**Book Proposal:**

***The Six Days that Changed Saudi Arabia: The Seeds of Saudi-Israeli Normalisation***

**1. Statement of Aims**

*The Six Days that Changed Saudi Arabia: The Seeds of Saudi-Israeli Normalisation* is the first book-length treatment of the impact of the Six-Day War on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)’s perception of and policy towards Israel thereafter.

The book addresses the significant and far-reaching repercussions for the region of the war, the effects of which persist into the present day, but focuses on the political, economic, and domestic costs to the KSA during and after it. It analyses the political and economic strategies the KSA developed to balance its commitment to Israel’s allies, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, which support its security, with the demands of the Arab and Muslim world to punish countries supporting Israel. It thus provides a unique perspective on the evolution of the KSA’s attitudes towards Israel, highlighting and exploring in depth its calls immediately after the Six-Day War for a two-state resolution in Israel/Palestine. The book’s relevance to contemporary events, as historic KSA-Israel normalisation trends become more overt and appear to head towards formalisation, could not be more immediate, with academic, analysts, and policymakers certain to want the compelling answers the book provides to the genesis of this process.

The book explores the Six-Day War’s impact on the KSA’s society, economy, foreign policy, and other spheres and argues that the war forced the Kingdom to undertake a radical reckoning with itself. Suffering political isolation due to its disputes with the revolutionary nations of the region, the KSA had no choice but to back Egypt—a country that it otherwise saw as a major threat, and which had only weeks earlier bombed Saudi cities—or exacerbate its own isolation. The oil industry, which had generated unprecedented domestic prosperity, was now required to share in the cost of the war and serve political goals at the expense of immediate revenues in the form of the oil embargo on countries that supported Israel. The expression of solidarity with the greater Arab world and the need to address criticism from within compelled the KSA to take a stand against its important allies, the United States and the United Kingdom, who were accused of ensuring the Arabs’ defeat. The KSA also urgently needed to calculate future risks and challenges to it due to the British withdrawal from Aden, the looming danger from the south requiring security guarantees for it from the United States and the United Kingdom. At the same time, it felt obliged to throw its weight behind the only cause that stirred and united Saudi public opinion in a sustained way: Opposition to Israel. Thus, the book also shows how Israel’s discourse and actions in the Arab world influenced the KSA mindset and stability during and after the war.

The book explores the KSA’s efforts to assist Arab countries against Israel, including its “contribution” to the military effort. The book describes, for example, the movement of Saudi forces to the Jordanian border and its limited permission of the passage of Egyptian planes through its territory for refuelling purposes, amid internal and wider Arab criticism of its limited combat involvement more broadly. The book scrutinises the KSA’s considerations in not deploying large-scale forces in direct warfare against Israel. The book also discusses the implications of the transfer of the islands of Sanafir and Tiran from Saudi to Israeli control in the war’s aftermath, assessing the Kingdom’s reaction to that and its lobbying of the United States to regain control over them. In doing so, the book explores Israel’s relations with the major powers—the United States and the United Kingdom—before and during the war and how these influenced their relations with the KSA, an important ally of theirs.

The book importantly analyses the Saudi perception of Israel, both through post-war conferences and through records of private conversations between the king and his aides, and with foreign officials. The compelling documentation of all of this gives unique insight into KSA policy towards Israel immediately after the war, recognising it as a Jewish state. It also reveals that the KSA had a deep understanding that, unlike Egypt and Yemen, Israel did not pose a threat to the region from its perspective. At the same time, the book shows how Saudi King Faisal’s personal views on Zionism and Jewish entities in general before and after the war were shaped by tensions between him and the Jewish world. Thus, the book weaves all the various influences on KSA’s trajectory during and after the war in a way that has not hitherto received such focus in published form.

This study of the KSA and the Six-Day War is both a first and also overwhelmingly based on primary documents—especially US, UK, and Israeli ones—while widely exploring the secondary literature also. The US sources are excellent for their analysis of KSA society and governance and cover many internal aspects of the Kingdom, with an emphasis on its society, economy, and opposition forces. The British sources often focus on the regional political powers, the KSA’s general interests and ambitions in the Middle East and internationally. The Israeli sources are important for completing the picture, helping to understand the KSA position on Israel in the context of the Arab world. The secondary sources expand the picture of events, whether the global oil market or the superpowers’ position on the region following the war.

1. **Detailed Synopsis and Chapter Summaries**

***Synopsis***

It took six days of darkness and light for the God of the Middle East to create the world. It took six days of war to change the region whence its Prophets came. Ironically enough, merely two days after the war’s end, it was the custodians of the Islam’s holiest sites, rigid in their interpretation of God, together with the royalists and conservatives who sketched out the nature of future relations with the Jewish state. Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of the prophet of Islam, its religious scholars having become synonymous with fanaticism and insularity, called for recognition of the state of Israel in exchange for a Palestinian state, doing so with its characteristic reserve. Initially, this was expressed in vague internal statements not accompanied by structured plans, but slowly Saudi Arabia’s initiatives became the Arab world’s semi-formal outlines for achieving an arrangement that would put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Today, these early steps may achieve concrete results, as 2023–24 witnessed serious discussions on full normalisation between Saudi Arabia and Israel. It may be that relations between the two nations are approaching a point that will lead to the signing of a historic peace agreement.

The 1967 war also represented the peak of a crisis, a situation after which everything seemed irreparable and where all those on the Arab side felt that their dreams had come to an end. The war broke out at the height of the tensions between revolutionary states and monarchies, at a time when Arab-Israeli relations were in freefall. Although the war ended with a stinging Arab defeat, it placed the Arab-Israeli conflict at the heart of the regional discourse for decades into the future. It also created the foundation for reconciliation between nations that had teetered on the brink of war, such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In hindsight, the war marked the end of revolutionary ideologies and of ambitions for pan-Arabism. Just as importantly, it signalled the rise of the political power of the wealthy nations in the region, first and foremost, Saudi Arabia that now became part of the countries that tried to solve the most complex and entrenched antagonism in the region: The Arab-Israeli conflict.

***Chapter Summaries***

**Chapter 1: A Kingdom at the Crossroads: King Faisal’s Leadership before the Six-Day War**

This examines Faisal’s leadership qualities, unique presence and force of personality in the Arab arena, and attitude towards Israel and the Jews. He had a tremendous effect on the course of the region’s polity, with his vision of Arab-Israeli normalisation, and possessed great skills in navigating between local constraints and international considerations. This was evident in diverse arenas, such as the Kingdom’s stance on Israel, its approach to oil markets, and its attitude to domestic social change, all of which were rooted in the leader’s strength and wealth of experience, as remains evident in the KSA even of today.

**Chapter 2: Faisal’s Reign and Saudi Society, Economy, and Foreign Policy Towards Israel and the World on the Eve of the Six-Day War**

This chapter charts the KSA’s stances on Israel, the West, and Middle Eastern countries on the eve of the war. It also explores Faisal’s economic vision before the war to understand the economic damage Saudi Arabia experienced as a result of the conflict and the KSA’s pre-war policy of using oil as a weapon to weaken Israel and its allies. Finally, the chapter portrays Saudi society on the eve of the war, focusing particularly on opposition elements to understand the background to the internal unrest that erupted during the war and how it shaped the KSA stance during and after the conflict.

**Chapter 3:** **Saudi Arabian Society: Reactions to the Six-Day War During and After It**

The chapter aims to highlight the immense impact of the domestic response to the events of the war on the KSA’s foreign policy towards Israel, the West, and Arab countries. It describes the erosion of trust between the West and the KSA following the outbreak of the domestic riots that took place in the Kingdom, concerns about government stability, demands for increased KSA involvement in the war, and the Palestinian community’s activities against Western entities.

**Chapter 4:** **Oil as a Weapon for Advancing Political and Economic War Against Israel**

The Six-Day War led to Arab oil-producing states like the KSA that natural resource as a n economic and foreign-policy weapon for the first time, in the light of numerous threats from neighbouring Arab countries, the KSA, like others, used oil to advance their political goals. The embargo imposed by these states had both immediate and far-reaching consequences for Israel and the global energy market. It laid the groundwork for the subsequent boycott during the 1973 War and created significant pressure on Israel from Western powers during and after that conflict. Additionally, it presented a dilemma for Israel’s Western supporters, who had to balance their support for Israel with their economic interests.

The aim of the chapter is to present the purpose of the embargo, its impact on Western powers’ relations with Israel, and the broader consequences of the embargo on the West. It also examines the initiatives related to the embargo and explores the discourse among Arab states regarding its use and effectiveness in altering Israel’s stance. Above all, the chapter describes Saudi Arabia’s role in balancing its commitment to the Arab world with its relationships with Western allies and main oil consumers, primarily the United Sates and the United Kingdom, Israel’s close allies.

**Chapter 5:** **Saudi Arabia in the Political Arena During and After the Six-Day War**

In the fifth chapter, the book explores Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy response to the Six-Day War. It details the constraints that prevented Saudi Arabia from participating militarily in the conflict. The chapter also highlights Saudi Arabia’s efforts to promote a settlement with Israel and to foster unity within the Arab world at the 1967 Arab League Summit in Khartoum. It concludes with an analysis of the British withdrawal from Aden and the 1971 announcement of the impending withdrawal from the Arabian Gulf. This transition underscores Saudi Arabia’s focus on regional concerns rather than the Arab-Israeli conflict, despite internal pressures for more economic actions against Israel and the fact that two of its islands, Sanafir and Tiran, were occupied by Israel during the war.

***Book Length, Graphics, and Production Schedule***

I expect the full text to include around 6–10 tables and illustrations and estimate the total word count as around 72,000 words, inclusive of references and footnotes. I also attach to this proposal a draft of Chapter 2 as a sample. I can submit the completed draft typescript within two months of this submission.

1. **Definition of the Market**

Saudi Arabia stands at the centre of global discourse. In recent years, the issue of normalisation with Israel has also become a highly significant topic in the context of regional reconciliation. The combination of these factors makes the subject intriguing for a wide audience, including Israelis and Saudis who seek mutual understanding, as well as Middle East scholars focussed on the Arab-Israeli conflict and the relationships between Gulf Arab states and Israel.

I believe that since the book addresses a variety of aspects such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, Israel-Saudi relations, Saudi foreign policy, Saudi oil policy, and the relationship between the government and society, it will be a significant text for students in various courses. These include international relations, energy policy, the Arab-Israeli conflict, Gulf Studies, and International Studies.

The book will certainly interest a UK readership but by no means exclusively so. English-language policymakers, academic and stakeholders across North America, Europe, and the MENA region can draw on its research, particularly since the normalisation dynamics it sheds light on are so prominent today.

The book addresses several prominent categories in recent Middle Eastern studies: the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Arab Gulf, Saudi Arabia, the Abraham Accords, and energy security. Given this, I believe the book significantly engages with content areas studied worldwide and of interest to researchers, students, and policymakers.

1. **Main Competing Books and Their Strengths and Weaknesses**

This book will be the first written with direct focus on the KSA’s involvement in the Six-Day War and its impact on its regional status and perception of Israel. Michael Oren’s *Six Days of War: June 1967* *and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (2003) is perhaps the most acclaimed in the academic world on the events in general and has also become a bestseller in the field. Although this work obviously touches upon the Saudi role in these events, it does not make it the specific focus as I propose. Given the specific and burgeoning interest in Saudi Arabia and its paradigm-shifting normalisation process with Israel, I would expect this book to be a highly relevant contribution in this regard that would generate similar resonance to Oren’s work in a more focussed way. This normalisation dynamic is of great interest to Western policymakers, intelligence and political analysts and academics but would equally be attractive to Israeli and Arabic counterparts.

While there is extensive literature on the Six-Day War that continues to be published, it primarily focuses on the countries directly involved in the conflict and less on second-tier states like Saudi Arabia.

In-depth works about King Faisal’s rule and the many challenges the Kingdom faced on the eve of the war and afterward do exist. Williard A. Beling’s *King Faisal and the Modernisation of Saudi Arabia* (1980), penned a few years after Faisal’s death, laid the foundation for research into different aspects of the king’s contribution to his nation. Other books have expanded on Beling’s work. Abir Mordechai’s *Saudi Arabia: Society, Government and the Gulf Crisis* (1993) provides a more detailed description of the challenges the king faced, and his personal strengths and ambitions, while Joseph A. Kéchichian’s *Faysal: Saudi Arabia’s King for All Seasons* (2008) is probably the most comprehensive contemporary book about the king’s foreign policy, attitudes to the United States, and the great reforms he undertook, as well as his relationship with the royal house. What Kéchichian’s book lacks is precisely what this book seeks to address: What took place socio-domestically during Faisal’s reign and particularly during the war. Alexei Vasiliev’s *King Faisal: Personality, Faith, and Times* (2013) provides a comprehensive view of the king’s reign and its formative events, including a single chapter on the Six-Day War. The book offers key insights into aspects of Faisal’s foreign policy, the road he travelled before assuming the throne, and his conduct, but it focuses on the personal rather than on the broader societal level addressed in the book I propose.

Studies about the internal discourse and social dynamics in the Kingdom during the war are scarce. Most essays deal with pan-Arab opposition movements, communist movements, internal elements, such as the Shiites, that had participated in anti-government activities before the Six-Day War. Claudia Ghrawi’s essay entitled “A Tamed Urban Revolution: The 1967 Riots in Saudi Arabia’s Oil Conurbation” (2016) is a fairly extensive discussion of the violent events that erupted in the Kingdom during the Six-Day War. It delineates the social changes that occurred in the KSA during the 1960s and the socioeconomic background to the riots during the war. Like my book, it draws on archival sources about the events that occurred in the oil-producing regions during the crisis but, largely pays attention only to the KSA’s eastern region rather than the Kingdom as a whole, as my book does. It also lacks a description of intra-Saudi tensions that greatly affected the nation’s decision-makers in the weeks after the war. John Chalcraft’s “Migration and Popular Protest in the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf in the 1950s and 1960s” (2011) gives a good presentation of the array of forces that threatened the KSA on the eve of the war and demonstrates how the forces that were vocally dissatisfied with the regime during this period later participated in the riots during the war. Toby Matthiesen’s *The Other Saudis* (2014) is an introduction to those elements in KSA society that were antagonised in the first few decades of the Kingdom’s existence, including the foreign oilfield workers and the Shiites. It is a sound foundation for understanding the events that occurred before the war, but other than referring to the internal riots during the course of the war, does not discuss the topic at any length.

Rosie Bsheer’s “A Counter-Revolutionary State: Popular Movements and the Making of Saudi Arabia” (2018) is an in-depth look at the genesis of revolutionary movements in the Kingdom and the campaign Faisal waged against them. It offers insights into the background of the riots and the factors that provoked the internal forces, and only briefly mentions what will be discussed extensively in my own book: The many arrests of pro-revolutionary forces in the period after the Six-Day War.

There is scant research on the oil embargo that began during the war, perhaps because of a paucity of archival sources. Those that do exist deal primarily with the attitudes of the US and UK administrations to the issue and document conversations with other governments, as well as there being reports by foreign representatives and local attachés about the atmosphere in the oil-producing regions. Other essays attempt to explain the reason for the oil embargo’s failure. Perhaps the paucity of literature on the subject stems from the mistaken notion that this embargo achieved nothing. It is mistaken because the 1967 embargo was a preview of the 1973 one, the nations that imposed the first having studied its lessons, the most important being the need for perfect coordination among OPEC members. Of note is the essay “The 1967 Oil Embargo Revisited” by Mohammed Dajanai Daoud and Munther Suleiman Dajani Daoudi (1984), which lays the foundation for studying the topic and tries to emphasise its importance. Unlike that essay, however, this book focuses primarily on what went on in Saudi Arabia: The intra-Saudi discourse, the various voices within society, the discussions within the royal house and with the relevant U.S. and British parties, subjects not explored elsewhere.

The United States and the United Kingdom were the two nations the embargo most directly harmed. Keir Thorpe’s “The Forgotten Shortage: Britain’s Handling of the 1967 Oil Embargo” (2007) and Shane Rowley’s “The Protection of American Oil Interests in the Middle East Following the Six-Day War” (2017) examine US and UK steps taken during the embargo and their dialogue with all the countries involved, including the KSA. However, they do not touch on the atmosphere inside the Kingdom, the public and official discourse there about how to relate to these Western nations, and the policy of the royal house toward them during the crisis. My own article, “A Reassessment of the 1967 Arab Oil Embargo” (2013), discusses the reasons the embargo had only limited effects on the large oil consumers and how it helped solidify Saudi Arabia’s status. That essay is the basis for this book’s broad, in-depth chapter on the subject, which also includes some new details and insights.

The literature on the political aspect of the Six-Day War is much deeper and broader. Neil Patrick’s *Saudi Arabian Foreign Policy* (2016) is a comprehensive assessment of certain aspects of the Kingdom’s foreign policy, including that towards its neighbours in the Arabian Gulf to its oil policy’s relationship to diplomatic aims. Despite its extensive scope, Patrick’s work lacks a description of the formation of the foreign ministry, those circles that played a role in shaping it, and the key stakeholders in the nation’s foreign policy during the period under discussion.

Several books help us understand Saudi Arabia’s political reality before, during, and after the war, a reality that shaped its political perceptions. Thus, for example, Mohammed Abdullah N. Alharbi’s *Saudi Arabia and Communism during the Cold War: King Faisal’s Foreign Policy towards the Soviet Union, 1962–1975* (2017)is key to understanding King Faisal’s fear of Soviet influence over nations such as Egypt and Syria. The book also highlights the connection to local Saudi forces that supported the communist forces. Thus, his work discusses some (though not all) of the internal issues that this book also addresses, including the threat presented by pro-revolutionary and communist forces to the Kingdom’s stability.

1. **Product Category**

I believe this book can serve both researchers and postgraduates. It is certainly suitable for libraries worldwide and for distribution in the Gulf Arab states as an important historical text for understanding the region and its relationship with Israel. Therefore, I would say it caters to senior researchers, students, and decision-makers who seek not only innovative research but also a historical perspective on and an understanding of Saudi Arabia.

1. **Author Profile**

Dr. Yossi Mann is the head of the Department of Middle Eastern Studies and a senior lecturer at Bar-Ilan University and head of the Middle East program and a senior lecturer at Reichman University in Israel. Dr. Mann’s research and teaching specialises in the economic and social aspects of the Arab Gulf, especially the oil market and Saudi Arabia’s internal affairs. He has been a research fellow at the University of Oxford, Renmin University, Gdansk University, and Reichman University. He also served as a consultant to various energy companies as well as the Israeli Prime Minister’s office. Over the years, he has taken part in research projects in the field of AI to assess geopolitical risks on the financial markets. A copy of his full curriculum vitae is attached.