in Kosovo. The region declared unilateral independence in 2008, a decision that remains contested to this day.

MARCH 5, 1998

Conflict in Kosovo

The plight of the mainly Muslim Albanians drew humanitarian help from the Islamic world

EMINA OSMANDZIKOVIC
DUBAI

By the standards of most recent conflicts, the Kosovo war from 1998 to 1999 was brief. It began with an armed uprising by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) against Serbian rule over the Kosovo region of rump Yugoslavia.



President Slobodan Milosevic's regime in Belgrade responded with overbearing force, spawning a massive refugee crisis and raising the specter of a Bosnia-like slaughter of Kosovar Muslims.

NATO intervened with a prolonged bombing campaign, leading to a peace accord and an end to the fighting. In February 2008, Kosovo declared independence from Serbia amid unprecedented scenes of joy and jubilation.

The US and several EU member countries recognized Kosovo as an independent state, but Serbia, backed by Russia, did not. Since then Kosovo has been in limbo, a parliamentary democracy with a lower-middle-income economy.

Growing up as a child of the Bosnian war in Sarajevo in the 1990s, the events in nearby Kosovo are etched forever in my mind. I am all too aware of the ancient hatreds that lay beneath. Historically, Kosovo lay at the heart of the Serbian empire, having been the site of the coronations of a number of Serbian kings in the Middle Ages.

Despite gaining a measure of autonomy under the former Yugoslavia in 1974, the province's mainly Muslim ethnic Albanian population had chafed at the dominance of ethnic Serbs. In the late 1980s, the Kosovars' leader Ibrahim Rugova initiated a policy of nonviolent resistance to the abrogation of the province's constitutional autonomy by Milosevic.

The president and members of Kosovo's Serbian minority had long fretted that ethnic Albanians were in demographic and political control of a region that held deep significance for Orthodox Christian Serbs. During the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia, and even after the breakup of Yugoslavia, Kosovars began to be viewed with suspicion by Serb nationalists.

Popular support swung in favor of ethnic Albanian radicals who were convinced their demands for autonomy could not be secured through Rugova's peaceful methods. In 1996, the KLA emerged on the scene with sporadic attacks on Serbian police and politicians, a campaign that grew in intensity over the next two years.

The heavy-handed tactics of the Serbian police, paramilitary groups and the army triggered a massive refugee crisis, which drew the attention of the international media and community. An informal coalition of the US, the UK, Germany, France, Italy and Russia, known as the Contact Group, demanded an immediate cease-fire, among other things.

The UN Security Council condemned what it called the excessive use of force and imposed an arms embargo, but the steps failed to halt the violence. On March 24, NATO began a campaign of airstrikes against Serbian military targets. In response, Serbian forces drove hundreds of thousands of Kosovars into Albania, Macedonia (now North Macedonia) and Montenegro.

While the wartime suffering of the Kosovars elicited sympathy and support from the Islamic world, some leaders criticized NATO for sidestepping the UN and labeling the campaign a "humanitarian war."

The legitimacy of the unilateral decision to launch airstrikes was questionable under international law. But then-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan supported the intervention on principle, saying: "There are times when the use of force may be legitimate in the pursuit of peace."

Arab countries such as Libya and Iraq, which had close relations with Yugoslavia at the time, predictably insisted on a political solution. The Gulf states, led by Saudi Arabia, kept their focus on organizing humanitarian assistance and seeking a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Saudi Arabia sent two relief planes with more than 120 tons of tents, dates, blankets and carpets, according to official statements.

A Saudi C-130 Hercules relief plane flew aid daily from either Jeddah or Riyadh to Albania's capital Tirana, where Saudi Embassy and air force personnel unloaded the contents. Besides a field hospital in Tirana, which opened on May 24, 1999, the Kingdom set up 10 more health centers across Albania and Macedonia.

A Saudi "telethon" raised almost $19 million on April 16, 1999. The Jeddah-based Islamic Relief Organization, which helped organize it, said it sent $12 million in humanitarian aid. A separate Kuwait TV initiative raised $7 million in one day, with Emir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah personally donating $1 million.

UAE organizations set up one of the largest relief camps, where roughly 10,000 Kosovar refugees received meals and access to basic amenities, and a fully equipped field hospital. The Red Crescent set up refugee camps in Macedonia and Albania.

The NATO bombing campaign lasted 11 weeks and eventually expanded to Belgrade, causing heavy damage to the city's infrastructure and the inadvertent deaths of many civilians. In June 1999, the Yugoslav government accepted a peace proposal mediated jointly by Russia and Finland.

NATO and Yugoslavia signed a peace accord outlining a troop withdrawal and the return of nearly 1 million refugees and 500,000 internally displaced Kosovars. Most ethnic Serbs left the region. NATO's humanitarian military intervention saved the lives of thousands of innocent Kosovars.

Emina Osmandzikovic, who writes about refugee issues for Arab News, grew up in Sarajevo in the 1990s during the Bosnian war.
Twitter: @eminaosmnandzik

HOW WE REPORTED IT

The conflict in Kosovo escalated today as Serbian forces launched a massive assault against Albanian villages in the province. Eyewitnesses and Albanian groups in Kosovo said civilians, among them many women and children, were fleeing the region amid shooting, mortar fire and burning houses.

AFP report in Arab News from Pristina, March 5, 1998



Serbia assault kills 'dozens' in Kosovo



arab news

Serbia assault kills 'dozens' in Kosovo

Key Dates



March 5, 1998
Kosovo conflict begins with an armed uprising by KLA.



March 24, 1999
NATO launches a campaign of airstrikes against Serbia.



June 10, 1999
NATO orders an end to airstrikes 11 weeks after the bombing began.



Feb. 4, 2003
Yugoslavia ceases to exist, renamed State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (the latter becomes independent on May 21, 2006).



Feb. 17, 2008
Kosovo declares independence from Serbia in a contested move.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East

TOMORROW
The Makkah school fire
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**





United Airlines Flight 175 crashes into the South Tower of the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001. Getty Images/AFP


Havoc as airlines suspend flights to US, page 2

The Independent | arab news — SAUDI ARABIA'S FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY

Terror strikes US

Thousands die as planes crash into WTC towers

Major cities turn into eerie ghost towns

Bush vows revenge as US denies Kabul attack

Kingdom denounces 'inhuman' attacks

Attacks leave America in shock, disbelief

CHICKEN FLAMER 5 FLAME GRILLED BURGER KING

SUMMARY

At 8:46 a.m. on Sept. 11, 2001, an American Airlines Boeing 767 flew into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York. As images of the stricken building claimed the attention of TV news channels around the globe, it seemed possible that the tower, an iconic symbol of America, had been the victim of a tragic accident.

But 17 minutes later, when another Boeing 767 struck the South Tower as the world looked on, it became shockingly clear that the US was under attack. The tower collapsed at 9:59 a.m., followed 29 minutes later by the North Tower. Two more aircraft had been hijacked. One was flown into the Pentagon; the other crashed in a Pennsylvania field after passengers fought back and foiled the hijackers' plan to attack Washington.

The attacks left 2,996 dead, including the 19 Al-Qaeda terrorists responsible, but the true cost is still being counted today. In under a month, the US had invaded Afghanistan, embarking on the longest war in its history, and in March 2003 a US-led coalition invaded Iraq.

SEPT. 11, 2001

The 9/11 attacks by Al-Qaeda

Horror unfolded live on TV, leading to the 'war on terror' that defined our era

JONATHAN GORNALL
LONDON

The enormity of the events that unfolded in New York on that late-summer Tuesday in 2001 can be measured by the fact that few of the millions who witnessed the horror unfolding live on news broadcasts around the world will ever forget where they were that day.



I was in the small port of Playa San Juan on the Spanish island of Tenerife, making last-minute adjustments to the 7.5-meter boat in which I was about to set out in a rowing race across the Atlantic to the Caribbean island of Barbados.

It was a beautiful day, with the sunlight shimmering on the surface of the gently undulating ocean. Ignorant of the events unfolding at that very moment 5,000 km away across the Atlantic, I was idling along the picturesque waterfront, heading back to my rented apartment from the small fishing harbor where the race fleet had been assembled, when a shout from one of the other rowers cut into my thoughts.

He was standing on the other side of the road, in the doorway of a small restaurant that had become our unofficial race headquarters. He called me across and I went inside, blinking as my eyes adjusted to the sudden darkness. The bar was unusually busy for the time of day, but no one was sitting at the tables. Instead, they were stood and grouped in a semi-circle, staring up in near-silence at the TV suspended above the bar.

It took a few moments to make sense of what I was seeing. There on the screen were the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, the establishing shot familiar to anyone who had ever seen a movie set in New York. Unfamiliar was the sight of smoke billowing out of both towers. The image was difficult to comprehend. Could both buildings possibly have caught fire at the same time?

Then came the replay of United Airlines Flight 175 flying into the second, South Tower, slicing through the structure as though it were made of paper and disintegrating in a ball of orange flame, instantly destroying all hope that New York was in the grip of some kind of terrible but accidental calamity.

Over the next few hours and days in Playa San Juan, there was much discussion about whether it would be appropriate for the race, which all of us recognized to be an essentially frivolous exercise, to go ahead in the shadow of the disaster.

Some of the rowers, including my teammate, argued for it to be scrapped. In the end, the race went ahead, but my teammate's heart was not in it, and after a week at sea, he dropped out and boarded one of the two yachts shadowing the fleet as rescue boats. Others, including me, subscribed to the "if we change our way of life the terrorists will have won" argument, although to be honest my motive for pressing on was far more personal and selfish.

I had trained insanely hard, and had taken a leave of absence from my job as a journalist at The Times in London, to take part in this race, in a boat I had spent the best part of a year building myself. Not going ahead was unthinkable.

In the end, most of us looked for moral guidance to the two Americans crewing the only US boat in the race, and they had no intention of backing out. In the days after the attacks, the US government told its citizens abroad to keep a low profile, advice to which one of the oarsmen, a native New Yorker, responded by going nowhere without the Stars and Stripes wrapped proudly around his shoulders.

In the end, the race started as planned on Oct. 7, 2001. That same day, seemingly striking out in a blind rage, America attacked Afghanistan. The 9/11 attacks, it had concluded, had been carried out by members of Al-Qaeda, a terror organization being sheltered by the Taliban, which had been in control of much of Afghanistan since 1996.

Alone at sea, my mind was filled with the horrors that had unfolded, from the sight of trapped occupants of the Twin Towers, unable to face the fury of the flames, jumping to their deaths, to thoughts of the dreadful last minutes of the passengers on United Airlines Flight 93, struggling desperately to overcome the hijackers before their aircraft was flown into the ground near Stonycreek Township, Pennsylvania.

Night after night, I lay flat out on the deck of the boat, exhausted after a day at the oars, gazing up at the astonishing panoply of stars and wondering which of the aircraft I could see tracking west to east across the heavens was bearing America's instruments of revenge.

When atmospherics allowed, I tuned into the Voice of America on the shortwave radio, and listened as the US launched its "war on terror" and the world slipped steadily toward a disaster that ultimately would cost far more lives than the approximately 3,000 lost on 9/11.

Having ousted the Taliban government, whose authority had been recognized by a number of countries, the US and its replacement Afghan Interim Administration found themselves facing the Taliban reborn as an insurgency. America had embarked on the longest war in its history which, almost two decades later, continues despite ongoing peace talks.

As for Osama bin Laden, the man who masterminded the attacks, he narrowly escaped US ground troops in Afghanistan in December 2001, and remained at large for almost another decade before American special forces found and killed him in his hideout in Abbottabad, Pakistan, in May 2011.

In the meantime, as part of the "war on terror" announced by President George W. Bush in September 2001, a coalition of US-led forces invaded Iraq in March 2003, on the pretext that dictator Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction.

He did not. But the fallout from 9/11 settled over Iraq and the wider region like a black cloud of ash, smothering its economy, costing thousands more lives and, arguably, unleashing the Al-Qaeda-allied Daesh and its ruinous bid to establish an extremist "caliphate" across vast tracts of the Middle East.

It was only after my feet finally touched dry land again that I realized just how much the events of 9/11 had altered the world and, crucially, the dynamic between West and East. To my surprise — not to say dismay — my only son had joined the UK's Royal Marines, and in early 2003 left for Kuwait prior to the invasion of Iraq.

That spring, I spent many weeks huddled once again around a TV set, keeping my phone close and hoping not to receive the news that would devastate so many families, West and East, that year and for many more to come. Mercifully, my son survived. Not all of his companions did. After 9/11, nobody's world would ever be quite the same again.

Jonathan Gornall, a writer for Arab News, was on leave from The Times in London for a transatlantic boat race when 9/11 happened; his son, a UK Royal Marine, later took part in the invasion of Iraq.

HOW WE WROTE IT


SAUDI ARABIA'S FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY

Terror strikes US

Thousands die as planes crash into WTC towers

Major cities turn into eerie ghost towns

Bush vows revenge as US denies Kabul attack

Saudi Arabia yesterday denounced the 'regrettable and inhuman' attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in the US, and reiterated its commitment to fight all forms of terrorism.

From a story on Arab News' front page, Sept. 12, 2001

Key Dates

Aug. 2, 2001
CIA's daily presidential briefing, headlined 'Bin Laden determined to strike in US,' warns of 'suspicious activity in this country consistent with preparations for hijackings.'

Sept. 11, 2001
American Airlines Flight 11 hits North Tower at 8:46 a.m.; United Airlines Flight 175 hits South Tower at 9:03 a.m.; American Airlines Flight 77 hits Pentagon at 9:37 a.m.; United Airlines Flight 93 crashes near Stonycreek Township, Pennsylvania, at 10:03 a.m.

Sept. 25, 2001
US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld announces Operation Enduring Freedom.

Sept. 26, 2001
Saudi Arabia cuts diplomatic ties with Afghanistan's Taliban government.

Sept. 27, 2001
FBI identifies all 19 hijackers: 15 Saudis, two Emiratis, one Lebanese and their leader, Mohammed Atta, from Egypt.



Oct. 7, 2001
America attacks Afghanistan to overthrow Taliban and dislodge Al-Qaeda.

Dec. 7, 2001
Taliban insurgency begins in Afghanistan.

March 19, 2003
US-led coalition invades Iraq.



Oct. 29, 2004
Bin Laden admits responsibility for attacks.

May 2, 2011
US Navy SEALs kill Bin Laden in his hideout in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

Sept. 11, 2011
9/11 memorial completed at site of Twin Towers.



Feb. 29, 2020
After 18 years of war, US and Taliban sign tentative peace agreement.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
The rise of Erdogan's AKP in Turkey
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**



One of more than 50 students injured in the 2002 school fire recovers in hospital. The blaze claimed the lives of 15 pupils. Magnum Photo

MARCH 11, 2002

When a deadly fire killed 15 schoolgirls in Makkah

The tragedy was a tipping point between Saudis and the religious police, who were accused of hindering rescue efforts


Kingdom & Gulf

Were commission members at fire tragedy impostors?

School guard refutes allegations

Head of PGE 'ready to face the music'

Fire destroys 200-year old building

WEATHER

Kuwait pours cold water on proposal for GCC-Iraq talks

ISE management, teachers mired in bitter confrontation

MAHA AKEEL
JEDDAH

The tragic death of 15 young girls in the Makkah girls' school fire that occurred in March 2002 will forever be a black mark in our memory, not only because of the number of innocent girls who lost their lives but also because of the circumstances that led to their death and their implications.



It was reported that the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice — Saudi Arabia's so-called religious police, or more commonly known as the "hayaa" — prevented the schoolgirls from escaping the burning building and hindered rescue workers from entering the building because the students were not covered in their abayas and headscarves.

The actions of the religious police caused outrage and condemnation both inside the country and internationally. A government inquiry concluded that the educational authorities were responsible for neglecting fire safety at the school, but rejected the accusations that the actions of religious police contributed to the deaths, despite the accounts of eyewitnesses and Civil Defense officers.

Nevertheless, due to public anger and criticism of the religious police, the General Presidency for Girls' Education, which administered girls' schools and was controlled by conservative clerics, was scrapped.

The fire at Makkah's Intermediate School No. 31 (for girls aged 13 to 15) started on the morning of March 11, 2002, caused by an unattended cigarette in a room on the top floor, according to the official inquiry. Others claimed it was caused by an electrical short circuit from a stove in the tearoom. It quickly spread, the girls panicked and rushed toward a narrow stairwell in the three-story building, where the majority of the deaths occurred as a staircase collapsed. Fifteen girls died in the tragedy and more than 50 were injured. The ill-equipped rented property was overcrowded, with more than 800 pupils and about 50 teachers. The inquiry found that the school lacked fire extinguishers, alarms, and emergency stairs and exits. Furthermore, the windows, as in all girls' schools, were covered with iron grilles and could not be opened. It was a disaster waiting to happen.

Many other factors contributed to the horrible incident. According to witnesses, the main gate of the building was locked by the male guard, who was away at the moment the fire started. Firefighters reached the school, only to find that members of the religious police — who usually roamed outside girls' schools to make sure that the girls and female staff were properly dressed and covered when arriving and leaving — were preventing anyone from fleeing or entering because the girls were uncovered. Precious time went by as girls suffocated, screamed for help and trampled over each other before the regular police were able to intervene and allow the firefighters to enter.

The residential building-turned-school had been rented since 1990 and, like all such buildings, was not suitable for use as a school. The General Presidency for Girls' Education rented the buildings that housed most girls' schools at that time. Most of the buildings had small rooms, few bathrooms, narrow staircases, small, dusty playgrounds and no proper science labs, enough computers or art classes. Most importantly, they lacked safety measures. Unfortunately, rented buildings are still being used for schools to this day, although the numbers have decreased in recent years, and better evaluation and monitoring of their facilities is applied.

This tragic story brought attention to corruption, neglect, dilapidated facilities and the religious establishment in rare public criticism in the local media. Consequently, the government decided to dismantle the General Presidency for Girls' Education — an autonomous government agency created when girls' schools first opened in 1960 — and place responsibility for the administration of girls' schools with the Ministry of Education, which also managed boys' schools.

The religious police were, for so long, a feared presence in public places, not necessarily because they were "promoting virtue and preventing vice" as they saw it, but mostly because of their harassment, physical abuse and arbitrary arrests, especially of women for such trivial matters as not covering the face or not wearing the proper abaya. Even in the Great Mosque of Makkah, they would gawk at women and order them to cover their faces. They were a law unto themselves and imposed restrictions on every aspect of people's lives that had nothing to do with religion, but rather their own narrow-minded interpretations and shows of power. They patrolled public areas to enforce dress codes, gender segregation and prayer breaks.

In 2016, responding to growing discontent over the violent behavior of the religious police, which caused over the years several incidents of deaths and injuries, the government curtailed some of their powers by disallowing them from detaining, pursuing or questioning suspects. They were required to act "kindly and gently" and only report suspicious activity to law enforcement officers for them to take the necessary action.

Today, they are rarely seen in public places. With the new rights gained by women, such as driving, the removal of gender segregation barriers, and the opening up of the country to entertainment — which were all things they objected to — little role is left for them except within their assigned mandate.

Maha Akeel is a Saudi writer based in Jeddah.
Twitter: @MahaAkeel1

SUMMARY

On March 11, 2002, 15 young women lost their lives in a fire at their school in Makkah when members of the religious police prevented Civil Defense officers from entering and stopped pupils from fleeing the building because the girls weren't wearing abayas or headscarves.

The tragedy, which shocked the country and the wider Islamic world, was a tipping point in the relationship between the state and citizens of Saudi Arabia and the religious police, aka the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice.

Since the tragedy, the committee, a government body established in 1940 but reinvented in more radical form in 1979 in the wake of the Iranian Revolution and the seizure of Makkah's Grand Mosque by religious extremists, has been progressively stripped of most of its powers.

Once a common sight on the streets, its officers and volunteers are now rarely seen in a rapidly modernizing Saudi Arabia that is benefiting from the reforms outlined in Vision 2030 and, under the direction of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, reverting to a more moderate form of Islam.

HOW WE WROTE IT


...re commission members at fire tragedy impostors?

School guard refutes allegations

Head of PGE 'ready to face the music'

An Arab News team which visited the school yesterday found a large number of abayas (black gowns), shoes and bags left by the girls in the rush to get out of the building following the fire.
From a report in Arab News on March 12, 2002





An abandoned classroom; then Makkah governor Prince Abdul Majeed visiting the hospital. AFP and Asharq Al-Awsat

Key Dates



March 11, 2002
15 pupils — nine Saudis, an Egyptian, a Guinean, a Chadian, a Nigerian and a student from Niger — die in a fire at Intermediate Girls' School No. 31 in Makkah.

March 14, 2002
Arab News publishes a Civil Defense report accusing the religious police of having 'intentionally obstructed the efforts to evacuate the girls,' resulting in an 'increased number of casualties.'

March 24, 2002
The head of the General Presidency for Girls' Education is forced into early retirement and the organization, judged responsible for safety failings and overcrowding at the school, is merged with the Education Ministry.

April 11, 2016
A royal decree strips religious police of privileges, bans them from pursuing, questioning or arresting anyone suspected of a crime, and urges them to 'encourage virtue and forbid vice by kindly and gently advising.'



Jan. 13, 2012
King Abdullah, above, replaces the head of the religious police with a more moderate figure.



Oct. 24, 2017
Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman pledges to return Saudi Arabia to its past of 'moderate Islam' at the FII in Riyadh.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
The US war on Iraq
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**





SUMMARY

On Aug. 14, 2001, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the former mayor of Istanbul, united the leaders of several previously banned Islamist parties to form Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, the Justice and Development Party. The AKP has dominated Turkish politics ever since.

The AKP's landslide victory in the general election of Nov. 3, 2002 — the first for a party with Islamist roots since the founding of the Turkish republic in 1923 — was a turning point in the country's history.

Many feared the victory posed a threat to Turkey's secular constitution, but Erdogan vowed to 'build a Turkey where common sense prevails' and pledged that 'under our government, Turkey will be in harmony with the world.'

Erdogan served as prime minister from 2003 until 2014. Despite accusations of corruption and backsliding on its commitment to secular democratic values, and surviving an attempted military coup in 2016, the AKP has remained in power for the past 17 years.

In 2017, however, the party narrowly won a referendum granting the president sweeping new powers, undermining Turkey's democracy.

Key Dates



Aug. 14, 2001
Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the former mayor of Istanbul, founds the conservative Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, the Justice and Development Party.

Nov. 3, 2002
The AKP wins a landslide victory in the Turkish general election.

July 22, 2007
The AKP retains a majority in the general election, a performance it repeats in 2011.

Aug. 10, 2014
With more than 51 percent of the vote, Erdogan is elected president of Turkey.



June 7, 2015
The AKP loses a majority in a general election, leading to a hung parliament.

Nov. 1, 2015
Erdogan calls a snap general election, which returns the AKP to a majority government.

July 15, 2016
A failed coup attempt by military factions concerned that 'the democratic and secular rule of law has been eroded by the current government' leads to a state of emergency, widespread arrests and purges of government officials.

April 16, 2017
The AKP narrowly wins a referendum abolishing the post of prime minister, granting the president sweeping new powers and transforming Turkey's political system from parliamentary to presidential.



June 24, 2018
The AKP joins forces with the ultra-right-wing Nationalist Movement Party to form the People's Alliance, which wins a majority in the election. Erdogan is re-elected president.

NOV. 3, 2002

The rise of Erdogan's AKP in Turkey

Ties were damaged when the country deviated from its policy of not meddling in Arab affairs

YASAR YAKIS
ANKARA, TURKEY

I joined Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP) upon the invitation of former Turkish President Abdullah Gul. We met each other when I was ambassador in Riyadh and he was an economist at the Islamic Development Bank. Our relations have remained excellent ever since that time.



As I was the only founding member acquainted with international relations, my colleagues in the party thought I should draft the "Foreign Relations" chapter of the party program. Here is what I wrote at that time regarding Turkey's relations with the Middle East: "Turkey maintains strong historical and cultural relations with all countries in the Middle East. The AKP will build on these foundations and cooperate with them in all fields to carry further ahead these valuable assets. It will do everything to eliminate misunderstandings and boost the relations in all fields."

When we won the elections and I became foreign minister, we immediately started to implement these promises. A few months after the AKP came to power, the Turkish parliament — where the AKP was holding two-thirds of the seats — rejected a US proposal to open a second front in the north of Iraq because it believed that the American invasion would bring nothing but calamity to this Arab country.

The AKP consolidated Turkey's relations with all countries in the region and beyond. It prioritized soft power in its ties with all nations. In a 2008 election for temporary membership of the UN Security Council, Turkey was supported by 151 of the 192 voting countries.

Having lived for several years in Saudi Arabia, both Prime Minister Gul and I were fully aware of the importance of closer relations with Riyadh, so we gave priority to further improving them. There were already strong relations that went back several centuries. In the late 1980s, Turkey's late President Turgut Ozal and King Fahd gave a new impetus to these friendly relations. They transformed them into cooperation in several areas. I was ambassador in Riyadh during that period and Saudi authorities opened wide all doors for me, and the Saudi government bestowed on me the Order of King Abdul Aziz (First Class) for my contribution to Turkish-Saudi friendship.

The momentum accelerated when King Abdullah visited Turkey in 2006 and again in 2007. The second time was in combination with the summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. President Gul and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, deviating from the established practice of receiving foreign heads of state in the presidential palace, visited King Abdullah in his hotel room. This was a show of appreciation for the king and the importance that Turkey's top two leaders attributed to Saudi Arabia.



Under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, above, the AKP began deviating from its traditional policy of not meddling in Arab affairs. AFP

These two countries also cooperated in the US-led anti-Daesh coalition, but Turkey's commitment was not as strong as many other members. In August 2014, Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah Al-Sheikh, the grand mufti of Saudi Arabia, condemned Daesh, saying: "Extremist and militant ideas and terrorism are not in any way part of Islam." During the same period, in an unfortunate coincidence, then-Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu used a narrative belittling Daesh as "nothing but a group of furious youths." This attempt to trivialize Daesh's threat has been brought back to the forefront now that he has announced the establishment of a new political party called "Future."

Turkey's deviation from its traditional policy of not meddling in Arab affairs started with its military support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria and Libya, and political support for the organization in Egypt, because the AKP was heavily inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology. In the divide between most Arab countries on the one side and Qatar on the other, Turkey sided with Qatar, again probably because of its Muslim Brotherhood inclination.

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, had in 1934 instructed an undersecretary in the Foreign Ministry, saying: "Turkey's close relations with many Arab countries are valuable assets. We have to maintain and improve them, but this should not turn to meddling in intra-Arab affairs and Turkey should not attempt to give advice unless they ask." Turkey is now doing the exact opposite of this.

Davutoglu's neo-Ottomanist ideology added insult to injury. The school curriculum in Turkey says that Ottomans brought peace, justice and stability to the Middle East and the Balkans. Many in Turkey cherish these ideas, but those who studied history from other sources know that the Ottoman legacy in the Middle East and the Balkans is remembered more for its negative aspects.

Turkey has to put aside this battered ideology and keep in mind that the Ottoman state collapsed 100 years ago, so it has to base its relations with the countries of the former Ottoman Empire on today's realities.

Yasar Yakis is a former foreign minister of Turkey and founding member of the ruling AK Party.
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HOW WE WROTE IT

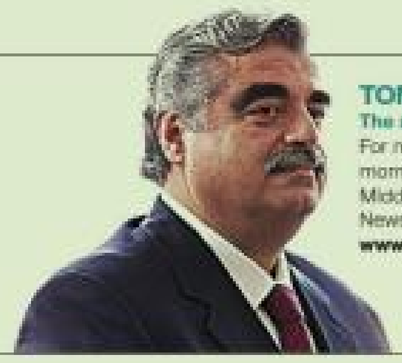
Islamists' win marks a turning point in Turkish history

Turks want leaders who will empty out the corrupt soup that Turkish politics has become and act with justice and honesty.

From an Arab News editorial, Nov. 5, 2002

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
The assassination of Hariri
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**

MARCH 20, 2003

The US war on Iraq

When weapons of mass destruction became weapons of mass deception

SIRAJ WAHAB
JEDDAH

What shall we call the 2003 US war in Iraq? The Americans had no problem at all in calling it a liberation. From the Arab perspective, however, it was something completely different. If you flip through the pages of our newspaper in the lead-up to the bombing of Baghdad on the night of March 20, 2003, what will strike you is that many Arabs were opposed to the US war in Iraq because they correctly foresaw that it would lead to giving Iraq on a platter to Iran.



US President George W. Bush was always prejudiced against Saddam Hussein. Bush's Cabinet colleagues and advisers, especially Donald Rumsfeld, Richard Perle and other neocons in the administration, made no attempt to hide their own pathological dislike of Saddam.

There were different theories of how Bush had come to despise him. Some reports said he hated Saddam for having plotted to kill his father during his visit to Kuwait. Whatever the truth, Bush Jr.'s advisers took full advantage of the president's strong dislike, and fed it with a variety of stories.

The horrific attacks on US soil by Al-Qaeda on Sept. 11, 2001, gave Bush and his advisers a reason to take out Saddam. He was portrayed as a supporter of Al-Qaeda and its leader Osama bin Laden, and was thus tarred with the same black brush of Muslim terrorism.

> **The region continues to suffer the consequences of that war.**

Nobody in the Middle East, however, was taken in by this story, since it was well-known that Saddam hated Al-Qaeda more than anyone else. As a Baathist, he saw a great threat to his rule from Islamist terrorists, a much more powerful threat than from his arch-enemy Iran.

The post-9/11 atmosphere, however, was such that it was easy to create any narrative and go for the elimination of any perceived enemy. That is exactly what happened with Saddam. A flimsy case was put together that he was in possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), based on flawed intelligence.

Colin Powell, Bush's secretary of state, made an elaborate speech at the UN, complete with maps and pictures of where the WMDs were allegedly hidden. The wider world was nonetheless unconvinced, and the UN — which had sent its own experts to Iraq on a fruitless search for WMDs — refused to approve the war.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal raised serious concerns on "Frontline," a show on the US network PBS. "What's going to happen to them (Iraqi soldiers and officials), especially since the army was disbanded and the government fired? And who's going to rule Iraq if you have that?" he said.

"Saddam Hussein had perhaps 2 million people controlling Iraq. The US and its allies have close to 150,000. How do you make that work?"

Nonetheless, Washington choreographed a plan to attack Iraq. The pages of Arab News are full of how Saudi Arabia advised the US, its closest Western ally, to call for sanctions instead.

Even after Saddam invaded Kuwait in the 1990s and his army was pulverized by the US and Saudi-led liberation forces, Riyadh convinced Washington not to remove Saddam from power. Saudi officials knew his removal would lead to chaos in the region and provide Iran with a golden opportunity to run amok.

As things panned out later, the removal of Saddam led to horrific atrocities, both in Iraq and the wider region. Al-Qaeda, which was given a severe drubbing in Afghanistan, bounced back and found an ideal and very fertile breeding ground in Iraq.

Much later, Daesh appeared on the scene. Sensing an opening, Iran stepped in and unleashed a sectarian war. Thousands died. Tehran and its many murderous militias used improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to devastating effect.

As a senior staff member at Arab News, I was part of the team that would select the front page stories and photos; some of them from that time remain etched in our memories. There was a front page on March 19, 2003, with Bush in a cowboy hat with the headline: "High Noon for Cowboy Era."

The front page also referred to King Fahd's address to the nation on March 18, in which he said: "The Kingdom will under no circumstances take part in the war against Iraq, and its armed forces will not enter an inch of Iraqi territory."

Baghdad would be bombed the next night, after the 48-hour ultimatum given by Bush to Saddam had passed. There was extensive reporting from Kuwait, Jordan, Washington, and of course Baghdad.

Arab News had correspondents on the ground who filed their reports to the newsroom in Jeddah. The March 21, 2003 edition had the headline: "Baghdad set ablaze, palaces, Saddam's family home targeted in aerial bombardment."

On the following nights, the US unleashed at least 3,000 satellite-guided bombs and cruise missiles at Iraq. There was not an Iraqi WMD in sight. In the "Letters to the Editor" column, readers continued to refer to the elusive WMDs as "the weapons of mass deception."

There was severe criticism in Saudi Arabia, especially because there was no UN approval for the war. In a piece in the March 21, 2003 edition, Adnan Jaber, a Jordanian journalist in Saudi Arabia, was quoted as saying the war "would increase terrorism rather than reduce it since political instability would provide a breeding ground for radicalism."

His words were profound. The very political instability he mentioned led to many in Saddam's army, which the Americans had foolishly disbanded, joining Daesh and Al-Qaeda in order to strike a blow against the invaders who had ravaged their homeland for no purpose.

There were, as in all wars, moments of comic relief. All of us would gather around the TV screens in the newsroom to listen to Saddam's famous information minister, Mohammed Saeed Al-Sahaf, making ridiculous claims when he addressed the media every day.

According to him, Saddam's army was on the verge of victory, whereas the reality was exactly the opposite. The much-touted American "shock and awe" had led to the melting away of the Iraqi military with no resistance. It was later revealed that Iraqi soldiers had simply given up their uniforms and chosen guerrilla warfare by joining Daesh or Al-Qaeda.

The region continues to suffer the consequences of that war: The increase in terrorism, the political instability and the breeding ground for radicalism. In virtually all cases, the consequences have been much worse than the war itself. Arab News was well situated to report the war and its after-effects, and is proud to continue the same dedicated and responsible journalism today.

Siraj Wahab is managing editor at Arab News. During the invasion of Iraq, he was a senior member of staff, having joined the newspaper in January 1998.





SUMMARY

On March 20, 2003, the US, then led by President George W. Bush, launched simultaneous attacks on Iraq with a view to removing Saddam Hussein from power. The war was ostensibly launched to eliminate what the US wrongly and misleadingly claimed were Saddam's weapons of mass destruction.

Iraqi troops went underground and launched a guerrilla war whose destructive effects, 17 years later, are still being dealt with. The resulting confusion led to the resurgence of Al-Qaeda and the rise of Daesh and Iranian militias. All of Iraq suffered because of the American decision to go to war, and the Middle East has never been the same since.

Smoke billows from Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's guest palace bombed during a coalition air raid on March 31, 2003. AFP

HOW WE WROTE IT



> **Saudi Arabia declared yesterday that it will not partake in a US-led war on Iraq under any circumstances and voiced strong opposition to any possible US military occupation of Iraq.**

From a staff story on Arab News' front page, March 19, 2003 edition

Key Dates

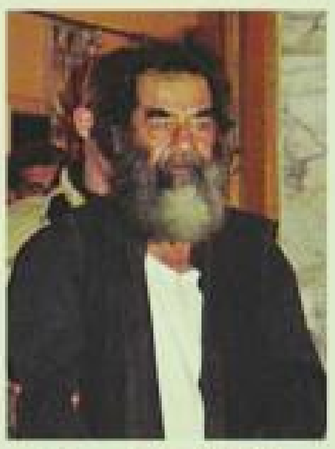


Feb. 5, 2003
US Secretary of State Colin Powell addresses the UN Security Council and provides the rationale for the war on Iraq: The country's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

March 20, 2003
American aircraft launch a blistering attack on Baghdad. Dubbed 'shock and awe,' it knocks out Iraqi anti-missile batteries, aircraft and power installations. The presidential palace is attacked.



May 1, 2003
US President George W. Bush declares an end to major combat operations. He lands on the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln in a Lockheed S-3 Viking, and gives a speech in which he announces the end of major combat operations in Iraq.



Dec. 13, 2003
After spending nine months in hiding, Saddam Hussein is captured.



Dec. 30, 2006
After a sham trial by the interim Iraqi government, Saddam is executed. Despite prolonged searches by the US, no WMDs were ever found in Iraq.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
Introducing the IPhone
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**



Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri addresses the General Assembly in 1998 at the UN in New York. AFP

SUMMARY

On Feb. 14, 2005, Rafic Hariri and 21 other people were killed when a massive bomb hidden inside a van parked on Beirut's bustling Corniche was detonated as the former Lebanese prime minister's six-car motorcade passed by.

Hariri, who served as Lebanon's prime minister from 1992 to 1998, and again from 2000 to 2004, had played a central role in reviving the battered nation's fortunes. As the architect of the Saudi-brokered Taif Agreement that ended the 15-year Lebanese civil war, he went on to deliver a peace dividend that was most apparent in Beirut's reconstruction and economic revival.

His death shocked the world and angered a nation that had hoped its bloodiest days were behind it, but even in death Hariri had more to give. His murder triggered the peaceful popular protests that came to be known as the Cedar Revolution, which in turn led to the withdrawal of the Syrian forces that had been in Lebanon since 1976.

FEB. 14, 2005

The assassination of Hariri

The car bomb that killed Lebanon's former prime minister wiped out hope of peace and prosperity

FAISAL J. ABBAS
EDITOR IN CHIEF



The Middle East in the early 2000s was in a state of flux. Saddam Hussein was toppled in Iraq.

Al-Qaeda and its various hydra-headed affiliates were running amok, popping up everywhere. Terrorists were on a killing spree. There was chaos and confusion.

It was at this particularly unstable time that I got into journalism at Lebanon's Future Television. There were plenty of stories — mostly of death and destruction; conspiracy and collusion; revenge and vendetta. There seemed to be an unending and singularly vicious cycle of violence.

In Lebanon, on the other hand, Rafic Hariri was scripting a rare success story. Following his vision, and thanks to the Saudi-brokered Taif Agreement that brought an end to the civil war, Lebanon had finally found its feet as the "Switzerland of the East."

Hariri was at the country's helm as prime minister from 1992 to 1998, and again from 2000 to 2004. He turned Lebanon around, infusing new life into a country that had been ripped asunder by a bloody civil war. It was a dream time for the country.

Lebanon became the talk of the town in shisha cafes across the region. Here was a Middle Eastern country proving that it could rise from the ashes and earn the admiration of its people as well as of the wider world. It could set an example for others to follow. The one man responsible for this unprecedented and historic turnaround was Hariri.

Unfortunately, as the saying goes, all good things come to an end, or in the Middle East, are brought to a violent end with bloody carnage. And so it was that the purveyors of death and destruction, the satanic forces that had been lying in wait for a long time, struck. The place of their strike was the center of Beirut with the destructive force of some 1,800 kg of deadly explosives. Hariri was assassinated at the age of only 60.

I was nearly 4,000 km away, in London, working for Asharq Al-Awsat. I remember that day with pain and pathos. It was Monday Feb. 14, 2005. Those were pre-Twitter days, and suddenly I was being deluged with text messages, so I rushed to my office.

I watched the whole world freezing as I saw the images of the exploding car. For me, it was not just any other piece of news because I had worked at Future Television, which Hariri had founded, and I had known him personally. I also knew, and had worked with, a number of people who were at the blast scene in Beirut, including the cameraman who was seen weeping at the time.

My pain and anger were greater because I had witnessed what was commonly referred to as "the second golden era of Lebanon" — between 1992 and 2005, when Hariri was in his prime. Many memories flashed through my mind.

I remembered distinctly the euphoria when then-French President Jacques Chirac came and walked hand in hand with Hariri in Downtown Beirut. That had been a beautiful summer night in the early 2000s, with the downtown buzzing with citizens, expats and tourists. They were out to enjoy fine dining, shopping, clubbing, or puffing on shishas in the then-newly renovated heart of the Lebanese capital.

So busy and alive was the atmosphere, and I recall sitting with a number of friends. We had chosen to go to a famous downtown cafe opposite the headquarters of the now-defunct pan-Arab daily Al-Hayat. We had to struggle to get the attention of the waiters, who were doing their best to handle the flood of orders being thrown at them, mostly by much better-tipping Gulf tourists who did not — for obvious reasons — have as many problems as we students did in getting their attention!

Then, all of a sudden, the musician playing the saxophone by our table stopped his music. Everybody stood up and people all around us began clapping and cheering as Hariri emerged on the scene, holding hands with Chirac.

The president was on an official visit to Lebanon at the time, and Hariri had decided to show him first-hand the progress made by the Lebanese people, both socially and physically. What better way to do this than taking Chirac out for a walk to experience the kind of vibrant life that Hariri had worked so hard to provide for his nation?

There were no bodyguards in sight; there were no weapons and no formalities whatsoever. On the contrary, both leaders casually greeted people and shook hands with them as the musician began, with no prompting, to play the French national anthem on his saxophone.

It was phenomenal and incredible how Hariri managed to turn Lebanon around in less than a decade. There was a new airport, a new downtown, and tourism was flourishing. Everything was going right for the country. That was indeed the prime of Lebanon — its legendary second golden period.

Back in my office in London, I realized immediately how Hariri's assassination was going to impact Lebanon. I anticipated and painfully watched a steady deterioration and institutions failing one after the other.

Today Lebanon has defaulted on its debt, and people are protesting the lack of jobs, opportunities and even basic living conditions such as 24-hour electricity. More worrying is the reality that the de facto ruler of the country is now the Iran-backed Hezbollah, no matter who the elected government is.

The assassination of Hariri wiped out all hope of a prosperous and peaceful Lebanon. It only added to the depressing scenario that existed and still exists in the wider Middle East. Fifteen years have passed since his assassination, and I have written umpteen articles on the state of affairs in Lebanon. Whenever I write, I recall wistfully and nostalgically the stellar vision and leadership that Hariri provided for Lebanon. Sadly, however, those days are gone — and they are not coming back.

Hariri had a vision, and that vision died with him. His critics say that he was a Saudi puppet, and that he brought the financial debt that Lebanon is in now. Of course, the country had to borrow money under Hariri, but it was on its way to recovery and the numbers showed it.

As for being the Kingdom's puppet, well — its Deputy Defense Minister Prince Khaled bin Salman rightly put it in his recent interview with Vice: Saudi Arabia sent tourists to Lebanon and Iran sent terrorists (including Hezbollah, which is accused of Hariri's killing).

If in doubt over which vision is better for Lebanon, one only has to compare Downtown Beirut that was under Hariri when Chirac visited, with what it is today under the armed rule of Hezbollah, much like the whole country: Torn apart by political divisions and unable to function, with businesses closing down and tourists nowhere to be found.

Faisal J. Abbas, Arab News' editor in chief, began his journalism career in Lebanon.
Twitter: @FaisalJAbbas

HOW WE WROTE IT



The explosion blew a 10-meter-wide crater in the street, set at least 20 cars on fire, and scarred the front of the landmark Phoenicia Hotel, where windows shattered and debris littered the balconies.

Daniella Hosari in Arab News, Feb. 15, 2005

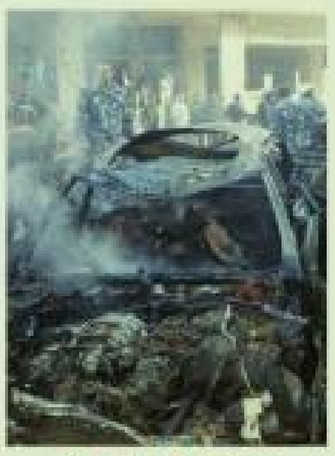
Key Dates

Sept. 2, 2004
Prime Minister Rafic Hariri supports UN Security Council Resolution 1559, calling for Syrian and other foreign forces to leave Lebanon.



Oct. 20, 2004
Hariri resigns as prime minister in protest at Syria's role in Lebanon.

Feb. 2, 2005
While campaigning for parliamentary elections, Hariri urges the opposition to back Resolution 1559.



Feb. 14, 2005
Hariri is assassinated.



April 27, 2005
Under pressure from world opinion and the mass protests of the Cedar Revolution, Syrian troops finally withdraw from Lebanon.



March 1, 2009
Appointed by the UN to investigate Hariri's murder, the international Special Tribunal for Lebanon opens in the Hague. Four suspected members of Hezbollah are eventually charged with his murder. One has since died; the others are fugitives.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
The global financial crisis
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**

JAN. 9, 2007

Key Dates

A visual evolution of the iPhone — to scale — showing its various designs, from its first release date until its latest version, the iPhone 11, released in 2019.



iPhone June 29, 2007
iPhone 3G July 11, 2008
iPhone 3GS June 19, 2009
iPhone 4 June 24, 2010
iPhone 4S Oct. 14, 2011
iPhone 5 Sept. 21, 2012
iPhone 5S & 5C Sept. 20, 2013



iPhone 11, Pro, Pro Max Sept. 20, 2019
iPhone XR Oct. 26, 2018
iPhone XS, XS Max Sept. 21, 2018
iPhone X Nov. 3, 2017
iPhone 8 & 8 Plus Sept. 22, 2017
iPhone SE & 7 & 7 Plus March 31, 2016
iPhone 6S & 6S Plus Sept. 19, 2015
iPhone 6 & 6 Plus Sept. 19, 2014

The birth of the iPhone

The smartphone first announced by Steve Jobs has evolved to become a staple of everyday life

ARKAN ALADNANI
LONDON

On Jan. 9, 2007, Apple's co-founder and former CEO Steve Jobs unveiled the iPhone, describing it as a three-in-one device combining an iPod, a phone and an internet communicator.



With a 3.5-inch screen, a 2-megapixel camera and 16 gigabytes of storage, it did not even support third-party apps back then, yet life has not been the same since its launch.

This was not the first mobile "smartphone" with a large touch-screen and internet connectivity, but it was the most elegant, putting user experience at the heart of usability and design. Today, more than 5 billion people worldwide use mobile services, according to GSMA Intelligence. A whole generation does not know what life was like before the iPhone.

The extent to which this revolutionary device took the world by surprise 13 years ago was reflected in the fact that in its issue of Jan. 11, 2007, Arab News covered the iPhone's launch not on its front page but on page 18, in its Economy section. It did so, however, with a prescient headline. The iPhone, it proclaimed, was "like the internet in your pocket."

Nowadays, everything can be done through a smartphone, including work, communication, shopping, traveling, finances and entertainment. This Apple product has made our lives simpler since its inaugural release in 2007. Its features and apps have replaced CDs and DVDs, and changed the way we watch TV. News channels have had to keep up with it, launching digital services for a generation of picky and selective audiences.

Jobs, whose biological father was born in Syria and studied at the American University of Beirut, made Apple the world's leading technology company through the iPod, the iPhone and the iPad. He also kept every other industry on their toes, forcing them to try to adapt to the fast-changing world that he had created.

Without his creation, influencers would not have had platforms through which to influence. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and many more would not have succeeded the way they did had they not been on smartphones. The iPhone enabled its users to play an active role in collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information. Apple gave every user the ability to be a reporter.

Citizen journalism has exposed corruption, violence and repression worldwide, especially in the Middle East, leading to uprisings past and present. Student Neda Agha-Soltan was shot dead during protests in Iran in 2009. Her killing was filmed on a mobile phone and was seen worldwide on YouTube, making her a symbol of the protest movement.

Thanks to mobile phones, Iran topped Twitter trends in 2009. This was the moment I decided to make "technology for advocacy" the subject of my thesis for my master's degree in digital media.

The Egyptian revolution in 2011 was another momentous development for mobile phone users and social media platforms, as the government at the time had to shut down all communication networks in order to hinder the gathering and movement of protesters.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made a FaceTime call to a Turkish TV network during the attempted coup against him in 2016. Some say the call saved him.

Since the 2000s, we stopped making regular calls and moved to wifi calls, before getting hooked on texting. The first iPhone specifications seem primitive today. An upgrade came with the iPhone 3G, to which Apple added critical new capabilities such as a GPS sensor for location monitoring, support for 3G networks and faster performance. It was the App Store that transformed the iPhone, from simply a device able to access the internet, to a computing platform. Today, the store hosts more than 2 million apps, setting the stage for startups and creating a whole economy around it, from Snapchat and Instagram to Uber.

There were further refinements with the iPhone 3GS, such as a better camera and longer battery life. The iPhone 4 came in 2010, representing the first major redesign of the iPhone since its launch. The iPhone 4S introduced Apple's digital voice assistant Siri. More gadgets and accessories — such as the Apple Watch, the Mac and the HomePod — have been introduced to support the iPhone.

The iPhone 5 was the first Apple smartphone to come with the Lightning charging port. It was followed by the iPhone 5S, the first Apple product with the Touch ID fingerprint sensor. The 5C was a cheaper option that lacked a fingerprint sensor. With the iPhone 6 and 6 Plus came the larger-screen iPhone that competed with larger-screen Android smartphones. The iPhone 6 also introduced a faster processor and larger storage options.

The iPhone 7 and 7 Plus required headphones to be connected through the Lightning slot. AirPods — wireless earbuds — were introduced with it. The iPhone X was launched alongside the iPhone 8 and 8 Plus. They were Apple's first smartphones to include a nearly edge-to-edge OLED screen, support for facial recognition and no home button.

The iPhone 11, with its relatively low $700 price point and wide range of color options, is essentially Apple's successor to the iPhone XR. It features a new dual-camera system that includes an ultra-wide-angle camera, support for night mode, a faster processor and a higher-resolution front-facing camera. Apple's pricier iPhone 11 and 11 Max are its first iPhones with a triple-lens camera, and include a new matte finish and camera sensor.



Steve Jobs, then Apple's CEO, discusses the iPhone during a developers' conference in San Francisco before its release on June 29, 2007. AFP

HOW WE REPORTED IT


Economy
EU Launches Energy Plan
Apple's iPhone 'Like Internet in Your Pocket'

Apple's iPhone 'Like Internet in Your Pocket'

To demonstrate, Jobs accessed Google maps satellite imaging and within seconds zoomed in on the Washington Monument, then the Eiffel Tower, and finally checked Apple's rapidly rising stock. He also phoned a local coffee bar and jokingly ordered 4,000 lattes for his assembled guests.

From an AFP story about the Apple announcement at the Macworld Conference and Expo in Arab News' Economy section on Jan. 11, 2007

Arkan Aladnani, global head of operations at Arab News, remembers waiting in line for the first iPhone in New York.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
Saudi Arabia at the first G20 leaders' summit
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SEPT. 15, 2008

2008 global financial crisis

Lehman Brothers' collapse led to the mother of all modern recessions — until now

FRANK KANE
DUBAI

In his epic account of the 2008 global financial crisis, "Too Big to Fail," Andrew Ross Sorkin wrote: "Never have I witnessed such fundamental and dramatic changes in business paradigms and the spectacular self-destruction of storied institutions."



What superlatives will Sorkin use when it comes to tell the story of the current crisis, which threatens to eclipse the economic damage of just over a decade ago by a multiple factor?

The events of the global financial crisis (GFC) seemed at the time so utterly transformational that it was impossible to imagine anything similar happening twice in a lifetime.

SUMMARY

On Sept. 15, 2008, the collapse of the Lehman Brothers investment bank sent shock waves around the world and turned problems in the US property market into a global financial crisis.

The crisis of 2008–09 brought unprecedented change — and fear — to the world economy. Government intervention, not least by China, averted catastrophe, but left a legacy of soaring debt. In the current economic downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the worry is that a more divided world will be unable to apply the same remedies.



A Chinese stock investor checks his share prices at a security firm in Fuzhou, southeast China, on Dec. 31, 2008. The global financial crisis wreaked havoc on major stock markets around the world, including Wall Street, below. AFP

At the beginning of 2007, the world appeared on an ever-improving path, with rising economic growth, stock markets and personal living standards. The financial industry, especially in real estate, was an eternal wealth-creating machine.

By the end of 2009, stock markets had collapsed, economies around the world were in steep recession, individuals — the ones who had not gone bankrupt or lost their homes — had taken such a hit to their standards of living that many just gave up. There was a sharp rise in reported suicides.

In the Middle East in 2007, oil prices — as ever the determining factor in regional economies — had been on the rise since the turn of the millennium, driven by the global economic boom.

Saudi Arabia was benefiting from that revenue and was thinking about diversifying its economy away from oil. Membership of the World Trade Organization a couple of years before had given the Kingdom a more extrovert perspective, perhaps with one eye on the glittering example of Dubai, a booming economic role model for the Arab world.

Fast forward two years, and the oil price had collapsed, losing $100 per barrel in value in the second half of 2008, diversification plans were on hold as policymakers made survival their priority, and Dubai was on the brink of an existential threat to its debt-fueled business model.

"It was the financial equivalent of 9/11," one commentator said at the time.

Like that attack a few years earlier, the GFC had its "ground zero" in New York. The "masters of the universe" on Wall Street had recovered from the blips of the Al-Qaeda attacks and the dot-com bust, and had piles of other people's capital to put to invest.

The American dream — a home, a couple of cars, maybe even a boat somewhere — was within reach. All bought on credit. And Wall Street had come up with a revolutionary method of financing.

All that credit could be bundled into "collateralized debt obligation" (CDO) and sold as investable instruments that could be traded among the big firms, which were, of course, "too big to fail."

But by the summer of 2007, what was termed the "subprime" mortgage market was in serious trouble. The loans bundled together in CDOs were worth only as much as the most toxic mortgage in the basket.

The first sign that this was anything more than a threat to the US property market came when Merrill Lynch, one of Wall Street's "blue blood" banks, suffered a shocking $5.5 billion loss.

The stock market caught the contagion, with shares prices falling 50 percent over a few months. The "mom and pop" businesses of Main Street USA found their capital and pensions wiped out in a Wall Street bloodbath.

A financial nadir was reached when Lehman Brothers, a 150-year-old pillar of the US financial system, filed for bankruptcy. Despite the hundreds of billions of dollars US federal authorities had spent on propping up the system, it turns out nobody was too big to fail.

The global financial system was dangerously close to freezing up altogether, with credit increasingly difficult to obtain. Massive government intervention, not least at the emergency G20 meetings in 2008 and 2009, kept the wheels just about moving.

But the global economy was feeling the shock, and with it the Middle East, which had survived the credit crisis relatively well, thanks mainly to government austerity measures and big financial reserves. Vital oil prices rose quickly as the global economic situation improved on the back of an economic stimulus package by China.

The regional exception was Dubai. With minimal oil reserves, its exuberant growth had been fueled by debt and, by late 2009, it found it could not service many of those liabilities. Dubai World, one of the government companies at the forefront of extravagant projects such as the Palm Jumeirah, told creditors it was seeking a "standstill" on debt repayments while it renegotiated its loans.

The year-long negotiations were fraught, but in the end Dubai's creditors stood by it, as did the oil-rich government of Abu Dhabi, which provided $20 billion as a life-saving act of fraternal support. "Standing still, but still standing" was how The Economist magazine described it.

But in many ways, the Dubai experience encapsulates the global situation since the GFC, and explains why the current crisis could get even more serious. The emirate has restructured and extended its debts, even repaid some, while taking out others. Dubai's aggregate level of indebtedness is still roughly the same as it was in 2010, according to the IMF.

The world has also continued its debt spree. Total global indebtedness is estimated at $250 trillion, three times what it was in 2008. The IMF in its most recent forecast said that the economic effects of the pandemic crisis could be the worst since the 1930s Depression.

Apart from the debt factor, the coronavirus crisis is different from the GFC in other ways, none of them encouraging. There is the immediate threat to life, of course, and the worry that China does not have the capacity to pull off another rescue act. There is also the fear that global institutions are not as capable now as they were in 2008 of adopting effective measures to avert catastrophe.

"The world economy is now collapsing," ran a headline in the Financial Times recently. Sorkin will have to consult the superlatives dictionary for his next book.

Frank Kane has reported on every financial crisis since 1987 for some of the world's leading newspaper titles.

HOW WE WROTE IT


Lehman bankruptcy sparks global turmoil
■ Global equities plunge ■ TASI slumps 6.5 percent ■ Oil prices decline

Asia tumbled first on the news yesterday, followed by the Middle East, Russia and then Europe before the shock wave hit the North and South American markets.

From a story by Khalil Hanware on Arab News' front page, Sept. 18, 2008



Key Dates

Oct. 5, 2007
Merrill Lynch, one of Wall Street's leading investment banks, records a big loss, evidence that the crisis in US real estate markets is infecting the entire financial system. The bank is eventually sold to Bank of America to save it from bankruptcy.

Feb. 27, 2008
The Dow Jones Industrial Average index hits 7,000 points, representing a 50 percent loss over the previous four months. The crisis is in full swing on the world's biggest stock market.

Sept. 15, 2008
The collapse of Lehman Brothers, one of Wall Street's 'blue blood' banks, sends shock waves around the world and turns the problems in the US property market into a global financial crisis. One observer calls it the 'financial equivalent of 9/11.'



June 22, 2009
The World Bank warns that global economic activity will fall by almost 3 percent over the years, the first downturn since World War II. The financial crisis is affecting the global economy and threatening a second 'Great Depression.'



Nov. 25, 2009
Dubai World, creator of the Palm Jumeirah and perhaps the best known of the government-owned conglomerates that made up 'Dubai Inc.,' says that it will be unable to repay up to $63 billion of debts. Dubai eventually renegotiates its liabilities to international banks with $20 billion of financial help from Abu Dhabi.



April 2, 2011
Signifying an end to the global recession, crude oil rises above $130 a barrel, its highest point since the boom before the financial crisis. Oil trades consistently above $100 per barrel until the over-supply shock in summer of 2014.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
Opening of the Burj Khalifa
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NOV. 14-15, 2008

Saudi Arabia's first meeting with G20 leaders

The Kingdom took on a leadership role in tackling the global financial crisis of 2008



Saudi King Abdullah greets US President George W. Bush at the G20 Summit on Nov. 15, 2008 in Washington, DC, where leaders posed for their first 'family portrait,' below. AFP



RAWAN RADWAN
JEDDAH

On Nov. 14, 2008, Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz joined the first meeting of the leaders of the Group of 20 hosted by US President George W. Bush in Washington, DC, showcasing the Kingdom's respected position as one of the top 20 economies in the world.



The G20 was formed in 1999 during a forum in Cologne, Germany that was attended by finance ministers of the original Group of Seven (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US) and bank governors. In response to a financial imbalance as a result of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the attendees discussed the initiation of a summit that included more of the global community, comprising 10 industrial countries and 10 emerging market economies.

The group's founding was primarily the initiative of German Finance Minister Hans Eichel, and finance ministers convened every year to discuss international economic policy issues and promote international financial stability.

On the initiative of US President George W. Bush's administration, the G20 finance ministers meeting was elevated to the level of leaders, and the first G20 summit was held in November of 2008. The call for more immediate action by heads of state was due to the collapse of global stock markets that year. The first high-level G20 group assembled in Washington, DC, giving Saudi Arabia a chance to demonstrate its global leadership and showcase its economic importance.

During my first semester as a masters of public health student in Europe in 2008, I kept up with all news related to Saudi Arabia and followed the G20 summit with great interest as it was up to the leader of our nation to show the global community its commitment to its partners and the world.

As a young Saudi, I lived through some of the early reforms by King Abdullah after he became ruler in 2005. I was a witness to the economy's boom, a result of the reforms to development infrastructure in the Kingdom. Later, as an Arab News reporter in 2019, I traveled to Tokyo and reported from the T20 (Think 20) Tokyo Summit, one of the G20's engagement groups.

To understand the G20, you have to understand the T20. It is the intellectual backbone connecting bridges between policy recommendations, called Task Forces (TF), of successive G20 presidencies. Annual summit topics include trade, climate change, terrorism and gender equality.

I met with heads of Saudi think tanks and researchers at the meeting and spoke about their proposals, many of which would be adopted in the next presidency chaired by Saudi Arabia in 2020. The proposed TFs are selected carefully, as the head of the Saudi T20 delegation, Dr. Fahad Al-Turki, was kind enough to describe it as "a collective effort to ensure continuity" and not break the cycle that first began in 2012, when the T20 engagement group was launched.

For two days I read papers and spoke to heads of research centers from my home country, Japan, Argentina, the US and Japan, sitting through sessions that were open to the public, and read the final communique. I now know more. The G20 is not just simply a gathering of leaders: It is a village of ministers, heads of agencies, researchers, economists, mayors (yes, mayors) and scientists that have set up important policies in order to have more control over their economies while assisting challenged and poorer economies.

Going back to 2008, for two days behind closed doors in Washington, world leaders discussed financial market woes and discussed ways to bounce back, before finally gathering for the first ever "family portrait."

In Arab News' Nov. 16 edition, it was reported that King Abdullah called for greater international cooperation and coordination to offset the impact of the financial crisis. He emphasized "the need to develop effective monitoring systems" and called on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to play a greater role in supervising the financial sectors of developed countries.

His speech came at a time when the Kingdom was going through various reforms to modernize the country's business environment, which resulted in the country climbing from 35th to 27th place in rising global economies, moving up to 10th place among the top 40 a few years later.

The significance of Saudi Arabia's participation at the first G20 leaders' summit is that it not only showed that it plays a role in the global market, but also demonstrated the Kingdom's responsibility to become a voice for the region and the developing world.

To ensure regional balance over time, the G20 presidency rotates annually according to a system that reflects its nature as an informal political forum.

A little over a decade later, Saudi Arabia assumed the G20 2020 presidency on Dec. 1, 2019. The 2020 G20 Riyadh summit will be the 15th meeting for the G20 member states at a time when the world is facing yet another crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, which is set to decimate economies even more than the 2008 global financial crisis.

With the difficulties the world is currently facing with the pandemic, King Salman conducted an extraordinary virtual summit on March 26 with the G20 leaders to advance a coordinated response. It was part of a continued effort by the Kingdom's leadership to play its role in stabilizing the economies of the world, as there is no returning to normal after COVID-19, but with a united front there is a path forward.

Rawan Radwan, Arab News' regional correspondent based in Jeddah, reported from the T20 (Think 20) Tokyo Summit, one of the G20's engagement groups.



SUMMARY

On Nov. 14, 2008, G20 leaders from the world's top 20 economies met for the first time in Washington, DC, led by US President George W. Bush, to discuss solutions to the stock market crash. The gathering, elevated from a finance-minister level, was in answer to a call for greater international cooperation in stabilizing economies.

Saudi Arabia, the largest oil exporter in the group and a rising new economy, proved itself as a key member of the Group of Twenty. King Abdullah, who headed the Saudi delegation, addressed the global challenges with the other leaders, just as the current King Salman is now is rallying the G20 leaders to address the global pandemic.

HOW WE WROTE IT

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah called for greater international cooperation and coordination to offset the impact of the financial crisis.

From a story by Barbara Ferguson on Arab News' front page, Nov. 16, 2008



Key Dates

Sept. 26, 1999
The Group of Twenty is founded after the Asian financial crisis as a forum for finance ministers and central bank governors of 19 countries and the EU.



Nov. 14-15, 2008
Headed by US President George W. Bush, leaders of the G20 members met in Washington, DC amid the global stock market collapse. Saudi Arabia's delegation was headed by King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz.



Aug. 31, 2016
The first meeting of the Saudi Arabia-China High-Level Joint Committee between then Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and President Xi Jinping attending the G20 Hangzhou summit.



July 8, 2017
The G20 Hamburg summit's final communique announces that the 2020 G20 summit is to be held in Saudi Arabia for the first time.

Dec. 1, 2019
Saudi Arabia assumes the G20 2020 presidency from Japan.



March 26, 2020
King Salman calls on G20 leaders to partake in an extraordinary virtual summit in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic to put forward a coordinated set of policies to protect people and safeguard the global economy.

Nov. 21-22, 2020
The 15th meeting of the G20 is still scheduled to be held in Riyadh.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
Beginning of the Arab Spring
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**



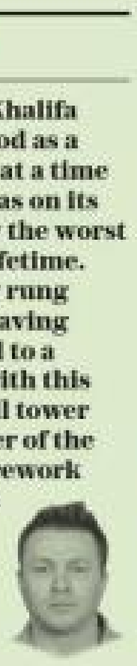
JAN. 4, 2010

Burj Khalifa: The world's tallest tower

Dubai's icon, recognized around the world, raised a very high bar

PETER HARRISON
DUBAI

The day the Burj Khalifa was opened, it stood as a sign of prosperity at a time when the world was on its knees, crippled by the worst recession of our lifetime. Dubai had already rung in the new year, waving a relieved farewell to a turbulent 2009, with this vast 828-meter-tall tower acting as the center of the world's highest firework display — its roots held solid in the foundations of Dubai Mall, one of the world's biggest.



Four days later, it was the turn of Dubai's ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum — on the anniversary of his accession — and the official opening of the world's tallest tower, the Burj Dubai, as it was then known. For those of us lucky enough to cover the story on Jan. 4, 2010, there was a sneak peak of the observation deck and a chance to take in the breathtaking views — allowing for the mist and haze.

We met with executives of Emaar, the developers behind the tower, who spoke proudly of the achievements as the media formed a scrum around them. There was no mention of the name change — they did not even reveal the tower's closely guarded height. It was only during the evening's spectacular firework display that the latter two "secrets" were revealed.

Sheikh Mohammed had ordered its construction years before, when the world's economy was much healthier. It was clear before the recession that Dubai needed to diversify its economy — move away from oil reliance — and the service and tourism industries seemed to be the obvious way forward.

The sheikh wanted an icon for Dubai that would be recognized around the world. And he was not satisfied with just another tower — the world's tallest was not good enough. This one had to smash all existing records — Sheikh Mohammed was raising the bar. "It started with a dream, and then a journey of seeing that dream every day getting built higher and higher," Ahmad Al-Falasi, executive director of Emaar, said of the project.



The Burj Khalifa illuminated for the Year of Zayed in 2018. Shutterstock

The previous record-holder at 508 meters tall, the Taipei 101, is now the 11th-tallest building in the world after six years (2004-2010) at the top. The Burj Khalifa boasts the highest observation deck, there are views of the world's largest choreographed fountain, and one side of the tower hosts the world's biggest lighting display — inside are the highest apartments, nightclub and restaurants.

When the tower was completed in 2010, the opening was overshadowed by a financial crisis that had taken its toll everywhere, and Dubai was no different. The Arab News editorial the day after the official opening event, while acknowledging the architectural achievements, did also remind readers of the hardships experienced everywhere — not least in Dubai.

HOW WE WROTE IT


BURJ KHALIFA SOARS HIGH
DUBAI OPENS WORLD'S TALLEST SKYSCRAPER

At a time of profound pessimism and sky-high debt around the world, the sky-high Burj Khalifa ... is a mighty finger pointing upward toward better and altogether more prosperous times.
Arab News editorial, Jan. 5, 2010

SUMMARY

On Jan. 4, 2010, Dubai opened the world's tallest tower, the Burj Khalifa, standing at an impressive 828 meters tall. It had been six years in the making, with the excavation works taking place in January 2004 and the external cladding of the structure completed five years later in September 2009.

Its opening ceremony was televised around the globe at a time when the world was only just beginning to show signs of recovery after the worst recession in our lifetime, making a defiant stand for prosperity. Since the Burj Khalifa was opened, there has been talk of other, even taller towers, but currently that is all it has been — talk.


Arab News
EXTRA BODY CHECKS FOR US-BOUND PASSENGERS
Accords to monitor funding of terrorism
BURJ KHALIFA SOARS HIGH

"Burj Khalifa is a reminder of the vision which has driven the quite remarkable real estate development in the emirate (of Dubai)," the editorial explained on Jan. 5, 2010. But the column went on to add: "So at a time of profound pessimism and sky-high debt around the world, the sky-high Burj Khalifa, as it is called now, is a mighty finger pointing upward toward better and altogether more prosperous times."

Creating the world's tallest tower requires a lot of attention to detail — details that would ultimately save lives. The building is a series of interwoven towers that stop at different levels — no single surface runs all the way to the top. This shape prevents the strong winds from causing vortexes that would cause the building to sway too much.

The external glass is designed to reflect more than 70 percent of the sun's heat; without it, temperatures would be deadly in the summer. A "Faraday cage" style structure was created on the exterior of the tower to act as a massive lightning conductor to prevent lightning strikes from hitting its interior. There are two vast chiller systems outside the tower that pump chilled water into the Burj's air-conditioning system.

The tower's design includes an escape network with a lift that travels 138 floors in less than a minute (the farthest any one lift travels in the world), in a shaft encased in fire-resistant concrete — it is the Burj Khalifa lifeboat. There is also a series of safe refuges at intervals down the building that are also encased in fire-resistant concrete and have a supply of fresh air that is delivered at high enough pressure to deflect smoke, should there be a fire.

The design was so advanced that the architects and engineers even had to consider how to deal with the messy business of sewage. A straight drop from the top would not work — that would mean a flush of the toilet at the top would reach speeds of up to 160 km per hour by the bottom.

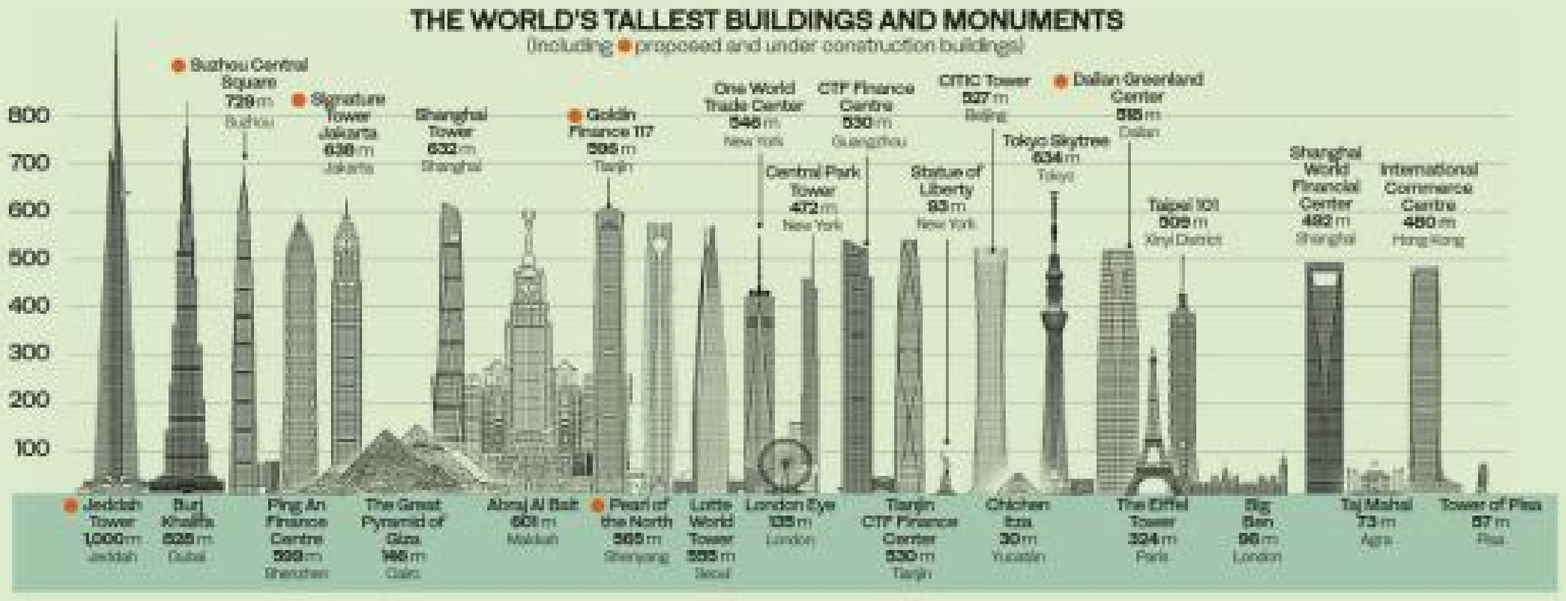
As such, sewage is sent down a few floors at a time through a series of sound-proofed pipes and pumps, while super-pressured pumps send fresh water to a series of water tanks up in the building.

The Burj was a first in many respects, and it will always mark the moment that architecture changed forever, but it will likely lose its crown when Saudi Arabia completes the 1,000-meter-tall Kingdom Tower.

Peter Harrison, Arab News' Dubai bureau chief, attended the opening ceremony of the Burj Khalifa as a reporter. He had already been given access to the At The Top attraction earlier in the day when it was still the Burj Dubai.

THE WORLD'S TALLEST BUILDINGS AND MONUMENTS

(Including ● proposed and under construction buildings)



45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
Mubarak's resignation
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**

SUMMARY

On Dec. 17, 2010, Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi, protesting police harassment, bribery and corruption, set himself on fire outside the governor's office in the city of Sidi Bouzid, unwittingly igniting the multinational protest movement that would become known as the Arab Spring.

The callous treatment of Bouazizi struck a chord with millions of Tunisians, tired of living under an autocratic, corrupt regime. Even as doctors fought in vain to save Bouazizi's life, protests flared in Sidi Bouzid and soon spread to the rest of the country.

Bouazizi died 18 days later. By then he had become "the hero of Tunisia," a symbol of revolt inspiring violent protests in a dozen countries across the region, leading to regime change in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya and a bloody revolution that continues to divide Syria to this day.





A demonstration against former Tunisian President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunis on Jan. 14, 2011. Reuters

DEC. 17, 2010

Where the Arab Spring began

Tunisia's uprising began after a street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, set himself on fire in protest

JONATHAN LESSWARE
LONDON

According to his family, Mohamed Bouazizi had suffered at the hands of overzealous officials for years. On Dec. 17, 2010, however, it took less than two hours for a sequence of events to unfold that would change the world.



As he did every day, Bouazizi, a 26-year-old fruit and vegetable seller, dragged his cart of produce along the unpaved roads into the center of Sidi Bouzid.

The nondescript provincial town in central Tunisia was typical of the area, with unemployment high among young men and opportunities to make a decent living scarce.

The exact details of what happened next are disputed. Bouazizi's family say that at about 10:30 a.m. he was approached by municipal inspectors who requested a bribe. When he refused, a female inspector, Faida Hamdy, slapped him in the face and confiscated his electronic scales and produce.

Hamdy later denied that she had lashed out. Instead, she claimed, she was merely enforcing the law that stated market traders were not allowed to sell their goods in a public place.

Furious and humiliated, Bouazizi stormed off to the municipal office where his fellow traders say that he was beaten again. Undeterred, he made his way to the main regional government building and demanded to speak to the governor.

His request was refused and within an hour of the original confrontation he returned, doused himself in paint thinner and once again demanded to meet the official. It took just the flick of a lighter for Bouazizi to envelop himself in a ball of fire and unwittingly ignite a series of protests and uprisings across the region that became the Arab Spring. In places such as Syria and Libya, the devastating conflicts that followed are still raging today.

Bouazizi's actions immediately flicked a switch in Sidi Bouzid, and by the time of his death 18 days later on Jan. 4, the protests had spread across the country.

Despite the rapid escalation, it took time for the potential implications of what had happened to fully register in the media. The first front-page mention in Arab News of the protests in Tunisia was in a report on food riots in Algeria that ran on Jan. 7. On Jan. 14, the newspaper led with the headline "Rioting spreads in Tunisia" — the same day that the president, Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, fled the country after 23 years in power.

On the busy foreign desk of the newspaper where I worked in Abu Dhabi, we were unsure of how much of a challenge the rampant anger would pose to the autocratic rulers.

Even with the speed of Ben Ali's downfall, and as the protests spread beyond Tunisia's borders, could this really lead to a domino effect, toppling the men who had run much of the Middle East for decades?

Tunisia not only lit the touch paper, it showed to the frustrated and disaffected youth across the region that change was not only real, but could happen quickly.

That it was a young man, supposedly well educated, who had been driven to such a desperate act by his hopeless situation only served to present Tunisia's uprising as a model for others across the Arab world.

Within a year, the leaders of Egypt and Libya had been overthrown, and Yemen's ruler was soon to stand aside. But the bloodshed from these subsequent uprisings and the brutal responses to the protests dwarfed what had unfolded in Tunisia.

Nowhere was this more the case than in Syria, where Bashar Assad's security forces turned their guns on protests and unleashed the horrors of the civil war and the extremist forces that emerged from it.That said, Tunisia suffered its own share of violence, with more than 300 people killed in the protests. The country is held up in the West as the only one to have made progress toward democracy. Two sets of presidential and parliamentary elections have taken place since the uprising, despite some bitter political disputes that at times spilled over into violence.

Many Tunisians question whether they are better off than they were in 2010. The economy has struggled to pick up and the public have carried the burden of tough economic measures attached to a $2.8 billion loan package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In 2018, widespread protests against increased costs took place across the country.

Tunisia has also suffered from a series of extremist attacks, including one near the US Embassy in March and another on a tourist resort in 2015 that killed 38 people and dealt a major blow to a key industry.

Much of the social and economic conditions that are so often referenced among the causes of the Arab Spring remain in Tunisia. Unemployment is even higher nationally — 15 percent compared with 12 percent before the uprising and 30 percent in the poorest areas.

Early reporting of Bouazizi's self-immolation described him as a university graduate, something that was often repeated and fitted neatly with the narrative of the Arab Spring being driven by an overeducated and underemployed youth. The truth was that he had dropped out of school as he became the main breadwinner for his extended family after his father died. His aspiration, his family said, was to own a van to help him grow his business.

That aspiration disappeared in the flames that ended his life, but allowed the anger felt toward Ben Ali's corrupt and oppressive regime to overspill.

For the Arab world, Bouazizi's extreme and individual action will forever be remembered as the moment that unleashed the anger of the many.

Jonathan Lessware is Arab News' London bureau digital editor and the former foreign editor of The National. He worked in the Middle East for 10 years, during the time of the Arab Spring.

It took just the flick of a lighter for Bouazizi to envelop himself in a ball of fire and unwittingly ignite a series of protests and uprisings across the region that became the Arab Spring.



Wrapped in the Tunisian flag, a woman takes part in a protest in Tunis on Jan. 20, 2011. AFP

HOW WE WROTE IT



In the capital Tunis, police opened fire on demonstrators killing at least one person as weeks of anti-government protests intensified.
From an AFP story on Arab News' front page, Jan. 14, 2011

Key Dates

Dec. 17, 2010
Street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi, 26, sets himself on fire.



Dec. 28, 2010
President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali visits Bouazizi in hospital.



Jan. 4, 2011
Bouazizi dies at the age of 26.



Jan. 5, 2011
Thousands attend Bouazizi's funeral, many vowing to avenge his death.



Jan. 14, 2011
President Ben Ali flees into exile in Saudi Arabia.



Dec. 12, 2011
Mohamed Moncef Marzouki becomes Tunisia's first elected president.

Jun. 20, 2012
Tunisian court sentences Ben Ali in absentia to life imprisonment on charges of inciting violence and murder.



Sept. 19, 2019
Ben Ali dies in exile in Jeddah, aged 83.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
The Syrian war
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**



Ousted Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak sits inside a cage in a courtroom during his verdict hearing in Cairo on June 2, 2012. AFP

FEB. 11, 2011

Mubarak's resignation: Behind the scenes

It remains to be seen whether this turning point changed Egypt's history for the better



SUMMARY

On Feb. 11, 2011, Hosni Mubarak, the former air force officer who succeeded the assassinated Anwar Sadat as Egypt's president in 1981 and held on to power for three decades, finally resigned in the face of mass popular protests against his regime's brutality and corruption.

As Arab News reported the following day, 'fireworks burst over Tahrir Square and Egypt exploded with joy and tears of relief' at the fall of a man 'who until the end seemed unable to grasp the depth of resentment over his three decades of rule.'

The victorious protests, organized largely over social media and watched live on television by millions around the world, altered Egyptian politics fundamentally, but not without cost. Over the 18 days of what became known as the Jan. 25 Revolution, at least 846 people lost their lives and thousands more were injured.

ABDELLATIF EL-MENAWY
CAIRO

In history, there are certain major events that should stop us and make us think for a long while. We must contemplate them to understand what happened, learn from them, avoid making the same mistakes, and emphasize what we found to be correct. One such day was Feb. 11, 2011, the day the late Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak stepped down.



On that day, I was responsible for managing the state media within the Mubarak government. I was not part of the regime in its political sense, but I was a professional employed by the state and had a role to play. I also had many friends in Tahrir Square demonstrating for what they believed in.

This date has gone down in the history of Egypt, and the conditions in which we live today have resulted from it. It was a real turning point in the country's history, but whether it was for the worse or for the better, only history can decide. What is important is that change has occurred.

I will always remember this day very clearly. In the morning, the streets were filled with angry demonstrators, who were frustrated by Mubarak's speech the night before. In that speech, Mubarak delegated power to his then-vice president, Omar Suleiman. I knew it would end on that day, but I did not know how.

In the morning, I received a phone call from a leading military figure, who told me that they would shortly need to release news about Mubarak's intention to leave. I immediately called some media networks to tell them the news. Some reported it, while others avoided doing so. At midday, the president boarded a helicopter that would take him from the presidential palace to El-Nouzha Airport, east of Cairo. From there, he took a presidential plane to his residence in Sharm El-Sheikh.

This was the first time since the crisis began that Mubarak was alone without his wife, children or even his advisers. As soon as he arrived at his residence, at about 1:30 p.m., he called Defense Minister Field Marshal Mohammed Hussein Tantawi. It was a short telephone conversation, during which Mubarak said: "Hussein, I have decided to delegate full responsibility to you and the army. You are now in power." Tantawi replied: "No, Mr. President, we will find another way. This was not what we wanted." Mubarak said: "No, this is my decision. Speak to Omar Suleiman and make arrangements to announce this news to the public."

Minutes later, I received a phone call from one of my army sources informing me that Suleiman was in a meeting with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. They were preparing an official statement to inform the nation of Mubarak's resignation. The president wanted it to be a short statement, so Suleiman and Tantawi sat down to write it together. They decided Suleiman should read the statement, rather than a member of the army, so that it did not give the impression the president had been ousted by a military coup.

It was strange. We were — literally — sitting on the biggest story in the world that day.

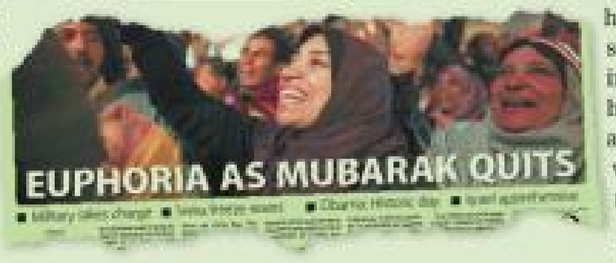
About an hour after that, the army's spokesperson, Ismail Atman, arrived at my office. After I greeted him, he opened his coat and pulled out something from the inside pocket, saying: "I have the statement." He added: "I will wait here with the tape until I receive orders to broadcast it. They are still waiting for (Mubarak's sons) Gamal, Alaa and their families to leave."

It was strange. We were — literally — sitting on the biggest story in the world that day. We had to sit and chat indifferently, waiting for the next stage. We waited, and Atman phoned the council every few minutes. It was not long before he received news that Gamal and Alaa had arrived at the airport and were waiting for their mother, Suzanne. When she finally arrived at the airport, Atman received instructions to broadcast the announcement, so the two of us headed to the studio, which was two floors below my office. Despite the fact the walk there took less than a minute, it felt like it took forever. We entered the control room, put the tape in the machine and pressed the play button.

The film was 37 seconds long. Emotions began to overwhelm us. The statement was simple: "In the name of Allah the Merciful ... Citizens, in these difficult circumstances the country is going through, President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak has decided to step down as president of the republic and tasked the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces with managing the affairs of the country. God bless."

When the statement was broadcast, the country was in a state of clamor and excitement. But, during the years since that day, this clamor may have turned into questions, which everyone continues to ask each other.

HOW WE WROTE IT



The country has erupted in joy. The traffic has stopped. People are out of their cars, kissing and embracing, screaming, laughing and crying. Egypt is jubilant.
Somayya Jabarti on Arab News' front page, Feb. 12, 2011

Dr. Abdellatif El-Menawy, a columnist for Arab News, was responsible for managing the state media in Egypt on the day Mubarak stepped down.
Twitter: @ALMenawy

Key Dates



Jan. 25, 2011
Demonstrations triggered by police brutality break out across Egypt.



Feb. 10, 2011
Mubarak refuses to resign, proposing instead only to delegate some powers to vice president Omar Suleiman.



Feb. 11, 2011
Suleiman announces Mubarak's resignation and transfer of power to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.



Aug. 3, 2011
The trial begins of Mubarak, his two sons and others charged with corruption and the premeditated murder of protesters.

June 2, 2012
Mubarak is sentenced to life imprisonment for failing to halt the killing of protesters.

Jan. 13, 2013
Appeal court overturns his life sentence.

May 9, 2015
Mubarak is sentenced to three years imprisonment after being found guilty of embezzlement.

March 24, 2017
Mubarak, now 88, is freed after having spent six years in custody.



Feb. 25, 2020
Mubarak dies, aged 91, in Cairo and is buried with full military honors.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



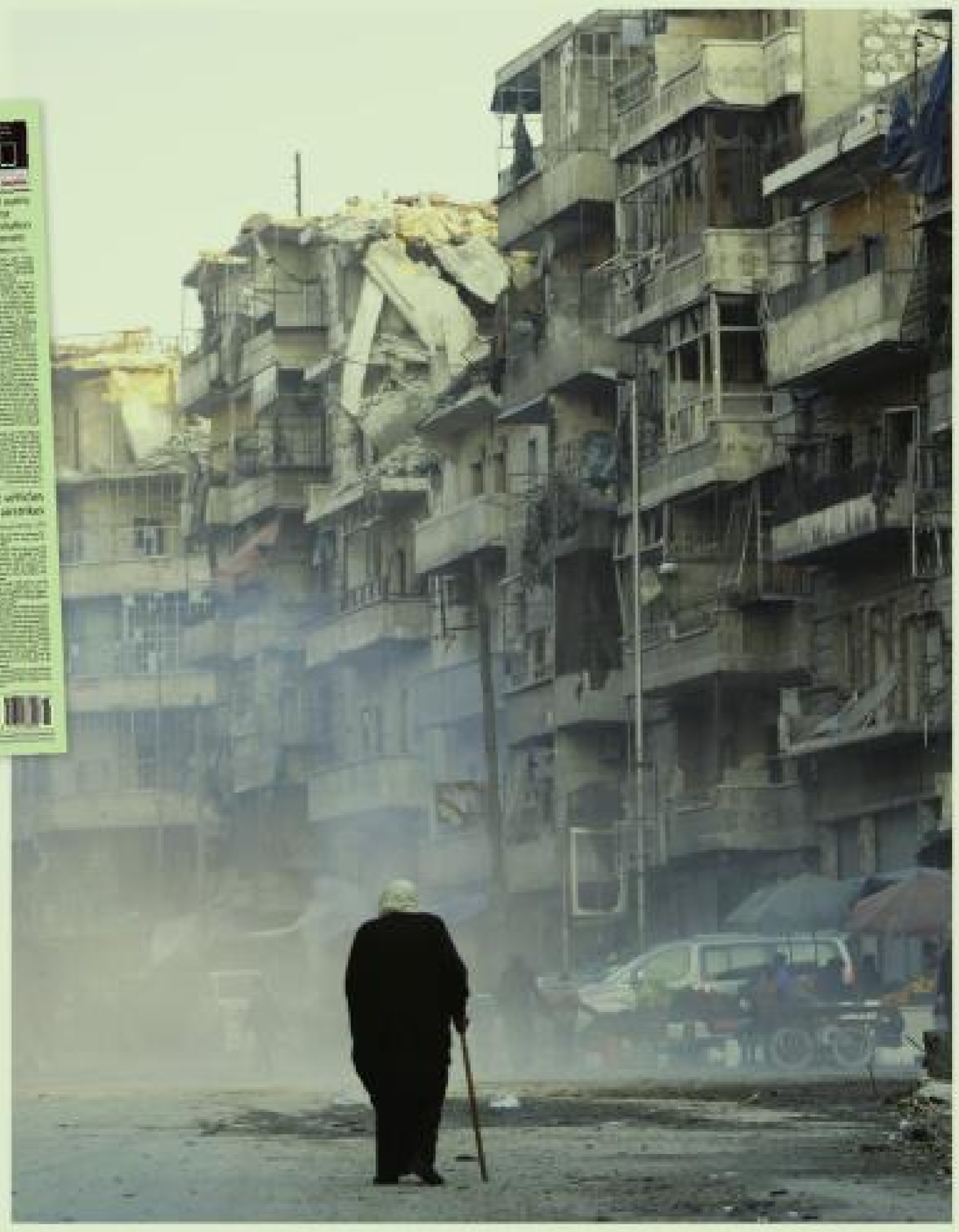
TOMORROW
The death of Osama bin Laden
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**





Syrian President Bashar Assad took a leaf out of Israel's and America's book of war strategy, Sharif Nashashibi writes. AFP





SUMMARY

The Syrian conflict blew wide open the sectarian and political fault lines that had to an extent been papered over by the region's near-unanimous opposition to this century's two previous watershed events in the Middle East: Israel's increased oppression of the Palestinians, and the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

The Iraq folly cast a shadow over the Syrian conflict, with Iran able to fulfill its goal of becoming a regional hegemon, and the international community deeply reticent about foreign involvement in other countries, even when a government is butchering its own people.

That has enabled Syrian President Bashar Assad to carry out what the UN has described as crimes against humanity amounting to 'extermination' of the civilian population. Meanwhile, American fatigue in Iraq and Afghanistan allowed a resurgent Russia to fill the US void in the Middle East. Moscow's direct intervention in the Syrian conflict turned the tide in Assad's favor.

MARCH 15, 2011

The never-ending Syrian conflict

A brutal war lasting almost a decade has blown the Middle East's fault lines wide open

SHARIF NASHASHIBI
LONDON

As Arab News looks back at 45 "moments of change" that the newspaper has covered during its history, including Syria on the list is a no-brainer.



But to say the ongoing conflict there has changed the region is an understatement — Syria has defined the Middle East and beyond, and has contributed to reshaping the world order.

Sectarian and political fault lines had to an extent been papered over by the region's near-unanimous opposition to this century's two previous watershed events in the Middle East: Israel's increased oppression of the Palestinians, and the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Syria blew those fault lines wide open.

The longevity and scale of the horrors that the Syrian people have faced for the last nine years can be attributed in large part to the consequences of the Iraq folly. The US-led invasion and occupation unleashed an Iran determined to be a regional hegemon, and the Syrian uprising presented Tehran with the opportunity to flex its newfound muscle to that end.

Furthermore, the calamitous US-led intervention in Iraq understandably made the international community deeply reticent about foreign involvement in other countries. But this reticence did not address what to do when a government is butchering its own people.

As such, the Iraq experience has provided an insurance policy for dictators and autocrats worldwide — as long as their brutality is kept within their own borders, they can enjoy immunity. That has enabled Syrian President Bashar Assad to carry out what the UN has described as crimes against humanity amounting to "extermination" of the civilian population, without any real fear of being held to account.

America's fatigue with its seemingly endless wars in Iraq and Afghanistan allowed a resurgent Russia to fill the US void in the Middle East. Having positioned itself during the 1990s and 2000s as a leading opponent of American interventionism, Moscow is now doing all the things it had been criticizing the US for (and which it had done with equal vigor during the Cold War).



Without Russia's direct intervention in the Syrian conflict, Assad would have been finished years ago. Meanwhile, his patron in Moscow has repeatedly shielded him from censure in the UN Security Council, as the US has done for Israel.

The many injustices facing the Arab world over the decades — some imposed from outside, others fostered from within — led to vibrant and determined movements that campaigned for self-determination, human rights, justice, equality and international law. Those movements provided hope to counterbalance despair and disillusionment. The Syrian conflict snuffed out that hope.

Activists who had joined those movements out of principle realized that many of their peers were motivated instead by agenda. Many activists, journalists, parties and governments that cheered the removal of pro-Western dictators at the outset of the Arab Spring suddenly found all manner of excuses to support the one in Damascus. To them, Syrians are less deserving of basic human rights because they do not fit into a certain worldview.

Worse, their popular struggle to secure those rights has been met with contempt and deception. Assad and his supporters are using the Israeli propaganda playbook. Meanwhile, the global political left, which had historically positioned itself as a champion of human rights and an opponent of imperialism, is full of people for whom rights are selective, and for whom only the West is capable of imperialism.

The invasion of Iraq was opposed worldwide, but there was no illusion of Saddam Hussein as being a benevolent or misunderstood leader. Yet Assad, who is no less brutal, is the subject of hero worship.

The "war on terror" narrative nurtured by him and his supporters — and copied from Israel and the US — has led to suspicion and demonization of millions of Syrian refugees fleeing to neighboring countries, Europe and further afield. The current rise of populism in Europe and elsewhere can be attributed in considerable measure to this anti-refugee sentiment.

Like the rest of the media, Arab News had to cover the conflict from beyond the actual warzone due to the inherent physical danger and because of access restrictions. Here too, the Assad regime took a leaf out of Israel's and America's book of war strategy: Deny access to a war zone, then dismiss all accounts, footage and citizen journalism from there as propaganda because it is unverified.

As an Arab proud of my heritage and privileged with freedoms that are denied to so many of my ethnic kin, my main motivation for becoming a journalist was to give a voice to Arabs silenced either by their own governments or by media bias and misrepresentation in the West.

Over the decades, there has been much cause for despair, but for me — as an Arab, a journalist and a proponent of universal human rights — what has happened in Syria has elevated that despair to a whole new level.

That country — historically known for its civilization, culture, hospitality, tolerance and diversity — is where the words "never again" have gone to die, buried under the rubble of a hospital or hanging from a regime torture cell as the rest of the world has either looked away or cheered on.

Sharif Nashashibi is an award-winning journalist and commentator on Arab affairs.

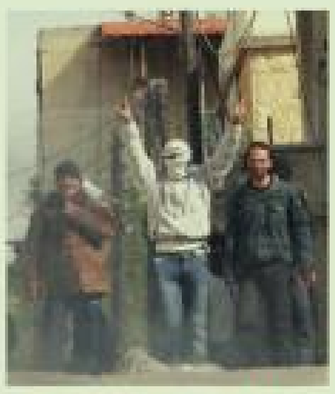
HOW WE REPORTED IT



Human rights activists and witnesses said Syrian security forces opened fire on tens of thousands of protesters in Deraa, killing 25 and wounding hundreds.

Wire story on Arab News front page, March 18, 2011

Key Dates



March 15, 2011
Security forces in the city of Deraa shoot dead protesters demanding the release of political prisoners, triggering nationwide demonstrations.



June 29, 2014
Daesh declares a 'caliphate' in territory spanning Syria and Iraq.



Sept. 30, 2015
Russian direct military intervention begins, turning the tide of the conflict in favor of the Syrian regime.



Oct. 2019
American troops withdraw from northern Syria, prompting Turkey to attack US Kurdish allies in the area.



Feb. 3, 2020
Direct conflict begins between Turkish and Syrian regime forces following the regime's offensive in Idlib province and the killing of Turkish troops.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
Al-Baghdadi declares a Daesh caliphate
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**

MAY 2, 2011

The death of Osama bin Laden

Long before the US caught the Al-Qaeda leader, our Southeast Asia bureau chief interviewed him

BAKER ATYANI
DUBAI

The tall, thin man wore a smoke-colored, ankle-length thobe and bright white turban, and held an AK-74 assault rifle close to his chest. As I stepped into the room and he moved forward and embraced me, the gravity of the moment finally dawned: I was face to face with Osama bin Laden, the most-wanted man in the world.



I had spent a good part of my career over the decades thinking and writing about Bin Laden and the Al-Qaeda militant group that he had turned into a multinational enterprise for the export of militancy.

Now here I was at his heavily guarded, mud-walled hideaway in southern Afghanistan on June 21, 2001 — less than three months before the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001 would spread the names Al-Qaeda and its founder to every corner of the globe.

I was Asia correspondent with the London-based Middle East Broadcasting Center at the time and had received a phone call three months before inviting me to Afghanistan to meet Bin Laden. So, as we settled down on a mattress on the floor that summer afternoon, my first question was why he had granted me the interview and what message he wanted to send to the world through me.





The US on the hunt for Osama bin Laden, above, in an undated photo, after the 9/11 attacks, above left.
Getty Images/AFP

Moments earlier, Bin Laden had said he would be giving only "limited comments" as he was restrained from talking to the media by his hosts in Afghanistan, the Taliban, who rose to power in the war-ravaged nation largely on the strength of Bin Laden's aid and, in turn, provided him refuge.

Instead, his aides in the room did much of the talking during the three-hour-long meeting. Notable among them were Mohammed Atif (alias Abu Hafs), Al-Qaeda's military leader; Ayman Al-Zawahiri, who now heads what remains of the transnational militant group; and Othman, a man assigned to handle logistics for my interview and who identified himself only with a first name.

"In the coming weeks, there will be a big surprise; we are going to hit American and Israeli installations," Abu Hafs said. "The coffin business will increase in the United States."

I looked at Bin Laden and asked if this was true; he smiled and nodded.

In an interview with Pamela Constable for The Washington Post the following month, I would reiterate this: "They said there would be attacks against American and Israeli facilities within the next several weeks. I am 100 percent sure of this, and it was absolutely clear they had brought me there to bear this message."

Two months later, the 9/11 attacks would prove that Bin Laden's chilling message to me had, indeed, been true.

When the interview ended, Bin Laden's personal photographer snapped photos of us and filmed me with Al-Zawahiri and the Al-Qaeda founder, who said he would invite me to interview him again.

"If something big happens, I will be hiding in the tribal areas of Pakistan," Bin Laden said as he shook my hand and walked out of the room. "That's where you can come again to interview me."

A decade later, at 7 a.m. on May 2, 2011, I was at Islamabad airport ready to board a flight to Dubai when a journalist in Kabul texted, asking if I had heard rumors that Bin Laden had been killed in a US raid in Pakistan. A few hours earlier, a Pakistani journalist had sent me a text about a helicopter crash in the garrison city of Abbottabad. Suspecting that the two events might be connected and following my reporter's instinct, I walked up to an airline representative and told him that I was a journalist and needed his help getting my luggage off the flight. The man got excited at the news that Bin Laden may be dead and led me by the hand back through immigration, telling other colleagues to help me because I had to cover one of the biggest stories in modern history.

From the airport, I left directly for Abbottabad, 50 km north of the Pakistani capital of Islamabad, arriving there at 11 a.m. By then, a large group of excited journalists had gathered near the compound where Bin Laden had hidden for years, kept from entering by Pakistani soldiers standing guard.

Meanwhile, US President Barack Obama confirmed that Bin Laden had been killed in a night raid by US forces in Abbottabad city, not far from the tribal regions where the militant leader had told me he would flee from Afghanistan. It was the end of a decade-long hunt for the man who had redefined the threat of terrorism for the 21st century.

To date, the US has disclosed few details of the raid. Only a small number of people — a handful of senior administration and military officials and the Navy SEALs who carried out the operation — were privy to the events of May 2, and the US government classified most of the documents relating to the raid. Questions also remain about the Pakistani government's role, if any, in allowing Bin Laden to hide in a compound within sight of an elite military academy.

As the years go by, I often think of that meeting at Bin Laden's desert hideout and whether he could have predicted that after him, Al-Qaeda's ranks would be hollowed out by relentless American attacks and the rise of Daesh. I also wonder what more he would have had to say if we had met again.

Indeed, in November 2001, barely two months after the 9/11 attacks, Othman, Bin Laden's logistics aide, called to say "the person" was ready to meet me again.

"Will you come?" he asked.

I never got back to Othman and so my meeting with Bin Laden remains the last time before 9/11 that the Al-Qaeda founder is known to have met and given an interview to a journalist.

Baker Atyani, head of Arab News' Southeast Asia bureau, interviewed Osama bin Laden three months before the 9/11 attacks.

SUMMARY

On May 2, 2011, a US special forces team stormed a walled compound in the northeastern Pakistani city of Abbottabad and shot dead Osama bin Laden, the leader of Al-Qaeda.

The operation, carried out in the early hours of the morning, brought an end to a 10-year hunt for the world's most-wanted terrorist, responsible for the Sept. 11 attacks on the US in 2001 and numerous other terrorist outrages.

The following day, an Arab News editorial celebrated the 'lifting of a curse' on the Muslim world. Bin Laden and his 'twisted version of Islam,' declared the paper, had made the religion 'feared and despised among millions upon millions of people' and had been responsible for much of 'the spreading tide of international Islamophobia.'

HOW WE WROTE IT

President Obama said the remains had been handled in accordance with Islamic custom, which requires speedy burial, and the Pentagon later said the body was placed into the waters of the northern Arabian Sea after adhering to Islamic procedures — including washing the corpse — aboard the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson.



Key Dates



1988
Osama bin Laden, son of a wealthy Saudi businessman, forms Al-Qaeda to support Afghan resistance to the Soviet invasion.

April 9, 1994
Saudi Arabia revokes Bin Laden's citizenship for his support of Islamic extremism.

Aug. 23, 1996
Bin Laden issues a declaration of jihad, pledging to drive US forces from the Arabian Peninsula and overthrow the Saudi government.



Aug. 7, 1998
Twin Al-Qaeda truck-bomb attacks on US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya leave 200 dead; the FBI places Bin Laden on its most-wanted list.



Sept. 11, 2001
Coordinated attacks on the US, masterminded by Bin Laden, leave almost 3,000 dead.



Dec. 14, 2001
Bin Laden escapes US attack on Al-Qaeda caves and tunnels in the Tora Bora mountains of eastern Afghanistan.



May 2, 2011
US Navy SEALs storm Bin Laden's hideout in Abbottabad, Pakistan, shortly after 1 a.m. local time.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East

TOMORROW
The Yemen civil war
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**









An image grab, below, from a Daesh propaganda video released on July 5, 2014, allegedly shows Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi addressing people at a mosque in Mosul, then held by the militants. In March 2016, right, Iraqi Shiite fighters from the Popular Mobilization units take Daesh's flag down from an electricity pole during an operation in the desert of Samarra aimed at retaking areas from the militants. AFP

JUNE 29, 2014

The rise and fall of Daesh

The terror group changed the debate on extremism

PETER WELBY
LONDON

In June 2014, I was part of the team that launched a new think tank looking at religious extremism. Our patron, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, had long been concerned that the ideological element of extremist groups was being overlooked and needed more policy-focused research.



That month, Daesh raced through northern Iraq, routing government troops and capturing a vast quantity of material that would strengthen its new position. On June 29, in the central mosque in Mosul, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, the group's leader, declared himself to be caliph of a new caliphate.

The world was fascinated and horrified. Most had never heard of Daesh, or were aware of its links to Al-Qaeda in Iraq during the Iraq War. How had this group come out of nowhere to conquer the north of Iraq in addition to its territories in Syria? Interest was such that an article I published on our think tank's website explaining where the group had come from was at one stage the top result in Google searches.

For extremists and their sympathizers across the world, this was the moment they had been waiting and fighting for over many years. Al-Qaeda's softly-softly approach had caused immense frustrations; here at last, they thought, was a leader and a group capable of delivering on what it promised. Extremists flocked to Daesh in their droves; estimates in 2016 put the number of foreign fighters who had joined at 40,000, with a flow at its peak of up to 2,000 per month. The majority of these foreign fighters were from the Middle East and North Africa, but they included a large number from the West, and South and Southeast Asia too.

Throughout modern history, in every kind of social or political movement, new kinds of organizations have emerged and changed the terms of the debate. Al-Qaeda did that with the 9/11 attacks. Daesh did the same in 2014.

Daesh's use of propaganda probably received the most focus (and parts of its violence, such as the immolation of Muath Al-Kasasbeh, the Jordanian pilot, were for propaganda purposes). It produced slick videos and professionally edited and produced magazines. It created vast networks on social media. Counter-Daesh efforts sought to emulate this, with very limited success, because the majority of efforts seemed unable to grasp that the production of slick videos was not the point, but merely a mechanism for communicating the point.

Another area of total change was in Daesh's approach to governance. Other transnational terrorist groups had attempted governance before — notably Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in the aftermath of 2011. And other extremist groups of different ideological stripes had tried it on a large scale, such as the Taliban in Afghanistan. But Daesh was the first group with an explicitly transnational ideology (it sought to establish a global caliphate) to attempt governance at scale. It put out calls to doctors and teachers; it announced the launch of a currency with great fanfare; it encouraged those who traveled to its territory to burn their passports.

This relates to the third area of total change, and the reason that, even now, with the majority of Daesh territory liberated, extremists all over the world are still carrying out attacks in the group's name. Daesh's actions in 2014 had proclaimed a message across the Islamist world: "We Deliver." For decades, different groups had been claiming to seek a caliphate. Most observers laughed at this fantasy and focused on how the West, in their eyes, could stop provoking such groups. Daesh's actions granted it legitimacy in the sight of its ideological sympathizers. Fighters for other extremist groups in Syria and Iraq defected — in contrast to Daesh, their leaders were mere warlords. Groups from Nigeria to the Philippines swore allegiance. And, right across the Middle East and North Africa, Daesh cells claimed to expand its jurisdiction.

Wind forward nearly six years and Al-Baghdadi is dead, while the territories he commanded across Syria and Iraq are Daesh territories no more. But the allegiance to the idea has remained: In Nigeria, the Sinai, Yemen, Syria, Iraq and elsewhere across the globe, people still claim to be acting in the name of Al-Baghdadi's supposed caliphate.

This is the power of ideology. When we focus on personalities, propaganda or territory, we risk missing the most important aspect. It was not Al-Baghdadi's charismatic personality that drew people who had never met him and hardly ever heard him speak to pledge allegiance. If slick films were enough, the world would be rushing to pledge allegiance to Peter Jackson. If territory were the key, then support for Daesh's would have dried up on the banks of the Euphrates. All of these things are important, but it is the idea of the caliphate, and the means to achieve it, which holds Daesh's supporters together.

Peter Welby is a consultant on religion and global affairs, specializing in the Arab world. Previously he was the managing editor of a think tank on religious extremism, the Centre on Religion & Geopolitics, and worked in public affairs in the Arabian Gulf. He is based in London, and has lived in Egypt and Yemen.
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HOW WE WROTE IT



Iraq said Daesh's 'caliphate' was coming to an end three years to the day after it was proclaimed, following the recapture of Mosul's iconic Al-Nuri Mosque on Thursday.

From a story by Siraj Wahab on Arab News' front page, June 30, 2017



This still image from a video released by the US Department of Defense shows smoke rising from the compound of Daesh leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi in Syria after it was destroyed in a US raid on Oct. 26, 2019. AFP

SUMMARY

On June 30, 2014, Arab News reported that a Sunni terrorist group, the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, had declared the formation of a caliphate, imposing its extreme interpretation of Shariah law on areas it had conquered in Syria and Iraq.

Led by Iraqi-born 'caliph' Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, it declared it would henceforth be known only as the Islamic State, a caliphate whose territory extended from Aleppo in Syria to Diyala in Iraq.

Known in the Arab world as Daesh, the organization was responsible for a reign of terror in which thousands were killed or held as slaves, priceless antiquities were destroyed or stolen, and historic sites from Palmyra in Syria to Mosul in Iraq were devastated.

Although Daesh continues as an ideological threat, over the past five years a US-led coalition of dozens of nations, including all six Gulf Cooperation Council states, has stripped it of the 110,000 square kilometers of territory it once controlled, liberating 7 million people.

In October 2019, Al-Baghdadi committed suicide during a US raid on his hideout in northern Syria.

Key Dates

Jun. 29, 2014
Daesh declares the formation of a caliphate, led by Iraqi Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Al-Badri, aka Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi.

July 5, 2014
Al-Baghdadi makes his only known public appearance, in a video filmed at the Al-Nuri Mosque in Mosul.



July 25, 2014
Daesh posts photographs of the beheading of dozens of captured Syrian soldiers. Over the next year, more filmed beheadings would follow, including those of US journalists James Foley, above, and Steven Sotloff and British aid workers Alan Henning and David Haines.

September 2014
The Global Coalition Against Daesh is formed by the US.



June 1, 2017
Daesh fighters murder 163 people in Mosul, Iraq.

June 21, 2017
Daesh destroys the historic Great Mosque of Al-Nuri in Mosul.



December 2017
Daesh destroys monuments at Syria's UNESCO World Heritage site at Palmyra.

Oct. 26, 2019
US Special Forces track Al-Baghdadi to a hideout in northern Syria, where he kills himself and three children by detonating a suicide vest.

Nov. 14, 2019
At a ministerial meeting in Washington, the 82-member global coalition celebrates the liberation of the group's former territories but warns 'these achievements and Daesh's enduring defeat are threatened... our work is not done.'

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
The drowning of Aylan Kurdi
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MARCH 22, 2015

The civil war in Yemen

When Iran-backed Houthis descended on Aden, the Saudi-led coalition intervened

SAEED AL-BATATI
AL-MUKALLA, YEMEN

On March 22, 2015, Abdul Malik Al-Houthi, the leader of Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi militia, appeared on TV calling for a general mobilization of fighters to expel Al-Qaeda and Daesh militants.



Two days earlier, more than 100 people had been killed by three suicide bombs detonated in mosques in the Yemeni capital Sanaa, which had been seized by the Houthis in September 2014. Responsibility for the attacks was claimed by the Yemeni branch of Daesh.

Here in Yemen, however, we knew that the Houthi leader's real objective was to finally defeat Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, who after the fall of Sanaa had decamped to Aden, now the country's temporary capital.

A day before the Houthi leader's call to arms, Hadi had given a defiant speech in which he vowed to raise the Yemeni flag inside the northwestern city of Saada, heartland of the Houthi insurgency, and to challenge Iran's designs in Yemen.

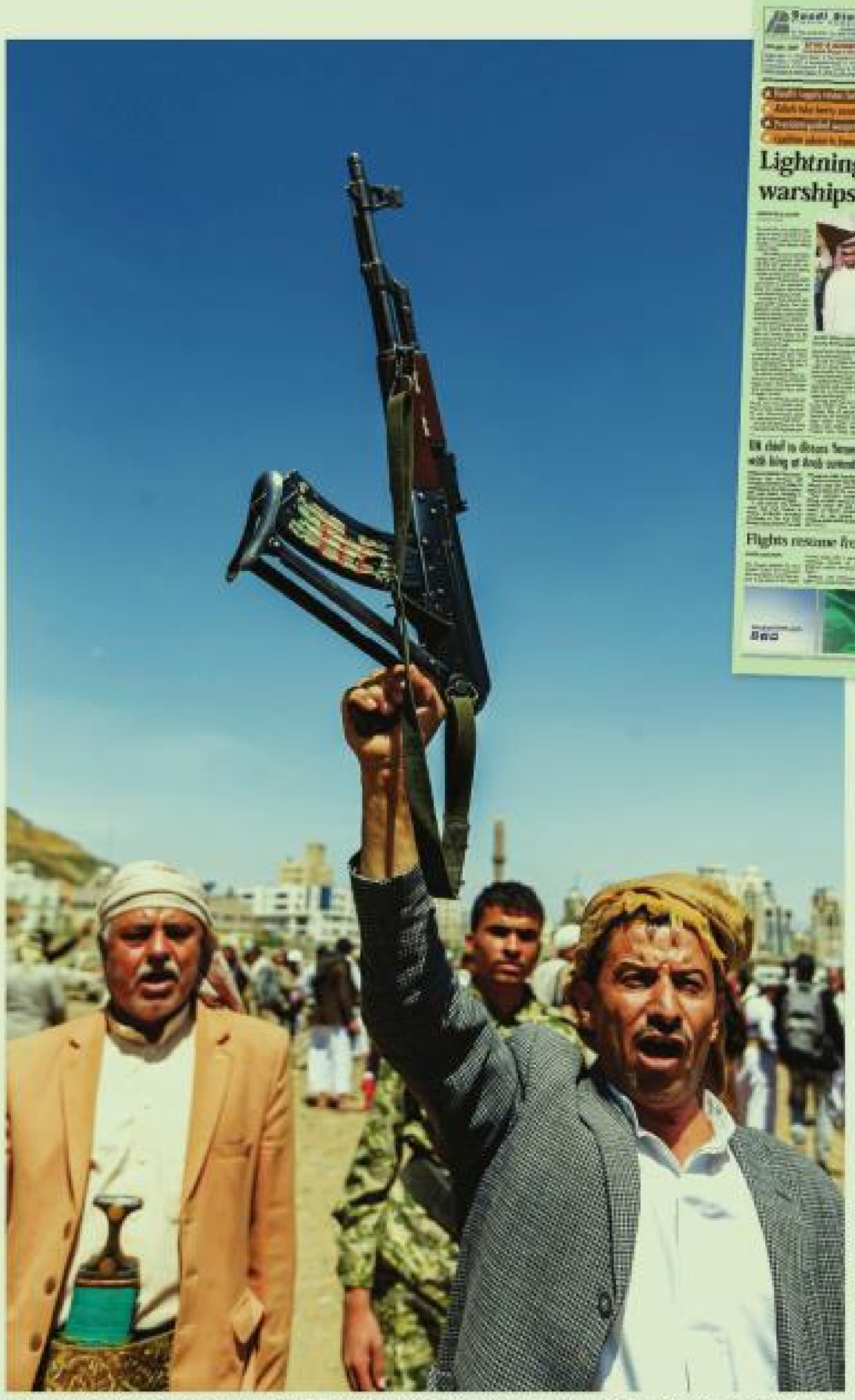
I watched both speeches and sensed that a major showdown between the forces of the two leaders was inevitable. The Houthi leader's speech coincided with the seizure by his forces of Taiz, Yemen's third-largest city, and their continuing march toward the southern provinces that were Hadi's fiefdom.

Hadi was aware that the Houthis outnumbered and outgunned his ragtag forces, so he despatched his foreign minister to appeal on TV for military intervention from the neighboring Gulf states.

Hadi received an immediate shot in the arm when on March 22, the UN Security Council reaffirmed "its strong commitment to the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen," and "condemned the ongoing unilateral actions taken by the Houthis that were undermining the political transition process and jeopardizing the country's security and stability."

But the strongly worded statement did not stop the Houthis' march toward Aden. As a Yemeni reporter who had been following the crisis since day one, I knew there was one man whose influence was inspiring the Houthis' ruthless pursuit of Hadi: Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had been Yemen's president for three decades before he stepped down in February 2012 after months of turmoil in the country inspired by the Arab Spring protests.

Saleh was succeeded by Hadi, his deputy for 18 years. But even after leaving office, Saleh continued to exercise considerable influence over army units, facilitating the rapid military expansion of the Houthis.



A Yemeni man chants as he holds up a assault rifle in the Houthi rebel-held capital Sanaa on Sept. 21, 2019. AFP


Arab News
Lightning strikes pulverize Houthis as warships secure strategic sea passage
Yemeni FM says Iranian forces were aiding Houthis
Flights resume from airports in south

SUMMARY

On March 22, 2015 Houthi leader Abdul Malik Al-Houthi, inspired by rapid military gains in northern Yemen, gave a televised speech calling for the mobilization of forces to defeat Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, who had decamped to Aden from the captured capital Sanaa.

Hadi, backed by inadequate numbers of remaining troops and tribesmen, nevertheless vowed to resist the Houthi advance and requested military support from the neighboring Gulf states.

It came quickly, in the shape of a heavy aerial bombardment by a Saudi-led coalition that helped to tilt the balance of the conflict in favor of the government, which was able to recover control of almost 80 percent of the country. But the civil war, which has claimed the lives of thousands of Yemenis and driven many more toward starvation, continues with no end in sight.

At the peak of national frustration, relief came from the sky.

This influence continued even after Saleh's assassination in 2017 by the Houthis, following the collapse of the alliance between the two. Hadi later said when Saleh had stepped down as president, he had handed over only the flag of Yemen, and the army had ignored his successor's orders to fight the Houthis.

Shortly after the Houthi leader's speech, convoys of his troops descended on Aden, and given the speed of their expansion in northern Yemen, observers knew that they were poised to take the city and might capture Hadi for the second time.

Hadi, meanwhile, had scrambled to bring together local tribesmen and remnants of army troops under the command of his Defense Minister Mohammed Mahmoud Al-Souhaihi. The continuing influence of Saleh's grip on the army, however, was all too visible as military units in Dhale, Lahj, Abyan and Shabwa that had long been under the former president's command threw their weight behind marching Houthi forces, smoothing their way to reach the outskirts of Aden within days.

The implications of the Houthi military expansion were huge. The civil war had allowed Al-Qaeda and Daesh to expand in southern provinces when thousands of army troops and other security forces had abandoned their positions to fight along with the Houthis.

Experts here told me at the time even that Saleh and the Houthis were behind the resurrection of Al-Qaeda and Daesh to discredit Hadi and create a rationale for invading Aden and neighboring provinces.

The civil war has disrupted the implementation of outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference. Starting on March 18, 2013, the conference brought together all Yemeni factions, including the Houthis, who agreed on solutions to the country's many thorny issues.

The conference, which concluded on Jan. 22, 2014, approved a plan to divide the country into six semi-autonomous regions. But with the Houthis on the verge of seizing control of the whole country on March 22, 2015, it was impossible to put this plan into action.

The other consequence of the Houthis' military activities has been the introduction of an unprecedented religious divide in Yemen's political dialogue. Wars in the country had long been seen as competitions between different political or tribal forces. But when the Houthis, a Shiite group seeking to invade the Sunni-dominated south, it was to the sound of a new sectarian discourse.

For days, as the Houthis crushed tribal and military resistance on their way to Aden, seizing control of the city's airport on March 25, citizens and army commanders alike despaired that anything could blunt their advance. Hadi fled the country, and military officers who confided in me spoke of reverting to insurgency tactics rather than facing the superior Houthi forces in conventional battles.

Then, at the peak of national frustration, relief came from the sky. On March 26, 2015, an overjoyed military officer who had been a source of mine for more than a year called me at about 3 a.m., unable to wait until daylight to tell me the news. "Saeed, wake up! The Saudis have begun bombing the Houthis in Aden," he said. "Now we can regroup and fight them off."

Saeed Al-Batati is a Yemeni journalist based in the southern port city of Al-Mukalla who covers Yemen for Arab News.
Twitter: @saeedalBatati

HOW WE WROTE IT


Lightning strikes pulverize Houthis as warships secure strategic sea passage

The main aim of the military operations in Yemen currently is to cut off the major supply routes of the Houthis, a senior defense official said on Friday.

From a story by Mohammed Al-Sulami on Arab News' front page, March 28, 2015



Newly recruited Houthi fighters take part in a gathering in Sanaa on July 16, 2017, to mobilize more fighters in the war against pro-government forces in several Yemeni cities. AFP

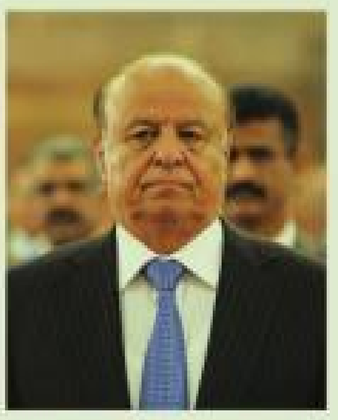
Key Dates



Sept. 21, 2014
Iran-backed Houthis seize control of Yemen's capital Sanaa.



Feb. 6, 2015
Houthis take over the government, dissolve parliament and place Yemen's President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi under house arrest.



Feb. 21, 2015
Hadi flees to Aden, where he vows to defeat the Houthis.



March 22, 2015
Houthi leader Abdul Malik Al-Houthi declares war on Hadi and orders troops to move to Aden.



March 26, 2015
The Saudi-led coalition begins bombing Houthi forces, enabling loyalists to take the offensive.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East

TOMORROW
Vision 2030
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SEPT. 2, 2015

The drowning of Aylan Kurdi

Images of the Syrian-Kurdish boy lying lifeless on a Turkish beach drew attention to refugees' plight

EMINA OSMANDZIKOVIC
DUBAI

More than nine years after a popular uprising erupted in Syria against the regime of President Bashar Assad, a tense calm prevails in much of the country. But in 2015, a civil war was at its height, entire cities were being razed, and Daesh had set up a proto-state spanning the Syria-Iraq border. Syrians displaced by the fighting attempted the journey to Europe in rickety vessels that plied the Mediterranean Sea. Thousands did not succeed.



The desperation and despondency that defined the period was captured by images of a dead 3-year-old Syrian-Kurdish boy, Aylan Kurdi, lying face down on a beach in Turkey. The photos, taken by a Turkish journalist, quickly spread around the globe, shocking the world and raising international awareness of the refugee crisis like no other event since the start of the war.



This image of the lifeless body of Aylan Kurdi, on the shores in Bodrum, southern Turkey, on Sept. 2, 2015, became a heartbreaking symbol of the burgeoning refugee crisis. AFP


INTERNATIONAL 9

Thousands arrive in Athens as migrant influx rattles EU

HotSPOT

The rising walls of humanity

The Kurdi family's tragedy struck such a powerful chord among both ordinary people and public intellectuals of Europe that the EU decided to ease its border controls, if only temporarily, for Syrian refugees. It later transpired that when their struggle for survival in Turkey became too difficult, Aylan's father, Abdullah, and his family of five decided to make the precarious journey to what they believed was Europe's safety.

Their ultimate destination was Canada, where they hoped to join relatives in Vancouver. Tima Kurdi, an aunt of Aylan, had reportedly filed for refugee sponsorship for her extended family under the Canadian immigration system.

In the early hours of Sept. 2, the Kurdi family boarded a small inflatable boat operated by human smugglers, which capsized about five minutes after leaving the Turkish city of Bodrum. More than a dozen people had filled a vessel designed to fit eight, in the hope that they could make it to the Greek island of Kos. Abdullah later said those on board had no functioning life vests or any way of protecting themselves.

The trip across the Mediterranean had cost the lives of hundreds of migrants and refugees since the outbreak of wars in Syria and Iraq. But it was the death of Aylan that became at once a symbol of the conflicts and the European refugee crisis of 2015.



The Kurdish family's tragedy resonated with me as a Bosnian on a deeply personal level. Forced to go into exile during the 1992-1995 Bosnian war, my own family found themselves scattered across the globe and left with no option but to rebuild from scratch.

In a testament to the power of a few pictures, Aylan's images moved millions of hearts, sparked a burst of hashtag activism and caused a major, if brief, change in European public perception of the refugee crisis. In the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, Abdullah was flown home and provided with a police escort and a place to stay. Tima, herself a refugee, was invited to speak at the UN and EU.

European news media experienced a shift in the language it used to describe the crisis, with the word "refugee" gaining precedence over "migrant." Germany agreed to take in an additional 50,000 refugees, despite already being the largest refugee host country in Europe. But the policy shift did not last. As the refugee crisis intensified, many southern and eastern European nations closed their borders to Syrians.

Syrian refugees and other asylum-seekers continue to board overloaded, unsafe boats and undertake the perilous journey toward Europe. In total, the year 2015 witnessed more than 1 million arrivals and at least 3,500 deaths at sea. Since then, another 10,000 have drowned in the absence of safe and legal ways to cross the Mediterranean, according to the UN.

A political controversy erupted in Canada soon after Aylan's drowning, when news broke that the country's Department of Citizenship and Immigration had rejected Tima's sponsorship request for a brother of Abdullah because it was deemed incomplete.

In 2018, she published a book about Aylan titled "The Boy on the Beach: My Family's Escape from Syria and Our Hope for a New Home." She wrote: "Everyone promised to do more, but the good will was short-lived."

Tima and her brother now run the Kurdi Foundation, which works to deliver aid to children in refugee camps. In February 2019, Abdullah was invited to rename a German rescue ship "Alan Kurdi" in Palma de Mallorca in the Spanish Balearic Islands.

But in hindsight, the world has learned little from the Kurdi family tragedy. In February, during a new refugee wave by land and sea from Turkey, the first victim was another child, a 4-year-old-boy who drowned when a boat capsized off the coast of the Greek island of Lesbos.

Emina Osmandzikovic, whose family was forced into exile during the 1992-1995 Bosnian war, writes about refugee issues for Arab News.
Twitter: @eminaosmnandzik

HOW WE WROTE IT


INTERNATIONAL

Thousands arrive in Athens as migrant influx rattles EU

> **The present surge in Europe is largely Syrians leaving their war-torn country, and in Europe the slanging match has reached an unfortunate high, with some countries blaming Russia for encouraging the Syrian conflict and being responsible for the flow of homeless humanity.**
>
> **Bikram Vohra in Arab News, Sept. 3, 2015**

SUMMARY

In the early hours of Sept. 2, 2015, Abdullah Kurdi and his family boarded a small boat on the Turkish coast in hopes of reaching the Greek island of Kos. But the vessel capsized about five minutes after leaving Bodrum.

Three-year-old Aylan Kurdi, together with his older brother and his mother, died from drowning. The Kurdi family were Syrian Kurds trying to reach Europe amid the refugee crisis of 2015. Their ancestral town Kobani was devastated by battles between Kurdish fighters and Daesh, which had set up a proto-state spanning the Syria-Iraq border.

The images of Aylan's lifeless body lying face down on a Turkish beach riveted the world's attention on a burgeoning refugee crisis, illustrating the magnitude of the suffering, the lives destroyed, and the treacherous journeys people risked. That moment moved millions of hearts and caused a major change in European public perception of the unfolding humanitarian disaster. Germany alone agreed to take in an additional 50,000 refugees.

But the policy shift did not last. Since the peak of refugee crossings in 2015, another 10,000 people have drowned in the absence of safe and legal ways to cross the Mediterranean Sea, according to the UN.

Key Dates



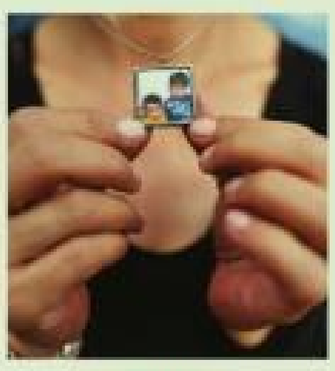
March 15, 2011
Months after a political revolt begins in Syria, a refugee crisis erupts and grows into one of the biggest humanitarian emergencies of the 21st century.



Feb. 9, 2015
A European refugee crisis develops, with at least 300 migrants believed to have drowned after four inflatable boats sink off the coast of Libya.



Sept. 2, 2015
Three-year-old Aylan Kurdi drowns as the boat that was carrying him and his family members toward Greece capsizes off the coast of Turkey.



2018
Kurdi's father and aunt set up the Kurdi Foundation to raise funds for food, clothing and medicine for children in refugee camps.



March 2, 2020
A regime offensive in Idlib province in northwest Syria sends yet another wave of refugees from Turkey toward Europe, resulting in the drowning of a 4-year-old boy off the coast of Greece.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
The Qatar boycott
For more events in our '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**

APRIL 25, 2016

Unveiling Saudi Vision 2030

The eagerly awaited change was launched by then Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman

FAISAL J. ABBAS
EDITOR IN CHIEF

A seminal event occurred on April 25, 2016. On that date Saudi Arabia's then Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced details and contours of what we have come to know as the path-breaking, paradigm-shifting Saudi Vision 2030. That very day the prince gave Al Arabiya News Channel an exclusive interview which was his first one. At the time, I was based in Dubai editing the channel's English digital arm; it was obvious to me that if there was an eagerly awaited moment of change that would positively impact the region, this was it.



Here was a man who was charting a new course that was an almost total about-face for Saudi Arabia. It was the kind of thing that nobody had tried before. The young prince was giving hope to a nation, 60 percent of whose population was under the age of 35. He talked about the government having targets, key performance indicators and Project Management Offices, as well as ridding the Kingdom of its dependence on oil — all of which were things unheard of in the past.

Five months later — on Sept. 26, 2016 to be precise — I was in Jeddah after being appointed editor in chief of Arab News. Having lived in Jeddah during my formative years, I felt that I had a genuine feeling for, and understanding of, the city. What I failed to consider, on the other hand, was that in the five months since the announcement of Vision 2030, change had become the new norm. And not a slow glacial change, but a fast and urgent one. I was nonetheless pleasantly surprised, and I wrote about my optimism on my first day at Arab News. In that column I mentioned how I was assisted upon my arrival by a female Saudi receptionist at the Rosewood Jeddah hotel. "While the thought of having a woman do such a job was unheard of 20 years ago, I must confess that I honestly have never dealt with a more professional, meticulous and 'happy to serve' receptionist in my travels around the world," I wrote in the piece that was aptly titled, "The Return of the Prodigal Son."

It was a coincidence that I returned to the Kingdom only five months after Vision 2030 was announced. From the perspective of a journalist, it was an exciting time even though I had no idea what to expect. Nor did I know whether the announced changes, genuine as they and the intentions underlying them were, would materialize into reality.

Day after day, it became evident that Saudi Arabia was on a new track and nothing could stand in the way. For example, curbing the powers of the religious police was a giant step away from what had been the norm. In one fell swoop, the fears that had for so long stopped Saudis from thinking outside the box were done away with. Before the curbs, members of the religious police had been a virtual law unto themselves and, in a few tragic cases, they had been responsible for the deaths of young Saudis. It is disappointing that the Saudi leadership gets very little credit for this remarkable achievement which represented a complete reversal of the old status quo in the Kingdom.

That decision followed concerts and musical performances before live audiences, the very sort of events that had been unheard of in the past. Some of the old-timers in the newspaper flinched when we decided to run large photos showing ordinary Saudi men and women sitting next to each other, eating popcorn as they enjoyed themselves humming along to live music at a concert.

The first mixed concert in the Kingdom that I personally attended was by "iLuminate," the spectacular LED hit show from New York. In the runup to the show, there was a conflict between the security forces who said the mixed event could not take place and the people from the official General Entertainment Authority who insisted the event had to be mixed. Ultimately, the GEA won and it was a fabulously memorable performance, mesmerizing thousands in the massive Al-Jowhara Stadium. Men, women, and children sat together and enjoyed a dazzling show, full of music, dance moves and special effects.

Next came women driving and the abolition of the guardianship laws. People of my generation never thought we would see women driving, but we were proved wrong and it did happen. I invited our Senior Editor Mo Gannon, a Canadian in our Dubai office with an international driving license, to Jeddah. I asked her to be part of the history that was unfolding in Saudi Arabia. We got her into the driver's seat; I sat next to her to record the reactions of her and our Saudi female staff who were also in the car. It was an incredible feeling of liberation for the women of Saudi Arabia. The happy faces that appeared on our front pages were of proud and traditionally but fashionably dressed Saudi women of all shades from all regions. What had been the forbidden exception became the accepted norm.

Then there were the high-decibel concerts at Ad-Diriyah. The setting was straight out of the Arabian Nights, and it was enthralling to see history encounter the modern world in the ancient deserts of Arabia.

These cultural and social changes resulted in Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman earning the total support and admiration of the people. He earned their love and respect by making longed-for changes and getting rid of suffocating restrictions.

At the same time, the crown prince did not forget about Saudi Arabia's international image. He set about rehabilitating that image and transforming the country into a center of moderation. In order to do this, he hosted leaders of other religions in Saudi Arabia and focused on the virtues and advantages of interfaith cooperation. He invited Jewish rabbis and Christian preachers to the Kingdom and encouraged them to engage in dialogue with one another and with the Saudi ulema.

The crown prince's most significant announcement, however, was the one in which stated that he wanted to return Saudi Arabia to a moderate form of Islam or, in his words, return it to the way it was before 1979.

Why 1979? Because as he said during his CBS interview with Norah O'Donnell in September 2018: "We were living a very normal life like the rest of the Gulf countries. Women were driving cars. There were movie theaters in Saudi Arabia. Women worked everywhere. We were just normal people developing like any other country in the world until the events of 1979."

Having said all that, I must now ask a question: Has the Crown Prince's Vision 2030 achieved all that it set out to achieve? No. Will it? Probably not. Has there ever been a vision anywhere at any time that has managed to make real all its wishes and desires? No. Many mistakes and mishandling by several government bodies and global unforeseen events have at least partially derailed and delayed some of the ambitious plans of Vision 2030. Megaprojects and economic plans will surely be affected by the coronavirus, its aftermath and its influence on oil prices which have dropped to a new low.

However, just think of the size of the problem that would have been had Vision 2030 not been in place when the coronavirus struck the world! Imagine, the religious police opposing the suspension of prayers at the two holy shrines and mosques across the Kingdom: Hundreds of thousands if not millions would have been affected.

Leave all of that and look at the key question which is the bottom line. Is Saudi Arabia better off today and happier today than it was four years ago? Just ask the youth who form 60 percent of the Saudi population what they think. And there you will find the answer.

Faisal J. Abbas, Arab News' editor in chief, began his journalism career in Lebanon.
Twitter: @FaisalJAbbas



Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the press conference in Riyadh where he unveiled Vision 2030 on April 25, 2016. AFP

SUMMARY

On April 25, 2016, Mohammed bin Salman, then Deputy Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, launched Vision 2030, an ambitious strategic plan designed to transform the nation's economy, reduce its dependence on oil and nurture a 'vibrant society characterized by strong roots and strong foundations that emphasize moderate Islam, national pride, Saudi heritage and Islamic culture.'

Among the goals outlined in Vision 2030 was a determination to become 'a global investment powerhouse... to stimulate our economy and diversify our revenues' and to exploit Saudi Arabia's unique geographical location and transform the country into 'a global hub connecting three continents: Asia, Europe and Africa.'

Also revealed were plans to build a trade-boosting bridge across the Red Sea; sell shares in Saudi Aramco, the world's largest oil company; develop a national defense industry; encourage inward investment; reduce unemployment and scrap unsustainable electricity and water subsidies.



SPOTLIGHT
JEDDAH AIRPORT: NO WORRIES, THE AIRPORT WILL FIND YOUR BAGS
OPINION
US RHETORIC PUSHING RUSSIA AND CHINA CLOSER TOGETHER, WHITES MARIA DUBOVIKOVA
SAUDI ARABIA
HOUTHI ATTACK ON SAUDI TANKER IS TERRORIST ACT, SAYS AL-MALIKI
BUSINESS
SOMALILAND EMERGES AS KEY PLAYER IN HORN OF AFRICA

ARAB NEWS
The Voice of a Changing Region
Since 1975

First Saudi cinema in 35 years to open on April 18

FAST FACTS

The Brief

Iraq president warns Turkey against 'foreign invasion'

After 9/11 Al Jazeera became 'a mouthpiece of Osama bin Laden'

EXCLUSIVE

HOW WE WROTE IT

One of the goals of Saudi Vision 2030 is to improve the quality of life through providing additional entertainment opportunities...
From a story on the front page of Arab News, April 5, 2018



First Saudi cinema in 35 years to open on April 18

FAST FACTS

Key Dates

April 25, 2016
Then Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman launches Vision 2030.

June 21, 2017
Mohammed bin Salman is appointed Crown Prince by King Salman.



AVIS
arab news
sm
'WE ARE GOING BACK TO MODERATE ISLAM'
WIN 100 KILOS OF GOLD
ROLEX
MALABAR

Oct. 24, 2017
At the Future Investment Initiative conference in Riyadh, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman pledges a return to moderate Islam and launches NEOM, a $500-billion megacity.



Lights, camera, action: Gala heralds rebirth of Saudi cinema

April 18, 2018
Ending a 35-year ban on cinemas, the first commercial movie theater opens in Riyadh with a screening of the Marvel film 'Black Panther.'



ARAB NEWS
Independence Day
Women in Saudi Arabia are free to drive as Vision 2030 reforms begin to bear fruit
Today is the day my high-school dream becomes reality

June 24, 2018
A ban on Saudi women driving is lifted.



Feb. 10, 2019
Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman launches a tourism megaproject in AlUla, including a resort designed by Jean Nouvel and a nature reserve.

Feb. 25, 2020
Saudi Arabia creates three new ministries, for sports, tourism and investment, as part of its commitment to Vision 2030.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
Saudi women drive
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JUNE 5, 2017

The boycott of Qatar

After Doha refused to abandon support for extremists, its Gulf neighbors cut all ties

MOHAMMED AL-SULAMI
JEDDAH

As a reporter for Arab News, I was surprised when my request for an exclusive interview with Qatar's foreign minister on the sidelines of the 17th Doha Forum in May 2017 was swiftly granted.



It seemed to signal that Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani had a message he wanted to convey ahead of the Riyadh Summit, due to be held a week later in the presence of the leaders of other Gulf and Arab countries and, on his first overseas trip, US President Donald Trump.

After I sat down with Al-Thani, the first topic on the agenda was the thorny issue of Qatar's support for the Muslim Brotherhood, which some Gulf states and other Arab countries consider a terrorist organization.

I was surprised by Al-Thani's response, summed up in the front-page headline in Arab News on May 17: "We do not, will not and have not supported the Muslim Brotherhood."

Our conversation moved on to the other big issue increasingly alienating Qatar from the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) — the closeness of its relations with Iran. Doha, said

The news that Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE and Bahrain were cutting diplomatic ties with Qatar and imposing a boycott on the country broke on June 5, 2017, but the origins of the decision could be traced back two decades.



Doha's tourism took a hit when the blockade was declared on June 5, 2017. Shutterstock

SUMMARY

On June 5, 2017, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE and Bahrain cut diplomatic ties with Qatar, closing borders and airspace, and imposing an economic blockade that still remain in place.

Saudi Arabia said at the time that the decision was based on 'Qatar's embrace of various terrorist and sectarian groups aimed at destabilizing the region, including the Muslim Brotherhood, Al-Qaeda, Daesh and groups supported by Iran,' as reported in Arab News.

The four states, and others that soon joined the boycott, had spent years trying to persuade Doha to stop supporting terrorist groups and interfering in the internal affairs of other countries in the region, including its GCC allies.

Qatar's alignment with Iran, a destabilizing and threatening influence in the region, was of special concern to states wary of Tehran's ambitions in the Gulf.



Al-Thani, did not enter into direct dialogue with Iran without the GCC. But, he added, Qatar had "responded positively to Iran's call for dialogue." The theme of that year's Doha Forum was "Development, Stability and the Refugee Crisis." As we talked in the Sheraton Hotel, Doha, neither I nor, so far as I could tell, Al-Thani knew that just three weeks later Qatar would be plunged into a crisis of its own making.

The news that Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE and Bahrain were cutting diplomatic ties with Qatar and imposing a boycott on the country broke on June 5, 2017, but the origins of the decision could be traced back two decades.

On June 27, 1995, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani had seized power in a bloodless coup, deposing his father, Sheikh Khalifa, who had left the country for medical treatment. Under Sheikh Hamad, Qatar began to drift out of alignment with the other GCC states, interfering in their internal affairs, supporting terrorists groups and even broadcasting speeches by Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden on the Al-Jazeera television channel, founded by the state the year after Sheikh Hamad took control.

Just how far Doha had strayed from the GCC's common values started to become apparent when several terrorists affiliated with Al-Qaeda and holding Qatari passports, were allowed to infiltrate the Kingdom through Qatar. Among them was Abdel Aziz Al-Muqrin, who in 2002 took charge of Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia and carried out a series of attacks before he was killed by Saudi security forces in 2004.

In 2014, two leaked recordings of conversations between Libyan President Muammar Qaddafi, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa and former Qatari prime minister Hamad bin Jassim, dating back to 2003, revealed Qatar had been plotting to destabilize and divide Saudi Arabia. On Oct. 25, 2017, Hamad bin Jassim admitted the authenticity of the recordings for the first time.

For years the other Gulf states, and the Kingdom in particular, tried to persuade Qatar to turn from its disruptive path. The attempts continued after Sheikh Hamad stepped down and handed power to his son, Sheikh Tamim, on June 25, 2013, but to no avail.

In November 2013, Doha signed the Riyadh Agreement, brokered between Qatar and Saudi Arabia by Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, the emir of Kuwait, and designed to improve relations between Gulf states. At the time, the details of the agreement were secret. But when the document was later leaked, it emerged that Qatar had agreed not to interfere in the internal affairs of the other Gulf states, not to support the Muslim Brotherhood, not to support or finance terrorist organizations and not to support "antagonistic media" — taken to be a reference to Al-Jazeera.

The emir of Qatar had also put his signature to the condition that Qatar's failure to comply with the provisions of the agreement gave the rest of the GCC countries the right to take whatever measures they deemed appropriate to protect their security and stability.

It quickly became clear that Qatar was failing to abide by the conditions of the Riyadh Agreement and, in March 2014, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE withdrew their ambassadors, citing "Doha's noncompliance with previously agreed decisions." In November 2014, after the Qatari government declared its commitment to some of the provisions, the return of the envoys was announced and a second agreement signed, but all was still not well.

On June 5, 2017, the Qatar News Agency broadcast a statement by the emir of Qatar, criticizing what he called "anti-Iranian feelings." Qatari officials quickly disowned the statements, claiming the official news agency's website had been hacked, but this was the straw that broke the camel's back.

On the same day Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE and Egypt cut diplomatic ties with Qatar, blockaded all ports and borders, and listed 13 requirements for the restoration of normal relations.

The most important demands were that Doha should end its support for terrorism and militant groups in Arab countries, cease interfering in the internal affairs of boycotting countries, stop harboring extremists and terrorists in Qatar, and no longer give militants a media platform to attack the four countries.

Qatar's response? On Aug. 24, 2017, Doha announced that it was restoring full diplomatic relations with Iran and intended to "strengthen bilateral relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran in all fields." More than 1,000 days later, the crisis remains unresolved.

HOW WE REPORTED IT



Residents of Qatar were seen 'panic buying' and some supermarket shelves stood empty after Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, the UAE and other countries announced they would withdraw diplomatic staff from the country.

From a story by Aisha Fareed and Lulwa Shalhoub on Arab News' front page, June 6, 2017

Mohammed Al-Sulami, regional director of Saudi Arabia at Arab News, conducted an exclusive interview with Qatar's foreign minister in 2017, before Saudi Arabia cut diplomatic ties with Doha.

Key Dates



June 27, 1995
Hamad bin Khalifa deposes his father and seizes control of Qatar.



June 12, 2002
Terrorist Abdel Aziz Al-Muqrin enters Saudi Arabia via Qatar, with a Qatari passport.



Nov. 16, 2013
Qatar signs the first Riyadh Agreement.

March 5, 2014
Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain withdraw their envoys from Qatar, accusing Doha of interfering in other states' affairs.



March 7, 2014
Saudi Arabia designates the Muslim Brotherhood as a terror organization. On Nov. 15, the UAE follows suit.

Nov. 17, 2014
Ambassadors of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain return to Doha, and Qatar signs a supplementary agreement.

June 5, 2017
Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE and Bahrain cut diplomatic ties with Qatar.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East

TOMORROW
Bashir overthrown in Sudan
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JUNE 24, 2018

The day Saudi women could drive

The lifting of the ban was one of several reforms that improved gender equality





MO GANNON
DUBAI

This story could be called a tale of two countries. When I arrived in Jeddah from our Dubai office for my first visit to Saudi Arabia on June 20, 2018, I was not allowed to drive. And then, four days later, along with every other woman in the Kingdom, all of a sudden we could. Much like Cinderella in the fairy tale, our pumpkins turned into carriages at the stroke of midnight on June 24, 2018.



So much has changed since then that it seems like ancient history. The guardianship law, which required Saudi women to get a male guardian's permission to travel, was rescinded in August last year, and foreign female travelers are no longer expected to wear abayas and headscarves. And in December, the Kingdom officially ended gender segregation in public places, although Saudi women and men had already begun to mingle.

This was all unthinkable at the time that the driving ban was lifted — the first major, visible sign that the Kingdom was serious about change. As my Saudi colleague Noor Nugali pointed out, it was a "mind-blowing" signal that it was headed "100 miles in the right direction."

So let us reverse, if you will, to the time when the Kingdom was the last country in the world where women could not drive. Arriving on a humid morning at Jeddah's airport, I stepped off the plane in my abaya with a sense of excitement tempered by fear at what I might encounter as a solo foreign woman in the Kingdom.

After a decade living in the UAE, I had heard stories from other women about their encounters with the Saudi religious police, so I wrapped my headscarf tightly and prepared for the worst.

Mistakenly joining the line for Umrah arrivals, I was approached by a customs officer who, after looking at my visa, asked me to have a seat while he sorted an issue by calling an Arabic speaker in our Jeddah newsroom. "This is it," I thought. "I'm going to jail." What happened next was a total surprise. He returned, offering me Arabic coffee and a chocolate heart before helping me through the gates.

The driver sent to pick me up told me I did not have to wear a headscarf, so I let it go around my shoulders, already feeling more relaxed. He brought me to the Jeddah Hilton, with a lobby that looks like a "Star Trek" spaceship, and escalators that curl around like spiral staircases.

For the next few days, I made my trips to the Jeddah newsroom with Bakhsh, our ever-smiling company driver who insisted on carrying my bags, whenever he was available. But to those who claim the lifting of the driving ban was just a token gesture, I can tell you: It was anything but. Imagine getting through your day by relying on someone to pick you up at every point, then remember the freedom you felt when you got your license and the keys to your first car.

So when the clocks on our iPhones turned to 12:01 a.m. on June 24, it was not just a sign to start our engines. It was time for Saudi Arabia to leave this old way behind, and the unnecessary load that came with it.

At this time, I was already in the driver's seat of our company car, wearing Saudi designer Moe Khoja's driving jacket, embroidered with the date of this occasion. My boss Faisal J. Abbas, beside me in the passenger's seat, had designated me to take him and my two female colleagues on this drive, because a Saudi woman in our newsroom had yet to get a license. It was not just a historic drive for me; for them, it was the first time they had been driven by a woman in the Kingdom.

Off we drove that night in a big black SUV, rolling down our windows at stoplights and waving to surprised Saudis, who smiled and gave us their thumbs up. The real test was when we pulled up next to a police car at the next light. We waited in nervous silence, until the light turned green and we let go of our breaths, driving off without incident.

The next morning, as more Saudi women took to the roads, I approached the rental car desk in my hotel lobby to ask about renting a car. The man told me it was not possible. "Oh, yes, it is," I told him. "Haven't you read the news?"

I showed him Arab News' special issue that day, wrapped in Malika Favre's illustration of a Saudi woman driving, which went on to become an iconic image of that day. Sadly, it did not help my appeal. He called his supervisor, who told me I needed a Saudi license.

Remarkably, after I wrote about this in Arab News, the chief operating officer of Budget Saudi Arabia contacted me to rectify the confusion. He invited me to visit their office on the Corniche, where I produced my international driver's license and became the first foreign woman to rent a car in Saudi Arabia.

As I climbed into the white Land Cruiser, people on the street stopped to take photos with their mobile phones. That night, when I took my ladies on a drive to Old Jeddah, we got the same reception from the crowded streets: Smiles and waves. And unlike most places in the world, male drivers courteously stopped to let us ahead of them in traffic.

We rolled down the windows, blasting the song Saudi singer Tamtam wrote for the occasion: "We know it's our time ... let go of past perceptions, tomorrow is mine. We got drive, pushing through the limits, we ride. We have dreams, and every day we're making them real ..."

I am glad we soaked up the celebrity attention while we had it, because as more Saudi women got their licenses, it has become commonplace to see women driving in the Kingdom. The initial objections raised to allowing women on the roads — that they would clog the streets with traffic or cause more accidents — now seem silly notions from a time long past.

Back at home, I often get asked what it is like to drive in the Kingdom. "Isn't it scary?" people wonder. My answer to them now is: It is just like anywhere else. And that is exactly how it should be.

Mo Gannon is a senior editor in the Dubai bureau of Arab News. She was the first foreign woman to rent a car in Saudi Arabia.

A young woman in Jeddah, above, drives a car on the first day she is legally allowed to drive in Saudi Arabia on June 24, 2018. Above left, Mo Gannon, wearing Moe Khoja's driving jacket emblazoned with the historic date, prepares to get in the Arab News SUV and drive at midnight June 24 with colleagues Aisha Fareed, left, and Aseel Bashraheel, right, as passengers. Getty Images

SUMMARY

On June 24, 2018, Saudi women took their place behind the wheel, driving on the Kingdom's roads legally for the first time. The historic day came about as part of a series of reforms under Vision 2030, announced in 2016 by then-Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. It was followed by a royal decree on Sept. 26, 2017, lifting the ban on women driving.

The decision had a demonstrable effect on the daily lives of women and on the Kingdom's economy. In 2020, it was one of the reforms that led to Saudi Arabia being recognized by the World Bank as the top reformer globally in the past year when it comes to female empowerment and gender equality.

HOW WE WROTE IT

Saudi women driving is about much more than ... women driving

Of all the places I have filed my column from, I never thought one of the most significant would be the passenger seat of my company car ... Because the driver sitting next to me was one of my female colleagues at Arab News — and one of the first women to legally take the wheel after the end of a decades-long ban.

From a column by Editor in Chief Faisal J. Abbas in our special issue, June 24, 2018



Key Dates



Sept. 26, 2017
A royal decree orders the lifting of the ban on women driving in the Kingdom. The date is set for June 24, 2018.



Jan. 11, 2018
The first car showroom for women opens at a Jeddah shopping mall.



June 4, 2018
The first driving licenses are issued to 10 Saudi women in the Kingdom.



June 24, 2018
Along with women being allowed to drive on the Kingdom's roads for the first time, Aseel Al-Hamad becomes the first Saudi woman to drive a Formula 1 car in a symbolic lap around the French Grand Prix circuit at Le Castellet.



April 6, 2019
Saudi racing driver Reema Juffali makes her Formula 4 British Championship debut at Brands Hatch in the UK.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



TOMORROW
The strike on Soleimani
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APRIL 11, 2019

The downfall of Sudan's Omar Bashir

After 30 years in charge, the leader was removed by the military after mass protests

JONATHAN LESSWARE
LONDON

During his 30 years in charge of Sudan, Omar Bashir seemed to thrive on conflict. Whether it was with the southern half of his country, the people of Darfur, the US, or the Islamist ideologues who had helped him to power, the former paratrooper ruled amid a perpetual state of military and political war.



When the Sudanese people took to the streets against him for a final time at the end of 2018, it was a battle too far for the-then 75-year-old. Bashir was removed from power in April 2019 by the military after months of protests against his rule. That some of his closest confidants were among those who ousted him showed how his pillars of domestic and international support had collapsed from beneath him.

For the protesters who had braved the security forces to voice their desire for change, the moment was bittersweet. Bashir had gone, but military and senior figures from his regime were now in control.



SUMMARY

On April 11, 2019, Sudanese dictator Omar Al-Bashir was overthrown in a military coup after a year of popular protests, which were met with brutal repression by his regime and were triggered by rising prices and a failing economy.

Bashir, a former general in the Sudanese Army who had himself seized power in a military coup 30 years earlier, was arrested along with his entire Cabinet, and his government replaced by a Transitional Military Council.

Imprisoned in Sudan on charges of money laundering and corruption, Bashir, 76, may now also face trial at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, where in 2009 he was indicted on multiple charges, including genocide, related to his suppression of the rebellion in the Darfur region of Sudan.

Former Sudanese leader Omar Bashir was sentenced to two years in jail on corruption charges and faces further counts related to protesters' deaths. AFP


ARAB NEWS

The end of Sudan's 30-year nightmare

What next for the Sudanese?

Brief

Saudi Arabia on right economic road — even according to 'Dr. Doom'

His legacy was one of bloodshed, extremism, international isolation and economic ruin. At the time of his downfall, he was the only leader of a nation wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on charges of crimes against humanity and genocide.

Born to a farming family north of Khartoum in 1944, Bashir joined the military after high school and rose through the ranks to become a member of an elite parachute regiment. He was deployed to fight alongside Egyptian forces in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, and in the 1980s he was involved in campaigns against southern rebels as part of Sudan's decades-long civil war.

In 1989, he led the military overthrow of the democratically elected government of Sadiq Al-Mahdi. The coup was orchestrated by Hassan Al-Turabi, an Islamist scholar and leader of the National Islamic Front, an offshoot of the Sudanese branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Despite banning political parties and dissolving Parliament, Al-Turabi and his party were the ideological spine of Bashir's new regime. He swiftly introduced a hardline interpretation of Islamic law — a move that served to intensify the war raging in the south, where most of the population is Christian or animist. The conflict is estimated to have killed at least 2 million people.

Bashir extended his allegiance with hardline Islamism by hosting Osama bin Laden between 1992 and 1996, after he was expelled from Saudi Arabia. It was a move that was to prove disastrous for his country as the US placed Sudan on its list of "state sponsors of terrorism" and went on to impose comprehensive sanctions against the country.

In 1999, Bashir's alliance with Al-Turabi crumbled, and the president removed him from his position as parliament speaker and threw him in jail. Within a few years, Bashir was to oversee the darkest episode of his rein.

Rebels in the Darfur region in the country's west took up arms against the government in 2003. Bashir's response was swift and brutal. His regime deployed militias known as the Janjaweed to unleash a scorched-earth policy of murder, rape and looting against local populations.

The UN estimates that around 300,000 people were killed and 2.5 million displaced in the conflict. In 2009, the ICC indicted Bashir, accusing him of "an essential role" in the atrocities.

For many, it was the breakaway of South Sudan in 2011 that marked the beginning of the end for him. The secession took with it much of Sudan's oil-producing regions, depriving Khartoum of a key source of revenue and precipitating a steep economic decline.

He was forced to try to rebuild relations with the West and China, and to shift allegiances in the Middle East away from Iran and back toward Arab Gulf countries, from which he had managed to ostracize himself.

Years of economic problems came to a head in December 2018, when his government tripled the price of bread and the protests began. Bashir desperately clung on, appearing at a rally in January in which he called the demonstrators "traitors" and "rats." During the months of protests, dozens were killed by security forces and thousands thrown in jail.

On April 6, 2019, tens of thousands set up camp outside the Defense Ministry in Khartoum, where Bashir's residence was also located. Early on April 11, he was informed that the country's most senior military and security officials had removed him from power.

The historic moment dominated the front page of Arab News the next day, a mark of both the scale of the story, and the political and economic links between Saudi Arabia and Sudan. "The end of Sudan's 30-year nightmare" was the headline story, accompanied by a photo of a smiling girl waving the Sudanese flag amid celebrations in Khartoum.

The front page also carried an opinion piece by the newspaper's Editor in Chief Faisal J. Abbas, which asked: "What next for the Sudanese?" The article highlighted the number of Sudanese he had met who had fled Bashir's regime to Europe and beyond — often highly educated doctors and professionals, who would never return.

"The Bashir regime did not mind watching institution after institution fail," Abbas wrote. "It oversaw Sudan's becoming one of the poorest in the region, despite its abundant resources." Since his downfall, Bashir has been held at Khartoum's Kober prison — the same facility where many of his opponents were detained after he had ordered their arrests.

Outside the prison's walls, Sudan has struggled to move forward, with protests continuing until a deal was struck in August that led to a transitional government of both civilian and military officials.

Bashir was sentenced to two years in prison in December on corruption charges, and he faces further charges related to the killing of protesters and the coup in 1989 that brought him to power. As for his crimes in Darfur, it is still unclear whether Sudan will hand over the 76-year-old to the ICC, or whether charges will be brought domestically.

During an interview in 2015 with the Abu Dhabi-based newspaper where I worked as foreign editor at the time, Bashir spoke about the terror threats of Daesh and Boko Haram to his country. He then launched into far-fetched conspiracy theories accusing the CIA and Mossad of creating Daesh, ignoring the fact that he had provided a safe haven for Bin Laden to train extremists and build his global terror empire.

For the Sudanese people, the slogans chanted during the uprising were far more straightforward. "Freedom, peace and justice" was one of the most common. Time will tell if after 30 years these basic principles are finally delivered in their country.

HOW WE WROTE IT

In a televised address, Defense Minister Ahmed Awad Ibn Auf announced 'the toppling of the regime' and said Bashir had been detained in 'a secure place.'

From a story on Arab News' front page, April 12, 2019


The end of Sudan's 30-year nightmare

Bashir ousted by military, closed under arrest ● UN is meeting today

Jonathan Lessware is Arab News' London bureau digital editor and former foreign editor of The National in Abu Dhabi. He helped oversee Arab News' digital coverage during the Sudan uprising.

Key Dates



June 30, 1989
Sudanese Army Gen. Omar Bashir seizes power in military coup.



March 4, 2009
Arrest warrant for Bashir is issued by International Criminal Court, charging him with war crimes in Darfur.



April 11, 2019
Bashir is deposed and arrested in military coup.



April 17, 2019
Bashir is transferred from house arrest to maximum-security prison.



May 13, 2019
Bashir charged with 'inciting and participating' in the killing of protesters.



Dec. 13, 2019
Convicted of money laundering and corruption, Bashir is sentenced to two years in a reform facility.

Feb. 11, 2020
Sudan's military-civilian Sovereign Council hints it is prepared to hand over Bashir to the ICC on charges of war crimes and genocide related to his role in the Darfur conflict.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East

TOMORROW
The COVID-19 pandemic
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A US drone strike approved by President Donald Trump, below, killed the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani, left, shaking hands with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, far left. AFP



SUMMARY

On Jan. 3, 2020, missiles from a US Reaper drone struck two vehicles leaving Baghdad International Airport, killing Qassem Soleimani, the feared commander of Iran's clandestine Quds Force, and nine others.

For over two decades Soleimani had been the architect of Iran's violent meddling throughout the region, responsible for countless thousands of deaths in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and elsewhere.

In the words of an Arab News editorial the day after his death, in "spreading the malign influence of the mullahs and their revolution to anyone foolish enough to listen" Soleimani had "brought death and destruction to a vast swath of the Middle East and beyond."

When death came in turn for Soleimani, accused by the US of being behind a series of attacks on American interests in Iraq, those who died alongside him included four other members of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, commander of the Iranian-backed Iraqi terrorist organization Kata'ib Hezbollah.

JAN. 3, 2020

The strike on Soleimani

For many in the region, the head of Iran's Quds Force was no different from Osama bin Laden

DR. MAJID RAFIZADEH
BOSTON

US President Donald Trump on Jan. 3 this year ordered a game-changing military attack that killed Iranian Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, head of the elite Quds Force, near Baghdad International Airport.



Soleimani was accompanied by Iraqi militia leaders, including Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, who was also killed in the attack. The US Department of Defense justified the attack by claiming that Soleimani "was actively developing plans to attack American diplomats and service members in Iraq and throughout the region."

The death of Soleimani marked the first time that the US had deliberately killed a top Iranian official. Without doubt, the move shocked and weakened the theocratic establishment of Iran, as Soleimani was considered the country's most powerful man after Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

It is virtually impossible to imagine that the Islamic Republic could have gained such influence in the region and built such a vast and mighty network of proxies, militias and terror groups without Soleimani. The general even admitted, when he wrote a rare message to US Gen. David Petraeus: "You should know that I, Qassem Soleimani, control the policy for Iran with respect to Iraq, Lebanon, Gaza, and Afghanistan. And indeed the ambassador in Baghdad is a Quds Force member. The individual who is going to replace him is a Quds Force member."

The death of Soleimani has had significant implications in the region, tipping the balance of power against Tehran and ridding the Middle East of a top terror leader.

For many in the region, Soleimani was no different from Osama bin Laden. In fact, he was more dangerous in some respects because he operated under the legitimacy of a state, ruled over a powerful military organization with tens of thousands of members, and had a budget of billions of dollars to advance his fundamentalist objectives.

Soleimani was masterful in carrying out extraterritorial operations, including organizing, supporting, training, arming and financing predominantly Shiite militia groups. He prioritized launching wars directly or indirectly via his proxies; fomenting unrest in other nations to advance the regime's ideological and hegemonic interests; attacking and invading cities and countries; and plotting the assassination of foreign political figures and powerful Iranian dissidents worldwide.

For example, under his leadership, the Quds Force was accused of failed plans to bomb the Saudi and Israeli embassies in the US, and to assassinate then-Saudi Ambassador to the US Adel Al-Jubeir. The Quds Force also encouraged unrest in Iraq by providing deadly, sophisticated bombs that killed many people, including Iraqis and Americans. An investigation also revealed that Soleimani's Quds Force was behind the 2005 assassination of Lebanon's Sunni Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

In addition, Soleimani's death undermined other non-Shiite extremist groups in the region because he was successful at making alliances with the likes of Al-Qaeda. For instance, while under Soleimani's rule, Iran's military was implicated in the 9/11 attacks. In 2011, US Federal Judge George Daniels issued an order stating that senior leaders of the Quds Force, Iran's Lebanese Shiite proxy Hezbollah, and Al-Qaeda were jointly responsible for the attacks. Iran provided "safe harbor for some Al-Qaeda leaders," while "the (Quds) Force's senior leaders have longstanding ties to Al-Qaeda and, since the fall of Afghanistan, have provided some Al-Qaeda leaders with travel documents and safe haven," according to a European intelligence analyst. Christopher Harmer, a retired US Navy commander, told The New York Times that Soleimani is "a more stately version of Osama bin Laden."

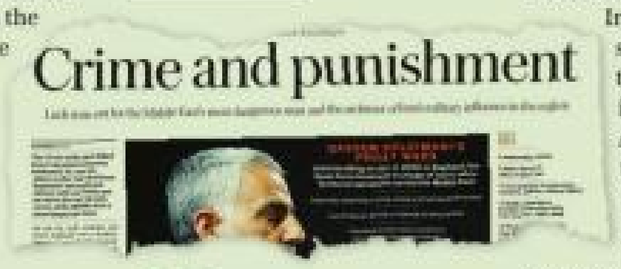
Based on my research at Harvard University, there are more than 250 terrorist groups worldwide, with many different religious and sociopolitical backgrounds. During Soleimani's rule, about 25 percent of these were funded, trained or supported by his organization. This may explain why terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda did not attack Iran.

The ruling clerics lost an irrepressible general because Soleimani had developed deep personal connections with the leaders of many militia groups across the region over the past four decades. He and the Quds Force infiltrated top security, political, intelligence and military infrastructures in several nations, including Syria and Iraq. He had a major say in which foreign leaders and politicians ruled in Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon and Syria, and he had operatives and agents worldwide.

Soleimani's death not only inflicted irreparable damage on Iran's theocratic establishment, but it also rid the Middle East of its most dangerous man. Nevertheless, the Iranian regime will continue to do whatever it can to pursue its hegemonic ambitions and military adventurism in the region.

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh is an Iranian-American political scientist. He is a leading expert on Iran and US foreign policy, a businessman and president of the International American Council.
Twitter: @Dr_Rafizadeh

HOW WE WROTE IT



So let there be no tears shed for Qassem Soleimani; he must have known that he could not get away with his crimes forever, and that he would not die in his bed.
Editor in Chief Faisal J. Abbas in Arab News, Jan. 4, 2020



Key Dates

Oct. 2019
Soleimani reportedly meets with militia allies in Baghdad to plan fresh assaults on US interests in Iraq using Iranian-supplied rockets and missiles.



Dec. 27, 2019
A US contractor dies in a rocket attack on the K-1 airbase in Kirkuk, Iraq, one of a series of attacks in Iraq blamed by Washington on the Iranian-backed Kata'ib Hezbollah militia.



Dec. 29, 2019
US counterattacks on five Kata'ib Hezbollah bases in Iraq and Syria kill 25 militiamen, including several senior commanders.

Dec. 31, 2019
Kata'ib Hezbollah supporters try to storm the US Embassy compound in Baghdad. President Donald Trump holds Iran 'fully responsible.'

Jan. 2, 2020
With 'clear, unambiguous intelligence' that Soleimani had approved the Kirkuk rocket attack and was planning a series of further outrages, Trump approves a drone strike.

Jan. 3, 2020
Soleimani and nine others die in a US drone strike in Baghdad.



Jan. 8, 2020
Iran fires missiles at two airbases in Iraq where US forces are stationed. There are no casualties. However, a Ukrainian airliner leaving Tehran for Kiev is shot down.



Jan. 11, 2020
Anti-government protesters in Tehran call for leaders to quit after Iran admits its forces shot down Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 by accident.

45TH ANNIVERSARY

Moments that changed the Middle East



ONLINE
All 45 moments
For the full list of '45 moments that changed the Middle East' celebrating Arab News' 45th anniversary, go to **www.arabnews.com**

MARCH 11, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic

As the world emerges from lockdown, our series ends with the greatest challenge of modern times

JONATHAN GORNALL
LONDON

In his new year's message on Jan. 2, 2020, the director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO) urged the world to "take a moment to thank all the brave health workers." Within a few weeks, the words of Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus would take on an unprecedentedly urgent meaning.

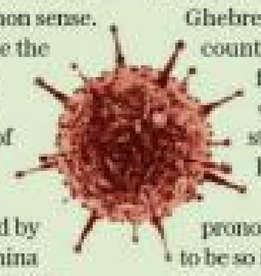


It soon became clear that the modern world was about to be engulfed in a fight for its life with a microscopic organism capable of a virulence not seen since the flu pandemic of 1918-19.

It also swiftly became apparent that for all the advances in medicine and technology of the recent past, we remain at the mercy of wayward nature, thanks largely to the inability of world governments to act as one and efficiently intervene.

On Jan. 26, I wrote an opinion piece syndicated throughout the region, urging Gulf and other states to at least screen incoming passengers from China. The only correct reaction at that stage to what the world now knows was a new coronavirus was "prudent overreaction." On Feb. 17, I hardened the message: The single most effective defense our interconnected world had against the new virus was to ground every aircraft.

Although I am a journalist specializing in medical issues, I was not blessed with any special insight. The tragedy of what has unfolded over the past five months is that all the steps we should and could have taken were simply common sense.



Yet at first, few outside the central Chinese city of Wuhan seemed overly alarmed by the cluster of more than 40 mysterious pneumonia-like cases that were reported by Beijing to the WHO's China Country Office on the last day of 2019.

One week after Ghebreyesus' speech, which made no mention of anything untoward brewing in China, Beijing announced that it had identified the cause of the outbreak — a novel form of coronavirus, a newly discovered member of a family of viruses common in animals and humans.

It seemed to have originated in the animal kingdom, possibly jumping from bats to the pangolin, a scaly animal protected by international and local law but which, with its scales prized in Chinese folk medicine, is traded illegally.

Whether or not the link between the virus and the pangolin is firmly established, hopefully the memory of the great pandemic of 2020 will serve as a warning that we abuse our relationship with nature at our collective peril.

Several common and perpetually circulating human coronaviruses cause mild to moderate upper-respiratory tract illness, such as the common cold. Over the past two decades, however, two new ones surfaced that hinted at the family's capacity to cause serious harm: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV), which emerged in 2003, and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), first seen in 2012.

Together, they accounted for just over 10,000 cases and about 1,630 deaths, but the new member of the family had far deadlier ambitions. On Jan. 11, 2020, China reported its first death, a 61-year-old man who had been a customer at the market where the virus is thought to have jumped from an animal to a human for the first time.

China was slow to introduce effective lockdown procedures, and as the virus spread rapidly within China, the WHO played down the threat. In fact, on Feb. 4 Ghebreyesus even urged countries not to ban flights from Wuhan, for fear of "increasing fear and stigma, with little public health benefit."

Few public health pronouncements have proved to be so ill-judged. On Feb. 11, the WHO gave the virus its official name: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The disease it caused was COVID-19. But it was on March 11 that the WHO finally declared the outbreak to be a pandemic — a state of affairs already blindingly obvious to the 114 countries that by then were already in its grip.

Governments worldwide reacted with little cohesion, often shunning the already tardy WHO advice until far too late. Some leaders, most notably US President Donald Trump, produced a series of perverse and even dangerous messages, hampering the efforts of their own public health services.

Worse, many governments seemed reluctant to accept the short-term preventive economic disruption which was the bitter medicine that clearly had to be swallowed.

In the parlance of epidemiology, the aircraft served as the fatally efficient vector for the virus, in the same way that the mosquito is the instrument that spreads malaria. Eventually, and in an uncoordinated, haphazard fashion, flights were grounded. But the measure came too late to prevent the virus from traveling the globe and, ultimately, caused far more global economic disruption than if air travel had been halted earlier on.

As the virus spread around the globe, it exposed a lack of long-term health planning and preparedness. Many countries found themselves short of bed space, personal protective equipment for frontline medical staff and all-important mechanical ventilators.

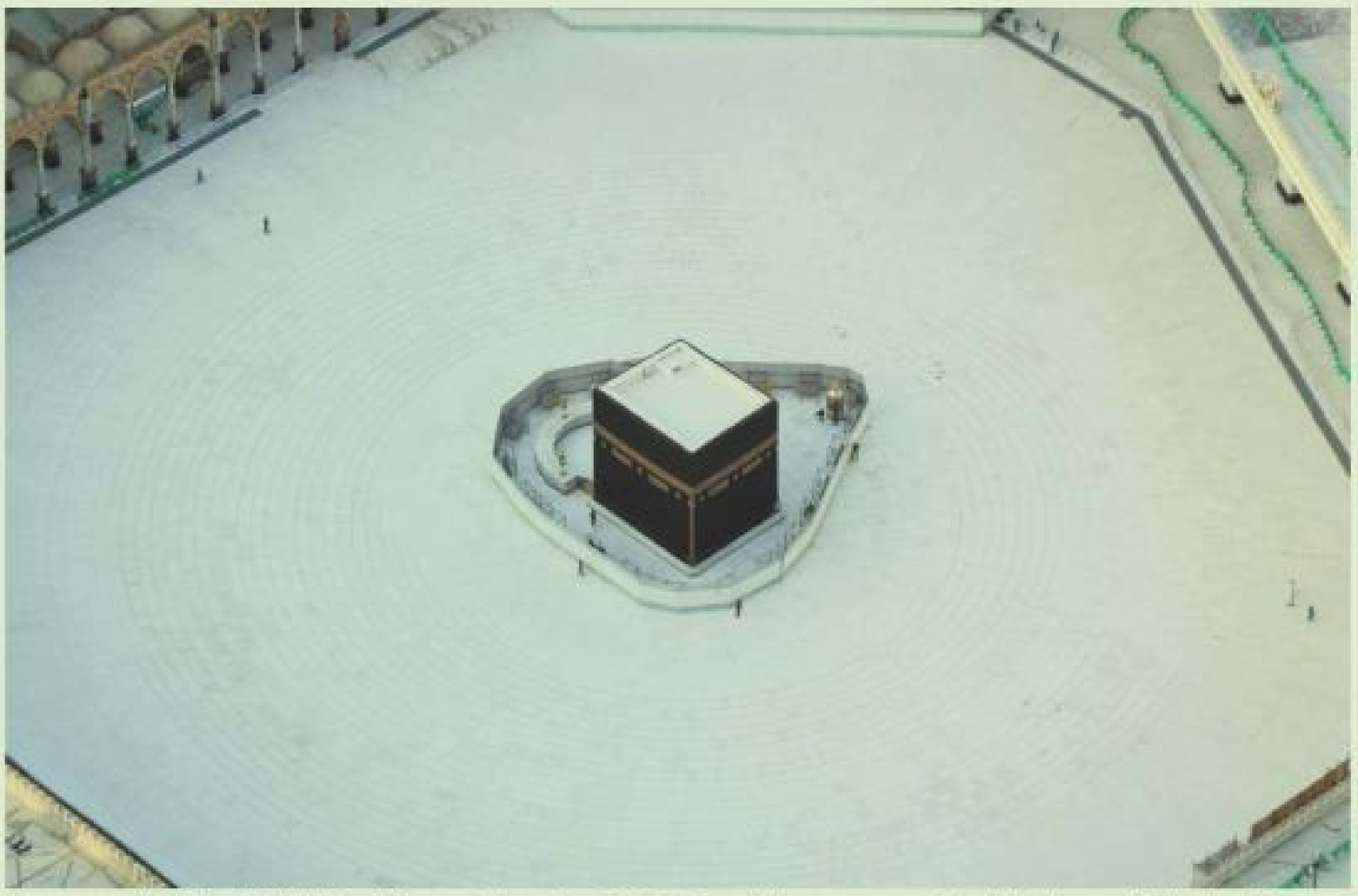
The highest price has been paid by those countries that were slowest to act. America, one of the world's wealthiest and most scientifically advanced nations, has suffered the highest number of cases and deaths. As of June 2, the virus has infected 1.8 million Americans and killed over 107,000, the highest death toll in the world. Globally, there have been 6.4 million confirmed global cases and more than 375,000 deaths.

It remains to be seen how this plague will play out. The race is on to produce vaccines and treatments, but neither appears to be imminent. And, if the problem in the first months of 2020 was that of doors being slammed shut too late, in the view of many concerned epidemiologists, it is now those same doors being flung open again too soon in the rush to end lockdowns that poses a risk of a second wave of infections.

Such has been the disruption caused to everyday life around the planet — as much by the fractured nature of the world's response as by the virus itself — that we must learn the harsh lessons the coronavirus has taught us about the necessity of acting in concert in the face of a global threat. However, Trump's announcement last week that the US was pulling out of the World Health Organization and halting its funding does not bode well.

As bad as SARS-CoV-2 has been, epidemiologists fear it may not be the Big One. We must learn to work together better as a human race if we are to successfully confront not only the next, inevitable pandemic, but also the ultimately far greater existential threat posed by climate change which, largely forgotten during the coronavirus crisis, continues to hang over all our heads.

Jonathan Gornall, a writer for Arab News, specializes in medical issues and writes investigative articles for the British Medical Journal.



The area around the Kaaba in Makkah's Grand Mosque stands empty on March 6 after protective measures were taken to halt the spread of the virus. AFP

SUMMARY

On March 11, 2020, more than two months after China first identified a virulent and deadly new coronavirus, and with 114 countries already reporting multiple cases of infection, the World Health Organization finally declared the world to be in the grip of a pandemic on a scale not seen for over a century.

Although there are thought to be hundreds of coronaviruses present in animal populations, until then only six had developed the ability to jump across to humans, causing conditions ranging from the common cold to more serious respiratory diseases, such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

But the newcomer was far deadlier and harder to contain than any of its predecessors. In just five months it has travelled to almost every country in the world, infecting more than six million people, claiming over 375,000 lives and devastating the global economy.





Paramedics carry a patient suspected of being infected with the coronavirus in Mexico City on May 20. AFP

HOW WE WROTE IT



It is now clear that COVID-19 is going to be with us for a considerable length of time, and the actions that we take must be actions that we can live with for a prolonged period.

An expert quoted on the front page of Arab News, March 12, 2020

Key Dates



Dec. 31, 2019
China notifies the World Health Organization of a cluster of pneumonia-like cases in Wuhan City; nine days later, it identifies it as a new type of coronavirus.

Jan. 11, 2020
First death from the coronavirus reported in China; two days later, Thailand reports a case imported from Wuhan.

Jan. 21, 2020
The WHO's first Novel Coronavirus Situation Report records a total of 278 confirmed cases and six deaths in China, with one case each in Japan and South Korea and two in Thailand.

Feb. 27, 2020
Saudi Arabia suspends visas for the Umrah pilgrimage.

March 2, 2020
Saudi Arabia records its first coronavirus infection, a citizen who had recently traveled to Iran. Six days later, on March 8, the Kingdom closes schools.

March 11, 2020
With 114 countries already infected, the WHO finally declares a pandemic.

March 24, 2020
Saudi Arabia records its first fatality, a 51-year-old Afghan resident in Madinah.



April 6, 2020
Saudi imposes 24-hour lockdown on all major cities.

May 11, 2020
As countries around the world begin to ease lockdown restrictions, WHO says only those with testing, tracing and isolating systems in place should consider doing so.

May 31, 2020
Number of confirmed global cases passes 6 million; now at 6.4 million, with more than 375,000 deaths.