



A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RELIGIO-POLITICAL CONDITIONS OF MODERN SAUDI ARABIA

ABSTRACT

THESIS

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By

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The present study, '*A Critical Analysis of the Religio-Political Conditions of Modern Saudi Arabia*' begins with the first chapter which introduces ideological foundations of the Saudi State, which became basis of the establishment of the state, is discussed in the chapter two. The next chapter gives a historical survey of the Saudi State from the first quarter of the 19th century to the end of 20th century. The fourth and fifth chapters study the intrinsic relationship between the Religious ideology and the modern political challenges and changes; followed at the end by my own conclusions. The thesis on the whole can be introduced as follows:

It is a well known fact that the location of the two holiest Muslim shrines- the Kabah at Mecca and the Prophetic Mosque in al-Medina accounts for the privileged religious position of Saudi Arabia as it attracts lacs of the Muslim Pilgrims every year from all parts of the world. Likewise, the presence of the vast petroleum reserves in this country gives it significant economic and political clout. Further, as the largest and perhaps the richest country in the Middle East, it exerts considerable influence on the nearby oil-rich states as well as on the problems facing the Muslim world.

The Saudi state which emerged in the first half of the 18th century mainly through the fruitful efforts of the house of Saud, today ranks among the powerful countries of the Muslim world. The history of Saudi Arabia is

in fact the history of the origins and development of the so-called `Wahhabiyya`, in real terms, in all its aspects, as it was in essence a `revival` of the purity of early Islam.

During the eighteenth century there arose in Najd a Muslim religious thinker and reformer named Shaykh Muhammad Ibn `Abd al-Wahhab (1703-92), born into a family of Hanbali scholars who followed the traditional Islamic thought of Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (d. 855) and Imam bn Taymiyah (d. 1328), and invited the Muslims to adhere to the strict dogma of *tawhid* (monotheism) and abandon all forms of deviationist ideas of `divine associationism` (*shirk*). He found a powerful protector in Amir Muhammad Ibn Saud, the ruler of the town of Dir`iyya. Both formed a pact of mutual support in 1744 and vowed to work together to establish a state based on the doctrine of pure monotheism. The event marked the dawn of the Saudi state. Acting on the basis of the puritanical, but appealing, approach to Islam, Muhammad ibn Saud and his successors in the Saudi royal family rapidly conquered much of central Arabia, thereby establishing the first Saudi State. It was followed by second Saudi-Wahhabi state founded in 1824. Riyadh was then made its capital which ended in 1891 with the Rashidis taking over the whole of Najd. With the fall of Riyadh, the

Saudi capital, and the self exile of `Abd al-Rahman in Kuwait, there remained no Saudi contender for the Rashidis in Najd.

A young Saudi prince, Abd al-Aziz (born about 1880), regained control of Riyadh in 1902 and thus emerged the third Saudi State which later grew to transform into the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932. Abd al-Aziz, commonly known as Ibn Sa`ud, demonstrated good judgment, leadership skills, and extraordinary courage as well as a deep personal and political commitment to Islam. By 1904, with the help of his brother Saud, Abd al-Aziz extended his power over the districts of Kharj, Aflaj, and Wadi al-Dawasir in Southern Najd and Sundayr, Qasim, and Washm in the North. All these had been extorted from the Rashidis. All Qasim as far as the boundary of Shammar, the stronghold of the Rashidis, now recognized the Sovereignty of Abd al-Aziz.

Having himself spent enough time with the Bedouins, Abd al-Aziz moulded them into a formidable martial force, their settlements were called *Hujar* and the settlers came to be known as Ikhwan (*brethren*). Abd al-Aziz made first use of the Ikhwan in 1913 against the Turks at Hofuf, the principal town of Hasa. Therefore, the Ikhwan became the main force of the Saudi state. In 1915 a treaty was concluded between the British and Abd al-

Aziz. In 1920 the Ikhwan were involved in a number of raids in Kuwait and Iraq which forced the British to intervene on behalf of Kuwait and Iraq both.

In 1924, after the abolition of the Caliphate by the Turkish Republic, a conference of `Ulama, tribal chiefs, Ikhwan, and notables were held and decided to attack Hijaz. The fall of Hijaz ended the Sharif's rule there. In January 1927 `Abd al-Aziz was proclaimed king of Hijaz and Najd and its dependencies with headquarters at Riyadh .The British Government in the treaty of Jeddah in 1927 recognized the Kingdom as a sovereign state and renounced the long-outdated special rights as set forth in the treaty of 1915. The final step in the creation of the modern state was taken on September 22, 1932, when it was renamed the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. `Abd al-Aziz reached the peak of his career and the Arabia over which he was to rule for nearly three more decades was united as never before. Thus for the first time in human memory Arabia had a single ruler whom all could, and did, respect.

In 1953 King Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud passed away and was succeeded by his eldest son Saud, although he had served as his father's deputy in Najd but during his rule Saudi state got some set back to avert such a breakdown, Faisal as Prime Minister was granted full power to administer the external and internal financial affairs of the Kingdom. One of King Saud's greatest

successes was the development of education. In 1957 King Saud also made his mark globally and became the first Saudi monarch to visit the United States.

King Saud was succeeded by King Faisal , one of the most important rulers of Saudi Arabia whose influence transcends the actual period of his reign to which conventional history assigns a mere eleven years. The legacy of King Faisal extended for more than half a century and encompassed virtually the entire modern history of the nation. As such the history of the modern state of Saudi Arabia is essentially the history of King Faisal. Early in his reign, when faced by demands for a written constitution for the country, Faisal responded with "our constitution is the Quran."

Although a diplomat he was also a man of action. As king he is credited with rescuing the country's finances and implementing a policy of modernization and reform, while his main foreign policy were pan-Islamism, anti-Communism, and anti-Zionism.

Promptly upon assuming power, Faisal issued on November 6, 1962, a ten point program of reform which covered a wide range of measures designed to improve the administration, the economy, the judicial system and the educational system in the Kingdom as well as to introduce a

machinery of popular representation in the form of a consultative council. The leadership of King Faisal is viewed as a continuum in which the period of his premiership with full power and the subsequent period as king. The aim of which was to modernize the country in administration and technical section while adhering to the traditional principles in the religious, cultural, and social sectors. He was assassinated by his nephew on March 25, 1975 and was succeeded by King Khalid.

In April 1976, Khalid made state visits to all the Gulf States which probably laid the foundation for the establishment of the *Gulf Cooperation Council* (GCC). Khalid's achievements in domestic and foreign policies were not inconsiderable. King Khalid oversaw the implementation of the second five-year development plan (1975-1979) and the creation of the third five-year development plan (1980-1984). Saudi Arabia began to diversify its economic base and edged towards the completion of its infrastructure. In 1981, Khalid convened a historic summit of Arab nations.

Khalid died on June 13, 1982, and Fahd ascended the throne. He adopted the title "*Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques*" in 1986, replacing "*His Majesty*" to signify an Islamic rather than secular authority. On March 03, 1992 (27/08/1412 H) he announced the establishment of four new systems.

1. The Basic Government System.
2. The Al Sh`ura Council System
3. The Provincial System
4. The Council of Ministers System.

On August 2, 2005, Saudi King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz was laid to rest.

As Saudi Arabia is the heartland of Islam, it is committed to preserving the Islamic tradition in all areas of government and society. It is a leader in the pursuit of worldwide Islamic solidarity. It hosts the Muslim World League the Organization of the Islamic Conference, institutions dedicated to preserving Islamic interests. Saudi Arabia, flush with oil revenue, and increasingly the most influential player among Arab countries, has long resisted changing its ultra traditional ways. Since the 1950s, when oil revenues became abundant, Saudi rulers have sought to reap the economic benefits derived from oil resources while trying to minimize the political and social impact of change.

With the establishment of the state and the advent of oil wealth and mass education, Wahhabi *'ulama* became one group among several others capable of articulating religious ideas and interpretations. Their engagement with modernity centered on formulating opinions on whether certain aspects

of modernity were permissible or prohibited. They developed religious rulings regarding technological aspects of modernity (cars, aeroplanes, radio, television, cassettes, faxes and the internet), and its economic challenges (banking, insurance and other new economic innovations).

The introduction of the satellite dish and the Internet in the 1990s ensures a deepening of connections between Saudis and the outside world. Wahhabi ulama have used these and other communications technologies to proselytize. The innovations of modernity, together with communication technology, have allowed both the consolidation and contestation of official Saudi discourse. Official 'Wahhabiyya' has shown greater flexibility and pragmatism. Islam continues to occupy the central position in Saudi Arabia as it not only guides the lives of people but also the policies and functions of the government.

Saudi Arabia's unique role in the Arab and Islamic worlds, its possession of the world's largest reserves of oil, and its strategic location make its friendship important to the United States. The United States and Saudi Arabia share a common concern about regional security, oil exports and imports, and sustainable development. Close consultations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia have developed on international, economic, and development issues. The advent of *ARAMCO* in the 1930's marked the

beginning of professional public relations in Saudi Arabia and increased embracing of Western techniques and innovations. *ARAMCO* established a research department to study the Saudi people, their language, and their history, and the nation's social conditions.

Islam and politics in Saudi Arabia are closely intertwined and mutually interdependent. Saudi Arabia was built with the support and approval of the ulama, thus their historical relationship gives them direct access to the monarchy. The ulama operate as part and parcel of the state apparatus in Saudi Arabia, contributing to stability of the country, support to the rulers, and encourage change and development. The ulama hold a variety of positions in Saudi institutions they are judges (*qadis*), lawyers (*muhamas*), and prayer leaders (*imams*) although only a few of them wield real power.

The ulama in fact, exercise their sway in subtle and silent ways. While their input varies depending on the domestic circumstances and the strength of the Saud family, the king can never completely ignore them but must take their views into consideration in every choice he makes. Since the 1970s, it has been commonplace to speculate about the legitimacy and longevity of Al- Saud rule. True, the kingdom has endured a prolonged stretch of unrest since 1990. In the 1990s, however, the Saudi/Wahhabi-revivalist alliance unraveled its fragility because of Riyadh's decision to solicit United States

military intervention against Iraq. The same issue divided the kingdom's religious camp between traditional Wahhabis loyal to the monarchy and recruits to the revivalist outlook. The *'ulama's* support for the regime is not unconditional. They remain controversial, provocative and confrontational. The *sahwa* have consistently agitated against the regime's close relationship with the United States as well as what they perceive to be aggression against religious beliefs and rituals in the Kingdom. From this vantage point the religious field in Saudi Arabia appears to be in flux, its horizons hazy and the destiny of the eighteenth-century call from Najd uncertain.



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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**A Critical Analysis of the Religio-Political Conditions of Modern Saudi Arabia**” is an original work done by **Parvaiz Ahmad Khanday** under my supervision.

The thesis is suitable for submission for the award of Ph. D in Islamic Studies.

Prof. Sayyid Ahsan

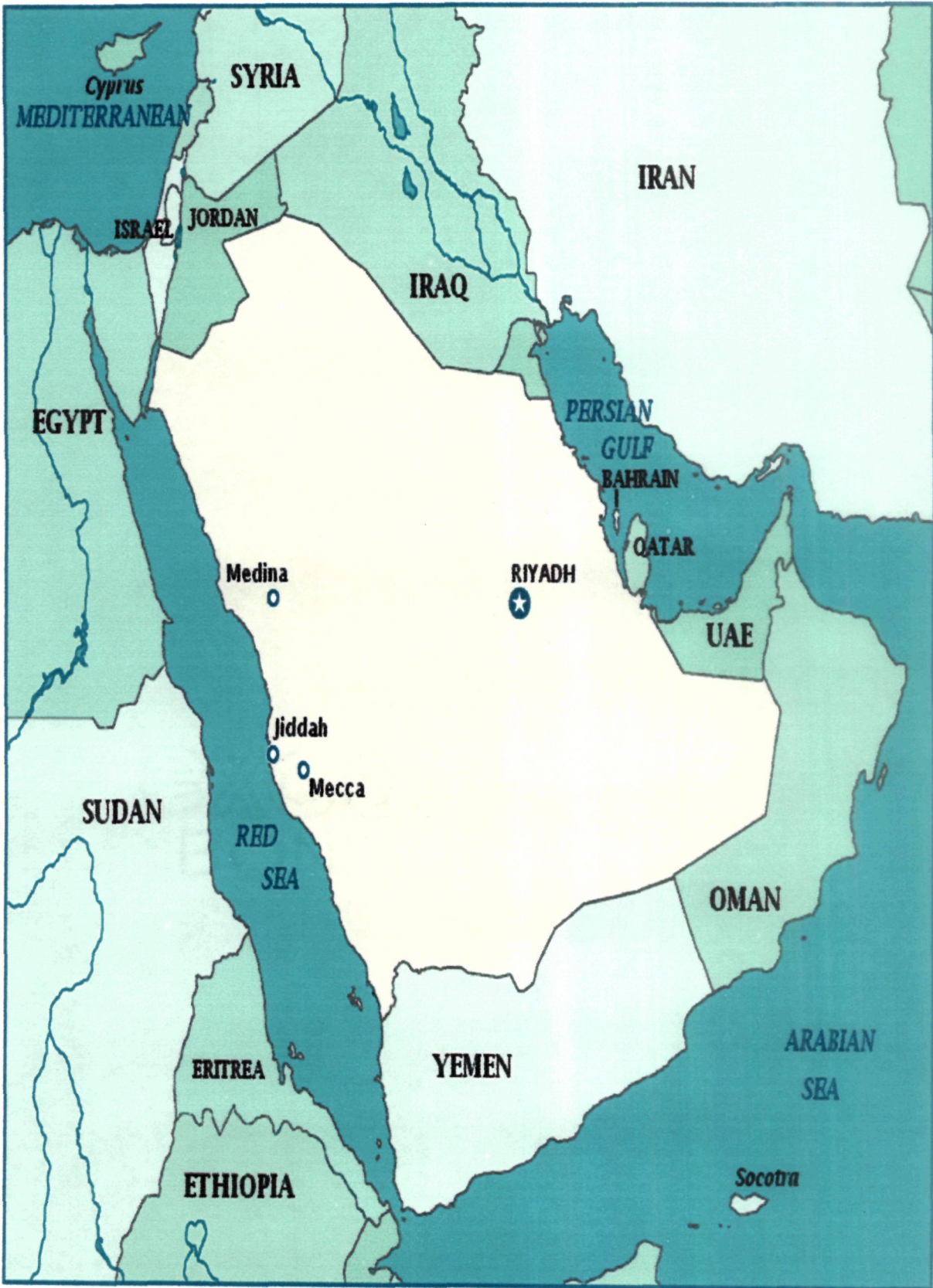
“ Dear is the memory of those who depart”

Dedicated

To a man who is behind my every success

Who is none other than my beloved Father

Late Ghulam Ahmad Khanday



Courtesy: Google Maps

CONTENTS

Acknowledgment	i-iii
Preface	1-2
Chapter First	3-25
Ideological Foundations of Saudi State	
Chapter Second	26-45
Establishment of the Saudi State	
Abd al-Aziz ibn Muhammad ibn Saud	
Sa`ud ibn Abd al-Aziz	
`Abd Allah ibn Sa`ud	
Chapter Third	46-102
A Survey of the Political Developments in Saudi Arabia in The 19th and 20th Centuries	
Mishari ibn Sa`ud	
Turki ibn `Abd Allah ibn Muhammad`	
Faisal ibn Turki	
Khalid ibn Saud	
Abd Allah ibn Thunayyan	
Faisal ibn Turki (Second Reign)	

Abd Allah ibn Faisal and Sa`ud ibn Faisal:

Abd al-Rahman ibn Faisal:

ESTABLISHMENT OF MODERN SAUDI STATE

Abd al-Aziz (1902-53)

Saud ibn Abd Al-Aziz (1953-64)

King Faisal (1964-75)

Viceroy and Foreign Minister

King Khalid (1975-82)

Khalid`s Monarchy

Domestic and Foreign Policy Achievements

King Fahd (1982-2005)

Political Reforms under King Fahd

Consultative Council

Regional Government System

King Fahd as monarch

Chapter Fourth

103-124

Religio-Political Relations in the 19th and 20th Centuries

King Saud

King Faisal

King Khalid

King Fahd

The New Government System

Shura Council

Chapter Fifth **125-146**

Saudi Arabia and the US: Strategic Compromises

Modernization in Saudi Arabia

Background: The US Role in Saudi Arabia

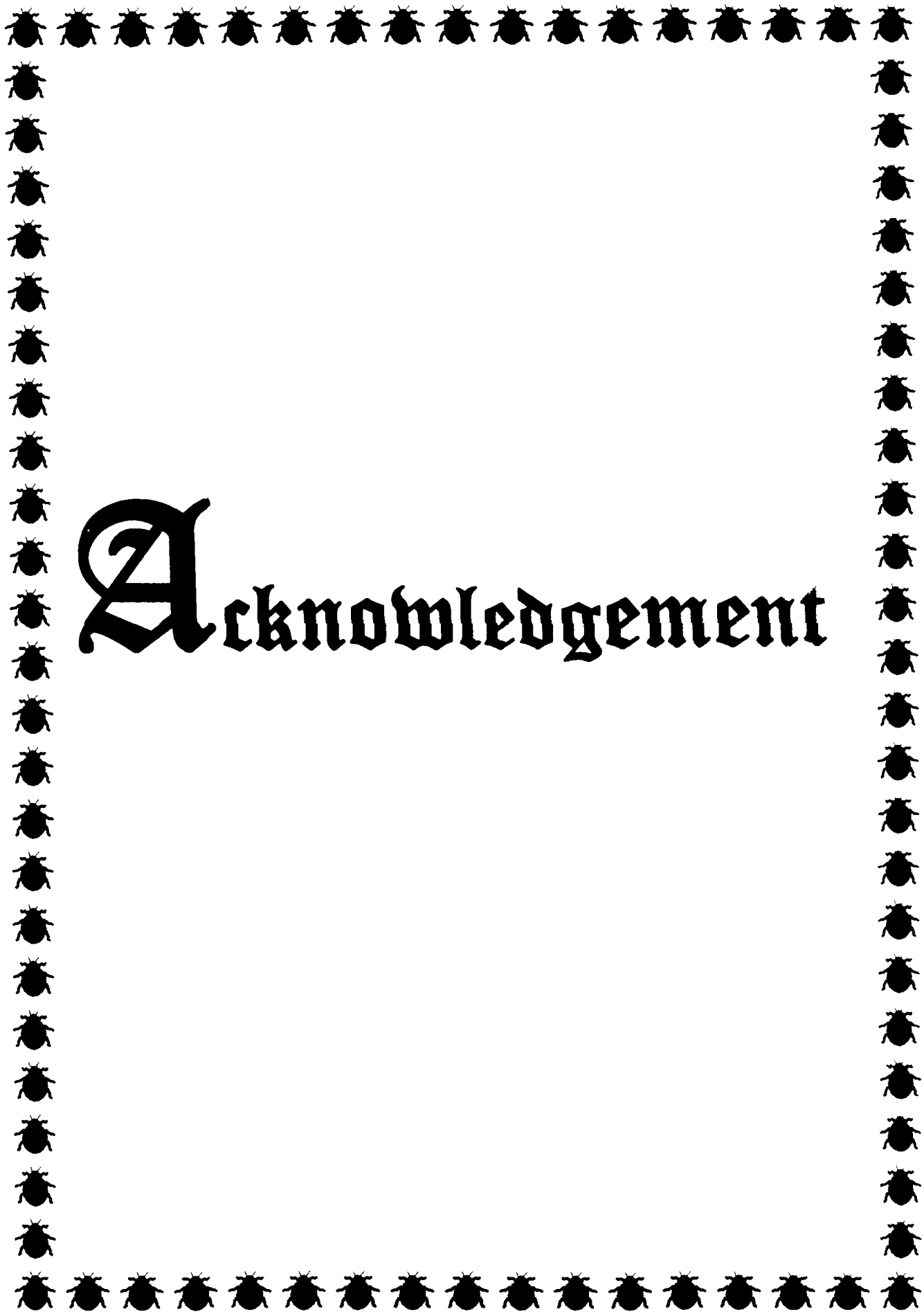
Relations with United States

Role of Ulama

Conclusions **147-156**

Bibliography **157-169**

Appendix **170**



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In the name of Allah, the Beneficent the Merciful

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Preface

Saudi Arabia with its enormous wealth and oil reserves has suddenly jumped into fame from oblivion. Therefore it becomes extremely important to make a detailed study of the religious and political past of its people. In the present thesis entitled *A Critical Analysis of the Religio-Political Conditions of Modern Saudi Arabia*, an attempt has been made to study the religious and political background of this country from the time the Saudi state was founded in the 19th century.

The thesis is broadly divided into six chapters. The first chapter deals with ideological foundations of Saudi state and the second chapter deals with the establishment of the Saudi State. Attempt has been made to study the life and thoughts of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and the establishment of the third Saudi - Wahhabi state to its development into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia under `Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud, the founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The third Chapter is a study of the political conditions of Arabia from the first quarter of the 19th century to the end of 20th century. It discusses the establishment of modern Saudi state, political reforms, consultative council, and regional government system in a comprehensive and detailed manner.

The fourth chapter entitled "The Interrelationship between Islam and Royalty in the 19th and 20th Centuries" deals in political and religious

developments during this period up to king Fahd's period of rule (d.2005). It discusses in detail the new government system established by King Fahd i.e. the Shura system.

The fifth chapter entitled "Saudi Arabia and the US: Strategic Compromises" discusses some strategic compromises like the pace of modernization in Saudi Arabia, relationship between Saudi Arabia and the US and its background, the rule of ulama in Saudi politics and policies in detail and is followed by my own conclusions which makes up the sixth and final chapter of the thesis.

I must acknowledge my indebtedness to my supervisor Prof. Sayyid Ahsan who has very patiently gone through the thesis. My thanks are also due to Prof. Zafarul Islam, Chairman of my department who very kindly provided all the necessary facilities for the preparation of this work.



Chapter First

Ideological Foundations of

Saudi State

The beginning of the 12th century A.H./18th century A.D. witnessed the religious and moral degradation of the Muslims all over the world was at its lowest ebb especially in the province of Najd in central Arabia. More so because over the centuries this province of Arabia had become neglected due to its geographical location. Lying amongst the vast sand dunes of Arabia and also due to the fact that the centre of the Muslim empire had drifted far away from Arabia and the only important province for the rulers was the province of Hejaz which contained the two Holy cities of Mecca and Medina to which flocked the Muslims from all over the world every year and so they realized that the Ottoman Caliphs were the rulers of the Holy cities who bore the title of *Khadim al-Haramayn al-Sharifayn*. They had deviated from the spirit and stipulated standards of Islam to such an extent that even the non-Muslims wondered at the disparity between the Muslims of early times and those of the present era.¹ It may be pointed out that the simple, clear-cut, chaste monotheism of Islam constituting the nucleus of the Islamic religious thought was completely eroded by saint-worship among its followers. The religious practices of the Muslims of this area had become encumbered with all sorts of un-Islamic rites, superstitions and innovations comparable to those of the pre-Islamic Arabs consequently, the ignorant majority of the Muslims, bedecked with amulets, charms and rosaries preferred to go on pilgrimage to the tombs of the fakirs or dervishes

whom they worshipped as Saints and intercessors with Allah. The mosques in which Almighty Allah used to be worshipped were but naturally rendered deserted and ruinous. In short, the Muslims had become so thoroughly un-Islamic in their religious deeds and practices that, had Prophet Muhammad (SAW) come to earth, he would certainly have declared his followers as apostates and idolaters.² It is a fact of history and a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) that ("ان الله يعثر الخلد والامة على رأس كل مائة سنة من يجدد لها دينها) "Allah will raise at the head of each century such people for this Ummah, who will revive his religion".³ Whenever the Muslims deviated from the spirit of Islam and became un-Islamic in their religious deeds and practices, a revivalist was born among them in order to put before them the genuine image of Islam.

It was against this background that Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab appeared on the scene to champion the cause of Islam, and launched a revivalist movement which brought about one of the most remarkable changes in Arabia since the days of the Prophet (SAW)⁴.

Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab⁵ b. Sulayman b. Ali b. Muhammad b. Ahmad ibn Rashid al- Tamimi was born in 1115 A.H./1703 A.D.⁶, at `Uyaynah⁷, a small town situated in Wadi Hanifa in Southern Najd North

of Riyadh, the present capital of Saudi Arabia. Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab belonged to the Masharifa clan of Banu Tamim Tribe which was influential as well as noted for its traditions of knowledge and learning in the whole of Najd. Both his father Abd al-Wahhab and his grandfather Sulayman bin Ali were reputed scholars of Najd. His grandfather Sulayman was the most learned and well-versed in *fiqh* in his native town 'Uyaynah, and was one of the eminent '*Ulama*' in Najd. He was an authority on *hadith*, *tafsir*, *fiqh* and *usul*.

He was an authority in the Hanbali doctrine and gave legal opinion according to the teachings of Hanbali School, but at the same time he was well-versed in the doctrines of the other schools too. Apart from imparting instruction, giving fatwa, and administering justice he also compiled some books and treatises on *fiqh*. His most important work is entitled '*Tufhat al-Nasik fi Ahkam al-Manasik*'. He died in 1668 but his place was filled by his son Abd al-Wahhab who became more distinguished, learned and reputed. Sulayman was the chief *mufti* of Najd and when he died he was *qadi* in 'Uyaynah. 'Abd al-Wahhab succeeded him in 1713 but was dismissed by the amir in 1727 whence he moved to Huraymila where he died in 1740.

His pedigree coalesces with that of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in the first Century of the Christian era.⁸ possessing a healthy and strong physique, he was extra-ordinarily intelligent and alert. He memorized the Quran at the

age of ten. His memory is said to have been so excellent that he could reproduce and write as many as twenty pages from a religious book in one sitting.⁹ He was given the best religious education that could be had in those days by his father who himself was a reputed jurist and traditionist as well as Qadi at `Uyaynah. He developed a keen interest in the study of *Tafsir*, *Hadith* and Hanbalite Jurisprudence and soon became well grounded in the Islamic religious sciences, as a result of which he was competent enough to lead the prescribed congregational prayers at the mosque at the early age of twelve. Pleased with the achievement of his son, his father got him married the same year.¹⁰

Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhab was a widely travelled man. Soon after his marriage he visited Mecca and Madina, and performed the pilgrimage at an early age. After having stayed in these cities for about two months, he proceeded to Syria and Iraq, and visited a number of towns including Basra. On his return from the pilgrimage to his native town, he devoted himself to further study of the Hanbalite theology and law. He also thoroughly studied the works of ibn Taymiyah and his disciple ibn-al-Qayyim, and soon established his reputation as a scholar, jurist, reformer and an effective speaker.

Having an insatiable thirst for knowledge, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab travelled widely and met a number of scholars at various places, of

whom Shaykh Abdullah b. Ibrahim b. Sayf, the head of the `Ulama` of Medina, was learned and prominent, who had embarked on a similar mission of bringing the believers back to the uncorrupted principles of Islam by purging it of the un-Islamic elements that had crept into it in the course of centuries.

At that time Madina was no exception to the abuses generally prevalent among the Muslims all over. Once, while he was standing before the Prophet`s tomb, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab saw a person at the tomb invoking, supplicating and doing what was contrary to the teaching of the Prophet himself. He could not restrain himself from pointing out to the people his strong disapproval of their practices. The young Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab was fortunate enough to get the opportunity to stay with this learned Shaykh, who, on being deeply impressed by his enthusiasm for learning, put his rare collection of books at his disposal by telling him that they were the main weapons stored by him for the redemption of the people of Najd .¹¹ Muhammad`s stay at Mecca and Madina proved most fruitful for him, for, apart from studying under distinguished `Ulama` there, he got the opportunity of meeting the visitors to those cities coming from all corners of the Muslim world thus acquainting himself with the various innovations and superstitions prevalent in the world of Islam.

After completing his education in Madina, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab returned to Najd, travelled widely, and visited a number of cities. First, he went to Basra which at that time was an active centre of Islamic learning, and he stayed there for a fairly long time.¹² There he studied under many learned scholars the most prominent among them being Shaykh Muhammad al-Majmu`i of the village Majma`a near Basra.¹³ Under Shaykh al-Majmu`i he studied philology and Sirah. Moreover, he also learned traditions and grammar. In addition to this he wrote books and treatises condemning all types of innovations in which he had found the people engaged.

These journeys made Shaykh Muhammad fully acquainted with the socio-religious conditions of the followers of Islam. He was deeply perturbed, saddened and infuriated by the un-Islamic practices in which they were involved. Being totally ignorant of the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah, they visited the tombs of the saints including that of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and sought their help and blessings instead of approaching Allah and worshipping him, thereby making a mockery of tawhid, the most fundamental principle of Islam. All that enkindled in the Shaykh a fire to combat all sorts of un-Islamic innovations by bringing them back to the authentic mode of Islam as preached and practised by the Prophet (SAW). With a view to achieving this objective, he launched a

vigorous reform movement which had far-reaching implications in the social, religious and political life of the Muslims of the world in general and of the Arabian Peninsula in particular.

When Muhammad ibn Abd. Al- Wahhab shifted to Huraymala in 1129 A.H./1726 A.D., along with his father, he started his reform movement with added vigour and momentum. He came out openly and established himself `as an apostle of moral and spiritual regeneration`. ¹⁴ It was also here that he composed his most important work entitled *Kitab al-Tawhid* on the doctrine of God's oneness in which he vehemently attacked syntheism and gave a call for a return to the true Islam, very soon he became well known not only in Huraymala but also in the adjoining areas through his disciples who went to these places to spread his word. His preaching's bore fruits in Huraymala when a number of people became his followers. However, in the beginning he had to face severe opposition from different corners. His own brother Sulayman b. Abd al-Wahhab wrote against him and opposed his mission. Similarly his father too was not well-disposed towards his movement. ¹⁵ But he succeeded in convincing both of them and won them over to his cause. ¹⁶ In spite of all the opposition which he encountered, he continued to propagate his reformist ideas relentlessly, enthusiastically and courageously. His speeches and sermons proved very effective, following

which the number of his supporters also began to increase slowly but steadily.

After the death of his father in 1153 A.H./1740 A.D. the Shaykh and the handful of his followers devoted themselves exclusively to the popularization of their movement.¹⁷ The Shaykh soon became the household name in Arabia. And people, attracted by his magnetism and religious fervour, began to swell the ranks of his followers drawn from different strata of society.

The popularity of the Shaykh invited the wrath of the rulers of Huraymala, and those of the neighboring territories. It is worthy of mention in this context that the whole of Najd at that time was split up into tiny emirates, while the people were mostly nomadic and lived a tribal life.

In the absence of an organized central form of government. The entire area was plunged in a state of anarchy. An idea of the state of anarchy which prevailed in central Arabia at that time may be derived from the fact that there were two rival tribes in Huraymala itself, each of which claimed supremacy for itself. One of them had the support of a large number of slaves called Humayan. Constituting a sort of irregular army, they oppressed the people with no fear of reprisal from any government worth the name. It was under these circumstances that Muhammad ibn Abd al- Wahhab thought that mere persuasion unaided by political power might prove

effective in the case of an individual, but it was difficult to bring about any radical change in a peoples outlook without the backing of a political force.¹⁸ After that the Shaykh decided to move to Uyaynah and entered into correspondence with the then Amir of Uyaynah Uthman b. Mu`ammar to that effect. When the Amir assured him not only to give him his full support but also to accept his faith, he proceeded to Uyaynah, and reached there about the year 1744 A.D. where he was warmly welcomed by the Amir.

Under the Amir's protection, Shaykh ibn Abd al-Wahhab carried out a series of operations in order to reform the people of Uyaynah. First, he cut down all the `believed to be pious trees`. Next, the Shaykh advised the Amir to be regular in offering prayers in congregation, as well as suggested punishment for those who did not perform prayers. He also abolished the numerous kinds of taxes that were imposed on the public. Now they had to pay only the *Zakat* and the *Khums* in accordance with the Islamic law.¹⁹ All these activities made the Shaykh popular far and wide.

The growing popularity of the Shaykh aroused the suspicion and anger of Sulayman b. Muhammad, chief of the Banu Khalid tribe and ruler of al-Hasa, who apprehended that Shaykh might usurp his throne and expropriate the taxes that maintain him and his court. It is because of this, that Sulayman b. Muhammad wrote to Uthman either to kill or banish the Shaykh. He also threatened him with serious consequences in case he failed

to comply with his orders.²⁰ The Shaykh was compelled to seek asylum in Dir`iyya.

Dir`iyya, which is situated between `Uyaynah and Riyadh, was at that time a village consisting of about seventy houses.²¹ It was ruled by Muhammad ibn Sau`d, who, even before the arrival of the Shaykh, and already established a reputation for courtesy and honourable dealings with all men.²² The Shaykh`s arrival was not made known to the amir of Dir`iyya because his host ibn Suwaylim feared that the amir might not be courteous to the Shaykh and turn him out of his dominion as had happened at `Uyaynah. Meanwhile, the Shaykh was busy in his preaching`s and the number of people who visited him secretly began to grow day by day. It was also feared that Sulayman b. Muhammad or `Uthman b. Mu`ammar might send a messenger to the amir informing him of the Shaykh`s presence in Dir`iyya.

Meanwhile, two brothers of Muhammad ibn Sa`ud, Mishari and Thunayan, who had heard of the Shaykh`s knowledge and reputation and were interested in his teachings, went to meet him personally at ibn Suwaylim`s house. They were greatly influenced by what he taught and later on they became his greatest supporters. They desired that their brother Muhammad should also visit the Shaykh and adhere to his teachings. When Muhammad was told about the Shaykh`s presence in Dir`iyya and the

mission which he had undertaken, he agreed on summoning the Shaykh to his place and felt reluctant to visit him personally. Muhammad's wife Mawdha bint Abi Wahtan of the Al-Kathir²⁴ was a wise and discerning woman and had a reputation among her people for charity to students and learned men. When she came to know about the Shaykh she persuaded her husband to visit him personally instead of summoning him to his own place. Thus, the amir proceeded on foot to ibn Suwaylim's house to meet the Shaykh in person, When he met the Shaykh he was fascinated. The Shaykh, explained to him the meaning of Tawhid (Unitarianism), which was the mission of all the Prophets, the ills of Shirk (associating with God) and also at the same time explained to him the religious degeneration in which the people of Najd were engulfed.²⁵ He further encouraged the amir to help and support him by emphasizing that if he would help him in these reforms then he hoped that one day they would together be able to bring all the Muslims under one banner and he (the amir) would win dominion over lands and men.²⁶ This proposal of the Shaykh so moved the amir that he immediately agreed to be on his side to assist him in his mission and to fight his enemies side by side. But at the same time the amir put two conditions before the Shaykh. First, the amir said, that if he (the amir) helped him and fought in the path of Allah and if Allah give them victory over lands then he feared that he (the Shaykh) would desert him and go over to other people.²⁷

Secondly, the amir said that in Dir`iyya he taxed the people during the fruits season and he feared that the Shaykh would tell him to take nothing from it.²⁸ On hearing the two conditions the Shaykh replied that as far as the first condition is concerned, extend your hand to me, we are one in affluence and distress—blood for blood, destruction for destruction²⁹, and for the second condition may God bestow upon you conquests and spoils so much that it would suffice you for the taxes that you levy. Thus the two entered into a compact sealed by the same oath the Prophet and the men of Madina had sworn to cement their alliance.³⁰

The understanding between the Shaykh and the amir took place in 1744 or 1745. The amir then took an oath of allegiance to him and became his disciple³¹ and pledged to enforce “*al-amr bi`l-ma`ruf wa`l-nahy `an al-munkar*” (ordering good and forbidding evil). He requested the Shaykh to accompany him and rose up along with him. From then on the Shaykh became the guest of the amir of Dir`iyya. It is stated by some Scholars that the Shaykh married his daughter to Muhammad ibn Saud³² and in this way the reigning king of Saudi Arabia is a descendent on the male side of Muhammad ibn Saud and on the distaff side of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab.³³

With the conversion and backing of the amir, the movement of the Shaykh gained momentum. People who had secretly become his followers, came out in the open. His disciples and acquaintances from all the surrounding areas of Dir`iyya came freely to meet him. The news of the success of the Shaykh`s mission also reached `Uthman ibn Mu`ammar in `Uyaynah. He along with a number of notables of `Uyaynah reached Dir`iyya to meet the Shaykh. He pledged obedience to him repented upon his act and vowed to stand by his side to support and propagate his doctrine, Uthman also requested the Shaykh to return to `Uyaynah but The Shaykh directed him to take up the matter with Muhammad ibn Saud. Muhammad did not allow the Shaykh to leave Dir`iyya and so `Uthman had to return to `Uyaynah unsuccessful.³⁴

Once the Shaykh established himself peacefully at Dir`iyya, he started to work on the same lines as the Prophet had done after the conquest of Mecca, i.e., he sent letters to rulers, nobles, and religious Scholars in other towns to win them to his views.³⁵ In these letters he made known to them the facts regarding his mission and emphasised upon them to give up *Shirk* and *bid`a*. Some of these people were moved by the Shaykh`s mission and were converted to his cause but at the same time there was a majority of them who made fun of the Shaykh`s proposal and even attacked him in insulting terms.³⁶ This, however, did not deter the Shaykh from keeping on

with his preaching's and he, meanwhile, also wrote books and treatises in support of his doctrines and in condemnation of *bid`a*. On the other hand his antagonists were actively engaged in their sinister designs, that of dissuading the people from submitting to the Shaykh's views and at the same time doing whatever they could do oppress the converts. Among the bitterest of opponents of the Shaykh's movement and call were Dahham b. Dawwab, the Amir of Riyadh, Sulayman ibn Muhammad al-Hamiri, the amir of Hasa, and the chief of the Banu Khalid tribe, ibn Maftaq of Qatif and ibn Thuwayni, the Amir of Basra.³⁷

This made the situation even worse for the Shaykh's movement and it compelled him to realise that in order to strengthen his movement, other weapons must also be used.³⁸ Therefore, he prepared for a *Jihad* (religious war) against his opponents. His campaign against syntheism opened a new front for his opponents and Dir`iyya came into conflict with a number of towns in central Najd. His first military campaign, it is said, began with only seven riders on camels then followed a number of conflicts and battles against many neighbouring states and especially Riyadh which was finally annexed by `Abd al-Aziz, the son of Muhammad ibn Saud, in 1795. When Muhammad ibn Saud died in 1765, he was master of all the provinces between the Hijaz and the Persian Gulf, with the exception of Qatif.⁴⁰ But his death did not affect the position of the Shaykh in Dir`iyya, as, his son

and successor, `Abd al-Aziz, like his father, showed much reverence to the Shaykh.

In this manner the Shaykh was able to give a practical form to the ideological system which he dreamt of while still young and lived enough to see it bearing fruits. His call had been successful in building a Muslim society on the basis of Islamic principles; he carved out a virtuous and a human society wherein all the members belonged to one and the same family. It was due to his labours that the Arabs had renounced their nomadic way of life and adopted themselves to a better urban one. During the last few years of his life the Shaykh dedicated himself towards disseminating his message but at the same time he did not dissociate himself from participating in the government and the conduct of affairs in the new state. He was able to create a generation of new adherents, messengers and preachers to instruct thousands of enthusiastic followers in religious matters and bring them up in the true Islamic spirit.⁴¹ Thus the Shaykh was able to guide them on to `the straight path` that of the *Salaf al-Salih* (the pious ancestors). On the political front a vast empire was being formed by `Abd al-Aziz by forcing into submission all those who opposed the teachings of the Shaykh.

The Shaykh died but his teachings survived strongly because he left behind those who would carry the banner of the call, strive hard for it and

protect and disseminate it. The Shaykh was reputed for his strict adherence to the precepts of Islam. He also clung to the teachings of the righteous old doctors of true theology following their way, manner, and deeds. He was a true follower of Sunnah and eliminator of innovations. His knowledge was extensive and was the master of all the sciences of the day. To teach the people he held congregations several times a day and lectured on different subjects like *Tawhid*, *Tafsir*, *Hadith*, *Fiqh* and all the auxiliary sciences of Arabic language. He had a deep insight into the *Tafsir* and *Hadith*, and possessed thorough knowledge of *ilal* (points) of weakness in *Hadith*, and the *rijal* (narrators of Hadith).⁴²

The Shaykh was self-composed patient, wise and tolerant. Seldom was he excited to rage except when religion or its rituals were dishonoured. On such occasions he lashed out equally with word and sword. He always praised the *`Ulama* and talked highly of their virtues, he practised *al-amr bi'l-ma'ruf wa'l-nahy `an al-munkar*. He could not tolerate any innovation; he would, at first politely remonstrate with those who practised innovations then would go on admonishing with harsh words, and lastly with anger and severity accordingly as the circumstances demanded.⁴³ As a matter of fact the teachings of the Shaykh were not those of a new religion nor did they differ from those of the *Salaf al-Salih* and above all he did not at all desire a

special status for himself. Philby is faultless when about the Shaykh, he aptly observes.⁴⁴

“ The creed he taught never professed to be a new revelation or even a new interpretation of Islam; and the teacher never claimed a prophetic status. Yet Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab was in reality something more than a doctor of divinity . . . viewed from the standpoint of history alone, the Wahhabi movement in Arabia has all the characteristics of a prophetic dispensation. It is to its author's credit, and proof sufficient of his disinterestedness and political sagacity, that he was never tempted to assume the guise of the promised Messiah . . . he seems never to have had any ambition for temporal power, nor even to have coveted any kind of titular spiritual status . . .”.

Since the time he reached Dir`iyya in 1744 the Shaykh lived there continuously for nearly fifty years and thus he stuck to his word and fulfilled the `agreement` that he had with Muhammad ibn Saud about not leaving the city.⁴⁵ During the course of his stay there the city of Dir`iyya developed so swiftly that it had very soon transformed itself to become ` the biggest city in Najd, perhaps in all Arabia. And Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab was its central figure, its leading light the luminary which sent its

rays and its flames in every direction.⁴⁶ In all the sincere efforts of his he was very ably assisted by his aide Muhammad ibn Saud (d. 1765), and after him his son Abd al-Aziz, so much so that together they practically remodelled for the better, the outlook of their society. `Abd al-Aziz, who is credited with the extension of the boundaries of the new state more than his father, is often characterised even by the orientlists as the `Umar of the new movement.⁴⁷ Sometimes a parallel is drawn between the political and religious restoration of the Shaykh and the establishment of the Islamic state under the Prophet and the orthodox Caliphs.

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2. L. Stoddard, *The New World of Islam* (London, 1992), pp. 25-26.
3. Abu Dawud, *Kitab al-Sunnah*, Mastadrak Hakim vol. v. p. 522.
4. Sayyid Ahsan, *life and Thought of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab* (Aligarh, 1988), p.58.
5. Musil stresses that `ibn Abd al-Wahhab` was the name of Muhammad's family and Abd al-Wahhab was not his father as stated by other's and his father's name was Sulayman. A Musil, *Northern Najd*, (New York, 1928), p. 258.
6. Some scholars assert that he was born in 1691 A.D. and some say in 1700 A.D. see. T.P. Huges, *Dictionary of Islam*, (London 1885). p. 659; A.M.A. Shustry, *Outlines of Islamic Culture* (Bangalore 1954), p. 28; M.M. Sharif (ed.) *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, vol. 11, p. 1946.
7. Palgrave says that his birth place was Huraymalah, Cf. W.G. Palgrave, *Narrative of a Year's Journey through Central and Eastern Arabia, 1862-63*, (London, 1862), vol.1, p. 374.
8. H.St. J.B. Philby, *Arabia*, p.8; Margoliouth says that `he was a Banu Sinan, a branch of Tamim; Cf. D.S. Margoliouth, "Wahabiya." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

9. M.M. Sharif, *op.cit.* 1447.
10. Ahmad b. Hujr, *al-Shaykh Muhammad b. Abd al-Wahhab*. p.15.
11. Aslam Jayrajpuri, *Tarikh-i-Najd*. (Delhi, 1344, A.H.), M. A. Nadwi, *Muhammad b. Abd al-Wahhab* (Hyderabad 1947) p.19.
12. M. A. Nadwi states that he stayed in Basra for four years, *Cf.* Nadwi, *op. cit*, p. 21.
13. S. Alusi, *op. cit.*, p. 112.
14. H. St. J.B. Philby, *op. cit.*, p.36.
15. M. A. Nadvi, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
16. M. Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
17. This raises a question in the minds, that whether his father had converted to his views or not. Some are of opinion that with the death of his father there remained no further hindrance for him, M. Ahmad *op. cit.*, p. 23; M. A. Nadwi states that his father did not like his activities but he had paid full reverence to his father and teacher. But on the other hand, H. Laoust, "Ibn Abd al-Wahhab." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. (New Ed.) vol. 111, p. 678, is of the opinion that "these accounts should not be accepted without some reservation, particularly since there exists a dissertation, by his father against the cult of saints. The last one seems to be true.
18. A. H. Siddiqui, *op. cit.*, p. 1447.

19. M. Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
20. Philby, *Arabia*, 1930, pp. 11-12.
21. D. S. Margoliouth, E. I. (shorter).
22. H. St. J.B. Philby, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
23. A. Rihani, *Ibn Saud of Arabia*, p. 241.
24. Idem., *Ta`rikh Najd*, p.29.
25. *Cf.* Ibn Bishr, *op. cit.*, p. 15
26. Ahmad b. Hujar, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
27. As A. Rihani puts it, Thou most pledge thyself to remain here in Dir`iyya to make it thy city and the pole of our religion; and thou must pledge thyself, whatsoever may chance, to make no alliance with any other Ameer in the land of Arabs. *Cf. Ibn Saud of Arabia*, p. 242.
28. Attar, *op. cit.*, p. 50-51. See also ibn Bishr, *op. cit.*, 15-16; M. Ahmad *op. cit.*, p. 15; M. A. Nadwi, *op. cit.*, p.32.
29. Ibn Bishr, *op. cit.*, p.16.
30. G. Rentz, '*Wahhabism and Saudi Arabia*', p. 56. D.S. Margoliouth has definitely misinterpreted this pact. According to him 'the two came to an agreement whereby, should they succeed in enforcing their system on their neighbors, the sovereignty should rest with ibn Saud, whereas the religious headship should belong to Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab'. *Cf. `Wahabiya*, p.618.

31. Margoliouth asserts that he was the first disciple of the Shaykh in Dir`iyya. Cf. 'Wahhabis', *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. x11, p. 661.
32. *Ibid.*, Aslam Jayrajpuri, *op.cit.*, p. 74; T.P. Hughes, *Notes on Mohammedanism* (London), p. 220.
33. G. Rentz, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
34. Ahmad b. Hujr, *op. cit.* p.25.
35. H. St. J. B. Philby, *op. cit.*, pp.12-13.
36. Ahmad b. Hujr, *op. cit.*, p. 26; M. A. Nadwi, *op. cit.* pp. 36-7.
37. A. Rihani, *Ta`rikh Najd*, p. 32.
38. G. Rentz, *op. cit.* p.57; probably D. S. Margoliouth does not take into consideration the malefic and menacing attitudes of the Shaykh`s opponents towards his followers while commenting “. . . . The two made their resolve to restore Islam to its original purity a ground for attacking their neighbors . . . ,” Cf. 'Wahhabis', p.661.
39. Ibn Bishr, *op. cit.*, p. 18; D. S. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*, p. 661
40. D. S. Margoliouth, *op. cit.*
41. Attar, *op. cit.*, p. 83.
42. Ahmad b. Hujr, *op. cit.* p. 28.
43. *Ibid*, pp. 28-9.
44. Cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 54-5.

45. See above, pp. 116-7.
46. A. Rihani, *op. cit.*, p. 245.
47. S. M. Zwemer, *Arabia; The cradle of Islam*, p. 194.



Chapter Second

Establishment of the Saudi State

Saudi state which emerged as a Kingdom in the first half of the nineteenth century A. D., today ranks among the powerful countries of the Arab world. It is considered a fruitful effort of the house of Saud. According to earliest annals the Saudi family lived near the Oasis of Qatif in the mid-fifteenth century, but there exists no indication that they held any authority at that time. The head of the family then moved into Najd and founded the town of Dir`iyya near the heights above Wadi Hanifah situated at a distance of about ten miles from the present capital of Riyadh.¹

The fifteenth-century found the Arabian Peninsula politically fragmented. A number of independent lords held small townships which often were either in conflict with each other or with the nomadic tribes. The new lord of Dir`iyya was just another landlord. After the founding of Dir`iyya, nearly three centuries passed in relative historical obscurity until the first half of the eighteenth century, when the Arabian history observed a great revolution which was altered by two men who built the foundations of the house of Saud, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad ibn Saud.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab was born in 1703 A.D.² at Uyaynah, he belonged to the Masharifa clan of Banu Tamim tribe which was influential as well as noted for its traditions of knowledge and learning

in the whole of Najd. Both his father Abd al-Wahhab and his grandfather Sulayman ibn Ali were reputed scholars of Najd.

After completing his education, he travelled widely, and visited a number of cities. These journeys made Shaykh Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab acquainted with the socio-religious conditions of the followers of Islam. He was deeply perturbed, saddened and infuriated by the un-Islamic practices in which they were involved, he launched a vigorous reform movement which had far-reaching implications in the social, religious and political life of the Muslims of the world in general and of the Arabian Peninsula in particular. He faced oppositions in his reform movement and was forced to leave the town. In 1744 he shifted to Dir`iyya. The ruler of Dir`iyya, Muhammad ibn Saud, whose family had governed the town for several generations, had already established his reputation for courtesy, justice and honourable dealings with his people.

The Shaykh appealed to the Amir to help him by saying that if he assisted him in these reforms, he was sure that one day they would together be able to bring all the Muslims under one flag, and that the Amir would win dominion over lands and me. Muhammad ibn Saud agreed to assist the Shaykh in his mission and fight against his enemies.

Thus both of them entered into a solemn pact, 'whereby, should they succeed in forcing their system on their neighbours, the political authority should rest with ibn Saud whereas the religious leadership should belong to Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab³ In this way the year 1744 A.D. is very significant not only in the annals of Arabia but also in the history of Islam. The alliance, proved to be of tremendous importance over the decades.

It is remarkable to note that prior to the pact between Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad ibn Saud, the Saud family was not so influential in the affairs of Arabia as were the Sharifs in the Hijaz, the Banu Khalid in Al- Hasa and the surrounding coastal district, the Mu`ammar family in `Uyaynah.⁴ Al- Hasa or Al-Ahsa is a traditional oasis region in eastern Saudi Arabia that gives its name to the Al-Hasa Governorate, Al-Hasa has been inhabited since prehistoric times, and the area was certainly known as Al- Hasa during the time of the Prophet. Its early history is similar to that of eastern Arabian historical region of Bahrain. In later times, the Oasis was coveted by the Wahhabis from the Najd⁵ and by the Turks. Al- Hasa, the residence of Bani Khalid tribe was occupied by the Saudis for the first time in about 1795.⁶ Al- Hasa changed hands a number of times.

Al- Hasa, along with Qatif, was incorporated into the First Saudi State in 1795 but returned to nominal Ottoman control in 1818 with an

invasion ordered by Muhammad Ali of Egypt. The Banu Khalid were again installed as rulers of the region in 1824-31 i.e. Banu Khalid chiefs succeeded in maintaining their position and removed the Egyptians. But the Saudi amir was soon at war with the Banu Khalid and finally the Saudis re-occupied Al- Hasa in 1830-31. But in 1838-39 the second Egyptian occupation of Al- Hasa took place and finally Al- Hasa was Annexed by Turkey in 1871.⁷ In 1913, Ibn Saud, the founder of modern Saudi Arabia, annexed Al- Hasa and Qatif to his domain of Najd.

Banu Khalid tribe dominated the eastern region of modern-day Saudi Arabia (al- Hasa and al-Qatif) from 1670 to 1793, and again under the auspices of the Ottoman Empire for a brief period in the early 19th century. At its greatest extent, the domain of Banu Khalid extended from Kuwait in the north to the borders of Oman in the south, and wielded political influence in the region of Najd in central Arabia. The vast majority of the Banu Khalid are Sunni Muslims, historically following the Maliki and Hanbali rites. At present many families from Banu Khalid can be found in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar as well.⁸

Al-Uyaynah is located in the central Najd. In the middle of the 18th century, Al-Uyaynah was the seat of the powerful Al-Mu'ammam family of the Bani Tamim. When Muhammad Abd al- Wahhab returned from his

travels around the Middle East and began to preach the pure form of Islam to which he was committed, he met with a mixed reception. In the end, Al-Mu`ammar family compelled him to leave the town. Abd al-Wahhab was welcomed by Muhammad bin Saud. The alliance formed between Muhammad bin Saud and Muhammad Abd al- Wahhab in 1745 that was to change the history of the Arabian Peninsula and Uyaynah was one of the first towns to fall under the sway of the new alliance.⁹

The Banu Khalid tribe ruled in Al- Hasa and Uyaynah was under the sway of Al- Muammar family which most probably accepted the authority of the ruler of Uyaynah.

Al- Hasa was in opposition to the Sauds of Dir`iyya, another most powerful state at that time. There was no demarcation of their boundaries; they were at war with each other. The situation in 18th century was quite different from that of the Prophet`s period. No one tribe in central Arabia had been able to prove its leadership.¹⁰

The Sharif of Mecca or Sharif of Hejaz was the title of the former governors of Hejaz and a traditional steward of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The term Sharif means *noble* in Arabic. The Sharif was charged with protecting the cities and their environs and ensuring the safety of pilgrims performing the Hajj. The office of the Sharifate of Mecca dates

back to the late Abbasid era. Since 1201, the Sharifate was held by a member of the Hashim clan, not to be confused with the larger clan of Banu Hashim to which all Sharifs claim descent. Descendants of this family continued to hold the position until the twentieth century. During the Ottoman era, the Sharifate expanded its authority northwards to include Medina, and southwards to the frontiers of 'Asir, and regularly raided Najd.

The Sharifate came to an end shortly after the reign of Hussein bin Ali, during the Arab Revolt of 1916. In 1924, however, in the face of increasing attacks by Ibn Saud, Hussein abdicated his secular titles to his eldest son, Ali bin Hussein, who was to become the last Grand Sharif. At the end of 1924, the Ibn Saud conquered the Hejaz and expelled him. The House of Saud has since exercised stewardship over the holy cities and the Hajj.¹¹ These were the main principalities into which Arabia remained divided for a long period of time marked by constant strifes between them in a struggle for existence or supremacy.¹² But in pursuance of the alliance both Ibn Saud and Muhammad b. Abd al-Wahhab began to assert themselves not only in the revival of religion, but consequence of which they militantly, as a consequence of which they launched a Jihad (holy war) on the rival Emirates. But it was no smooth sailing for the Shaykh and Ibn Saud. They were bound to face numerous difficulties and opponents. In the ensuing armed struggle, Ibn Saud suffered some humiliating defeats too. In

1765 A.D. his fortune seemed to have been at its lowest ebb when he was confronted with the combined forces of `Orayyar of Al- Hasa and Sayyid Al- Hasan ibn Hibat-Allah of Najran, who, bent upon putting an end to the new movement, had planned to attack Dir`iyya simultaneously. Meanwhile, an army led by his son Abd al-Aziz ibn Muhammad was defeated by the Najrani forces at Al-Hayir, between al-Khaj and Riyadh, without the aid of `Orayyar and his tribes who had not yet even arrived there. This defeat made the Amir nervous to some extent. But Ibn Abd al-Wahhab sought to solidify his courage by asking him to remember what had happened to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in the battle of *Uhud*. Ibn Saud`s wife, an enthusiastic supporter of the new movement, also encouraged him to carry on the struggle against the opponents with added vigour. However, Ibn Saud and the Shaykh succeeded in negotiating a treaty with the Najran ruler, who set his prisoners free, and returned home. Later, when the Al- Hasa army arrived there alongwith the Bedouin allies from the Ijma tribe, and heard of the departure of the Najran forces, they also went back.¹³

The rising power of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and the Saudi family was bitterly opposed by the ruler of Riyadh named Waham bin Dawwas who struggled against his opponents for more than a quarter of a century (1157-1187 A.H.).¹⁴ Nevertheless, when Muhammad ibn Saud died in 1765 A.D., most of Najd had been subdued.

Abd al-Aziz ibn Muhammad ibn Sa`ud (1765-1803)

Muhammad ibn Sa`ud died in 1765 and was succeeded by his son `Abd al-Aziz¹⁵ whom he had nominated in his lifetime. `Abd al-Aziz was well acquainted with the administrative and military responsibilities which fell upon him. The new amir from his previous experience realized that the immediate threat to his rule was from Riyadh, therefore he diverted his full attention towards subduing it and which he eventually did in the eighth year of his rule in 1773.¹⁶ This victory boosted the morale of the Wahhabis who now felt strong enough to meet the Banu Khalid and even to carry the war into Al-Hasa` itself. The Wahhabis consolidated their position in Najd. `Abd al-Aziz was now assisted in his military campaigns by his son Sa`ud who was now being given independent charge of the force. In the following years small skirmishes with Al-Hasa continued. Sa`dun, the ruler of Al-Hasa`, attacked the Wahhabis in 1778 in al-Kharj, in 1779 in al-Majma`a, in 1780 again in al-Kharj, and in 1781 in Burayda.¹⁷ Meanwhile a revolt amongst the Banu Khalid chiefs indirectly helped the Wahhabis. Sa`dun was overthrown and ousted from Al-Hasa`. He came to Dir`iyya and sought the assistance of `Abd al-Aziz to recapture Al-Hasa` for him. Sa`dun died within a year after reaching Dir`iyya. The Wahhabis under Sa`ud made repeated incursions into Al-Hasa` beginning from 1784.¹⁸ probably in order

to test the strength of the Banu Khalid after the resumption of their internal strife's. It was not until 1775 that Al- Hasa` was finally subdued by the Wahhabis and Barrak ibn `Abd al-Muhsin, one of the Khalidi chiefs, was installed as governor (wali) of Al- Hasa` by `Abd al- Aziz. It is also reported that while the Wahhabi forces under Sa`ud were engaged towards the Hijaz, Barrak tried to throw off the Wahhabi yoke but was rendered unsuccessful by Sa`ud. Barrak was able to escape ¹⁹ and Najim ibn Duhaynim of the common people of Hufuf was ultimately appointed the governor of the place.²⁰

Meanwhile, the growing Wahhabi power was being viewed with concern by Sharif Ghalib of Mecca in the Hijaz. Sharif Ghalib was under the Ottomans and was a determined enemy of the Wahhabis. He had an interest in widening the breach between the Wahhabis and the Ottomans. Therefore, artfully and unremittingly, he spread reports of the Wahhabis being really infidels, in order to render abortive all attempts at negotiation with them. The Pashas of Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo, who were nearest to the dreaded Wahhabis, were no less eager in representing under the blackest colours, the designs of these enemies of the Turkish faith. Very soon it became generally believed throughout that the Wahhabis were endeavouring to establish an entirely new religion, and that they treated all Turks with increased cruelty because they were Muslims.²¹

The Wahhabis on their part displayed great intolerance, especially towards the Turks, whose morals they regarded of the logical soundness of Wahhabi doctrine, had recourse to calumnies and misrepresentation. Consequently each side virtually placed the other outside the place of Islam, and that the Wahhabis, who were the more warlike, declared the lives and the property of their antagonists to have been forfeited by religious infidelity and applied themselves to execute the sentence.²²

Hostilities between the Wahhabis and the Sharif of Mecca broke out in 1792 or 1793 and the war continued for several years in the form of desultory raids and counter-raids by the tribe's dependent upon either sides.²³

In the meantime the attacks of the Wahhabis on Kuwait had been affected between 1793 and 1795, and their raids on the borders of Iraq had started as soon as 1784. These raids increased steadily during the next ten years. Although these attacks were largely unsuccessful but “the ease with which the Wahhabis assembled a force, and the rapidity with which that force marched when assembled, astonished and confounded the slowly moving Ottoman.”²⁴ The first Turkish expedition against the Wahhabis was led by Ali Pasha in 1798 to Al- Hasa`. there was no fight but a truce was arranged between the Pasha of Baghdad and the Wahhabis for six years.²⁵

But very soon in April 1801 a crowning humiliation at the hands of the Wahhabis under Sa`ud overtook Sulayman Pasha of Baghdad.²⁶ A force of about ten thousand men with at least six hundred camels broke into Karbala and made straight into the shrine of Imam Husayn. The town was given over to slaughter and pillage. In eight hours they wrecked and plundered to the best of their ability and then withdrew.²⁷ The great dome over the tomb of Imam Husayn was demolished and the bejewelled covering of his grave carried off as spoil.²⁸ This expedition proved to be a starting point of a general revulsion against the Wahhabis. It later on had disastrous consequences for the nascent Wahhabi state.

The next year in 1802 there was a deterioration in the relations between the Sa`udis and the Sharif of Mecca. It culminated in the Wahhabis attacking and capturing Ta`if in the Hijaz. They followed it up by marching on to Mecca which finally succumbed after two or three month's defense. Sharif Ghalib withdrew to Jeddah with his troops. The Wahhabis meanwhile demolished all the domes built over the tombs of the heroes and heroines of Islam, and other sites connected with the Islamic legend. This lasted for several weeks and in the course of it every building offending against the standards of the Wahhabis was reduced to dust and rubble.²⁹ Jeddah was also attacked by the Wahhabis but unsuccessfully. Sharif Ghalib accepted

Sa`udi sovereignty but later reoccupied Mecca after the return of Abd al-Aziz to Dir`iyya.

The same year i.e. 1803, `Abd al-Aziz was assassinated at Dir`iyya in the mosque of Turayf while offering prayers. The assassin was a Persian who professed to be a *Darwish* and was given all opportunity to satisfy his desire for learning something of the precepts and practices of the Wahhabis.³⁰ Thus ended the period of `Abd al-Aziz, renowned for his humility, asceticism and justice, who carried out the precepts of the faith scrupulously and without favouritism.³¹

Sa`ud ibn `Abd al-Aziz (1803-14)

`Abd al-Aziz was succeeded by his son Sa`ud as the new amir. In fact Sa`ud's nomination was secured by Shaykh Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab himself as early as in 1787.³² Sa`ud was a seasoned military campaigner and his military career had already covered about thirty-five years by the time he ascended the throne of Dir`iyya.³³

Sa`ud's military campaigns started as soon as he assumed the command of the state. His first major victory was in Hijaz when he reconquered Mecca in 1805.³⁴ This time Sharif Ghalib himself was appointed the agent of Sa`ud in Mecca. Soon after he annexed Madina and

the whole of Hijaz came under the authority of the Wahhabis.³⁵ Ghalib was made in charge of Hijaz with the orders to destroy all the domes and structures in Jeddah and Madina. Sa`ud also initiated certain reforms in the performance of the pilgrimage. He especially stopped the ancient tradition of the *Mahmal*³⁶ which was brought from Egypt on pilgrimage as a rallying standard for their people. He also prohibited them from bringing drums, pipes and so on their pilgrimages.³⁷ Sa`ud expelled all Turkish civilians and soldiers from Mecca and also expelled all suspicious persons from Madina.³⁸ On Fridays the Khutba till now being delivered in the name of the Sultan of Turkey was stopped.³⁹ Above all the effective loss of the Holy Cities was more than the Ottoman Sultan could countenance. Sultan Salim III, after failing to attack from Iraq after several attempts, ultimately appointed Muhammad Ali of Egypt as the viceroy of Hijaz in 1805 with orders to combat the Wahhabis.⁴⁰ In 1811 with the intention of attacking the Wahhabis, Muhammad Ali dispatched a huge army under the command of his son Tusun Bey. Tusun occupied the port of Yanbo and attacked Madina the same year. But Tusun`s army was repulsed with heavy losses when it was attacked by a huge force of the Wahhabis. After large reinforcements having arrived from Egypt, Tusun again attacked Madina the next year in 1812. The city was occupied and plundered by Tusun`s army within a

fortnight of its attack. This victory was followed up by the occupation of Mecca, Jeddah and Ta'if by the Egyptian army in 1813. The same year Muhammad Ali himself arrived in Jeddah on orders from Constantinople. Sharif Ghalib was arrested and deported to Constantinople. After achieving these victories the Egyptians returned home.⁴¹

In the meantime in Eastern Arabia the Wahhabis had attacked Zubayr and Basra in 1804, Najaf, Samawah and Zubayr again in 1806, and in 1810 a plundering expedition was carried out by `Abdullah b. Sa`ud against Iraq when he penetrated to within a short distance of Baghdad. The same year an expedition against Syria was undertaken and it is said that about thirty-five villages were sacked within three days.⁴²

In April 1814 Sa`ud succumbed to fever in Dir'iyya. His death was a serious setback for the Wahhabi cause for his was a steady, if awe-inspiring personality.⁴³

`Abd Allah ibn Sa`ud (1814-18)

Sa`ud was succeeded by his son `Abd Allah (r. 1814-1818). He was a man known for his wisdom and intelligence but lacked his father's firmness and military abilities. The very beginning of his reign was marked by dissensions within his supporters. He faced internal opposition when he was challenged by his uncle `Abd Allah ibn Muhammad for the throne on the

grounds that being the son of Muhammad ibn Sa`ud he had prior claims, in the fight that followed he defeated his uncle. This was the chance that Muhammad Ali was waiting for. In 1815 Tusun Bey marched on Qasim, half way between Madina and Dir`iyya. An agreement was reached between him and `Abd Allah wherein the latter renounced any claim to Mecca and Madina and Tusun returned to Madina.⁴⁴ But Muhammad Ali refused to ratify the agreement since he wanted nothing less than total surrender.⁴⁵ Thus the fight was to continue. Tusun was recalled to Cairo and Muhammad Ali sent another of his sons, Ibrahim Pasha, with a fresh force. Ibrahim Pasha landed in Hijaz towards the end of 1816 and slowly but steadily began moving towards the Sa`udi capital. He finally appeared before Dir`iyya in April 1818. The Wahhabi force surrendered after about five month's siege. `Abd Allah was arrested and sent to Cairo from where he was sent to Constantinople where, after being paraded through the streets, he was beheaded in the Square of St. Sophia along with some of his companions.⁴⁶ In the meantime Dir`iyya was pillaged by Ibrahim Pasha along with all the adjoining territories. Ibrahim Pasha withdrew after nine months from Najd and Al- Hasa` leaving the area in the charge of the Banu Khalid who were the representatives of the Turkish government.⁴⁷ Thus ended the first Sa`udi state.

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11. *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*
12. Sheikh Hafiz Wahba, *op. cit*; p.102
13. Derek Hopwood, *The Arabian Peninsula, Society and politics*; (London,1972), p.57
14. *Ibid.*

15. `Abd al-`Aziz was the son-in-law of `Uthman ibn Mu`ammar, the ruler of `Uyayna.
16. It was only after 28 years of intermittent fighting that the Wahhabis were able to finally annexe Riyad.
17. See Ibn Bishr, *op. cit.*, pp. 70, 71, 74 and 75.
18. For details of these raids see Ibn Bishr, *op. cit.*, p. 83ff.
19. Ibn Bishr, *op. cit.*, p. 112, reports that Barrak later on repented and joined the Wahhabi troops and was killed in one of their raids on Iraq.
20. Philby, *op. cit.*, p. 87; Ibn Bishr, *op. cit.*, p. 106, describes him as one of the populace of Al- Hasa.
21. J. L. Burckhardt, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.
22. J. G. Lorimer, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1A, p. 1052.
23. For details see Amin Sa`id, *Ta`rikh al-Dawlat al-Sa`udiyya* (Beirut, 1964), 1, pp. 62-70.
24. J. G. Lorimer, *op. cit.*, p. 1057.
25. J. G. Lorimer, *op. cit.*, p. 1959.
26. Philby, *op. cit.*, p. 93, states that it was Sa`ud himself who broke the spell of peace.
27. J. G. Lorimer, *op. cit.*, p. 1060. For details of the sack of Karbala see especially *Ta`rich Karbala wa Ha`ir al-Husayn*, pp. 172-4; Amin Sa`id, *op. cit.*, p. 62; Salah al-Din al-Mukhtar, *Ta`rikh al-Mamlakat al-*

- `Arabiyyat al-Sa`udiyya*, (Beirut, 1957), p. 73; J. B. Glubb, *War in the Desert* (London, 1960), puts the number of camels involved in the attack at 6,000.
28. In fact everything of value in the Town was taken off, Cf. Philby, *op. cit.*, p.83. It is also said that more than 5,000 people were massacred in this expedition, cf. ja`far Subhani, *Ma`al -Wahhabiyyin fi Khatathum wa` aqa`idhum* (Tehran, 1406A.H.), p. 16.
 29. Philby, *op. cit.*, p. 9 .An excellent account of the Wahhabi expeditions against Hijaz is given by Amin Sa`id, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-71.
 30. Philby, *op. cit.*, p. 96. It is said that the assassin's three sons had been massacred in Kerbala. He had pretended to convert to Wahhabism and had worked in the Wahhabi capital for a year waiting an opportunity to avenge his children. cf. J.B. Glubb, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45
 31. For a thorough account of the personality and administration of Abd al-Aziz see Salah al-Din Mukhtar, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-85.
 32. Hafiz Wahba, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
 33. His first independent military campaign had been in 1768, Cf. Philby, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
 34. It may be recalled here that when Sa`ud had conquered Mecca earlier he had left Sharif Mu`in as his representative there. But soon after

wards Sharif Ghalib was able to take the city back again, Cf. Hafiz Wahba, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

35. For Sa`ud`s conquest of Hijaz see Amin Sa`id, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-82.
36. For the history of the Mahmal, see F. Buhl, `Mahmal` in *Encyclopedia of Islam* (shorter), pp. 313-14; also J. Jomier , *Le Mahmal et la Caravane Egyptienne des pelerines de la Mecque* (Cairo, 1953).
37. Hafiz Wahba, *op. cit.*, p. 107.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
39. J. G. Lorimer, *op. cit.*, p. 1067.
40. For a detailed account of Muhammad Ali`s conquests on Arabia see Henry Dodwell, *The Founder or Modern Egypt* (Cambridge, 1967)
41. For the Egyptian conquest of Hejaz see Amin Sa`id, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-102. It is also recorded that there were some negotiations between the agents of Muhammad `Ali and Sa`ud but the talks had no result, cf. Hafiz Wahba, *op. cit.*, p. 110.
42. For details see Amin Sa`id, *op. cit.*, p. 83 ff.
43. A good assessment of Sa`ud`s personality and his administration is found in Salah al-Din Mukhtar, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-42.
44. According to Philiby the terms of the agreement were: (a) to terminate hostilities; (b) to end Turkish intervention in the affairs of Najd; and (c) establish freedom of trade between Arabia and it neighbors, and to

assure the freedom of the pilgrimage for all concerned. cf. *op. cit.*, p. 131.

45. Philby, *op. cit.*, p. 132, states that Muhammad Ali duly confirmed the truce.
46. J. G. Lorimer, *op. cit.*, p. 1089.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 1091. For details of the Egyptian occupation see R. B. Winder, *Saudi Arabia in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 16-49s



Chapter Third

A Survey of the political
developments in Saudi Arabia in
The 19th and 20th Centuries

Modern Saudi Arabia, as it stands today, is a little more than seventy years old. All the rulers of Saudi Arabia during the twentieth century, are the sons of Abd al-Aziz Abd al-Rahman Al Saud, more famous simply as Ibn Saud, who created the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932.

Mishari ibn Sa`ud

Soon after the withdrawal of the Egyptian forces from Najd, Mishari ibn Sa`ud ibn Abd al-Aziz, one of the deported brothers of the later amir, who managed to escape his guards on way to Egypt, returned to Dir`iyya and assumed the authority. Although Egyptian authority was still maintained to some extent.¹ the manner in which Mishari`s rule ended is uncertain. Most probably he was overthrown by Muhammad ibn Mushari ibn Mu`ammar or fell into the hands of the Egyptians and put to death.²

Turki ibn `Abd Allah ibn Muhammad` (1824-34)

The credit of founding the second Saudi-Wahhabi state goes to Turki ibn Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn Saud.³ He came to power in 1824 when he expelled the Egyptian detachment from Riyadh and captured it. Riyadh was then made the Capital of the second Saudi state. Turki began consolidating his rule in Najd by constant campaigning and then began to expand it. In the process he conquered al-Hasa in 1830. By 1833 he had exacted recognition of his rule along the entire coast of the Gulf. But

everything was not going smooth for Turki. There was power rivalry within the family. His distant cousin Mishari ibn Abd al- Rahman ibn Saud, whom he had appointed governor of Manfuha, revolted against him in 1833, but by the time Turki reached Riyadh he managed to flee. Later Mishari submitted to Turki who put him under house arrest. However, in 1834 Mishari was successful in getting Turki assassinated. Mishari was acknowledged as the new Imam.

Faisal ibn Turki (1834-38)

At the time when Turki was assassinated his son Faisal was engaged in war with Bahrain, Mishari`s rule lasted for only forty days for Faisal soon after marched on Riyadh and defeated and executed Mishari. Faisal was one of the ablest and most courageous of the Saudis. At the time when the Egyptians had invaded Dir`iyya Faisal was one of their prisoners but he had managed to escape after about eight years of imprisonment.⁴ Faisal`s reign began auspiciously. But everything was not smooth for Faisal, both the Turks and Muhammad Ali were alarmed at the reinstatement of the Saudis in Najd.⁵ In 1836 an expeditionary force from Egypt landed at Yanbo and marched on Najd. This force was accompanied by a Saudi pretender, a cousin of Faisal named Khalid ibn Saud.⁶ Meanwhile Faisal was in preparation to meet the Egyptians but since there were dissensions within

the Saudi family he could not muster enough support and had to leave Riyadh for the Egyptian's without a fight in 1838. Towards the end of 1838, however, Faisal's first reign ended when he was made a prisoner by the Egyptians for a second time and sent to Egypt.⁷

Khalid ibn Saud (1840-41)

The end of Faisal's reign can be dated to 1837 when the Egyptians under Khurshid Pasha entered Riyadh and Khalid was installed as the new Imam and a representative of Muhammad Ali. Although various governors visited Khalid to acknowledge him as the new ruler but there are no evidences to show that any of the Wahhabi family came to pay homage to Khalid as Imam.⁸

The Egyptians were not destined to rule over Arabia for long. Events outside Arabia led to the termination of the Egyptian rule. In 1839 Muhammad Ali achieved a decisive victory over the Ottomans and the European powers had to intervene. They forced upon Muhammad Ali a settlement whereby he was confined to the hereditary rulership of Egypt, consequently the bulk of the Egyptian force was withdrawn from Najd.⁹ Khalid was left with a small contingent of the Egyptians. With no support of the religious leaders Khalid's rule was fragile, as Lorimer has neatly summed up the situation:¹⁰

“The reign of Khalid, who as the creature of the Egyptians was generally disliked, and who appears to have possessed no capacity for government, was short and troubled the Egyptian troops by whom Khalid’s power was supported received no pay and became discontented, moreover they were regarded with intense jealousy by the Arabs of the country, who considered that a Wahhabi Amir should rely on the swords of his fellow-countrymen alone.”

`Abd Allah ibn Thunayyan (1841-43)

Soon after the withdrawal of the Egyptian forces from Najd, Abd Allah ibn Thunayyan took Riyadh by storm.¹¹ He was proclaimed Imam in 1841, thus ended the reign of Khalid ibn Saud. Although Khalid made many attempts to regain Riyadh but all proved unsuccessful. Khalid became a fugitive and took refuge in Hijaz.¹² Ibn Thunayyan’s rule is credited with the final expulsion of the Egyptian troops from Najd.

Faisal ibn Turki (Second Reign) (1843-65)

After five years of detention in Egypt Faisal made good his escape from Egypt early in 1843.¹³ Faisal gained Riyadh after a twenty day siege.¹⁴ Thunayyan was captured and imprisoned. Faisal received immediate

recongnition as Imam. Faisal's second reign was a stable and prosperous period for Arabia. Philby gives the following estimate of his reign:¹⁵

“ Faisal now entered upon an unchallenged reign of all but a quarter of a century, in which must be sought the real beginnings of the modern Wahhabi state . . . [He] ruled a territory considerably smaller in extent than that of his great ancestors, but perhaps more compact and better woven together on the loom of Wahhabism. A new generation had grown up whose oldest members knew not the Jacob of the old paganism, whose faded and perished remnants may yet be found in our day as patches on the new garment of dour dogmatisms which passes for philosophy among the nomad tribes of the desert. The Arabia of Faisal was Wahhabi, in a sense unknown to the heyday of the Wahhabi empire; and Faisal's reign was one of administrative consolidation and progress in education and other acts of peace, leading up, by the irony of fate, to a final tragedy of dynastic dissension.”

Faisal died in 1866 and Najd lost a great ruler who had done much to unite the different parts of the country into one orderly whole, and a wise administrator who knew when to be lenient and when to use the mailed

fist.¹⁶ In short Faisal`s reign has been termed as the golden age of the second Saudi realm.¹⁷

Abd Allah ibn Faisal and Sa`ud ibn Faisal (1865-71) (1871-75)

Faisal had four sons Abd Allah, Saud, Muhammad and Abd al-Rahman, in his lifetime Faisal had nominated `Abd Allah to succeed him and had even allowed him great power. Abd Allah was known for his generosity and piety, but also as a fanatic. His brother Sa`ud, on the other hand was moderate and tolerant in disposition. There followed an internal strife within the Saudi family. Enmity between `Abd Allah and Saud developed and the kingdom began to break up. Northern Najd came under the Rashidi`s of Ha`il completely.¹⁸ the only parts remaining completely loyal to the Saudis were Riyadh, Kharj and some of the Southern districts. Saud left Riyadh and began collecting support for himself. Eventually Saud defeated Abd Allah and captured Riyadh in 1871.¹⁹ `Abd Allah fled and, through the Amir of Kuwait, sought the support of the Ottomans who were the nominal suzerains of Najd, to help him. Midhat Pasha, the Ottoman governor of Iraq, took advantages of the situation and conquered Hasa in July 1871. Abd Allah, who went to welcome the Ottomans, was arrested .In the meantime Abd Allah ibn Turki, a brother of Faisal ibn Turki, captured Riyadh from Saud, `Abd Allah ibn Faisal, after escaping from his captors, joined his uncle.

While the struggle for power between the brothers was on, the Ottomans took Asir under their control. The Buraimi Oasis was captured by the Omanis in alliance with Saud, the Qasim and Jabal Shammar ceased their contributions to Riyadh and declared their independence.

In 1873, Saud again captured Riyadh. His brother was able to escape but his uncle was seized and put into jail where he died soon. In 1875 Saud himself died and Abd al-Rahman, the youngest of the brothers, who was in Riyadh, took over the charge.²⁰ But his other two brothers challenged him. Abd al-Rahman was able to drive them away but then he was challenged by Saud's sons and was made to flee from Riyadh.²¹ He joined with his brothers Abd Allah and Muhammad and together the three of them drove their nephews out of Riyadh and Abd Allah was re-installed for the second time.²²

`Abd Allah, thereafter, had an agreement with the nephews which lasted till 1885, in the meantime he tried to strengthen his authority in Najd and for the first time felt positive resistance from the Rashidis of Hail.²³ Doughty has painted a grim picture of the Imams position at that time.²⁴

In a bid to stem the Rashidi tide `Abd Allah once again clashed with Muhammad ibn Rashid in 1884 but was decisively beaten. Ibn Rashid refrained from taking Riyadh. In 1887 Saudi sons marched on Riyadh and

took Abd Allah prisoner, on Abd Allah's request Ibn Rashid came to his rescue and liberated Abd Allah from prison and took him to Hail. He left behind Salim ibn Subhan as Rashidi governor of Riyadh.²⁵ In 1888 Ibn Subhan, learning of a plot being notched against him by Faisal's sons, marched against them in Kharj and decisively defeated them, Ibn Rashid on hearing the news, decided to return to Riyadh and retain the title of Imam. Abd Allah died in 1889.

Abd al-Rahman ibn Faisal (1889-91)

On the death of `Abd Allah, Faisal's youngest son `Abd al-Rahman was installed as the Rashidi governor of Riyadh in 1889. Ibn Subhan was sent back to Riyadh as Rashidi garrison commander. In the middle of 1890 Abd al-Rahman, suspecting a plot against the Saudis, surprised and captured Ibn Subhan. When Ibn Rashid came to know of this incident he besieged Riyadh and an agreement was reached whereby Abd al-Rahman was confirmed as governor of Riyadh under Rashidi suzerainty. In 1891 some tribes revolted against Ibn Rashid with the backing of Abd al-Rahman. Ibn Rashid met the rebels in the battle of Malayda, this battle proved to be `the last twitch of the dying Wahhabi state.²⁶ `Ibn Rashid got the better of the rebels and eventually `Abd al-Rahman went into exile in Kuwait where he

was joined by his family members which included his son Abd al-Aziz (b.1880).

ESTABLISHMENT OF MODERN SAUDI STATE

Abd al-Aziz (1902-53)

The second Saudi realm ended in 1891 with the Rashidis taking over the whole of Najd. With the fall of Riyadh, the Saudi capital, and the self exile of Abd al- Rahman in Kuwait, there remained no Saudi contender in Najd. In Kuwait Abd al-Rahman had with him his son Abd al-Aziz who, since his birth in 1880²⁷ had seen the decline of the Saudis in Najd.

At the time of Abd al-Aziz's stay there, Kuwait was recognized as being under the nominal jurisdiction of the Turks. During the mid 1890's, however, the growing importance of the area made Kuwait internationally important. In 1896, Shaykh Mubarak al-Sabah assumed power in Kuwait by usurping and killing his brother Muhammad.²⁸ Abd al-Aziz had, during his stay in Kuwait, developed a close friendship with Shaykh Mubarak who was an exceptionally shrewd and able ruler. Mubarak had developed close relations with the British and therefore political activities in Kuwait had increased.

In Mubarak's house Abd al-Aziz had enough time to learn much of diplomacy. Because of its strategical importance all types of people from

different parts of the world visited Kuwait. Abd al-Aziz rubbed shoulders with men of all professions and origins: traders, speculators, explorers, bankers, civil servants, politicians, adventurers, and also with the agents of foreign powers. French, English, Germans and Russians.²⁹ He had strong resolves to regain for himself the throne of his forefathers in Najd. Towards the close of the nineteenth century, Kuwait was threatened by the Rashidis of Najd. Abd al-Aziz, who was waiting for a chance to test the power of the Rashidis, raised an army and fought on the side of Kuwait. His aim was to occupy Riyadh but had to return to Kuwait. Abd al-Aziz had not given up his resolve to regain the lost domains of his ancestors. He collected an army for himself and towards the close of 1901 launched an attack against the Rashidis but was decisively defeated. He did not lose heart and resolved to make another raid. Reluctantly, his friend Mubarak and his father gave him permission, with only forty warriors, among whom was his brother Muhammad, he left Kuwait. He wandered for some months in the deserts before finally making up his plans to occupy Riyadh. He reached the outskirts of Riyadh in the night of January 14, 1902. On the following morning he made a surprise attack on the Rashidi governor `Ajlan as he was coming out of his fort. `Ajlan was killed with many members of his garrison. On hearing the news of the arrival of Abd al-Aziz and the death of `Ajlan, the inhabitants of Riyadh came out to welcome `Abd al-Aziz expressing

their joy at the change of event. Thus after eleven years in exile, the Saudi's were able to regain Riyadh for themselves.

The taking of Riyadh was a master stroke but there were long, arduous and battle filled campaigns ahead for `Abd al-Aziz who had become more popular as Ibn Saud. The Rashidis delayed in reacting to the fall of Riyadh and this gave `Abd al-Aziz time enough to fortify himself. The next step that Abd al-Aziz had in mind was to extend his authority. By 1904, with the help of his brother Saud, Abd al-Aziz extended his power over the districts of Kharj, Aflaj, and Wadi al-Dawasir in Southern Najd and Sudayr, Qasim, and Washm in the North. All these had been extorted from the Rashidis. All Qasim, as far as the boundary of Shammar, the stronghold of the Rashidis, now recognized the sovereignty of Abd al-Aziz. With Qasim came the important towns of `Anayza and Burayda. The notorious tribes of Mutayr in Qasim and Atayba and Qahtan in Washm began to pay tributes to `Abd al-Aziz.

Shortly afterwards `Abd al-Aziz twice encountered the combined forces of the Rashidis and the Ottomans. The decisive battle was the battle of Shinana (1904) after which the ³⁰ Ottomans had little stomach for further fighting in Arabia. The Turkish government sought the intervention of Shaykh Mubarak of Kuwait to come to an agreement with `Abd al-Aziz but the offer was turned down by `Abd al-Aziz.³¹ Later in 1906 the Rashidi ruler

was killed in an encounter with Abd al-Aziz and consequently there followed a war of succession in Ha'il the Rashidi capital.

The Bedouins were politically unreliable, characteristic of their inherent individualism.³² The Bedouin engaged in raids only for sport and for loot. They belonged only to themselves and the entire desert was their home.³³

Having himself spent enough time with the Bedouins, Abd al-Aziz was well aware of their nature. He took steps to supplant the tribal loyalties of the Bedouins with a broader loyalty. Consequently he founded agricultural communities peopled by Bedouin recruits, in some cases new communities or settlements were built from the ground up, in others, Bedouins were assigned to existing villages. The idea was to mobilise them in villages and acquaint them with the doctrines of Islam. In this way they could be made more reliable citizens and, at the same time, be moulded into a formidable martial force.³⁴ But this called for them to give up their old ways of life and to embrace a new one. Their settlements were called *Hujar* (sing. *Hijra*) and the settlers came to be known as *Ikhwan* (brethren).³⁵ Very soon in Arabia the term *Ikhwan* came to denote the Bedouin population which left their abode of tents and settled in special places and built for their homes mud huts as a sign that they left their own distressful life for another more beloved life.³⁶ Hafiz Wahba describes them as a people of Bedouin

who left their Bedouin life and who agreed to fight for God and the raising of his Word.³⁷

Abd al-Aziz made first use of the Ikhwan in 1913 against the Turks at Hofuf, the principal town of Hasa, the Turkish governor was surprised and made an immediate surrender. All the Turkish troops were allowed to depart. Abd Allah ibn Jiluwi³⁸ was made the governor there. Therefore, the Ikhwan became the main force of Saudi state. In 1915 a treaty was concluded between the British and Abd al-Aziz.³⁹ In 1917 Husayn had sent three expeditions against Khurma, inhabited by the `Utayba tribe, but all were repulsed. The people of Khurma sought help from Abd al-Aziz and immediately Ibn Humayd was sent with a contingent of the Ikhwan. The Hashimite forces were thoroughly routed at Taraba and it was now easy to push forward to Mecca but for diplomatic reasons the Ikhwan were held back.⁴⁰ In 1920 the Ikhwan were engaged in the capture of Abha, the capital of `Asir. But their high-handedness in the area resulted in a revolt which forced Abd al-Aziz to send his son Faisal alongwith a detachment of the Ikhwan under Ibn Humayd to regain it. In 1920, the Ikhwan were involved in a number of raids in Kuwait and Iraq which forced the British to intervene on behalf of Kuwait and Iraq both. The conflict between Kuwait and the Saudis were resolved when a delegation from Kuwait reached Najd. In 1921, a congress was held in Riyadh which was attended by many of the

Ikhwan. At this congress Abd al-Aziz was acclaimed Sultan of Najd while his father Abd al-Rahman kept the title of Imam. The new Sultan celebrated by crushing the Rashidis after a siege of nearly two months in which Dawish and the Ikhwan played a significant role. Ha'il was taken in November 1921. The Ikhwan criticised ` Abd al-Aziz for the generous terms which he accorded to the Rashidis.⁴¹

The situation turned to worse when in 1924, after the abolition of the Caliphate by the Turkish Republic, Husayan was proclaimed the caliph. This act was considered by the Ikhwan as a further proof of Hashimite heresy.⁴² In 1924 a conference of ` *Ulama*, tribal chiefs, *Ikhwan*, and notables were held. Ibn Bijad demanded that they should attack Hijaz.⁴³ The same year after the Hajj season Ta`if was attacked, Husayn abdicated in favour of his son Ali once Ta`if was taken. In October the same year Mecca fell to ` Abd al-Aziz and Madina followed early the next year. Jeddah capitulated two weeks later. The fall of Hijaz ended the Sharif's rule there.⁴⁴ The King's second son, Faisal, was appointed viceroy of Hijaz. In January 1927 ` Abd al-Aziz was proclaimed king of Hijaz and Najd and its dependencies with headquarters at Riyadh. The British Government in the treaty of Jeddah in 1927 recognised the Kingdom as a sovereign state and renounced the long-outdated special rights as set forth in the treaty of 1915. The final step in the creation of the modern state was taken on September 22, 1932. When it was

renamed the *Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. The fight was over, `Abd al-Aziz had reached the peak of his career. The Arabia over which he was to rule for nearly three more decades was united as never before: within the utmost limits practicable in the international circumstances of the time, and exceeding anything which any of his ancestors had effectively controlled. Within these limits he would not be challenged again; and the realm which he had carved out for himself with his sword and his faith would descend intact to his successors. The vital factor at the moment was his reputation for justice and resolution, which was seldom put to the test, and always vindicated when the rare need arose. For the first time in human memory, writes Philby, Arabia had a single ruler whom all could, and did, respect.⁴⁵

All was not well with Abd al-Aziz. The Ikhwan, who were the driving force behind the Saudi victories in the modern period, had become rebellious. After conquering Hijaz, the Ikhwan, by 1926, had returned to Najd. They had become more specific in their grievances against `Abd al-Aziz.

Ever since his creating of the Ikhwan, various advisors had warned him that they would cause him great trouble and a trouble they did become when against the orders of Abd al-Aziz they constantly raided the Iraqi and Kuwaiti borders. Negotiations with British and Iraqi officials were held to root out this problem but no tangible result was arrived at. Meanwhile the

Ikhwan themselves were becoming more hostile towards `Abd al-Aziz. They accused him of selling himself to the English and of being in league with them, at the expense of his earlier commitment to spread Islam, and fight the infidels.⁴⁶ The Ikhwan threat to `Abd al-Aziz was mounting and the king was now convinced that the Ikhwan leaders were motivated less by religious zeal and more by personal desires for power.⁴⁷ The king returned to Najd in November 1928. By this time the Ikhwan were all but in open rebellion. He realised that a confrontation with the Ikhwan was unavoidable. He, therefore, convened an assembly of the representatives of all the elements of the Najd population.⁴⁸ `Abd al-Aziz was considerably strengthened after this conference. All his efforts to resolve his differences with the rebel chiefs were unsuccessful. A series of messages exchanged and several attempts to arrange face to face meetings never bore fruit. The Ikhwan now had begun to attack even the natives of Najd.⁴⁹ Ultimately the differences culminated into a battle between the king and the rebels. The two armies met at Sabila near the Ikhwan Capital Artawiyya, the Ikhwan were decisively routed in the battle that took place in January 1929 never to raise their heads again.⁵⁰ the battle of Sabila, writes Philby, marked the end of an epoch. Saudi Arabia had virtually assumed its final shape as a result of constant war upon the infidel and henceforth the infidel would be a valued ally in the common cause of progress. Hitherto the killing of infidels in the

way of God had been regarded as the supreme virtue; but Faisal al-Dawlish had been taught at Sabila that the virtue must not be practised without the permission of higher authority; and henceforth its practice would be strictly forbidden.⁵¹

Saud ibn Abd Al-Aziz (1953-64)

Ibn Saud was succeeded by his eldest son Saud. Saud had long served as his father's deputy in Najd, but the dominating presence of his father who was there most of the time coupled with the relative isolation of the interior had deprived Saud of the experience which Faisal acquired in the Hijaz. After Saud became King management of the state got some set back. Despite the growing revenues from the oil industry, the country was on the brink of bankruptcy by 1958. To avert such a breakdown, Faisal as Prime Minister was granted full power to administer the external and internal financial affairs of the Kingdom. With the introduction of a reform program, Faisal's established authority fostered attempts by Saud to reassert his threatened power. The deposition of Saud and accession of Faisal as King on 2nd November 1964 finally resolved the crises.

King Faisal (1964-75)

King Faisal was one of the most important rulers of Saudi Arabia whose influence transcends the actual period of his reign to which

conventional history assigns a mere eleven years.⁵² While the official dates of the Faisal era extended from 1964-75, his leadership was profoundly felt for an epoch approximating half a century. It is perhaps not unrealistic to think of this impact starting as early as his trip to England in 1919. However that may be, he started making his impact felt on the administration of his country, especially in the domain of foreign affairs since as early as 1926, when he, at the age of twenty one was made viceroy of the Hejaz. This continued during the reign of his father which ended in 1953 and the eleven-year reign of his brother, Saud, when Faisal was Crown Prince, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. Thus for all practical considerations and contrary to conventional dynastic chronology, the legacy of King Faisal extended for more than half a century and encompassed virtually the entire modern history of the nation. As such the history of the modern consolidated state of Saudi Arabia is essentially the history of King Faisal. The shadow of Faisal lengthened even after his death as is evidenced by certain critical developments in the Islamic world which have emerged in large measures because of the profundity of his devotion to Islam.

Although a diplomat he was also a man of action, no sooner had Faisal returned from Europe than his father gave him command of a force to operate in Asir.⁵³ After a successful military triumph in Asir in 1924 Faisal joined his father in a series of campaigns in the Hijaz and with his brother

Saud he forced Abdullah al-Rashid into submission at al-Shuaybah in 1920. After that he turned towards Abha in the South-West and annexed it in 1922. In 1933, Prince Faisal advanced with an army into Tihamah from where he made a victorious entry into Yemen.⁵⁴ He marched along the Yemeni coast capturing besides other places, the port of Hudaydah which remained under his control for three months.

Viceroy and Foreign Minister

In 1924, Abd al-Aziz captured the Hijaz and made Faisal viceroy of the Hijaz and secretary of foreign affairs.⁵⁵ As viceroy he not only efficiently administered the holy shrines of Mecca and Medina but also met thousands of people from all over the world coming to perform their Hajj pilgrimage. He led many delegations to the West and the UNO during his tenure as foreign secretary of his father. In 1926, Abd al-Aziz sent him to Western Europe on a good will mission to make direct contact with foreign governments as well as to keep abreast of what was happening in Europe. Prior to his departure for Europe, a consultative council was formed in Mecca by the king's order with Faisal as its president. Until the creation of the council of ministers it was the chief instrument of the government for drafting its regulations⁵⁶. Abd al-Aziz appointed Faisal as foreign minister when the ministry was created in 1930. He also acted as minister of the interior. During the 1930's, he performed diplomatic services overseas and

military campaigns at home. As a diplomat, he visited the capital of Western Europe as well as Poland, Russia and Turkey.⁵⁷ In 1932A.D. Faisal led a government delegation to Moscow where they were received by Stalin. Relations between the Soviet Union and Saudi Arabia at that time were cordial and Faisal was interested in this visit as the Soviet Union had a large number of Muslims in its territories. The Soviet Union in its turn recognised the Saudi Kingdom.

Two other important events occurred in 1930s. On his visit to Turkey in 1932, he invited the widow of Ahmad Thunaiyan and her niece Iffat to Riyadh and later married Iffat which proved a good union. Iffat contributed much to the development of education in the Kingdom.⁵⁸ The event of this period that figured prominently throughout his life was his involvement in the Palestine problem. He went to London in 1939 for the Palestine conference.⁵⁹ It was a burning issue for him which figured prominently in the foreign policy of his country. The Second World War forced Faisal to extend his diplomatic mission beyond to America. The Arabian American oil company (ARAMCO),⁶⁰ had already brought him into contact with the Americans. He made an extensive tour to the United States during the war time in 1943 along with Khalid⁶¹. Faisal then represented Saudi Arabia at the inauguration of the United Nations at San Francisco. He also was his country's representative in the Arab league as well as the UN general

Assembly. During his visit to America he met President Roosevelt. This visit had two purposes diplomatic as well as developmental. He visited agricultural projects, oil installations, irrigation projects, dams, and universities, all of which figured in the planning for development of Arabia which Faisal was to lead in his lifetime.

Saudi Arabia moved in 1950s towards becoming an important factor in the international political community. In 1953 King Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud passed away which marked the end of the traditional Bedouin-style of Arabia. His eldest son Saud ascended the throne; Faisal was appointed heir apparent and president of the council of ministers, and later as Foreign Minister. At that time the increasing oil income of Saudi Arabia was also bringing in enormous problems with it. It was Faisal who acted as a brake on the extravagance of King Saud.

Promptly upon assuming power, Faisal issued on November 6, 1962, a ten point program of reform which covered a wide range of measures designed to improve the administration, the economy, the judicial system and the educational system in the Kingdom as well as to introduce a machinery of popular representation in the form of a consultative council.⁶² The fact that the ten points gained wide publicity is clear indication of a comprehensive reform program. Faisal set about energetically to implement his program, his prime concentration being on finances. He cut down

extravagant allowances for members of the royal family, introduced measures of austerity, and within a brief time brought the treasury of the Kingdom to a position of solvency by paying off all existing debts. These actions in turn generated increasing confidence in the stability of the Kingdom and began to attract both domestic and foreign capitals to invest in various development projects.⁶³

The leadership of King Faisal is thus viewed as a continuum of the period of his premiership with full powers and the subsequent period as king. The aim of which was to modernise the country in administration and in technical field while at the same time adhering to the traditional principles in the religious, cultural, and social sectors. The ten point program announced in 1962 was implemented to a great extent. Those points that pertained to the reorganisation of the executive branch of government were being carried out as efficiently as the local conditions permitted. Thus certain new ministries and government agencies were created in response to the requirements of the state and the society.⁶⁴

In any authoritarian government, the loyalty of the military forces is crucial to its survival and stability. In spite of the dissent among the air force officers, the overwhelming bulk of the Saudi military was loyal to the government, they were divided into two separate organisations, the regular army and air force under the jurisdiction of prince Sultan bin Abd al-Aziz,

Minister of Defence and Aviation, and the national guard, a tribal force, known as the white army, which was put under the command of another prince of the royal family prince Abdullah bin Abd al-Aziz.⁶⁵ The regular army was energetically modernised with the supply of large numbers of ever more sophisticated weapons and the construction of major military bases at Tabuk, in the North and at Khamis Mushait in the South close to the Yemen border. The white army was also brought up to the more modern standards. In 1975 alone the spending on arms and military equipment reached 6.3 billion dollars, tripling the figure of the previous year and making Saudi Arabia one of the biggest purchasers of modern arms, predominantly American made, anywhere in the World.⁶⁶

In building this stability, modernising the country, and launching it on the path of ambitious development and military preparedness, King Faisal played a decisive role which secured for him a firm and exalted position in Saudi history. It was therefore paradoxical and tragic that this man should be assassinated while his power was unchallenged and his position as one of the most important world leaders, undisputed. He was killed by a nephew, Prince Faisal bin Musaid bin Abd al-Aziz on March 25, 1975.⁶⁷

King Khalid (1975-82)

Following the assassination of Faisal, crown prince Khalid immediately succeeded to the throne and received the oath formal pledges of support from the family and tribal leaders, within the traditional three days.

Born in Riyadh when it was a small desert town, Khalid became the closest supporter of his brothers Saud and Faisal, when he was 14, his father Ibn Saud, founder of the Saudi Kingdom, sent him as his representative to the desert tribes to hear their grievances. In 1934 he took part in the Saudi expedition against Yemen led by his brother Faisal. Later on he became known as a “man of the desert,” one more at home with desert pursuits than with politics or diplomacy.⁶⁸

Khalid had already had some training in Saudi political affairs. He had made his first appearance on the military and political stage when his father sent him on an observation mission along the trans-Jordanian border during the Ikhwan rebellion. At the age of 19, he had stood in for his brother Faisal as acting viceroy of the Hejaz. He represented Saudi Arabia in 1934 when he signed an agreement ending war between Yemen and his country. And in 1939, he travelled with Faisal to London. He was appointed by Saud as acting Prime Minister in 1960, at a time when Saud was battling his half-

brother for power; although the appointment meant very little in terms of a transfer of power, it established Khalid's position in the line of succession.⁶⁹

Khalid was named Crown Prince in 1965, after his elder brother (and only full brother) Muhammad ibn Abdul Aziz Al Saud was declined a place in the succession. He was not very interested in politics and gave effective control of the country to his brother Crown Prince Fahd. Khalid's preparation for ruling a modern state included his accompanying Faisal on foreign missions and representing Saudi Arabia at the United Nations. He was more liberal in terms of informing the press of the rationale behind foreign policy decisions. And although he largely used the same policymaking team as Faisal did, he allowed them greater latitude in decision making within their separate portfolios. In regional affairs he permitted the governors considerably more autonomy and even authorized their use of discretionary funds. Above all, he valued consensus and team approach to problem solving.

The new king's first diplomatic coup was the conclusion in April 1975 of a demarcation agreement concerning the Al Buraymi Oasis, where the frontiers of Abu Dhabi, Oman, and Saudi Arabia meet. Claims and counterclaims over this frontier area had exacerbated relations among the three states for years. The successful conclusion of negotiations under

Khalid's aegis added to his stature as a statesman among knowledgeable observers of the peninsula political scene.⁷⁰

In a reorganization of the Council of Ministers in late 1975, Khalid named Crown Prince, Fahd, Deputy Prime Minister and designated Abd Allah (another half brother and the commander of the Saudi Arabian National Guard) as second Deputy Prime Minister.

Fahd, who had already participated in major decisions, became chief spokesman for the Kingdom and a major architect of Saudi modernization, foreign affairs, and oil policy. In 1976 a major concern of the Saudi government was the year-old civil war in Lebanon.

In April 1976, Khalid made state visits to all the Gulf States in the hope of promoting closer relations with his peninsular neighbours. These early visits, in retrospect, probably laid the foundation for the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Khalid and Fahd had been campaigning actively for such an organization for some time. The GCC included the six states of the peninsula that have similar political institutions, social conditions, and economic resources: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The aim of the GCC, formally announced at its first summit in May 1981, was to coordinate and unify economic, industrial, and defence policies.⁷¹

The major disturbance of the King Khalid's reign was the uprising of Juhaiman ibn Muhammad ibn Saif al Utaiba, in November 20, 1979, a religious zealot who led an occupation of the Grand Mosque of Mecca on the eve of the Muslim New Year of 1400. The leader of the dissidents, Juhaiman, a Sunni, was from one of the foremost families of Najd. His grandfather and family members were among the foremost of the Ikhwan. Juhaiman said that his justification was that the Al Saud had lost its legitimacy through corruption, ostentation, and mindless imitation of the West-virtually an echo of his grandfather's charge in 1921 against Abd al Aziz. Juhaiman's accusations against the Saudi monarchy closely resembled Ayatollah Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini's diatribes against the Shah.

The Saudi leadership was stunned and initially paralyzed by the takeover. The Grand Mosque surrounds the Kaaba, symbol of the House of God and believed by Muslims to have been built by Prophet Abraham. The courtyard is one of the sites where the hajj, the fifth pillar of Islam, is enacted. Because of the holiness of the place, no non-Muslim is allowed enter the city of Mecca. Furthermore, all holy places come under a special injunction in Islam. It is forbidden to shed blood there or to deface or to pollute them in any way. Despite careful planning on Juhaiman's part, a guard was shot dead by one of the nervous dissidents. Such a desecration is

a major violation under Islamic law and merits crucifixion for the convicted offender.

Juhaiman's party included women as well as men, other peninsular Arabs, and a few Egyptians. A score of the dissidents were unemployed graduates of the Kingdom's seminary in Medina. They had provisions for the siege they expected as well as extensive supplies of arms.

The government's initial attempts to rout the dissidents were stymied. Before any military move could be authorized, the ulama had to issue a dispensation to allow the bearing of arms in a holy place. When the religious problems were solved by announcement of the ulama's ruling, logistical problems bogged down the efforts of the military and the national guard for several days. Finally, two weeks later the military effort succeeded, and the dissidents were dislodged. All the surviving males were eventually beheaded in the squares of four Saudi cities.⁷²

Khalid's Monarchy

King Khalid and his half-brother and heir apparent Fahd shared power in more fluid way than had Khalid and his brother, King Faisal. Like his brother, Khalid assumed the roles of both Prime Minister and King, but unlike King Faisal, Khalid chose to delegate many of the ministerial responsibilities to his heir apparent. But the extent of Khalid's delegation of

responsibility to Fahd also fluctuated with the King's health and the political standing of Fahd.

During Khalid's reign, family rivalries were more subdued than under his predecessors. Instead, Saudi family politics became characterized by the presence of multiple centres of influence. As a result, in spite of Khalid's recurring health problems, he was able to counter Fahd's political ambitions. Many government ministers refused to keep Fahd advised of their activities, frustrating Fahd's attempts to become the country's *de facto* Prime Minister.

Also contributing to the decentralization of power was the continuation in office under Khalid of princes who had built up entrenched bureaucracies during King Faisal's reign. The splitting of power between Khalid and Fahd contributed to the independence of these princes. But as older princes left their government positions, and were replaced by younger ones, the internal politics within the Saudi family became complicated by the presence of shifting allegiances.⁷³

Domestic and Foreign Policy Achievements

Khalid's achievements in domestic and foreign policies were not inconsiderable despite suffering from a serious heart condition. As already noted, shortly after ascending the throne, Khalid initiated Saudi Arabia's

second Five Year Plan, which established the infrastructure for the future prosperity of his country.

On the foreign policy front, Khalid played a role in attempting to resolve the Lebanese civil war. An Arab peace conference was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in October 1976. This conference brought the Arab League Civil War to a halt. In 1981, Khalid convened a historic summit of Arab nations.

The Iran-Iraq war erupted in September 1980. Iraq had long posed a threat to the monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula. After Iran recovered from the attack by Iraq, the threat of Islamic revolution seemed to replace any threat posed by Iraq. The Persian Gulf principalities that had traditionally served as buffer states between Saudi Arabia and Iran and Iraq had, meanwhile, begun experiencing increased subversive activity within their borders by Iranian and Iraqi agents. After Saudi citizens were arrested in Bahrain in 1981, Saudi Arabia increased its cooperation with the mini states, and eventually formed the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Under Khalid, Saudi Arabia's standard of living rose considerably, and the country achieved enhanced economic and political strength in the international arena. Khalid actually oversaw the implementation of two of the country's five-year development plans, the first of these lasted from

1975 to 1979, and the next lasted from 1980 to 1984. During Khalid's reign, the country began to diversify its economy and made progress towards the completion of its infrastructure.

Khalid died on June 13, 1982, one week after civil war broke out in Lebanon. Fahd subsequently ascended the throne.⁷⁴

King Fahd (1982-2005)

Fahd bin Abd al-Aziz, King of Saudi Arabia succeeded his half brother Khalid as King when Khalid died of a heart attack in June 1982. As Crown Prince and as an active administrator, he had been the virtual ruler during his predecessor King Khalid's reign (1975-82) who was mild-mannered and his half brother.

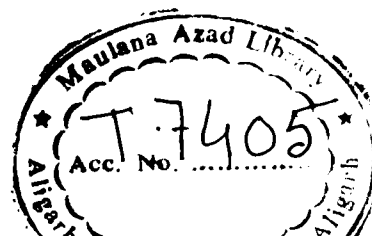
Prince Fahd was born in Riyadh in 1923, at a propitious time when his father, Abdul Aziz (Ibn Saud), was completing the unification of the land that was to be the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the land which sixty years later would be ruled by King Fahd. At the age of 11 in 1932, Fahd watched as his father officially found the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia after signing the Treaty of Jeddah.

In 1945 Fahd travelled on his first state visit to New York City to attend the opening session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

On this trip Fahd served under his brother, King Faisal, who was at the time Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister.⁷⁵

At the age of 30, in 1953, Prince Fahd was appointed the Kingdom's first Education Minister. It was to be another thirty years before Prince Fahd became King but a summary of some of his duties in the intervening period shows that, by the time his reign began, he had a rich and varied experience of government, politics and diplomacy both at national and international levels. Later, Fahd led the Saudi delegation to the League of Arab states in 1959, signifying his increasing prominence in the House of Saud and that he was being groomed for a more significant role.

In 1962, Fahd was given the important post of Interior Minister and five years later he was appointed Second Deputy Prime Minister. On March 25, 1975, King Faisal was assassinated by his nephew and King Khalid assumed power. Fahd, as next in the line of succession, became Crown Prince and First Deputy Prime Minister. Especially in the later years of King Khalid's reign, Fahd was viewed as the *de facto* Prime Minister. When King Khalid died on June 13, 1982, Fahd succeeded to the throne. He adopted the title "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques" in 1986, replacing "His Majesty" to signify an Islamic rather than secular authority.⁷⁶



Political Reforms under King Fahd

Introduction to Political Reforms

It is the fundamental assumption of the polity of Saudi Arabia that the Holy Quran, correctly applied, is more suitable for Saudi Muslims than any secular constitution. This assumption must be viewed in the context of a nation which is completely Islamic. The entire Saudi population is Muslim; the only non-Muslims in the country are foreigners engaged in diplomacy, technical assistance or international commerce. If they are non-Muslims, they may practice the rituals of their religion in the privacy of their homes. So there is no problem of ethnic, religious or linguistic pluralism or multiculturalism, such as is found in virtually all other developing countries.

Under the Saudi system of government, there is a highly active and highly sophisticated consultative process which provides powerful and continuous input to government thinking, in terms of both short-term and long-term policies. It has been an outstanding achievement of King Fahd that, within the framework of the Islamic constitution and within the context of a conservative religious establishment, he has been able to fulfill the ambitious development program embodied in the Five-Year plans.

In 1993, King Fahd introduced three major political reforms which formed part of a carefully constructed strategy to modernize the Kingdom's

system of government within the framework of Islam and the Kingdom's traditions.⁷⁷ These were:

- the formation of the *Majlis al-Shura* (Consultative Council)
- the restructuring of the Kingdom's Regional Government
- the promulgation of the Basic System incorporating the first two developments

Principles underlying Saudi system of government

It is important to recognize that the Saudi system of government, as defined under the 'Basic System' and the establishment of the Consultative Council, is not a move towards Western-style democracy, much less an imitation of Western-style democratic reforms. It is an organic development of the consultative basis of the relationship between the leader and the people that is inherent in Islamic traditions.

The Saudi Arabian system is a natural extension of the consultative traditions which have existed in the region for many centuries. The Majlis, or consultative session, provides an opportunity for every citizen to present his case, his request for help, his complaint about a grievance, his suggestion for an improvement, to a person in authority, whether that person is governor, a minister or the King. Apart from creating a climate in which everyone feels they have access to those in power, the Majlis also ensures

that those in power are aware of and ultimately sensitive to the opinions and wishes of those for whom they are responsible. Following in the tradition of his predecessors, King Fahd has, in the course of his reign, embraced and extended the Majlis.⁷⁸

Consultative Council

The long-awaited setting up of a sixty-member Consultative Council, or *Majlis al-Shura* (Royal Decree No. A/91, dated 27-8-1412) marked a significant move towards the formalization of the participative nature of government in Saudi Arabia. The announcement of the establishment of the Council, which coincided with the 10th anniversary of the accession of King Fahd, and which was accompanied by details of a new Basic Law, clearly marked the first steps towards a more formal, broadly based involvement in the Kingdom's political processes.

At its inception, the Consultative Council consisted of a speaker and sixty members selected by the King. The Royal decree establishing the Council made it clear, first and foremost, that the Council was set up and would operate in compliance with [the existing system of government in the Kingdom] and in adherence to the Book of God and the tradition of Allah's Messenger.

In 1997 a Royal decree was issued to amend the third article of the Shura system and accordingly the number of Consultative Council members was increased from 60 to 90. In 2001, the number was further increased to 120.

In practice, members of the Council are able to initiate and review the domestic and foreign policies of the Government. Any Government action not approved by the Council has to be referred back to the King. By 1998, the Council was well established and operating effectively.

In grasping the significance of these measures, it is important to understand that King Fahd's purpose in establishing the *Majlis al-Shura* and in introducing other planned reforms, was to provide an institutional framework through which the traditional form of Saudi Arabian Government, based on consultation within the context of the tenets and requirements of Islam, could be most effectively expressed in today's increasingly complex and interdependent world.

The reforms can, however, be seen as marking an important new chapter in the life of the Kingdom and in King Fahd's desire to hasten the pace of modernization, while remaining firmly within the religious and cultural traditions of the Kingdom.

It has been argued that, while oil wealth has transformed the economy and infrastructure of Saudi Arabia in the past three decades, the political machinery of the Kingdom had previously remained unchanged. These measures are seen by some as a cumulative process facilitating the modernization of Saudi Arabian government but the reforms do not mean that the Kingdom has moved away from its Islamic traditions. King Fahd himself stressed that his reforms were based on Islamic principles of fairness, decency and popular consultation.

Furthermore, the nature of the initial reforms should serve to reassure the religious conservatives. The Council as presently constituted has no law making power, merely the right to summon and question ministers. King Fahd's choice of Speaker for the first council, the Justice Minister Shaykh Muhammad bin Ibrahim bin Jubeir, served to confirm notions that the reform process was intended to be gradual in pace and judicious in development. The Council's members are selected because they have proved themselves to be responsible and loyal citizens of the Kingdom. In essence, the consultative council should be seen , not as a modest move towards Western style democracy but as an organic development of the consultative processes by means of which the Kingdom has been governed since its inception, processes which arose from a tradition that goes back to the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW).⁷⁹

Regional Government

The Reforms in Regional Government had the precise purpose of enhancing the level of administrative and developmental work in the regions of the Kingdom, while at the same time preserving security and order and ensuring the rights of citizens and their freedom within the framework of the Islamic Shari'a.

King Fahd's decree dealing with regional government listed the thirteen regions and their cities in which the headquarters of each region are located.

Regions and location of regional HQ

Region	Location of HQ
Riyadh	Riyadh
Makkah Region	Holy City of Makkah
Makkah Region	Holy City of Madinah
Madinah Region	Holy City of Madinah
Qassim Region	Buraidah
Eastern Region	Dammam

Asir Region	Abha
Tabouk Region	Tabouk
Hail Region	Hail
Northern Border Region	Arar
Jizan Region	Jizan
Najran Region	Najran
Baha Region	Baha
Al-Jouf Region	Skaka

Each of the regions has a regional governor with the rank of Minister who is responsible to the Minister of the Interior. The regional governor will be supported by an Under-Secretary.

Under the regional governor, each region will be subdivided into “Governorates” (Group the Regional Governor) and “Centers” (Group A or B Centers). Each Group A Governorate will have a governor with a ranking of not less than 14th grade and he will be supported by an Under-Secretary of not less than 12th grade. The Group B Governors will have a ranking of not less than 12th grade. Each Group A Center will have a Chairman of not

less than 8th grade; and each Group B Center will have a Chairman with a ranking of not less than 5th grade.

The Governor of each region, and his Vice-Governor, must take the following oath in the presence of the King before taking office:

I swear, in the Name of God the Almighty, to remain sincere to my religion, to my King and my nation, and not to reveal any nation, and to preserve its interests, its regulations and to perform my duties truly, honestly, sincerely and justly. The primary objective of the Governor and his staff is to administer the region in line with the public policy of the State and the regulations of the system. The maintenance of public security, order and stability, and the guaranteeing of individual rights and freedoms within the framework of the Shari`a and the governmental regulations are given a high priority, alongside a commitment to the social and economic development of the region.

Each region has a regional council, under the chairmanship of the Governor. The structure of regional government and the composition of the regional governing bodies and regional councils provides further evidence of King Fahd`s determination to increase the involvement of the citizens in the Government of Saudi Arabia while maintaining stability and continuity. These measures should not be seen as a cautious attempt to move towards Western-style democratic institutions; rather they should be construed as

logical and eminently sensible extensions of the traditional participative mechanisms that have facilitated good government in the Kingdom and that have allowed the inevitable tensions of any fast-developing society to be resolved through the emergence of a broadly based consensus.⁸⁰

Basic System

The Basic System, which incorporates the arrangements for the Consultative Council and for Regional Government, established in written form both a description of the essential structure and organization of Government and, in effect, a bill for rights of the citizens.

The Basic System sets out the general principles on which the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is founded. Article 1 clearly established the central tenets of the Kingdom:

Article 1: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an Arab and Islamic Sovereign State; its religion is Islam and its constitution is the Holy Quran and the Prophet's Sunnah. Its language is Arabic and its capital is Riyadh.

Article 5: The form of Government is monarchical.

Article 7: Rule in the Kingdom depends upon and must conform to the teachings of Islam.

Article 8: This rule provides justice, consultation and equality in accordance with the Islamic Shari`a.

Article 9: The importance of the family within Saudi society is heavily emphasized.

The family is the nucleus of Saudi society and its members are brought up in conformity with the Islamic creed and in obedience to Almighty God, the Prophet and the Kingdom`s rulers, showing respect for the system of Government, love for the homeland and pride in its history.

And the State sees as part of its role the enhancement of stable family relations, the preservation of Islamic values within the family, and the fullest development of the potential of all family members.

The Basic System goes on to define the responsibilities of the State in some detail, giving special reference to the Kingdom`s duties as guardian of the Holy Places, and setting guidelines for the exploitation of the State`s wealth to ensure the economic and social development of the Kingdom. Citizen`s rights (to security, to self-fulfillment through education and freedom of opportunity, and to the ownership of property) are all safeguarded. And a right to privacy is also guaranteed:

Nobody is allowed to enter the house of another without the permission of the owners; and nobody has the right to investigate another's private affairs, except in accordance with the System (Article37).

The Basic System sets out, with remarkable clarity, the basis on which the Kingdom is governed, and the rights and obligations of both State and the citizen. As the processes of consultation are extended, it becomes necessary to formalize the principles underlying the traditions which have enabled the Kingdom to pass through periods of extraordinary change with an equally extraordinary degree of stability.

In promulgating the Basic System, forming the *Majlis al-Shura* (Consultative Council) and restructuring the Kingdom's Regional Government, King Fahd has demonstrated considerable political acumen and ability to effect change within a conservative society by organic evolution of existing institutions and traditions.⁸¹

Council of Ministers (Cabinet)

The Council of Ministers is the highest level of government in the Kingdom. The Council of Ministers meets once a week, under the chairmanship of the King.

The phenomenal expansion in government activities, along with the Government's continued effort to enhance services provided for its citizens,

has necessitated some growth in the number of ministries, departments and Governmental agencies.

In 1975, the Saudi Cabinet consisted of fourteen ministries represented in the Council of Ministers. The Cabinet formed by Royal Order No. A/236 on 13th October 1975, when King Fahd was Crown Prince, increased the number of ministries from 14 to 20.

The Council of Ministers consists of:

- the Prime Minister, the King
- the First Deputy Prime Minister, who is the Crown Prince and Commander of the National Guard
- the Second Deputy Prime Minister, who is the Minister of Defense and Aviation and Inspector General
- Minister of Agriculture
- Minister of Civil Service
- Minister of Commerce and Industry
- Minister of Communications and Information Technology
- Minister of Culture and Information
- Minister of Economy and Planning
- Minister of Education
- Minister of Finance

- Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Minister of Hajj
- Minister of Health
- Minister of Higher Education
- Minister of Interior
- Minister for Islamic Affairs, Endowment, Dawa and Guidance
- Minister of Justice
- Minister of Labor and Social Affairs
- Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs
- Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources
- Minister of Transport
- Minister of Water and Electricity
- Ministers of State (five)

On 9th May 2000, Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz was appointed as Secretary General of the Supreme Commission for Tourism, with the rank of Minister.⁸²

King Fahd as Monarch

As monarch, King Fahd's first concern had to be the security and stability of the country. This is the primary responsibility of any Head of Government but, in the case of Saudi Arabia, the responsibility is of

paramount importance since the Kingdom is home to the Holy Cities of Makkah and Madinah and their guardianship is an integral part of the monarch's responsibilities.

Achieving security and stability has not always been entirely straightforward. The demands of modernization have inevitably created tensions from time to time in a conservative society. Striking the balance between those who wish to modernize as quickly as possible and those who are concerned that modernization could threaten the unique character of the Kingdom has demanded a high degree of skill. In exercising this skill, King Fahd has been helped by the tradition of consultation which permeates Saudi society. There have always been channels for every party to express their views. That has not necessarily helped King Fahd to find solutions but it has made him and his Government aware of any problems as well as sensitive to the balance of opinion on any issue.

In every act of diplomacy, King Fahd has sought to negotiate peace with justice. In the Iraq-Iran war, in Lebanon, in the Gulf war, in Bosnia and, above all, in Palestine, King Fahd has used his good offices to try to find just solutions to intractable problems. Even in the most vexed of issues, border disputes, the Kingdom, under King Fahd, has tried to resolve arguments by international arbitration rather than force. The agreement with

Yemen on the delineation of the Saudi-Yemen border is a model of the civilized way to resolve such matters.

At the same time, King Fahd has never been as advocate of `peace at any price`. When circumstances have necessitated it, King Fahd has always been prepared to place his authority behind a just cause and devote whatever resources are required to support it. Saudi troops led the way into Kuwait against the Iraqi invasion force and, whenever the Palestinians have needed help, the Kingdom has been unstinting in the humanitarian aid it has supplied.⁸³

It is difficult to find a corner of the world where Saudi Arabia, under King Fahd, has not made a contribution, either in humanitarian aid (which flows forth as soon as a need is recognized) or in promulgating Islam by building Mosques and Islamic centers and by distributing copies of the Holy Quran.

At home, King Fahd's achievements speak for themselves through the Kingdom's infrastructure, education, health services, agriculture and industry over the last twenty-five years. But King Fahd's legacy at home is not the buildings, the roads, the ports and airports; it is the people who, through education and social services, have been transformed from simple,

generally illiterate, tribesmen or traders into literate individuals capable of holding their own and competing in the modern world.

Of course the foundations for much of these achievements were laid down by King Fahd's predecessors but the drive and determination to make what seemed impossible into possible over the last twenty-five years belonged to King Fahd.

On August 2, 2005, Saudi King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz was laid to rest in an unmarked grave. Wrapped simply in a brown robe, his bier bore by the family after the briefest of funeral services. Fahd's end gave no clue to his life. He had been one of the world's most opulent rulers, his largesse the stuff of legend. Fahd also possessed powers as monarch that would have impressed Louis XIV. His reign and his wrestle with the challenges that threatened his Kingdom tell us much about Saudi Arabia's past, and, perhaps, even more about its future.⁸⁴

REFERENCES:

1. J.G. Lorimer, *op. cit.*, p. 1093.
2. Hafiz Wahba, *op. cit.*, p. 113, stated that he was taken prisoner by ibn Mu`ammar of Uyaynah, who wanted to rule Dir`iyya himself, and handed over to the Turks. See also A. Rihani, *Ta`rikh Najd al-Hadith* p. 106.
3. For an estimate of Turki`s character see ibn Bishr, *Unwan al-Majd*, vol. 11, pp. 54-7.
4. R. B. Winder, *op. cit.*, p. 67.
5. By that time Muhammad Ali had broken away from the Ottomans and had brought Palestine, Syria and Lebanon under his rule. He wanted to incorporate the whole of the Arabian Peninsula into his empire.
6. He was the brother of Abd Allah whom Ibrahim Pasha had defeated in 1818. He was brought up and educated in Egypt under Muhammad Ali in order to put him as a pliant governor of Najd once it was captured. Cf. R. B. Winder, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
7. A detailed account of Faisal`s surrender is given by Ibn Bishr, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-84.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 73. it may be recalled that in the Saudi state the political leaders belonged to the Al-Saud and the religious leaders to the Al Shaykh.

9. R. B. Winder, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
10. Cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 11`04-5.
11. For details of Ibn Thunayyan`s occupation of Riyadh see Ibn Bishr, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-5. `Abd Allah ibn Thunayyan ibn Ibrahim ibn Thunayyan ibn Saud was a great great-grandson of the eponymous founder of the House of Saud and the only member of the Thunayyan branch of the family to rule.
12. Philby, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
13. His escape from Egypt was made possible by Abbas Pasha, who had great admiration for him. Cf. Hafiz Wahba, *Arabian Days*, p. 115.
14. According to Amin Rihani, *Tarikh Najd al- Hadith*, p. 81, Faisal had already called on Ibn Thunayyan for recognition and Ibn Thunayyan had responded by saying he was only acting as regent for Faisal. Faisal at first accepted this rule at face value, but realised the true situation just before his entry in `Unayzah, after which ibn Thunayyan fled to Riyadh. Also see Ibn Bishr, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-103, for details of the ouster of Ibn Thunayyan.
15. Arabia, p. 114.
16. For a detailed estimate of Faisals reign see Salah al-Din Mukhtar, *op. cit.*, pp. 318-359.

17. Nadav Safran, *Saudi Arabia: A Ceaseless Quest for Security* (London, p.1985,).
18. For details of the House of Rashid see, R. B.Winder, *op. cit.*, pp. 239 ff.
19. The struggle between Abd Allah and Saud for power are best described by Hafiz Wahba, *Jazirat al-Arab*, pp. 264-9.
20. Cf. R. B. Winder, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-9.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 263. Hafiz Wahba, *Arabian Days*, p. 121, writes that after Saud`s death the people of Riyadh acclaimed Abdur Rahman ibn Faisal as ruler and Imam, but a year later, Abdullah, then with the `Utaiba, set out for Riyadh finding it impossible to remain as an outlaw while his youngest brother ruled. The people of Riyadh rallied to his and Abdur Rahman thought it better, in the interest of peace and to avoid any further bloodshed to abdicate in his favour.
22. It was the eighth change in the supreme authority that Riyadh had witnessed since the death of Faisal only eleven years before. Cf. Philby, *Saudi Arabia*, p.226.
23. C. M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*. (New York, 1964), vol. 11, pp. 347-8.
24. “ The town of al-Riath with her suburbs, the next village country about, is all that now remains of the Wahaby dominion; which is become a small and weak principality,- - - such as Boreyda. Their great clay

town, lately the metropolis of high Arabia, is silent; and the vast guest-hall is forsaken: ibn Saud's servants abandon his unfortunate stars and go to hire themselves to Muhammad ibn Rashid. No Bedouins now obey the Wahaby; the great villages of East Najd have sent back Abdullah's tax gatherers: but they all cleave inseparably to the reformed religion". Cf. *Ibid.* p. 455.

25. A. Rihani, *Ta'rikh Najd al-Hadith*, p. 88; also Salah al-Din Mukhtar, *op. cit.*, pp. 383-4.
26. Philby, *Arabia*, p. 155, see also *Idem.*, *Arabia of the Wahhabis*, pp. 272-3; A. Rihani, *op. cit.*, p. 90; Ahmad Assah, *Miracle of the Desert Kingdom* (London, 1969), p. 19-20.
27. 2nd. December, 1880, Cf. A. Rihani, *Tarikh Najd*, p. 93.
28. It is said that he had the backing of the British and the British resident had instigated the number, Cf. B.C.Bush, *Britian and Persian Gulf*, and 1894-1914 (Los Angels, 1967) p. 97.
29. J. Benoist Mechin, *Arabian Destiny* (London, 1957), p. 72.
30. For the conquests of `Abd al-Aziz during 1902-4, see, Rihani, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-31.
31. For details see Ahmad Assah, *Miracle of the Desert Kingdom*, pp. 25-6.
32. A. Rihani, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

33. Hafiz Wahba, *Wahhabism in Arabia: Past and Present*, *Journal of the Central Asian Society*, vol. xvi, pt. 4 (1929), p. 465.
34. G. Rentz, 'al-Ikhwan,' *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd. Ed.) Vol. iv, p. 1064.
35. The best study of the Ikhwan is John. S. Habib, *Ibn Saud's Warriors of Islam* (Leiden, 1978).
36. Hafiz Wahba, *Jazirat al-Arab*, p. 293.
37. *Ibid*, p. 309.
38. He was one of the forty warriors who had accompanied 'Abd al-Aziz on his historic exploit on Riyadh in 1902. Cf.
39. Britain had also signed an agreement with Sharif Husayn but its contents were kept secret from 'Abd al-Aziz just as the agreement with Abd al-Aziz was kept secret from Husayn. Cf. Ahmed Assah, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-5.
40. G. Rentz, *op. cit.*, pp. 1065-6.
41. *Ibid*. p. 1066.
42. G. Rentz, *op. cit.*, p. 1066.
43. The events are best described by Salah al-Din al-Mukhtar, *op. cit.*, vol. 11, pp. 289-90.
44. Attar, *Saqr al-Jazirah*, pp. 289-307.
45. *Saudi Arabia*, p. 292.

46. J. S. Habib, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
47. He was convinced that the three Ikhwan leaders had already agreed upon the spoils once he was overthrown: Faisal al-Dawish was to become the ruler of Najd; Sultan ibn Bijad ibn Humayd of Hijaz, and Dhihan ibn Hithtain of Hasa; Cf. *ibid.*
48. This is also called the Riyadh conference of notables. For details cf. Hafiz Wahba, *Arbian Days*, p. 137 ff.
49. J. S. Habib, *op. cit.*, p. 137.
50. For an interesting account of the battle see Wahba, *op. cit.*, pp. 140 ff.
51. Philby, *op. cit.*, p. 313.
52. Conventional chronology divides Saudi Arabian history as : Dir`iyya emirate and its expansion to Najd, 1745-1902, reign of Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud, 1902- 1953; reign of Saud, 1953-1964; reign of Faisal; 1964-1975; see *Fouad al-Farsy Saudi Arabia: A Case Study in Development*, London 1982 pp. 64-66.
53. Asir was a part of the territory under the influence of a theocrat, the Idrisi rulers were members of the dynasty of Ahmad Idris, who had come to Mecca from North Africa.
54. Leslie McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, p. 127.
55. *Ibid*, p. 120.
56. Col. B. K. Narayan, *Leaders of the Arab Worlds*, (N. Delhi, 1981) p. 4.

57. Sheikh Muhammad Iqbal, *Emergence of Saudi Arabia; A Political Study of King Abd al- Aziz ibn Saud 1901-1953*. Delhi, 1977 p. 102.
58. Ghazy Mujahid, *Education for Girls in Saudi Arabia*, `Muslim Education quarterly, vol. 4 no.3 (1987 U.K) pp. 59-60.
59. Jewish refugees fleeing from the Nazis were trying to enter Palestine. Malcolm McDonald the British minister concerned, called for Arab-Jewish conference to study the basics of a settlement by negotiation.
60. On May 29, 1933, the standard oil company of California obtained a sixty Year concession covering a huge area in the Eastern part of the Kingdom. An operation company known as California Arabian Company was established. When the Texas Company joined in the enterprise (ARAMCO) see K.S. Twitchell. *Saudi Arabia*, (Princeton 1953) p. 151.
61. With Faisal and Khalid went Sheikh Hafiz Wahhab, Sheikh Ibrahim Suleiman, Faisal`s private secretary and body guard, Murzouq, see De Gaury, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
62. For a summary of the ten-point program, see G. Lenczowski, “*Tradition and Reform in Saudi Arabia*“, Current History, Feb. 1987, p. 101.
63. Amitava Mukherjee, *Saudi Arabia: the Land Beyond Time*, (Delhi, 1987) p. 47.

64. Fouad al-Farsy, *Saudi Arabia, A Case Study in Development*, (London, 1982) p. 70.
65. Fouad al-Farsy, *op. cit.*, p. 70-71.
66. For details see Nadav Safran, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-214. Also see, George Lenczowski, *op. cit.*, p. 601.
67. A wide-ranging investigation was made by Saudi authorities but failed to discover any organised conspiracy. The young prince was summarily tried and executed. It is said that he had personal grudge against the king. See George Lenczowski, *op. cit.*, p. 602.
68. www.saudinf.com and www.saudiemassy.org
69. www.contrystudies.us/saudi-arabia/ source: U. S. library of congress and www.wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia.
70. www.wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia
71. *Ibid.*
72. www.saudiemassy.org Harvey Sicherman, *King Fahd's Saudi Arabia*, from <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/20050812.middleeast.sicherman.fahdsaudiarabia.html>
73. *Ibid.*
74. *Ibid.*
75. www.wikipedia , the Free Encyclopedia;
76. *Ibid.*

77. www.thesaudi.net/alsaud/fahd/
78. *Ibid.*
79. *Ibid.*
80. *Ibid.*
81. *Ibid.* and <http://www.kingfahdbinabdulaziz.com/main/b30.htm>
82. *Ibid.*
83. *Ibid.*
84. Harvey Sicherman, *king Fahd's Saudi Arabia*, from <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/20050812.middleeast.sicherman.fahdsaudiarabia.html>



Chapter Fourth

*Religio-Political
Relations in the
19th and 20th
Centuries*

Ibn `Abd al-Wahhab emphasized the necessity to conform with the laws of the Qu`ran and the practices exemplified in the Sunnah of the Prophet, as interpreted by the early scholars of Islam. These views meant that the ultimate goal of the Muslim community was to become the living embodiment of God's laws on earth. Toward that end, he encouraged religion education, which pleased the devout Muhammad ibn Saud. Moreover, Ibn `Abd al-Wahhab's philosophy complemented the political ambitions of the secular leader, because the reformer called for obedience to a just Muslim ruler. Thus emerged a community of believers in which an oath of allegiance was bestowed on a just Muslim ruler who ensured the application of God's laws. For the`Najdis, the union between the Ulama and those who held political power was, and remains, the hallmark of a true Islamic government.¹

It was a pure coincidence that the Shaykh met Al Saud and the two were united in their resolve to purify the community of all later accretions. The respect given to the Shaykh's family is because they never held temporal authority. When the Shaykh died he was bankrupt whereas the wealth of the Saudis was tied to the public treasury. The Shaykh's family members have always been advisers to the Saudis and religious leaders whereas the Saudis were in between the temporal and religious authority. The Saudis belong to both the families descending on the mother's side

from Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and thus getting all the prestige, and from the father's side they descended from politicians and warriors. The Saudis gave importance to the right of the Imam to choose his heir, they realized fully well that their claims to political authority were associated with the success of the Wahhabi call and its support of their hereditary claims.²

Adopting a puritanical but appealing approach to Islam, Muhammad ibn Saud and his successors in the Saudi royal family rapidly conquered much of central Arabia, thereby establishing the first Saudi Kingdom. This expansion was stopped when the Saudis seized Mecca and Medina, thereby impelling the Ottoman Empire and Egypt to invade Arabia, capture the Saudi capital in 1818, and execute the ruling Saudi prince.

Seemingly, the Saudi- Wahhabi politico-religious experiment was at an end, but the faith lived on in the desert and towns of eastern Arabia and a second Saudi-Wabbabi state was founded in 1824. The credit goes to Turki ibn `Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn Saud.³ He came to power in 1824 when he expelled the Egyptian detachment from Riyadh and captured it.⁴ Riyadh was then made the capital of the second Saudi state. Being a spirited Wahhabi, he urged the people to pray and fulfill the prescribed religious obligations. He appointed outstanding Qadis at various places for the administration of justice. The postings of the Qadis were rotated, and they were ordered to decide legal questions strictly in accordance with the

Shari`a. He also issued written epistles for distribution among the people, wherein they were required to believe in the Unity of Allah, while prayer and *zakat* were made obligatory.

The second Saudi realm ended in 1891 with the Rashidis taking over the whole of Najd. With the fall of Riyadh, the Saudi capital, and the self exile of `Abd al-Rahman in Kuwait. There remained no Saudi contender for the Rashidis in Najd.

A young Saudi prince, Abd al-Aziz (born about 1880), regained control of Riyadh in 1902 and thus emerged the third Saudi state. Abd al-Aziz, who was known in the west as Ibn Sa`ud, demonstrated good judgment, leadership skills, and extraordinary courage as well as a deep personal and political commitment to Islam.⁵ Once again the Saudis reconstituted their empire in central and eastern Arabia. In addition to employing town militias, Abd al-Aziz helped to raise an enthusiastic army from among the nomads who had made to been settle and trained as warriors for the faith.⁶

The founder of the modern state of Arabia lived much of his early life in exile. In the end, however, he not only recovered the territory of the first Saudi Empire, but initiated to develop a state out of it. Abd al-Aziz did this by maneuvering among a number of forces. The first was the religious

fervor that Wahhabi Islam continued to inspire. His Wahhabi army, the Ikhwan (brethren), for instance, represented a powerful tool.⁷

Abd al-Aziz trained the Ikhwan to become the main force of the Saudi state. The Ikhwan were deeply inspired by the teachings of Wahhabism. The strength of tribal ties as well as religious fervour contributed to form a community bond which was above the tribal division. They were enthusiastic to spread Islam through *jihad* and die as martyrs. Many devoted themselves to learning, to read and write, and to memorizing parts of the Qur`an and the Hadith. But, as Hafiz Wahba describes their beliefs;⁸

“- - - this very transition was violent enough to be dangerous. The people had absorbed only a small amount of religious education and principle, but they came to think that this alone constituted the whole of religion and that everything else was heresy. They even went so far as to believe evil of Imam Abd al-Aziz, their own chief. They came to regard the turban as the only proper and traditional headgear, scorning the head cloth and band as an undesirable innovation, some even going so far as to regard it as the sign of an `infidel` to be shunned by true believers. Many, too, began to believe that no Bedouin, however virtuous he was

and however much he disliked the evils of desert life, could be called Moslem unless he lived in a hijrah; they refused to greet Bedouin with the customary "Salam aleikum " and if they were themselves greeted refused to reply. They would not even eat the food of these people."

The government looked after the organization of the various hijras by choosing their locations and establishing schools, and residential places there and the supply of seeds and tools for farming, side by side with the supply of arms and ammunitions. Religious teachers (*mutawwi*) were frequently sent to these hijras acquaint the Ikhwan with the teachings of Islam. They were also supplied with religious literature composed for this very purpose under the guidance of Shaykh `Abd Allah b. Muhammad b. `Abd al-Latif, a descendant of Shaykh Muhammad b. `Abd al-Wahhab. This literature was based on, and prepared from, Hanbali teachings. Consequently the Ikhwan were soon infused with such religious zeal that they became extremists. They proved to be men of uncompromising religious temperament and fearless fighters, whose chief fault was over-zealousness.⁹ Nevertheless, through the religious teachings they were moulded to become honest and law abiding citizens when they were not at war. They called themselves `Knights of God`s unity, and those who obey God.¹⁰

In 1929 King `Abd al-Aziz founded the Committee for the Enforcement of Virtue and the Discouragement of Vice in conformity with the Qur`anic dictum *al-Amr bi'l-Ma`ruf wa'l-Nahy `an al-Munkar*. This was intended to promote Islamic values and eradicate the vices of smoking, singing and alcoholic drinking. Shari`a forms the core and basis of Sa`udi law. Nevertheless, an important principle was enacted in 1926 that new measures of `secular law` could supplement and complement the Islamic law. The Saudi Kingdom has been variously described as an `absolute monarchy`, a `theocratic monarchy`, and so on. But a Saudi source disputes both these labels: it is not an absolute monarchy, ` since the monarchy derives its power from the people of the country. As a result of this, some scholars have preferred to describe the Saudi monarchy as a `monocracy` (a state ruled by law); in this case, it is a monarchy ruled by divine law (Shari`a).¹¹

King Saud

After the death of his father in 1953, King Saud Bin Abdul Aziz assumed the charge of the Kingdom. King Saud created the country's welfare structure during his 11 years reign and was also noted for his generosity to Islamic causes.¹²

Saud bin Abdul Aziz was King of Saudi Arabia from 1953 to November 2, 1964. He was then the eldest surviving son of Ibn Saud. The first political mission that Saud headed was as leader of a delegation sent by his father to Qatar when he was thirteen years old. He led the first war against Hail in 1921, and became the leader of the Saudi troops fighting in Yemen. In addition, Saud had participated in eight wars before he ascended the throne: Grab War, Yabet War, Truba, Alkuras, Hail, Alhijaz, Almahmal and the Brethren.¹³ Before becoming King, Saud, along with his half-brother Faisal, was given great responsibilities in the establishment and running of the lands of Ibn Saud. Shortly after the formal establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, he was made the crown prince on May 11, 1933, superceding his father's own brothers. On October 13, 1953 Saud was appointed the Prime Minister¹⁴ and the same year when Ibn Saud died in 1953, Saud became the King. He continued King Abd al-Aziz's legacy, creating the Council of Ministers and establishing the Ministries of Health, Education and Commerce. One of King Saud's greatest successes was the development of education. Under his rule many schools were established in the Kingdom, including its first institute of higher education, King Saud University, in 1957. King Saud also made his mark globally. In 1957, he became the first Saudi monarch to visit the United States. In 1962 he

sponsored an International Islamic Conference that would later become the Muslim World League, headquartered in Makkah.

Saud and Faisal fought an internal battle over the definition of political responsibilities and the division of government functions (or over the role to be assigned to the Council of Ministers). Saud abolished the office of Prime Minister by a royal decree, thus enforcing his position as King and *de facto* prime minister. Saud thought of himself as both King and Prime Minister whereas Faisal envisaged more powers in his own hand as Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister.¹⁵ In 1962, when Faisal formed a cabinet in the absence of the King. He promised a ten-point reform that included the drafting of a basic law, the abolishing of slavery and the establishment of a judicial council. Saud died in Athens, Greece, on February 23, 1969 after suffering a heart attack in his sleep.¹⁶

King Faisal

Faisal ibn Abdul Aziz Al Sa`ud, was King of Saudi Arabia from 1964 to 1975. As king he is credited with rescuing the country's finances and implementing a policy of modernization and reform, while his main foreign policy themes were pan-Islamism, anti-Communism, and anti-Zionism.¹⁷

When Faisal became King (1964-75), he set himself the task of modernizing the kingdom. His first two official acts were protective,

directed toward safeguarding the nation from potential internal and external threats that could thwart development.¹⁸ Faisal's religious idealism did not diminish his secular effectiveness. For him, political functioning was a religious act that demanded thoughtfulness, dignity, and integrity. Faisal continued to pursue modernization while always making sure to couch his policies in Islamic terms.

Being one of Ibn Saud's elder sons, Faisal was delegated numerous responsibilities during Ibn Saud's quest to consolidate control over Arabia. In 1925, Faisal, in command of an army of Saudi loyalists, won a decisive victory in the Hijaz. In return, he was made the governor of Hijaz the following year.¹⁹ After the new Saudi kingdom was declared in 1932 Faisal received the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, a position which he continued to hold until his death. It was during the period as head of the Saudi government, that Faisal, though still not king, established his reputation as a reforming and modernizing figure. In 1962, however, Faisal rallied enough support within the royal family to install himself as prime minister for a second time.²⁰

Early in his reign, when faced by demands for a written constitution for the country, Faisal responded that "our constitution is the Quran".²¹

Faisal also supported monarchist and conservative movements in the Arab world, and sought to counter the influences of socialism and Arab Nationalism in the region by promoting pan-Islamism as an alternative. To that end, he called for the establishment of the Muslim World League, visiting several Muslim countries to advocate the idea.²²

He introduced education for women and girls despite the consternation of many conservatives in the religious establishment.

In November 1962, he announced a ten-point plan for reform. Projected changes in the government included promises to issue a constitution, establish local government, and form an independent judiciary with a supreme judicial council composed of secular and religious members. He pledged to strengthen Islam and to reform the Committee for Encouragement of Virtue and Discouragement of Vice (also known as the Committee for Public Morality). Progress was to be ensured by the regulation of economic and commercial activities, and there was to be a sustained effort to develop the country's resources. Social reforms would include provisions for social security, unemployment compensation, educational scholarships, and the abolition of slavery.²³

In 1963, Faisal established the country's first television station, though actual broadcasts would not begin for another two years.²⁴ As with

many of his other policies, the move aroused strong objections from the religious and conservative sections of the country. Faisal assured them, however, that Islamic principles of modesty would be strictly observed, and made sure that the broadcasts contained a large number of religious programmes.

In 1965, Faisal called an Islamic summit conference to reaffirm Islamic principles against the rising tide of modern ideologies. Faisal dedicated to Islamic ideals what he had learned in the house of his maternal grandfather, a direct descendant of Abd al-Wahhab.

Faisal also introduced the country's current system of administrative regions, and laid the foundations for a modern welfare system. In 1970, he established the Ministry of Justice and inaugurated the country's first "five-year plan" for economic development.²⁵

King Faisal bin Abd al-Aziz was a visionary innovator with a great respect for tradition. In foreign policy, King Faisal showed a firm commitment to the Islamic world. Throughout the turbulent period of the 1960s and 1970s, King Faisal was a voice for moderation, peace and stability.

Respect for Faisal increased in the Arab world based on the remarkable changes within Saudi Arabia, his excellent management of the

holy cities, his reputation as a stalwart enemy of Zionism, and his rapidly increasing financial power.

However, Faisal's failing health, overwork, and age prevented him from formulating a coherent development plan before he was assassinated on March 25, 1975. He was shot by his disgruntled nephew.²⁶

King Khalid

Khalid bin Abdul Aziz, was King of Saudi Arabia from the assassination of King Faisal in 1975 until his own death in 1982.

Khalid was named Crown Prince in 1965, he was not interested in politics and gave effective control of the country to his brother Crown Prince Fahd. Khalid's preparation for ruling a modern state included his accompanying Faisal on foreign missions and representing Saudi Arabia at the United Nations.²⁷

The King's first diplomatic coup was the conclusion in April 1975 of a demarcation agreement concerning Al Buraymi Oasis, where the frontiers of Abu Dhabi, Oman, and Saudi Arabia meet. Claims and counterclaims over this frontier had exacerbated relations among them for years. The conclusion of negotiations under Khalid added to his stature as a statesman.²⁸

Khalid's leadership style was remarkably different from Faisal's. He was more liberal in terms of informing the press of the rationale behind foreign policy decisions. And although he largely used the same policymaking team as Faisal did, he allowed them greater latitude in decision-making within their separate portfolios. In regional affairs he permitted the governors considerably more autonomy and even authorized their use of discretionary funds. Above all, he valued consensus and the team approach to problem solving.²⁹

In the late 1970s Saudi Arabia faced a host of regional problems. In addition to the legacy of the Palestinian problem, early in Khalid's reign the civil war in Lebanon occurred. Fahd, who had already participated in major decisions, became chief spokesman for the Kingdom and a major architect of Saudi modernization, foreign affairs, and oil policy. In 1976 a major concern of the Saudi government was the year-old civil war in Lebanon. In December 1979 the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, and in September 1980 Iraq attacked Iran over suzerainty of the Shatt al Arab waterway.³⁰

King Khalid oversaw the implementation of the second five-year development plan (1975-1979) and the creation of the third five-year development plan (1980-1984). Saudi Arabia began to diversify its economic base and edged towards the completion of its infrastructure.³¹ He

also emphasized upon development and his reign was marked by an almost explosive growth in the country's physical infrastructure. It was a period of enormous wealth and prosperity for Saudi Arabia.

King Khalid urged Moslem countries to resist military alliances with the superpowers, and he appealed to Islamic leaders gathered for a summit conference to resolve disputes that have divided the Moslem world. He was awarded the King Faisal International Prize for Service to Islam. During his reign the third Islamic summit was held in Makkah and Taif in 1401H (1980) and it has issued "Makkah Declaration", which is considered a standing executive plan of the goals of Islamic solidarity. Khalid died on June 13, 1982.

King Fahd

King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, was the King of Saudi Arabia, Head of the House of Saud as well as Prime Minister. Fahd ascended to the throne on the death of his half-brother, King Khalid, on June 13, 1982.³²

Fahd was appointed Crown Prince when Khalid succeeded their half-brother King Faisal, who was assassinated in 1975. Fahd was viewed as the *de facto* Prime Minister during King Khalid's reign in part due to the latter's ill health.

In 1962, Fahd was given the important post of Interior Minister and five years later he was appointed Second Deputy Prime Minister. After the death of King Faisal in 1975, Fahd was named first Deputy Prime Minister and Crown Prince.³³

Under King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz Saudi Arabia continued its tremendous socio- economic development and emerged as a leading political and economic force. He changed his royal title to "Custodian of the two Holy Mosques", and took steps to support the conservative Saudi religious establishment, including spending millions of dollars on religious education, further distancing himself from his inconvenient past.

As Crown Prince in 1981, he proposed an eight-point plan to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict and give the Palestinians an independent state. The plan was considered one of the first attempts to find a just and lasting settlement that took into consideration the needs of both the Arabs and the Israelis.

The New Government System

King Fahd directed a giant advance in government restructuring in the Kingdom. On March 03, 1992 (27/08/1412 H) he announced the establishment of four new systems.

1. The Basic Government System.
2. Al Sh`ura Council System
3. The Provincial System
4. The Council of Ministers System.

The Basic Law of Government confirms that the System of Government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a Monarchy. The Basic Law confines assumption of power to the sons of the Founder, King Abdul Aziz Al Saud and their offspring, with the oath of allegiance pledged to the most qualified among them.³⁴

During Fahd's reign, for the first time, the rules of succession to become Head of State were put into writing and formalized. New laws were also introduced for the Council of Ministers. Ministers are appointed by the King and are responsible for implementing governmental policies which relate to their particular ministry. The Council of Ministers, headed by the King, is responsible for drafting and overseeing implementation of the internal, external, economic, financial, social, educational, defense, and *other general matters of the state.*³⁵

Sh`ura Council

In August 1993, King Fahd restructured the Majlis Al-Sh`ura (national consultative council) to make it more efficient. The Majlis Al-Sh`ura, which was initially composed of 60 prominent members of Saudi social, political, and religious life, was expanded to 90 members in 1997. The Majlis Al-Sh`ura advises the King and the Council of Ministers on a regular basis on matters pertaining to government programs and policies. The Sh`ura Council's primary function is to assess, interpret, and modify the Kingdom's system of laws, by-laws, contracts, and international agreements.³⁶

Throughout his political career, King Fahd participated and led various Saudi delegations, thus acquiring the expertise needed to take important decisions in both domestic and international matters.

He restructured the Saudi government and approved the first nationwide municipal elections, which took place in 2005.

One of King Fahd's greatest accomplishments in Saudi Arabia was a series of projects to expand the Kingdom's facilities to accommodate the millions of pilgrims who come to the country each year. These projects

involved major expansions of Islam's two holiest sites, the Holy Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah.³⁷

At the international arena, King Fahd worked actively to resolve regional and global crises. These crises included the Arab-Palestinian conflict, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the Lebanese civil war in addition to conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Somalia and Kashmir.³⁸

King Fahd also dedicated years of diplomacy to resolving the civil war in Lebanon. He hosted a meeting of Lebanese members of parliament in Taif, Saudi Arabia in 1989. The meeting resulted in a national reconciliation accord signed in Taif that ended the fighting and opened the way for reconstruction with help from Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries.

Perhaps the greatest international crisis of King Fahd's rule occurred when Iraq invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990. The King played a key role in putting together the international coalition that drove Iraqi forces out of Kuwait.

King Fahd was also concerned with humanitarian issues. Under his rule, Saudi Arabia provided emergency humanitarian assistance to numerous countries, including Somalia, Bosnia and Afghanistan.³⁹

Fahd suffered a debilitating stroke November 29, 1995, after which he was unable to continue performing his full official duties. His half-

brother, Abdullah, the country's Crown Prince, served as *de facto* regent of the Kingdom and succeeded Fahd as monarch upon his death on August 1, 2005.

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Chapter Fifth

Saudi Arabia and the US: Strategic Compromises

Islam is a pervasive social and political force in Saudi Arabia. Because there was no separation of religion and state, the political role of religious scholars, or ‘ulama, was second in importance to that of the ruling Al Saud family.

Most Saudis believe that there is no separation between religion and politics at the level of public discourse. Yet the majority agrees that in practice there is a separation between the professed religious rhetoric of the state, on the one hand, and the reality of political practice, on the other. Calls for the reformation of state and society always invoke religion and politics together in a single framework.¹

Madawi Al-Rasheed argues that the Saudi state of today is an Islamic Wahhabi state and that there is a clear distinction between the Islamized public social sphere and politics. Politics is disenchanting in Saudi Arabia. It is no longer anchored in Islam as claimed by the leadership against this disenchantment; some Saudis have struggled for the past three decades to re-enchant politics.²

Although Saudi Arabia was established as a country based on a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, the discovery of vast petroleum deposits led to significant changes in the role of religion. Since the 1950s, when oil revenues became abundant, Saudi rulers have sought to reap the

economic benefits derived from oil resources while trying to minimize the political and social impact of change.³

Modernization in Saudi Arabia

With the establishment of the state and the advent of oil wealth and mass education, Wahhabi *'ulama* became one group among several capable of articulating religious ideas and interpretations. Their engagement with modernity centered on formulating opinions on whether aspects of modernity were permissible or prohibited. In addition to their long-established expertise in creed and ritual purity, official *ulama* developed religious rulings regarding technological aspects of modernity (cars, aeroplanes, radio, television, cassettes, faxes and the internet), and its economic challenges (banking, insurance and other new economic innovations).⁴

Official Wahhabis accepted and endorsed aspects of modernity only if these fell under their control. For example, the introduction of radio was condemned until it was shown to be the vehicle for the transmission of the Word of God.

Modernity paved the way for the emergence of the young, articulate, computer literate and cosmopolitan Wahhabi scholar, although they

originally denounced the internet as immoral, but since 1998 they have become active participants in cyberspace through personal websites and discussion boards. Today most official Saudi 'ulama and preachers have their own websites. The Wahhabi message is no longer preserved in handwritten chronicles and epistles but continued in polished and elegantly bound high-quality volumes, CD ROMs, and internet web pages as well.⁵

Similarly, in the early 1960s they objected to television, but later agreed to it when they were assured that they would dominate broadcasting. In the 1990s they denounced satellite television, but later endorsed it after they were guaranteed constant appearances on religious programmes. Today they have their own television channels, for example Iqra and al-Majd.⁶

The introduction of the satellite dish and the Internet in the 1990s ensures a deepening of connections between Saudis and the outside world. Wahhabi ulama have used these and other communications technologies to proselytize. At the same time, they provide channels, into the kingdom, for ideas and images far more worrisome to Wahhabi ulama than anything contained in Ottoman polemical treatises.⁷

Socially, official Wahhabi scholars devoted considerable energy to issuing opinions that maintained strict control over men and women. Their *fatwas* on sex segregation, women's attire, false eyelashes, sports centers,

body massage, hair removal and other innovations related to social and physical femininity are notorious. For example, after objecting to female education in the early 1960s, on the grounds that secular education would destroy a woman's capacity to provide her children with character-forming religious values they accepted it after being put in charge of the female curriculum and schools.⁸

Thus, opposition to female education was resolved through religious supervision; opposition to the full female form on Saudi television was resolved by the employment of non-Saudi women; opposition to state economic planning was countered by concern for Islamic values and social welfare.⁹

The innovations of modernity, together with communication technology, have allowed both the consolidation and contestation of official Wahhabi discourse. Official Wahhabiyya has showed great flexibility and pragmatism. However, this was entirely dependent on the gains that would accrue to its most prominent figures as a result of accepting and legitimizing innovations. While modernity consolidated and spread Wahhabi discourse both in Saudi Arabia and abroad, it resulted simultaneously in its contestation. Both advocates and critics of Wahhabiyya have endorsed modern technology for the promotion of their message. While the means for

the dissemination of Wahhbaiyya have become ultra-modern, the message remains far removed from the spirit of political modernity.¹⁰

Madawi Al-Rasheed claims that the ways in which Wahhabiyya became a hegemonic discourse under the patronage of the state rather than being a tradition opposed to modernity, Wahhabiyya flourished and its advocates became prosperous as a result of the immersion of Saudi Arabia in modernity. Wahhabiyya became a dominant discourse because of state patronage, oil and modernity.¹¹

Background: The American Role in Saudi Arabia

In Saudi Arabia, America is not merely a symbol of modernity, but for decades has been the prime agent of modernization. This relationship extends well beyond just commercial ties between a major oil producer and a major oil consumer. American construction firms and oil companies have played major roles in this process. The central expression of American involvement in Saudi economic development is the Aramco oil consortium. Another major example is the Bechtel Corporation, whose activities in Saudi Arabia over the course of the last half-century include an array of pipeline , oil, gas, water, transportation, telecommunications, and power projects, and Military modernization has proceeded along similar lines.¹²

But because the claim to Islamic purity is the central ideological support of the Saudi state, the Saudi-American embrace has been conducted at arms' length. From the 18th century to the present, the legitimacy of the Saudi dynasty has been linked to its sponsorship of the religious revivalism of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and the far-reaching Saudi-American relationship passes through this narrow opening.

American assistance has been central to the transformation of Saudi Arabia from a poor, underdeveloped, isolated country into a rapidly modernizing, largely urban, and potentially very wealthy nation. Oil wealth was developed by American companies. Economic plans were designed in consultation with American experts. American technology flourishes throughout the Kingdom. The national airline, the desalination projects, the hospitals, the National Guard, and the vast petrochemical complexes at Jubayl and Yanbu all reflect American technology.¹³

Everything changed with the formation in 1935 of "ARAMCO," formally known as the Arabian-American Oil Company. The presence of foreigners in general, and Americans in particular, finally created a climate that fostered the acceptance of Western communication innovations. The story of ARAMCO has been told repeatedly. Americans entered Saudi Arabia in their search for oil. And when oil was discovered, standard

American oil companies formed a joint operating agreement with the Saudis. To secure this agreement "ARAMCO" was formed.

The advent of Aramco marked the beginning of professional public relations in Saudi Arabia-and the increased embracing Western techniques and innovations. ARAMCO established a research department to study the Saudi people, their language, and their history, and the nation's social conditions. Unlike other dimensions of U.S.-Saudi relationship, economic development has primarily involved the American private sector, not the government. For many years ARAMCO probably played a more important role in U.S.-Saudi relations than did the U.S. government. Despite the Saudi takeover of ARAMCO, it continues to be heavily staffed with Americans.¹⁴

The presence of Americans in ARAMCO promoted change in the Saudi society in the Eastern part of the country. The company today controlled by Saudis, played a major role in introducing new communication ideas and still contributes such concepts. It is considered to be the window for Saudi Arabia to the outside world.

Saudi Arabia today is an important example of large-scale, rapid adoption and of the use of most new technologies as soon as they become available. However, they grew to take advantage of the technology used in modern communications.

The U.S. administration may have a new, but narrow, window of opportunity to reintroduce itself to Saudi Arabia. Many Saudis argued for the creation of a deeper, multi-dimensional relationship between both countries that engages society and culture, not just business and energy opportunities.¹⁵

As early as 1947, the administration of Harry S. Truman formally assured Abd al Aziz that support for Saudi Arabia's territorial integrity and political independence was a primary objective of the United States. This commitment became the basis for the 1951 mutual defense assistance agreement. Under this agreement, the United States provided military equipment and training for the Saudi armed forces.

Another example which shows Saudi –U.S. relation is that when in 1984 Iran initiated attacks on tankers carrying Saudi and Kuwaiti oil, King Fahd's government called upon the United States for help. In an unprecedented development, thousands of United States troops, under authority of several United Nations resolutions, were deployed to the kingdom beginning in August 1990; Saudi Arabia has a special interest in preserving a stable and long-term market for its vast oil resources by allying itself with healthy Western economies which can protect the value of Saudi

financial assets. It generally has acted to stabilize the world oil market and tried to moderate sharp price movements.¹⁶

In fact, Saudi Arabia is one of the staunchest supporters of the U.S. in the global war against terror. "Relations between Saudi Arabia and the U.S. are excellent and serve the interests of both countries. Also, Saudi efforts to eradicate terrorism are known to everyone," says Prince Dr. Abdurrahman Bin Saud Al Kabier. Indeed, Saudi Arabia is courting new U.S. investment as it opens its economy to the world, and pushes ahead with privatization plans and new infrastructure projects.

Along with Saudi Arabia's recent accession to the World Trade Organization, a number of reforms have been carried out internally to create a pro-business climate, and in its 2005 report, the World Bank's International Finance Corporation voted Saudi Arabia as the most competitive nation in the Arab World. "We have developed a mechanism to manage our investment environment and improve our competitiveness ratings," says Sagia governor Amr Dabbagh, who adds that U.S. companies represented the majority in the 800 percent jump in investment applications the agency received in the first half of 2005.¹⁷

The American and western interests in access to Saudi oil entails a concern for the security of Saudi oil and for the Kingdom itself. Considering

the value of Saudi oil reserves it is remarkable that no serious threat has ever been aimed at occupying the oil fields, toppling the Saudi government, or trying to blackmail the Saudi government through sabotage of the oil facilities.

The Saudis are not uniformly seen as a strong friend of the United States worthy of support. Memories of the oil embargo, oil price hikes, and hostility to Israel and Egypt have all under-mined the image of Saudi Arabia as a moderate, pro-Western, anti-Soviet [anti-Russian] state.¹⁸ Islam also was a significant factor in Saudi Arabia's foreign relations. The very close relationship that developed between the kingdom and the non-Muslim United States after 1945, for example, was partly a result of Saudi antipathy to the former Soviet Union's espousal of atheism.¹⁹

Saudi foreign policy objectives are to maintain its security and its paramount position on the Arabian Peninsula, defend general Arab and Islamic interests, promote solidarity among Islamic governments, and maintain cooperative relations with other oil-producing and major oil-consuming countries.

Since at least the late 1950s, three consistent themes have dominated Saudi foreign policy: regional security, Arab nationalism, and Islam. These themes inevitably became closely intertwined during the formulation of

actual policies. For example, the preoccupation with regional security issues, including concern for both regime stability and the safety of petroleum exports, resulted in the kingdom's establishing a close strategic alliance with the United States. Yet this relationship, which remained strong in 1992, often had complicated Saudi efforts to maintain solidarity with other Arab countries. The close ties with the non-Muslim United States also contrasted with the strained relations that existed between Saudi Arabia and certain predominantly Muslim countries that challenged the kingdom's efforts to portray itself as the principal champion of Islamic causes.²⁰

Crown Prince Abdullah made this point [i.e. Saudi-U.S. Relationship] quite clearly in an interview in the Lebanese newspaper, *As-Safir*, in June 1997.

“We are friends with the Americans, this is known. But we are the ones who know our interests. We can't give precedence to their interests over our interests. We are Arabs and our interests are those of Arabs and Muslims everywhere. On many occasions we have to tell the Americans...you have your policy and we have our policy. . . you have your interest and we have our interests? Do you want weak friends who are of no benefit and burden you, or do you want strong friends?”²¹

Relations with the United States

Saudi Arabia's unique role in the Arab and Islamic worlds, its possession of the world's largest reserves of oil, and its strategic location make its friendship important to the United States. Diplomatic relations were established in 1933; the U.S. embassy opened in Jeddah in 1944 and moved to Riyadh in 1984. The Jeddah embassy became a U.S. consulate. Meanwhile, a U.S. consulate opened in Dhahran in 1944.

The United States and Saudi Arabia share a common concern about regional security, oil exports and imports, and sustainable development. Close consultations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia have developed on international, economic, and development issues. The continued availability of reliable sources of oil, particularly from Saudi Arabia, remains important to the prosperity of the United States as well as to Europe and Japan. Saudi Arabia is often the leading source of imported oil for the United States, providing about 20% of total U.S. crude imports and 10% of U.S. consumption. The U.S. is Saudi Arabia's largest trading partner, and Saudi Arabia is the largest U.S. export market in the Middle East.²²

No one denies the fact that the United States has a direct and continuing interest in the petroleum resources of Saudi Arabia. For the indefinite future the United States and its allies simply cannot do without

substantial quantities of oil from Saudi Arabia. If Saudi exports were to be dis-continued, the cost to the world economy would be comparable to the Great Depression of the 1930s. By the early 1980s Saudi Arabia had become the largest supplier of oil to the United States.²³

In this regard Ronald R. MacIntyre claims:

“Saudi Arabia and the US share many common economic and strategic interests in the Gulf and indeed in the wider Middle East region. In 1977-8 the US supplied 90% of Saudi military requirements. The US purchases 25% of its oil imports from Saudi Arabia and the US-Saudi Joint Committee for Economic Co-operation has contracts worth \$650 million”.²⁴

Although Saudi Arabia and the United States obviously do not share any borders, the kingdom's relationship with Washington was the cornerstone of its foreign policy as well as its regional security policy. This special relationship actually dates back to World War II. Beyond the immediate issues of the Arab world, the chances for U.S.-Saudi cooperation are somewhat better. Turkey, Pakistan, and Morocco are all good candidates for U.S. arms and technology and Saudi economic assistance. Neither Washington nor Riyadh has demonstrated the qualities of leadership

consistency, or foresight to ensure that such a strategy could be mutually beneficial. Instead, both have reacted to events, shifting policies to adjust to existing situations, improvising as much as planning.²⁵

The United States-Saudi security relationship steadily expanded during the Cold War period. This process was facilitated by the shared suspicions of Riyadh and Washington regarding the nature of the Soviet threat to the region and the necessity of containing Soviet influence.²⁶ While the security dimension of the U.S.-Saudi relationship remained central throughout the 1980s, it was not free of tensions and strains. The two countries may have shared broad objectives, but they did not work out a common strategy, their priorities differed, and their political imperatives often clashed.

Nonetheless, the Saudis recognize the important role played by the United States in enhancing Saudi security. But many Saudis do not feel that this is a selfless American contribution for which the Saudis should be expected to pay a high price.²⁷

The Saudi Ulama

To understand politics and the political system in the kingdom today, and to forecast its future, it is essential to look at the strategic political

relationships being forged between the state and domestic groups. Of particular importance are the relationships the ruling family has cultivated in recent years with some of its boldest and oldest political adversaries, who, ironically, now embody both the hope of Saudi Arabia and its potential unraveling: the *`ulama*.²⁸

The close association between the ulama, advocating strict Islamic interpretations of Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab, and the Al Saud originated in the eighteenth century and provided the dynasty with its primary source of legitimacy. The ulama acted as a conservative force in maintaining the traditional social and political values that characterized Saudi Arabia in the early 1990s.

Since the eighteenth century, the rulers of the Saudi State have shared powers with their religious contemporaries, and this remains the case in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia today. While the monarch is technically the country's supreme religious leader and custodian of Islam's two holiest mosques at Mecca and Medina, in truth, he shares authority with a powerful group of spiritual leaders, the ulama. For nearly 300 years, the Al Saud have controlled the state while the Al Shaykh, the descendants of Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), have controlled the religious institutions. This cooperative and consensual relationship has provided the kingdom with one of the most stable societies in the region and has allowed

it to avoid the war and revolution that has wrecked nearly every one of its neighbors.²⁹

Historically, Saudi rulers have maintained an intimate relationship with leading *`ulama*, often manipulating the clergy and religiosity to ensure their grip on power. Clerical leaders, in exchange for authority over theological, social and cultural affairs in the Saudi polity, initially conferred upon the ruling family religious legitimacy as political leaders. The relationship has not always been friendly or equal nor have the terms of the original politico-religious partnership always been observed.

The *ulama*, or Islamic religious leaders, served a unique role of providing religious legitimacy for Saudi rule. Except for Iran, where the *ulama* participate directly in government, Saudi Arabia is the only Muslim country in which the *ulama* constitute such an influential political force.³⁰

While the *ulama* hold a variety of positions in Saudi institutions—they are judges (*qadis*), lawyers (*muhamas*), and prayer leaders (*imams*)—only a few of them wield real power. Appointed by the king, these latter individuals staff several leading organizations.³¹

While their input varies depending on the domestic circumstances and the strength of the Saud family, the king can never completely ignore them but must take their views into consideration in every choice he makes.

Religion remains a central element in state discourse and ideology, although the authority of religious leaders is highly restricted. Saudi rulers recognize, or at least maintain, that their authority is derived from Wahhabi principles, even if few of the monarchs were openly pious or faithful.

In the current political climate inside Saudi Arabia, it is precisely their position *vis-a-vis* the U.S. that provides them with credibility and power. It is also this position that most seriously threatens the government, which continues to struggle to formulate an earnest reform program that does not alienate its religious partners. It is clear, though, that the relationship is precarious and that the future of politics in the kingdom hinges to a great extent on how it develops.

Here it becomes necessary to throw light on the recent political positioning and what clerics say about politics and the world around them. In this respect some of their core principles have changed little from the past, and will continue to be seen as ominous and threatening, particularly to the U.S. In other respects, however, their message, when coherent and unified, is radically different, thus meriting consideration rather than knee-jerk reprobation.³²

The *`ulama's* support for the regime is not unconditional. They remain controversial, provocative and confrontational. The *sahwa* have

consistently agitated against the regime's close relationship with the United States as well as what they perceive to be aggression against religious beliefs and rituals in the Kingdom.³³

In fact, the ulama exercise their sway in subtle, silent ways. While their input varies depending on the domestic circumstances and the strength of the Saudi family, the king can never completely ignore them but must take their views into consideration in every choice he makes.

The Council of Senior Ulama had a symbiotic relationship with the Saudi government. In return for official recognition of their special religious authority, the leading ulama provided tacit approval and, when requested, public sanction for potentially controversial policies.

If the clerics continue to grow emboldened and wield an anti-U.S. agenda to expand their base of support, they will come to believe that they are both able and entitled to influence the political future of the kingdom from a position of leadership, rather than partnership. They do not and likely will not directly threaten the interests of the United States in Saudi Arabia or in the Middle East.³⁴

More importantly, while the royal family no doubt appreciates the *sahwa*'s efforts to support the regime against both internal and external political pressures, it will view with suspicion the efforts of *sahwa* leaders to

expand their own influence by addressing domestic politics and, in particular, the Kingdom's strategic relationship with the United States. In the course of the last decade, it has become clear that things have indeed gone wrong in Saudi Arabia. A deep intra-societal struggle cuts across all formative institutions of the country and the house of Al Saud is at pains to address its profound crisis of legitimacy and performance, the overwhelming crisis of identity associated with modernity, the internal and external pressures for socio-economic reforms and the complex and multi-faceted phenomenon of religious extremism.³⁵

Contemporary Saudi Arabia is grappling with fundamental issues of religion and modernity, development and dependency, political oppression and cultural turmoil, social frustration and institution building. There is a battle under way in Saudi Arabia- a battle for social, political and religious reforms.

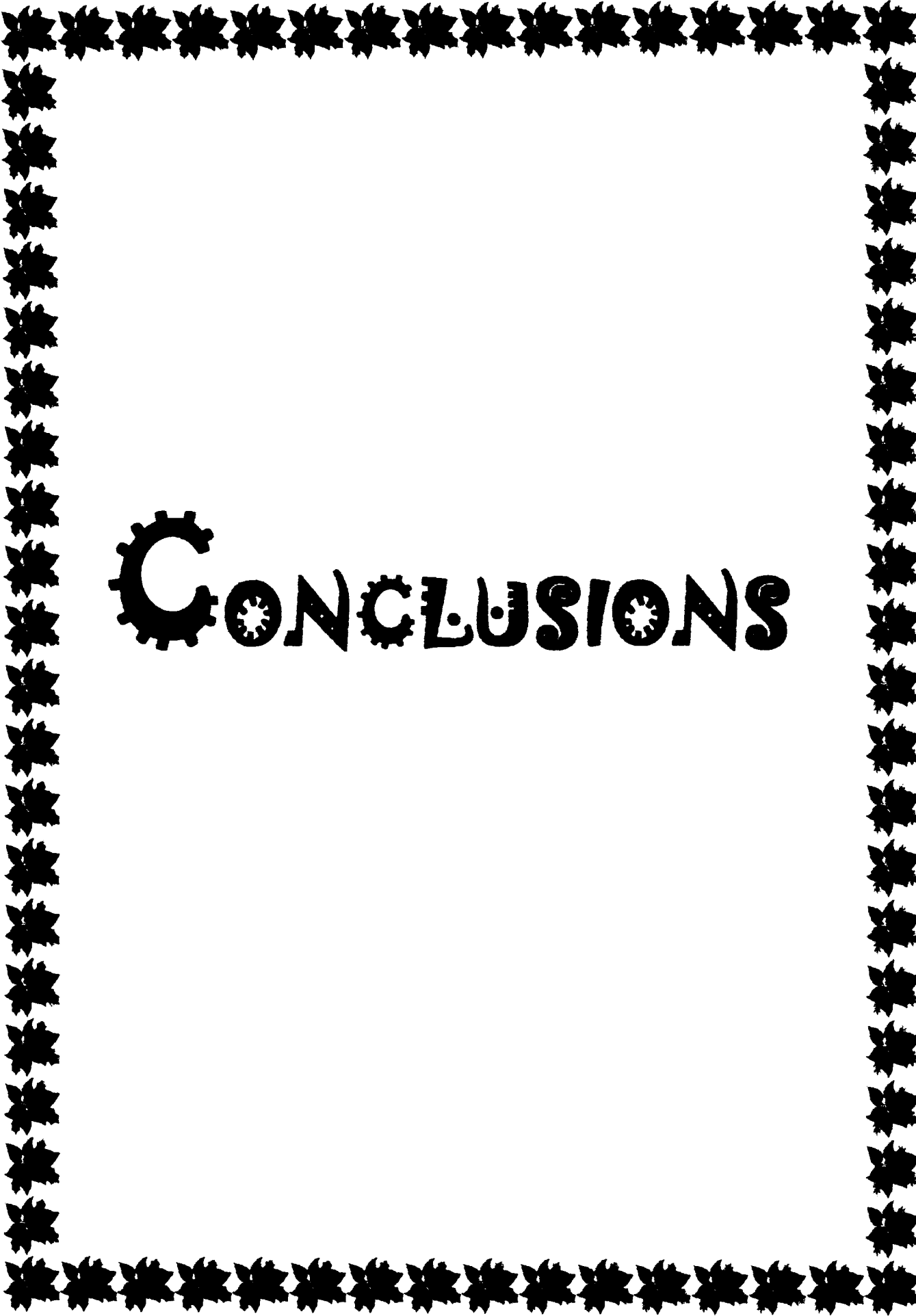
Whether the country can come together and reconcile the principles of tradition with modernity is still hard to tell.³⁶

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CONCLUSIONS

Our study leads us to the fact that the Saudi state which emerged as kingdom in the first half of the 19th century through the fruitful efforts of the House of Saud, today, ranks among the most powerful countries of the Muslim world. The history of Saudi Arabia is actually a religio-political history of the origins and development of the so-called 'Wahhabiyya', in real terms. It was in essence a 'revival' of the purity of early Islam.

The puritanical but appealing approach to Islam. Prompted Muhammad ibn Saud and his successors to rapidly conquer much of Central Arabia, and establish the first Saudi State in the 18th century. It is also evident that since the first Saudi State, Shari'a (Islamic Law) has been the pillar and source of the basic system of the Saudi government, which identifies the nature of the state, its goals, responsibilities as well as the relationship between the government and citizens.

Ever since the eighteenth century, Wahhabism contributed to the power of Al Saud through religious, educational and legal institutions. The risk of giving Wahhabism a role in foreign relations stemmed from its doctrine toward others.

Historically, Saudi Arabia has occupied a special place in the Islamic world. An appreciation of Islamic history and culture makes a genuine understanding of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its Islamic heritage and its

role as leaders of the Arab as well as the Muslim world. Islam occupies the central position in Saudi Arabia as it not only guides the lives of people but also the policies and functions of the government. The Holy Quran is the constitution of the Kingdom. It serves as the basis of the Shari`a system and of the state.

Thus, it is the heartland of Islam, the birthplace of its history, is committed to preserving the Islamic traditions in all areas of government and society. It is a leader in the pursuit of worldwide Islamic solidarity. It hosts the Muslim World League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and other such bodies dedicated to the preserving of Islamic interests. Saudi Arabia, flush with oil revenue, and increasingly the most influential player among Arab countries, has long resisted changing its ultra traditional ways. Now the intrusions of global economics and technology have begun to challenge some traditions in ways that the country's idealists could not envisage. And the strain that this is causing is showing in the form of surprisingly open debate about how much Saudis really want to modernize. With oil wealth and consumerism, Wahhabi ulama, the ruling group and society were capable of a great degree of material indulgence, consumption, and the fulfillment of all worldly desires, within the limits prescribed in the holy book and the traditions of the Prophet.

From the very beginning, Wahhabi teachings were not only religious but also had political leanings. To be a good Muslim, one needs to strive towards establishing a Muslim state that upholds the shari'a and enforces the obligation to command the virtue and prohibit the vice. It has always maintained that Muslims owe obedience to a ruler, no matter how that ruler might have gained power, as long as he did not command a subject to violate the basic commands and prohibitions of the Islamic law.

The majority of Saudis regarded the Salafi-Wahhabi reformist movement a perfect solution to heterodoxy, religious laxity, saint veneration, immorality and superstition. Wahhabiyya claimed to safeguard the souls against the misguided Islam of others, for example Shia, Sufis, Zaydis, Ismailis, grave worshippers, known as quburis, and many others. It was also a shield against 'corrupting' Western influences, undesirable social behavior, immoral and unacceptable alien ideas such as secularism, nationalism, communism, and liberalism.

Islam and politics in Saudi Arabia are closely intertwined and mutually interdependent. Saudi Arabia was built with the support and approval of the ulama, thus their historical relationship gives them direct access to the monarchy. Muhammad ibn Saud was able to weaken and overcome diverse tribal affiliations and establish the kingdom by allying himself with Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab. The ulama operate as part

and parcel of the state apparatus in Saudi Arabia contributing to the stability of the country and support to the rulers in their efforts at change and development. The ulama hold a variety of positions in Saudi institutions as judges (*qadis*), lawyers (*muhama*), and prayer leaders (*imams*) though only a few of them wield real power. An attempt to introduce secular politics gave way to accepting the inevitability of Islam playing a significant role in the stability of the country. Successive governments looked to the ulama for support and legitimacy.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Wahhabism reached new heights of influence. Wahhabi ulama became less combative toward the rest of the Muslim world: Having given up violence against fellow Muslims in early 19th century, Wahhabi views have become much more acceptable internationally, partly because the doctrine gained converts beyond the peninsula and partly because it has served well as a platform to confront the challenge of the West.

During King Faisal's period the influx of oil wealth amplified those efforts, funding mosques, Islamic centres, publications and staff dedicated to spreading the Wahhabi influence. Within Saudi Arabia, official religious institutions under Wahhabi control multiplied but at the same time the ulama maintained their hold on religious law courts, presided over the

creation of Islamic universities and ensured that children in public schools received a heavy dose of religious instruction.

However the underpinnings of Wahhabi influence were shaky in two respects. First, its dependence on the Saudi government leading Wahhabi clerics to support its policies. Second, the relationship with Muslim revivalist movements was based on sharing a common adversary (western influence), not a common doctrine.¹

In fact, the ulama exercise their sway in subtle and silent ways. While their input varies depending on the domestic circumstances and the strength of the Saud family, the king can never completely ignore them but must take their views into consideration in every choice he makes.

Since the 1970s, it has been commonplace to speculate the legitimacy and longevity of Al Saud rule. True, the kingdom has endured a prolonged stretch of unrest since 1990. In the 1990s, however, the Saudi/Wahhabi-revivalist alliance unraveled because of Riyadh's decision to solicit United States military intervention against Iraq. The same issue divided the kingdom's religious camp between traditional Wahhabis loyal to the monarchy and recruits to the revivalist outlook.

Both inside and outside of Wahhabism's homeland, its alliance with Al Saud, hitherto a source of power diminished its credibility.

The gradual erosion of Wahhabi credibility has been punctuated by three major crises [that struck Saudi Arabia between 1979 and 2001]: First, millenarian zealots seizure and brief holding of Mecca's Grand Mosque in November 1979 in their bid to overthrow Al Saud. Second, the kingdom confronted its most serious external threat of the twentieth century when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990–1991, and third, al-Qaeda's 11 September 2001 attacks on the USA which unleashed unprecedented strains in relations between Riyadh and Washington.

The crisis over Kuwait did, however, set off an unprecedented, intense and public debate inside the kingdom that included challenges to senior Wahhabi ulama from radical clerics and liberal reformers. A number of influential popular preachers, known as the sheikhs of the awakening (*sahwa*, in Arabic), found the fatwa utterly unpersuasive. They denounced the decision to invite infidel soldiers into the kingdom, essentially rejecting the authority of the Wahhabi leadership.²

Due to its authoritarian and theocratic rule, the House of Saud has attracted much criticism during its rule of Saudi Arabia. Its opponents generally refer to the Saudi monarchy as totalitarians or dictators. There have been numerous incidents of demonstrations and other forms of resistance against them.³

The Islamist's criticism of the monarchy grew dramatically following the Gulf War. The presence of thousands of Western, non-Muslim troops in close proximity to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina was seen as heretical.⁴

The Saudi regime's decision to rely on American military forces during the 1990-91 Gulf War to defend the Peninsula against potential Iraqi aggression radicalized the leading figures of the *sahwa*, particularly the two clerics who have come to be known as the movement's chief activists and ideologues, Salman al-Awdah and Safar al-Hawali. They gained widespread popularity criticizing the regime by circulating taped audiocassettes of their fiery sermons around the kingdom. Their radicalization was further fueled by the emergence of more liberal minded dissidents, who called on the regime to embark on an ambitious political reform program, one that would open both the political and social fields to more diverse actors and thoughts. With competing calls for the reform of the political system—the liberals petitioned for a more open system, while the *sahwa* implored for its complete Islamization, the regime responded by partially placating the former, cracking down on the latter, and attempting to outmaneuver both.

The *'ulama's* support for the regime is not unconditional. They remain controversial, provocative and confrontational. The *sahwa* have

consistently agitated against the regime's close relationship with the United States as well as what they perceive to be aggression against religious beliefs and rituals in the Kingdom. Deep distrust of American foreign policy and the suspicion that the U.S. seeks to remould Saudi religious institutions and relationships in its own image, form the substance of a popular anti-Americanism and sermonizing against Westernization. While anger and cynicism regarding the U.S. has led to criticism of Saudi domestic liberal reformers as well as reform efforts that are deemed to be West-oriented, direct anger with the U.S. as well as its close relationship with the Saudi regime has manifested in conflicts that have little to do with reform.⁵

A group of former government officials, Aramco technocrats, university professors and businessmen articulated the outlook of Saudi Arabia's liberal tendency and submitted a petition in December 1990, addressing King Khalid that the authorities should create a consultative council, with members from all regions, which would draft laws and oversee government bodies to ensure that they were performing their functions properly. In addition, the petitioners wished to see the restoration of municipal councils, the implementation of lapsed regulations for provincial administration and permission for professions to create associations like the chambers of commerce. Further, the government should do more to ensure

equality among citizens so there would be no discrimination based on tribe, sect, social class, or ethnicity.

Early in the twenty-first century, the truly novel element in the Arabian kingdom is not the dynasty's troubles but the debasement of Wahhabism's credibility. By recognizing religious pluralism in the 2003 National Dialogues, Al Saud demonstrated and possessed the power to subordinate the Wahhabi mission to dynastic interest.

From this vantage point the religious field in Saudi Arabia appears to be in flux, its horizons hazy and the destiny of the eighteenth-century call from Najd uncertain.

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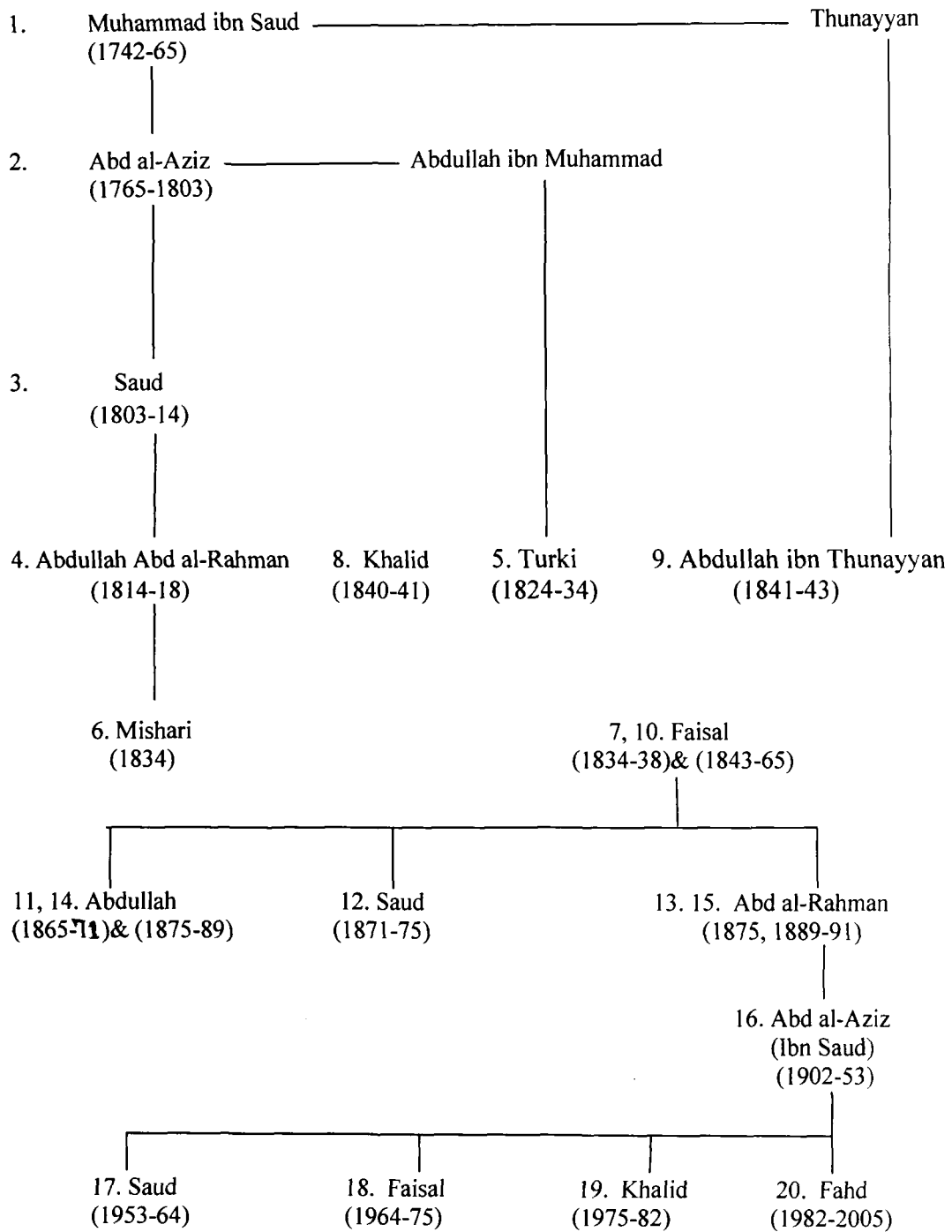
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Appendix



ABRIDGED GENEALOGY OF SAUDI ARABIA'S RULERS