Saudi Arabia: A Brief History
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"Despite King Faisal's assertions that he does not wish to create an aggressive political power bloc to advance the interests of the Muslim countries, an Islamic call to solidarity will lead to such a bloc. Although the various Muslim countries have diverse social and political structures, their adherence to Islam gives them a common bond."

Saudi Arabia: A Brief History

By Ramon Knauerhase*
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Recorded Western history began in the Middle East. Long before the Greek city-states were established, there were societies in the Fertile Crescent of the Middle East whose economic development had progressed to such a level that they were producing small economic surpluses over and above their populations' immediate needs. These surpluses supported a group of individuals whose contributions to society were products of the intellect rather than of the land. The alphabet was invented; legal systems were developed; and the state became strong enough to support and protect long-distance trade. As markets became larger, external economies of scale produced accelerating economic development.

The Old Babylonian Empire covered the area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and some territory on the eastern and western banks of these rivers. Two hundred and fifty years later, the Hittites and Kassites had conquered the Old Babylonian Empire and by the seventh century B.C. the Assyrian Empire ruled from Libya to the Indus River.

During this nearly 2,000-year period of history, the people of the Arabian Peninsula remained isolated. This isolation ended about the middle of the seventh century. Inspired by a new, militant faith, the tribes of Arabia united and established an empire which, at its apogee, extended from the Pyrenees in the west to the Indus River in the east. By the beginning of the second millenium, control over the Muslim Empire had passed from Mecca and Medina to Bagdad and subsequently into the hands of the Ottoman Sultans. Save for the Hejaz around Mecca and Medina, which continued to be the religious focus of Islam, the rest of Arabia lost its importance.

It is important to understand the significance that the Arabs of the Arabian desert attach to the 200-year period of the Arab Empire. The Islamic faith does not distinguish between secular and religious matters; even those individuals who do not have a formal education learn about past glories through the informal study of the Koran. The Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula are proud of the civilizing contributions of their ancestors in law, science, mathematics, literature and philosophy, and many modern decendants of the first four caliphs believe that they can recapture some of this lost glory. They are aware that this cannot be done by reestablishing the Arab Empire, but they are convinced that they can affect political events and contribute to the reform of Islam. "The internal history of Arabia since the 18th Century can best be understood in terms of the efforts of this community [Wahhabi] to spread its doctrine. Modern Saudi Arabia is the political expression of this continuing effort."[1]

The Saudis' firm belief in their mission is reflected in the preamble of the ten-point program for the betterment of the country issued by Crown Prince Faisal ir his capacity as Prime Minister on November 6, 1962. After a brief reference to past achievements the proclamation states:

> His Majesty's Government will redouble its efforts in developing and consolidating the structure of this youthful state, and in leading its citizens to the place they deserve as a nation which, from the dawn of Arab history, was the centre of true Arabism and the origin of spreading of the eternal Islamic civilization.[2]

The history of Saudi Arabia can be divided into four periods: from about 1745 to 1818, from 1819 to 1902, from 1903 to 1953, and from 1953 to the present. The first period began when Mohammad

* This article is taken from Chapter 3 of the forthcoming book: *The Saudi Arabian Economy* (New York: Praeger) scheduled for publication in the fall of 1975.

[1] George A. Lipsky, *Saudi Arabia* (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1959), p. 43.

[2] As reprinted in Gerald DeGaury, *Faisal: King of Saudi Arabia* (London: Arthur Barker, Ltd., 1966), p. 147.

ibn Saud, the Amir of the central Nejdi town of Diriyah, offered protection to the religious reformer Mohammad Abd al-Wahab and accepted his religious reforms. In an effort to spread the unitarian doctrines of Abd al-Wahab, the ruler of Diriyah subdued the Arabian tribes. At its height, about 1810:

> the doctrines of Wahhabism held sway in some form or the other from the gates of Damascus and Baghdad to Yemen and the Hadramout, and from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea.[3]

In 1801, the "Wahhabis" captured Karbala, the Holy City of the Shiites, killing many inhabitants and destroying the domes erected over many tombs, and in 1806, Wahhabi forces seized Mecca and Medina and evicted the Ottoman Turks and their representatives.

The destruction of Karbala and the occupation of Mecca and Medina goaded the Ottoman forces into action. Sultan Mahmud II ordered Mohammad Ali, his Egyptian viceroy, to recapture the holy cities and to break the Wahhabis' power. After a seven-year campaign directed by Mohammed Ali's son, Ibrahim Pasha, the Egyptian army drove the Wahhabi zealots out of Mecca and Medina. They seized and destroyed the Saudi capital, Diriyah, capturing Abd Allah ibn Saud, the fourth ruler of the Saudi line since Mohammad ibn Saud.

THE STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY IN THE NEJD

The second period of Saudi Arabia's history begins with the capture and execution of Abd Allah ibn Saud and ends with the exile of the House of Saud to Kuwait and the coastal towns along the Arabian Gulf. Following the destruction of Diriyah the Egyptians maintained themselves in the Nejd on and off for 20 brutal years. The long struggle for freedom from Egyptian rule began in 1823, when Turki ibn Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn Saud attempted to capture Riyadh. He failed in his first attempt, but succeeded the following year and liberated the central part of the Nejd from its Egyptian conquerors. To avoid the rebuilding of Diriyah, Turki established himself in Riyadh, making it the new capital of the House of Saud.

Following the assassination of Turki on May 19, 1834, the new Imam, Faisal ibn Turki, lost control of the central and eastern parts of Arabia to the Egyptian forces of Mohammad Ali. Faisal reestablished himself in 1845, and maintained the Saudi family's authority over the various factions of the Wahhabi state until his death in 1865. From Faisal's death to the beginning of the twentieth century, the nation's history is a confused and confusing story of various factions fighting each other for control. In 1891, the Saudi family again lost control of the Wahhabi state, because fraternal quarrels between Faisal ibn Turki's sons had weakened the family's power. The quarrel resolved itself eventually in favor of Saud ibn Faisal, who died in 1875 without having united the various factions contending for authority over the state.

While the Saudis quarreled among themselves, the House of Rashid had consolidated its hold over the north-central part of the Nejd, centering on the town of Hail.

Feuding did not end with Saud's death. Faisal's fourth son, Abd al-Rahman, who was in Riyadh at the time of his father's death, claimed power. His action was disputed by Abd Allah, with the support of his brother, Mohammad, Faisal's third son. Saud's sons also claimed the right to rule. The three brothers, Abd Allah, Mohammad and Abd al-Rahman, patched up their disagreements and forced their nephews out of Riyadh. An uneasy peace settled over the area, and Abd Allah ibn Faisal was installed as Imam for the third time. In 1884, Imam Faisal attempted to curtail the rising Rashidi power. He was defeated in the battle of Hamadah, and soon thereafter Muhammad ibn Rashid established himself as ruler of the central Nejd, exiling Abd Allah to Hail, the Rashidi capital.

After Abd Allah's death, Abd al-Rahman challenged the Rashidi overlords. He lost and was forced to flee to Kuwait. The House of Saud was defeated, and it seemed that they had been permanently eliminated in the struggle for control of the Nejd. But Rashidi control of the Nejd lasted only a decade before it was again challenged by the Saud family.

THE REIGN OF ABD AL-AZIZ

In 1901, Abd al-Aziz ibn Abd ar-Rahman Al Faisal Al Saud set out from Kuwait, where the Saud family had been granted asylum, to regain his patrimony. He captured Riyadh on January 1, 1902, and inaugurated the third phase of Saudi Arabia's history.

The capture of Riyadh did not assure Abd al-Aziz his patrimony. The Nejd was still in ibn Rashid's hands. To recapture the Nejd, he had to gain the support of the Bedouin tribes of the southern Nejd. Having nothing to offer in material inducements, Abd al-Aziz attracted them by his personal reputation as a warrior and the implied booty which success in battle promised. His strongest asset was:

> his own conviction that God was on his side, and that the Moslem world still needed to be purified by Wahhabism. . . . [I]bn Saud drew men to follow him in battle by his faith, and infected them with fervent intolerant zeal.[4]

Ibn Rashid, Abd al-Aziz's opponent, was a talented commander, well versed in desert warfare. His mis-

[3] R. Bayly Winder, *Saudi Arabia in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), p. 6.

[4] David Horwarth, The Desert King (London: Collins, 1964), p. 32.

take was that he underestimated his young adversary's ability and daring. Between 1902 and 1906, ibn Rashid and Abd al-Aziz engaged in a number of battles, which ended inconclusively, as most desert battles did. Nevertheless, Abd al-Aziz was able to exploit the population's resentment of the harsh Rashidi rule, and extend his control across the Saud family's original domain.

The strongest challenge to Abd al-Aziz came in mid-1904 when ibn Rashid negotiated an alliance with the Turks. Seeing a chance to reestablish Turkish dominance over Arabia, the sultan sent eight battalions of troops in support of ibn Rashid. For the first time, Abd al-Aziz faced a modern armed force equipped with artillery. On June 15, 1904, the two armies met in a day-long battle. Abd al-Aziz's warriors managed to route the Bedouin forces but could not defeat the Turks.

But Abd al-Aziz had only to wait for the summer's heat to accomplish the task for him. The Turkish troops suffered horribly in the heat, which often climbs above 130° Fahrenheit. Unprepared for survival in the desert, many Turkish soldiers died, and when the desert warriors faced them again, they breached the Turkish ranks. Unable to use their cannons, the Turks broke and ran. Abd al-Aziz's forces carried the day. Yet this victory was not conclusive, because the House of Rashid still threatened Abd al-Aziz's control over the Nejd. The final contest came in April, 1906, when the Saudi forces surprised Rashid's army during a raid 20 miles north of Buraida. In a short, bloody skirmish, ibn Rashid was defeated and killed. Abd al-Aziz had reestablished his power over the family's domain.

Abd al-Aziz's greatest problem during this period was to gain the loyalties of the various tribes in the central Nejd. The Bedouin were fickle. Their first loyalty was to their tribe, and their leader's actions were geared to promote the tribe's well-being. In a contest, they changed sides when they saw themselves on the losing side. Often boredom made them leave their allies to return home. They liked action and enjoyed a successful raid that gave them a chance to loot. It was one of Abd al-Aziz's greatest achievements that he united all factions in support of his cause and managed to keep their loyalty after the fighting had stopped and the kingdom of Saudi Arabia had been established.

The defeat and death of ibn Rashid did not put an end to Abd al-Aziz's problems. Between 1906 and 1912, tribal quarrels and other challenges kept him in the field. In the north, the House of Rashid still controlled the country. In the east, in al-Hasa, the Turks had maintained themselves, and in the Hejaz, the Turks had installed Hussain ibn Ali, whose presence kept the Saudi prince's ambitions in check. In the south, his cousins, the Araif, were unwilling to accept his rule and fomented upheaval. Slowly, Abd al-Aziz gained the upper hand. In April, 1913, he captured Hofuf and thus eliminated Turkish influence in the al-Hasa region.

Abd al-Aziz succeeded in uniting the various tribal groups by settling the Bedouin on the land in the ikhwan (brethren) settlements.

> Some authorities see these settlements as the greatest of his achievements; for the battles and diplomatic intrigues were mainly the means of building a kingdom; the settlements were a means of giving it permanence. The first stage had often been achieved in Arabian history, but the second never.[5]

In the ikhwan settlements, tribal loyalties were supplemented by a broader loyalty, loyalty to Islam. In addition to settling on the land and pursuing agricultural activities, the ikhwan were to study the Koran under the guidance of mutawa (preachers) sent to them by the ulema. After initial difficulties, the ikhwan settlements succeeded. Within 10 years, in more than 200 settlements, men owed allegiance only to God and their king.

> [T]he settlements gave the ulema new fields for the harshest extremes of their Wahhabi faith, and gave ibn Saud, in the end, a military strength which no other ruler in Arabia could resist, except those who had British support.[6]

Furthermore, they created a new segment of society, who had given up the ways of the desert; it was this group of people around whom a stable society could be built.

After the conquest of al-Hasa, Abd al-Aziz negotiated a settlement with the Turks. While conceding the eastern region, the Turks concluded an agreement with Saud ibn Rashid, the new head of the House of Rashid in Hail, offering to supply rifles to the Rashids for a renewed attack on the Nejd. To counter the Turkish initiative, Abd al-Aziz entered into negotiations with the British that culminated in the Anglo-Saudi treaty of 1915.

WORLD WAR I

Arabia did not play an important role in the events of World War I. To weaken the Turks, the British induced Abd al-Aziz to attack the Rashids. In January, 1915, Saudi and Rashidi forces met at Jirab in the Quasim area, in a fierce battle during which the British representative to Abd al-Aziz was killed. Both sides claimed victory, but as usual in desert warfare, the battle settled nothing. The House of Saud was still threatened by the Rashids. A second attack on Hail, launched in 1918, also failed.

While the British dealt with Abd al-Aziz in inner Arabia, they also negotiated with the Grand Sharif of

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 69.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

Mecca and ruler of the Hejaz, Hussain ibn Ali, a member of the Hashemite family. Hussain, who had been born in Mecca but spent nearly all his life at the Sultan's court, was appointed Sharif of Mecca by the Turks in an attempt to consolidate Ottoman rule in the Hejaz. The British saw a chance to weaken the Turkish enemy further by inducing Hussain to secede from the Ottoman Empire. In July, 1916, Hussain proclaimed his independence from Constantinople, claiming the title of King of the Arabs. The British, however, recognized him only as King of Hejaz.

At the end of World War I, the British had to choose between their two Arabian allies. They opted for support of Hussain in the belief that his better trained and equipped army was superior to Abd al-Aziz's warrior force. Encouraged by their support, Hussain launched an attack in May, 1919, on the oasis of al-Khurma on the western fringes of Abd al-Aziz's domain. The invading force was met by Saudi ikhwan warriors of the al Khurma area. The ikhwan struck in the middle of the night, killing almost all the invading force. It has been estimated that only about 100 of the 4,000 man force escaped the massacre. When Abd al-Aziz arrived at the scene, the way to Mecca and the Hejaz lay open before him, but he did not grasp the opportunity. Instead, he turned to the conquest of his northern enemy, the Rashids, and in 1921 conquered Jabal Shammar and its capital, Hail. This put an end to the Rashidi threat.

With the northern frontier secured, the limits of the Saudi state between Iraq and Kuwait required definition. The problem was settled late in 1922 by the creation of two neutral zones, one between Saudi territory and Iraq, and the other between Saudi territory and Kuwait.

After the delineation of the borders with Iraq and Kuwait on the one side, and Abd al-Aziz's territory on the other side, only one unsettled problem remained: the Hejaz. The ikhwan tried to persuade Abd al-Aziz to annex the Holy Cities, Mecca and Medina, and to purge them of the many unholy practices condoned by Hussain. Abd al-Aziz held his troops in check, but when Hussain declared himself caliph, following the abolition of the caliphate by the Turkish Republic, the Saudis decided to act. The mountain city of Taif was captured in September, 1924, and Mecca fell in October of that same year. As soon as the ikhwan had established themselves in the Holy City, they proceeded to demolish the decorative domes over graves and other signs of deviation from fundamental Koranic guidelines.

The port city of Jidda was besieged. The Saudis did not attempt to attack the city, being content with an occasional artillery bombardment. In keeping with ancient practice, Abd al-Aziz lifted the siege for the duration of the pilgrimage season. In December, 1925, Medina surrendered, with the stipulation that the dreaded ikhwan would not enter the city. Two weeks later, Jidda fell, and Hussain's eldest son, Ali, who had succeeded his father, left for Iraq. Saudi sovereignty had been established from al-Hasa in the east to the Hejaz in the west and from the rub-al Khali in the south to the Nafud in the north.

Following his victory in the Hejaz, Abd al-Aziz set up a system of control over the Bedouin. His approach was direct and simple. In case of lawlessness, the chief of each tribe was responsible for the punishment of the malefactors. If the chief failed to punish the offenders, the chief of the neighboring tribe was responsible for taking action; if that failed, Abd al-Aziz was ready to move in with his army. This system of law enforcement was effective, and for the first time in the history of the Arabian Peninsula intertribal warfare and general lawlessness were controlled. Peace had finally come to Arabia.

Throughout this period, Abd al-Aziz was in constant financial difficulties. There were times when his treasury consisted of the silver coins he carried in his saddle bags. With the capture of the Hejaz, there was some financial relief, because taxation of the pilgrims yielded additional revenues. Nevertheless, when Major Frank Holmes, a free-lance prospector, approached him regarding a license for oil exploration, Abd al-Aziz granted him the exploration rights for an area of over 30,000 square miles in al-Hasa. The search for oil was unsuccessful. But it was only a matter of time until oil would be found in the desert.

After his victory over the Rashidi, Abd al-Aziz was proclaimed Sultan of the Nejd and its Dependencies. On January 8, 1926, the citizens of Mecca swore allegiance to him and proclaimed him King of the Hejaz. About a year later, the people of the Nejd proclaimed him King of the Nejd, and Abd al-Aziz became King of Hejaz and Nejd and Its Dependencies. In 1927, Great Britain recognized Abd al-Aziz's domain as an independent, sovereign state, and on September 22, 1932, the country was renamed the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Before Abd al-Aziz could consolidate his success and forge the diverse regions and tribes into a coherent nation-state, he had to solve one final problem: what to do about the ikhwan. The ikhwan had been the mainstay of his army. Inspired by their religious fanaticism, they had fought in the name of God and Abd al-Aziz. Spurred on by sectarian zeal, they had contributed greatly to his victories. However, their narrow-minded dedication to Wahhabism led to bloody excesses. Believing that their opponents had deviated from the path of the correct faith, and that non-Wahhabi Muslims were in the same class as unbelievers, they murdered and plundered ruthlessly whenever they conquered the opposition. The mas-

sacre of over three hundred inhabitants after the victory of Taif is only one example of ikhwan ruthlessness.

Following his victories in the Hejaz, Abd al-Aziz no longer needed their services and sent them back to their tribes. Unfortunately, however, he had created an organism beyond his control. When the ikhwan returned home, they found life dull. Agricultural activities, which had never appealed to them, could not absorb their energy. The knowledge of the existence of numerous Muslim communities not yet cleansed by submission to the Wahhabi discipline continued to stimulate their fanaticism. Frustrated in their religious zeal and bored by their humdrum existence as farmers, they disobeyed Abd al-Aziz and raided across the border in Iraq and Kuwait. But they changed the nature of desert raiding. Instead of raiding a community and driving off the herds of camels and goats, leaving the population unharmed, they entered Iraq and killed all men and boys, driving off the herds and leaving the women and children helpless in the desert.

The Iraqi and Kuwait governments protested to Abd al-Aziz in vain. He would not, or could not, restrain his erstwhile supporters. Forced to act, the invaded nations organized a defense. On the Iraqi side, John Glubb, later known as Glubb Rasha, organized a defense based on aircraft and truck-mounted cannons. Slowly, the defenders gained the upper hand, and the raiding tribes of ikhwan turned from raids across the borders to raids of neighboring tribes within the kingdom. This was a mistake, because it gave Abd al-Aziz an excuse to oppose them. He left the Hejaz and moved his army into the Eastern Province. On March 29, 1929, the two armies met in the Battle of Sibilla, the last battle in the traditional, time-honored desert fashion. The rebels lost. Although some of the rebellious ikhwan held out for another 12 months, Abd al-Aziz had led his last charge. He subsequently turned to the establishment of an administrative system for the nation he had created.

No sooner had the ikhwan problem been settled in 1930 then another problem arose: the King had run out of cash. Since the conquest of the Hejaz, his main source of income had been the pilgrims. Although revenue was inadequate, given the nation's needs, it did provide relief. But the pilgrimage depends on the prosperity of the Muslim world. When the Great Depression of the early 1930's spread from Europe and America, it reduced the number of pilgrims, and Abd al-Aziz faced a crisis.

The King cared little about fiscal matters and assigned them to his treasurer, al-Sulaiman. The fiscal system was based on the assumption that the national revenues were the King's private income; the remainder was allocated for general administrative purposes only after his and his family's needs had been met. Of course, this is not the way to run the government of a nation extending across more than one million square miles. By 1931, the kingdom could not repay its foreign debt; much more important, the minor civil servants were not being paid. As their pay fell more and more in arrears, they returned to their old habits of swindling King and public alike. This created a tradition of corruption and fiscal irresponsibility that even today is a feature of government in Saudi Arabia.

The pilgrimage of 1931 made it clear that the Hadj was an unreliable source of revenue. Abd al-Aziz finally had to face his fiscal crisis, and the idea of attracting oil prospectors was revived. According to H. S. StJ. B. Philby, an Englishman who had converted to the Muslim faith and had attached himself to the King as a sometime adviser, the events leading to the King's decision to look for oil concessionaires began as follows:

> One day I was in the royal car with him, on one of his afternoon excursions, when he let himself go on the subject of his country's prospects. If the pilgrimage was to fail like this in the coming years, the country would be faced by ruin, for it had no other assets of any value. I tried to rally him: "Really," I said, "there is no ground for despair, provided you are prepared to help yourself, instead of waiting for God to save you. 'For verily God doth not change the state of a people unless they change their state themselves' (this was a favorite Quranic quotation of his). You are like a man sleeping over a buried treasure and complaining of poverty, while unwilling to do anything about it." "What do you mean?" he asked sharply. "I mean," I replied, "that your country is full of buried riches—oil and gold for instance—which you cannot exploit yourselves and won't allow anyone else to exploit for you." "I tell you, Philby," he answered rather wearily, "that if anyone would offer me a million pounds now he would be welcome to all the concessions he wants in my country." "They are worth a great deal more than that," I said, "and if you really mean what you have just said, I know a man who can help you."[7]

The conversation led to a meeting between the King and Charles Crane, an American with a deep interest in Arabia, in May, 1931, who in turn made K. S. Twitchell, one of his engineers, available to the government. Following some maneuvering among the international oil companies, the Original Concession Agreement between the Saudi Arabian government and Standard Oil of California was signed in May, 1933. As far as Abd al-Aziz was concerned, the importance of this agreement rested in the fact that his immediate financial difficulties were reduced; there was also the hope of large future revenue from oil production—God willing.

In March, 1938, test drillings in the Dhamam area

[7] H. S. StJ. B. Philby, *Arabian Days* (London: Robert Hale, Ltd., 1948), pp. 290–291.

of al-Hasa confirmed the fact that oil was present in commercial quantities. A year later, the first oil shipment left Ras Tanura. The King's financial problems were apparently solved. But four months later World War II broke out, and progress in the oil fields came to an almost complete halt.

By 1940 oil operations had stopped, and the number of persons arriving for the Hadj had fallen to a mere trickle. The winter of 1939/40 was very dry, and agriculture and animal husbandry suffered severely. Saudi Arabia faced bankruptcy, and the King turned to the British and the oil company for aid. Despite their own desperate need during the early war years, the British managed to supply Saudi Arabia with some food and cash loans. The country needed more funds; thus Abd al-Aziz turned to the oil company with a request for $30 million spread over a five-year period. Unable and unwilling to meet his demands, the parent companies persuaded the United States government to include Saudi Arabia in the Lend-Lease Program. After two years of negotiation, President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the extension of Lend-Lease aid to the kingdom.

During World War II, Saudi Arabia remained neutral, but the King's sympathies were on the Allied side. World War II marks an important turning point in Saudi Arabia's history. Before the war, the King's efforts were concentrated on the nation's internal problems, and the kingdom's participation in world affairs was practically nonexistent. After the war, Saudi Arabia's voice began to be heard in Middle Eastern and Islamic affairs.

Abd al-Aziz died on November 13, 1953. He was succeeded by his oldest son, Saud ibn Abd al-Aziz al Saud; and Faisal ibn Abd al-Aziz, his second son, was named Crown Prince. Although Abd al-Aziz was not widely known in the Western world, he was one of the most important rulers of the Middle East. He unified the Arabian tribes and stopped their intertribal warfare. He created the Saudi state, a necessary step in the economic development of the Arabian Peninsula. Abd al-Aziz has often been maligned by Western writers as a barbarian, spendthrift ruler of a third-rate nation. On the contrary, Abd al-Aziz was the last of the medieval rulers. He had great personal courage, and knew how to deal with the Bedouin. He was honest and straightforward. Judged by the standards of early twentieth century Arabian society, he was an outstanding individual. His failure to use the immense riches that the exploitation of oil eventually made available to him grew out of the fact that the Bedouin society was not prepared to deal with this new wealth. Socially and economically, Saudi Arabia was not prepared to absorb hundreds of millions of riyals efficiently

The history of the country since Abd al-Aziz's death is characterized by several trends. On the international level, there is the struggle with Egypt, the Palestinian question, the settlement of a number of border disputes and the Saudi drive to become the leader of the Muslim world. To this list must be added Saudi Arabia's leading role in the formation of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Domestically, the nation's main concern was the establishment of a coherent economic policy designed to stimulate economic development and the continued integration of the various factions of the population.

The reign of Saud lasted 11 years, which saw the transition from Bedouin society to a settled, modern nation. Saud was unprepared to rule the country. In 1958, Crown Prince Faisal was appointed Prime Minister and the government of the nation became his responsibility. On November 5, 1964, Saud was forced to abdicate, and Faisal Ibn Abdul-Aziz Ibn Abdul-Rahman Al Faisal was invested as King and Imam of Saudi Arabia.

Contrary to experience in other Arab states, in Saudi Arabia the change of rulers proceeded in an orderly, peaceful fashion. Faisal's appointment as Prime Minister was forced upon Saud by the family after consultation with the ulema. The original plan had been to depose Saud and place Faisal on the throne. Faisal refused the offer of investiture, and accepted the appointment as Prime Minister instead. Although he was well known in the Hejaz, he was less well known in the eastern part of the nation. To overcome this handicap, it was suggested that he make a series of radio and television addresses. He carried this suggestion several steps further by giving a series of speeches in various parts of the country, a novel approach that gained him recognition and support among the populace.

Faisal is a strong and able administrator. Within a few days of his appointment as Prime Minister he issued a communiqué in which he offered to participate in an effort to settle a number of outstanding issues involving relations with other Arab countries. This effort met with failure. The new Prime Minister was more successful, however, in his attempts to reform Saudi Arabia's monetary system.

Saudi Arabia's policy with respect to the Palestinan question has not changed since the days of Abd al-Aziz. The old King had argued that Palestine was

(Continued on page 82)

Ramon Knauerhase is the author of *An Introduction to National Socialism, 1920–1939* (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1972), and *The Saudi Arabian Economy* (New York: Praeger) scheduled for publication in the fall of 1975, and of articles on Saudi Arabia in *The Middle East Journal* and other publications.

Some observers of the increasingly tense Middle East scene argue that the Arab-Israeli crisis will be defused only when the two nuclear superpowers agree to severe limits on their arms shipments to the area. While the Vladivostok meetings between Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev and United States President Gerald Ford undoubtedly touched on such limitations, the recent past has seen a continued spiraling of military commitments.

The military presence of the superpowers in the region has also been very much in evidence in other ways. In addition to sending arms to its major clients, the United States sent its aircraft carrier *Constellation* to participate in the November, 1974, CENTO* Indian Ocean exercise (Midlink 74), alongside ships from Britain, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. The exercise was: "designed to demonstrate the alliance's strength in the approaches to the Persian Gulf and the world's richest oil reserves." It took place in the context of increased Soviet naval and air activity in the region.[15]

The CENTO exercise is instructive because it encompasses all three major United States goals in the Middle East—protecting oil supplies, limiting Soviet influence, and supporting Israel. Iran is Israel's major external source of oil. Therefore, the shipping lanes from the Persian Gulf, around the Arabian Peninsula and into the Red Sea, must be protected. During the 1973 war, the United States responded to Egypt's blockade of the Bab al-Mandeb Straits by moving its token naval force from Bahrain (in the gulf) toward the straits.

Even so, the Kissinger approach is more than arms-linked influence. The promise for continued progress in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict lies in the extent to which diverse negotiating strategies are developed in the coming months. The protagonists' capacities to wage another more devastating and technologically sophisticated war have increased; the costs of failure to negotiate a settlement have grown correspondingly.[16]

The 1974 Middle East negotiations furthered United States interests by paving the way for more cordial relations with Egypt. Soviet influence dwindled, and the Arab oil boycott was ended. However, the dilemma of the United States has always been that it has interests on both sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict. And that dilemma will continue as long as there is a stalemate at the negotiating table. ■

* Central Treaty Organization.

[15] Indian Defense Minister Swaran Singh registered his "deep concern" over the size of the exercise, in a speech to Parliament, *The New York Times,* November 21, 1974.

[16] The probable nature of a fifth war is discussed by Nadav Safran in his article "The War and the Future of the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *Foreign Affairs,* vol. 52, no. 2 (January, 1974), pp. 215–236.

SAUDI ARABIA

(Continued from page 79)

an Arab area and that the Israelis had no right to the land. He felt that the European Jews who had suffered so horribly from Nazi extermination policies should return to their country of origin, because the Allied victory had removed the Nazi threat to their existence. From Abd al-Aziz's point of view, this was reasonable; he believed that the Jewish question was a European problem, and that the sins of the Europeans should not be expiated at the expense of the Arabs.

There is considerable doubt that this position will change. King Faisal views the Israelis as intruders and he feels that now is the time to force the major oil-using nations to force Israel into compliance. He does not feel that a settlement would require the elimination of the state of Israel but he does feel that it would require Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories. There are at least two reasons behind this policy. First, King Faisal is a devout Muslim and he is fully committed to Israeli evacuation of East Jerusalem, Islam's third most holy city. He has stated repeatedly that he wants to pray in the mosque of Dom of the Rock and he would hardly do so as long as the city is in Israeli hands. Second, the "Arab Cause," that is the Arab's fight against Israel and other forces threatening Arab culture, is immensely popular among the younger Saudis. To guarantee the survival of a conservative monarchy among the left-leaning Arab states, Faisal must prove that he is willing to be in the forefront of the struggle with Israel. Only if he convinces his leftist critics of his sincerity in his commitment will he have the opportunity to further the ideal of Pan-Islamism, that is, the creation of a united Islam that cuts across national concerns.

Saudi Arabia has been an active participant in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The kingdom's major contribution has been in the form of cash subsidies to Egypt, Jordan, and certain Palestinian groups. At the Khartoum Summit meeting, Saudi Arabia pledged S.R. 630 million ($140 million) as its contribution to the Arab cause. This generous promise, which the government kept despite continued frictions between the United Arab Republic and the kingdom, contributed to the Saudi fiscal crisis of 1969/1970.

Saudi Arabia is the most conservative force in the Middle East. Until 1956, there had been no friction between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. After the overthrow of King Farouk in 1952, relations between the countries continued amicably. In 1956, however, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized all foreign property in Egypt, including that held by Saudi citizens, and relations became strained. When

Nasser announced his doctrine of Arab socialism, after his failure to gain support from the United States and the World Bank for the Aswan High Dam project, he turned to the Soviet Union for aid. The Russians saw a chance to gain a foothold in the Middle East and offered to support the project. Secure in this support, Nasser accused the United States and the other NATO countries of imperialistic behavior. Soon he broadened his attacks to include all Third World countries supporting the Western imperialists. Egypt began a propaganda war against Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria.

The relationship between Saudi Arabia and Egypt reached its low point in the fall of 1962, when Nasser intervened in the Yemen. Nasser saw an opportunity to gain the oil riches of Arabia through the back door. Until January, 1963, the conflict between the two rival factions was stalemated. Egyptian propaganda attacked Faisal again and again, trying to drive a wedge between the royal family and the younger, foreign-educated air force and army officers, and foreign-educated government employees. Consequently, Faisal broke relations with the then United Arab Republic (U.A.R.) At the end of December, 1962, the Egyptian air force attacked some Saudi border towns. In response to this attack, Faisal ordered a general mobilization. A few days later, he proclaimed his conditions for ending the war: the withdrawal of all foreign armed forces from Yemeni soil, the end of all foreign interference in internal Yemeni affairs, and guarantees that the Yemeni could choose their own government. The war in Yemen continued until the summer of 1965, when the number of Egyptian troops rose to about 60,000. Despite this formidable armed force, Egypt could not defeat the resisting loyalist forces commanded by the Imam, Muhammad al Badr. A final Egyptian offensive in the summer of 1964 failed, and King Faisal and President Gamal Abdel Nasser met in Jedda from August 22 to August 24, 1965, to work out a solution to the Yemeni impass. After the Jedda Conference, the two sides issued a memorandum laying down the basic conditions for a solution. Unfortunately, a conference of all interested Yemeni parties in Harad, Saudi Arabia, with Saudi Arabia and Egypt in attendance, failed to reach complete agreement. It did, however, achieve a cease-fire among the contending Yemeni factions.

Neither Saudi Arabia nor Egypt gained an absolute success in the Yemeni conflict. President Nasser failed to subvert the King's conservative government or to tap the country's vast resources for Egypt's development. Despite Saudi Arabia's failure to dislodge the Egyptian army from its southern border, the war had a salutary effect on the kingdom. Faisal's firm leadership in the dispute gained him greater recognition in the kingdom and was one of the factors contributing to his investiture as King and Imam. Although the danger of open warfare between the two Arab countries was averted, the relationship between them remained strained.

Another important aspect of recent Saudi Arabian history was the eastern boundary dispute. In 1949, Saudi Arabia advanced a territorial claim to the major part of Abu Dhabi, a claim that had its roots in the nineteenth century. There were several reasons for Saudi Arabia's claims in the Buraimi Oasis. It was assumed that there were large oil deposits in the area. The Saudi Arabian government was opposed to the presence of British troops in the Trucial States and wished to dislodge their presence. And, there was a faction of the ruling Saudi elite that wanted to pick up where Abd al-Aziz had stopped and wanted to extend the kingdom's rule throughout the Arabian Peninsula.

Many parties were involved in the dispute, which must be viewed as an Arabian Gulf problem rather than a local problem involving only Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi. The Iraqi government laid claim to Kuwait as part of its historical domain. The Shah of Iran advanced claims to certain islands, including Bahrain, in the gulf. In addition to the local participants, the United States, Britain and Egypt also involved themselves in the dispute. During the early 1960's, the contending factions laid down "unalterable" demands to which there appeared no amicable solution. All these disputed claims and counterclaims were settled between 1964 and 1974. Saudi Arabia recognized Abu Dhabi as an independent state, renounced its claims on the Buraimi Oasis, and agreed to a formal boundary between the two areas. Bahrain has become an independent state, and Iran has relinquished her claims on the island. Thus at the moment, at least, it appears that peace and harmony will prevail in the Arabian Gulf.

On November 6, 1962, Crown Prince Faisal issued a 10-point program outlining proposed social and economic reforms.[8] Point One called for the:

> promulgation of a Basic Law for the government of the country, drawn from the Koran and the Tradition of the Prophet and the acts of the Orthodox Caliphs, that will set forth explicitly the fundamental principles of government and the relationship between the governor and the governed. . . .

Point Two promised to draw up "legislation that will regulate the system of local government in the various provinces of the Kingdom." Point Three announced the creation of a Supreme Judicial Council and a Ministry of Justice, and Point Four outlined the establishment of:

(Continued on page 88)

[8] DeGaury, *op. cit.*, pp. 147–151.

revealed his master plan for the solution of the energy crisis.[30] He acknowledged that the oil producers had thus far paid little heed to the warnings of the consumers, since the consumers themselves had taken little action to defend themselves through cooperative efforts. He then presented his five-point program calling for:

1. The reduction of energy dependence on imported oil from one-third to one-fifth;
2. A full-scale program of research and development of alternative energy sources on a scale dwarfing the atomic bomb project;
3. The stabilization of the financial system through the creation of an international facility with an initial capitalization of $25 billion projected to rise to $50 billion in 1976, in order to recycle the petrodollars from countries where they are in excess to countries that need them to meet their energy bills;
4. Help for the developing countries, possibly through a separate trust fund in the International Monetary Fund (IMF);
5. The opening of a dialogue between the producers and the consumers.

It remains to be seen whether Kissinger's plan, if agreed upon, can persuade the oil exporting countries to lower their prices. There is certainly a fundamental community of interests, acknowledged on both sides, in the prosperity, stability and strength of the Western world. The difficulty lies in persuading the oil producers that Western stability is endangered before such damage becomes irreparable. ■

[30] Murray Marder, "U.S. Suggests 'Global' Plan on Oil Crisis," *The Washington Post*, November 15, 1974.

SAUDI ARABIA

(Continued from page 83)

a Judicial Council consisting of twenty members chosen from among the outstanding jurists and ulema to look into the matters referred to it by the State and consider all the questions and requests for advice directed to it by individual Moslems.

Point Four is very important. The Koran and the Traditions are fixed and cannot be changed. Therefore, they are limited in their applicability to modern problems. The new Council was to be a mechanism to reconcile the legal problems of a modern society with the immutable rules laid down by God and His Prophet.

Because the government is aware of its obligation "to spread the call of Islam," Point Five called for the adoption of "all means necessary for the performance of this noble task." To improve the religious climate within the kingdom, Point Six announced the resolve "to reform the Committees for Public Morality in accordance with the Sharia and Islam's lofty goals, for which they were originally created, and in such a way as to extirpate to the greatest extent evil motives from the hearts of the people." Point Seven was a promise to improve the lot of the average Saudi citizen by implementing various social legislation. Point Eight recognized the need for intensification and coordination of the economic development effort. To achieve this end, "a large number of important regulations will be issued gradually whereby the State will, before long, have a complete body of laws that will make for progress and greater activity and attract capital." Point Nine listed the priority items of the development plan. Among the projects to be undertaken were the creation of a road system; improvement of the water supply, including the construction of dams; and the encouragement of heavy and light industry. Furthermore, the memorandum called for the creation of an agricultural and an industrial bank. Finally, the establishment of the Economic Development Fund was announced. Point Ten ordered the abolition of slavery and the manumission of all slaves.

Nearly twelve years have passed since the announcement of this program, and many of the promises have been fulfilled. King Faisal's efforts in the Islamic cause are based on the assumption that Arabs and Muslims have common problems calling for a common solution. Some of these problems are: the Palestinian question; Muslim Kashmir's annexation by India and the denial of self-determination for the Muslim population; and the condition of Muslims in Russia and China. Because political, social and religious concerns are inextricably intertwined in Islam, to solve these problems advances the cause of Islam; that sacred burden is imposed on all Muslims.

Despite King Faisal's assertions that he does not wish to create an aggressive political power bloc to advance the interests of the Muslim countries, an Islamic call to solidarity will lead to such a bloc. Although the various Muslim countries have diverse social and political structures, their adherence to Islam gives them a common bond. In a world where the success or failure of policies is determined by the size of the state or the support of one of the superpowers, a united Muslim bloc could satisfy its demands for change. The recent use of the oil boycott as a sword is a case in point. There can be no doubt that the oil boycott caused a shift in United States support of Israel.

The King has been active in his efforts to advance the Islamic cause. He has traveled widely in the Muslim world, and his diplomacy has produced some solidarity among the Muslim states. A beginning has been made, and that is a most crucial step. ■

ERRATUM: We regret that Mrs. Eugenia Collier was incorrectly identified in our November, 1974, issue, on page 228. Her correct title is Visiting Lecturer, University of Maryland Baltimore County.