

POLICY PAPERS

NUMBER 37

**AFTER KING FAHD:
SUCCESSION IN SAUDI ARABIA**

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**THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Henderson, Simon. 1950-

After King Fahd: Succession in Saudi Arabia/ Simon
Henderson.

p. cm.—(Policy Papers; no. 37)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-944029-55-8

1. Saudi Arabia—Politics and government. 2. Saudi Arabia—
Kings and rulers—Succession. I. Title. II. Series: Policy Papers
(Washington Institute for Near East Policy): no. 37.

DS244.63.H46 1994

953.8—dc20

94-12154

CIP

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The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

1828 L Street N.W., Suite 1050, Washington, D.C. 20036

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 92-12154

ISBN 0-944029-55-8

Cover Design by John Wilner and Anne VandenAvond

Map by Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr.

Printed on recycled paper.

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Research for this study was undertaken while the author was a visiting fellow at The Washington Institute in 1993. The opinions expressed in this Policy Paper are those of the author and should not be construed as representing those of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, its Board of Trustees, or its Board of Advisors.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

An important part of the research for this study took the form of interviews with former American and British officials who held senior positions in the kingdom as ambassadors, military advisors, or oil company executives. Those who were willing to be identified are listed at the back. Another ten spoke on the condition of strict anonymity. All gave generously of their time and expertise; several gave what amounted to world-class tutorials on the subject. Some of those interviewed and others helped in checking facts at the draft stage so that this report could be of maximum value in informing policy debate, not only in the United States, but also in Saudi Arabia itself.

Also, the author would like to thank Jennifer Sultan, who provided research support throughout this project.

NOTE ON THE FORM OF ROYAL SAUDI NAMES

The correct form of a Saudi prince's name specifies his given name, the name of his father (indicated by *bin*, Arabic for "son of"), and sometimes that of his grandfather.

A family name is often added, such as Al Saud, meaning "the family of Saud"—the Saud in this case refers to the father of the first king in the dynasty 250 years ago, rather than the King Saud who ruled from 1953 to 1964.

Thus, the Saudi defense minister is Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud—usually abbreviated to Prince Sultan—and his son Bandar, the Saudi ambassador to Washington, is Prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz.

The term *bin* can also be transliterated as *ibn*, but this latter term is used in this study only in the name Ibn Saud, commonly used to refer to King Abdul Aziz, the founder of modern Saudi Arabia.

PREFACE

The kingdom of Saudi Arabia holds the distinction of being one of the United States' most important partners in the Middle East and one of the world's most closed societies. Indeed, although nearly a half million soldiers were deployed in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War, the culmination of a security relationship that dates from World War II, U.S. policymakers, scholars, and diplomats know surprisingly little about the internal decision-making of Saudi leaders. And of all Saudi decisions that interest U.S. policymakers, perhaps the least is known about the process of succession.

This Policy Paper, the Institute's first study on domestic Saudi politics, is an effort to shed light on the uncertain process of royal succession. A longtime observer of the Al Saud ruling family, British journalist Simon Henderson has combined exhaustive historical research with interviews of Western diplomats and oil company executives to trace the evolution of Saudi succession.

In assessing prospects for the post-Fahd succession, Henderson provides the first in-depth analysis of the impact of recent royal decrees and of the possible role of the grandsons of the legendary Ibn Saud. While cautioning against precipitous action that the Saudis might construe as unwelcome interference, Henderson sees the U.S. role as encouraging political and fiscal reform, and thus providing a more stable background for a potential succession crisis. Given the economic and political strains inside Saudi Arabia occasioned by the oil glut, this study makes an especially timely contribution to our understanding of the forces that shape change in one of the world's most volatile regions.

Mike Stein
President

Barbi Weinberg
Chairman

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ruling family of Saudi Arabia, one of the United States' most important allies in the Middle East, is heading for a crisis of leadership. Despite its modern infrastructure, paid for by huge revenues from oil exports, the kingdom's political system remains rooted in tribal structures that have scarcely evolved in the last several hundred years. Control remains tightly, although not always firmly, in the grip of the Al Saud clan, which, almost alone among the global roster of nations, incorporates its own name into the formal title of the state.

King Fahd (b.1921), whose twelve years of rule have been marked by periods of prosperity, extravagance and more recently, fiscal restraint, is 73 years old. His attempts since 1991 to bequeath a legacy of a more modern political framework and wider forum of political consultation have raised more questions about the issue of succession than they have answered. The process of succession is a murky system in which the throne passes down the line of Fahd's many brothers, while members of the next generation watch tantalized, wondering what stroke of fate will eventually give them (or a cousin) power.

Crown Prince Abdullah, who is expected to take over when King Fahd dies, is over 70 years old. Virtually all Saudi kings have begun their reigns in their fifties or early sixties and have all died in their early seventies. Furthermore, the next likely candidate after Abdullah is Sultan, who turns 70 this year. Sultan's next five oldest brothers are all already over 60.

The kingdom is therefore facing the prospect of having to appoint a new king every two or three years. Were Saudi Arabia unimportant in the world or its king a purely constitutional monarch uninvolved in the everyday business of government, this

might not matter. But the king of Saudi Arabia makes virtually all the important decisions in the country, either personally or as prime minister and chairman of the council of ministers, which functions as the kingdom's cabinet.

An additional and recent complication is that King Fahd is showing increasing signs of poor physical and mental health. Although he might remain king in name, the possibility is growing that the everyday responsibilities of government will be passed on to his immediate brothers.

The process of succession, as it is commonly understood, is supposedly a smooth one, with the throne passing from brother to brother through the line of sons fathered by the founder of the kingdom, Abdul Aziz (often referred to as Ibn Saud). The process has already been used in a variety of different circumstances—death by old age, deposition due to incompetence, and assassination. But the historical record shows that this apparent smoothness masks fierce intra-family rivalries that often fester for years. In the 250 years in which the Al Saud family has often dominated the Arabian peninsula, such rivalries have occasionally led to interruptions in its rule. Also, the notion that King Abdul Aziz wanted each of his sons to rule in turn (if they were able) is a myth. The process is a far more raw quest for power.

Succession in the future may well be complicated by the interests of Ibn Saud's grandsons, whose claim on the throne was recognized by King Fahd in an edict in March 1992. These grandsons, many of whom are already middle-aged with some holding important government positions, do not yet act as an independent constituency, but they are known to question current assumptions about the succession process. Such is the centrality of power held by the king, and such are his powers of patronage, that maneuvering for future successions is already an active part of royal family politics.

Succession—or rather, squabbles over it—could greatly affect the closeness of ties with the United States, which constitute the kingdom's most important international relationship and are among the most critical to U.S. economic well-being. However, due to the insularity of the royal family and its inbred fear of foreign encroachment on family prerogatives, Washington can only affect Saudi succession on the margins of the kingdom's internal decision-making process. In the interim, U.S. policymakers should take steps to prepare for any number of possible eventualities in a succession process whose outcome is not assured.

I THE HISTORY OF SUCCESSION

The modern state of Saudi Arabia was founded by King Abdul Aziz (Ibn Saud) in 1932. By the time he died in 1953, he had fathered forty-four sons, thirty-five of whom survived him. This feat of fatherhood was accomplished by having twenty-two wives,¹ although in keeping with Islamic tradition, he was never married to more than four at a time.² The customs of the Arabian desert are that women are kept out of the public eye and, unlike non-Islamic monarchies in the world, they have no right of succession. Upon the death of Ibn Saud, his eldest surviving son, Saud, assumed the throne and named the next-in-line, Faisal, crown prince and therefore his heir apparent.

¹ David Holden and Richard Johns, *The House of Saud* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1981), p. 14. Only nineteen bore him surviving children, and two of this total bore him only daughters. See also Brian Lees, *A Handbook of the Al Saud Ruling Family of Saudi Arabia* (London: Royal Genealogies, 1980), p. 36. This is an authoritative genealogical reference book by a former British military attaché in Saudi Arabia.

² Holden and Johns, pp. 14, 101. Abdul Aziz also had four concubines not included in this total, and would also be offered a young female companion by his host whenever he had to stay away from home overnight while traveling. See also Alexander Bligh, *From Prince to King: Royal Succession in the House of Saud in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1984). In his scholarly work, Bligh says the mothers of Nasir, Bandar, and Fawwaz were Moroccan, while those of Mansur, Mishal, Mitab, Talal, and Nawwaf were Armenian, and those of Hidhlul, Miqrin, and Hamoud were Yemeni. Being Moroccan or Yemeni implies that they were Arabs; being Armenian does not. Other authorities do not note whether they were concubines, and do not agree with Bligh on which sons are full rather than half brothers. The significance is not that Ibn Saud was not married to the mothers, but that some of them were not Arab.

There is some confusion over whether Ibn Saud had a clear idea that succession after Saud and Faisal would proceed down the line from brother to brother among his sons.¹ While this would have demonstrated pride in his offspring, what evidence there is suggests that he was merely determined to avoid a repetition of earlier disasters in the Al Saud family. Etched in his memory was the knowledge that succession had often been crucially mishandled in the more than 200 years of his family's dominance in the Arabian peninsula. On occasion, arguments between brothers and cousins had led to temporary weakening of the dominance of the Al Saud family, and occasionally had resulted in total loss of power.

THE FIRST SAUDI STATE

From a Saudi perspective, their country is older than the United States, despite occasional interruptions in rule and the fact that the Western notion of sovereign independence had not been achieved by the Saudis until this century. As founder of the modern Saudi state, Ibn Saud could trace his forebears back to the middle of the fifteenth century, when they arrived in the center of Arabia from the Hasa region to the east.² By the beginning of the seventeenth century, his ancestors had become local rulers of an area centered on the settlement of Dariyah, near modern day Riyadh. The man identified as the founder of the family was Saud bin Muhammad,³ who was succeeded as *sheikh* (local ruler) on his death in 1725 by his son Muhammad, who is usually described as the first ruler of the Al Saud dynasty.

¹ Holden and Johns, p. 240. A former U.S. ambassador claimed this view as the categorical truth, although he offered no documentary evidence. Holden and Johns comment on the appointment of Khalid as crown prince in 1965: "Within the House of Saud, however, no firm principles relating to the succession had been established. Generally, the practice—whether the leadership passed to a brother or son (the latter having been the usual procedure)—had been to choose the eldest acceptable candidate."

² Saudi history was largely compiled by researchers employed by American oil companies in the twentieth century. The companies were trying to curry favor with Ibn Saud, promote his legitimacy, and back claims for territory outside Saudi control, e.g., the Buraimi oasis. The researchers used primarily Ottoman Turk documents and Saudi oral history as source material.

³ Hence the family name of Al Saud and the name—Ibn Saud—by which his most illustrious descendant, Abdul Aziz, is often known.

The title seems well deserved. In 1745, Muhammad bin Saud, who had already achieved a reputation as a tough fighter in defending the date palm plantations of Dariyah from the attention of marauding tribes, gave refuge to a Muslim scholar from a nearby village who had been expelled for preaching an Islamic orthodoxy that criticized local practices. The scholar was Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, and his strict interpretation of Islam ("Wahhabism") found favor with Muhammad bin Saud.

The two men became allies and hatched a joint plan. With Muhammad bin Saud's tribal leadership and fighting prowess combined with Abdul Wahhab's religious zeal, they planned a *jihad* (campaign) to conquer and purify Arabia. The strategy was simple: those who did not accept the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam were either killed or forced to flee. The relationship was cemented by family intermarriage, including the marriage of Muhammad bin Saud to one of Abdul Wahhab's daughters. The alliance was the beginning of what is now referred to as the first Saudi state.

When Muhammad bin Saud died in 1765, Abdul Wahhab continued the military campaign of tribal raids with the *sheikh's* son, Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad. Together they ended up controlling most of the central area of Arabia known as the Nejd, including the town of Riyadh, now a city and the capital of Saudi Arabia. But the limits of their power and influence soon became apparent. To the southwest, the rulers of Mecca, Islam's holiest shrine, blocked their advance, while tribal entities to the north, south, and east countered Wahhabi raids with their own.

Abdul Wahhab himself died in 1792, but Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad continued the raiding parties, pillaging the Shi'a Muslim holy city of Kerbala (now in Iraq) in 1802 and also conquering Mecca in 1803. Such activity—and success—elicited reaction. Abdul Aziz was assassinated in 1803, presumably by a Shi'a Muslim seeking revenge for the desecration of the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson in Kerbala. And the Ottoman Sultan in Constantinople (modern day Istanbul), who regarded himself as the guardian of Mecca, engaged the ruler of Egypt, Muhammad Ali, to mount an expedition to regain Mecca and Medina, the latter having fallen to Wahhabi forces in 1805.

In the face of this superior military might, the Wahhabis, now led by Abdul Aziz's son Saud, lost control of Medina and Mecca in 1812 and 1813, respectively. Saud himself died in 1814, and his son Abdullah concluded a truce with the Ottoman forces. In 1816,

however, another Egyptian army pushed into the Nejd region of central Arabia, and razed Dariyah two years later. Abdullah was sent as a captive to Constantinople and later executed. Abdullah's brother Mishari briefly laid claim to the throne in 1820, but in most Saudi eyes, the first Saudi state ended with the death of Abdullah.

THE SECOND SAUDI STATE

In 1824, Turki, the son of another Abdullah (one of Abdul Aziz's brothers), evicted the Egyptians from the Nejd and occupied Riyadh. The Egyptians were pushed back to the Hijaz area on the Red Sea coast that includes Mecca and Medina. Turki's claim to the throne was contested, however, and he was assassinated in 1834 and succeeded by his son Faisal, the future grandfather of Ibn Saud. When Egyptian forces returned in 1838, Faisal was captured and sent as a prisoner to Cairo. In his place the Egyptians installed Khalid (a brother of Abdullah and Mishari), who died in 1841. Abdullah bin Thunayyan, a great grandson of Muhammad bin Saud's brother, ruled for two years until Faisal escaped from Cairo in 1843 and returned to reestablish his rule with the aid of the Rashid tribe.

Faisal's second reign was notable for its longevity (twenty-two years), restoration of order, and comparative prosperity.¹ But it is also remembered for the utter chaos that ensued after his death in 1865, as two of his sons squabbled over succession. The eldest, Abdullah, assumed the throne initially but lost the position to his brother Saud in 1871, and during the fighting the family lost control over much of central and eastern Arabia where it had exerted influence.

On Saud's death in 1875, leadership of the tribe passed briefly to a third brother, Abdul Rahman. But Abdullah regained power the same year, and retained the position until his death in 1889, when Abdul Rahman became head of the tribe again. By this time, the Rashid tribe, which had ruled Hail (the area northwest of Riyadh) at Faisal's request since 1835, had with Ottoman backing extended its influence over the remaining Saudi territory. After two years as ruler, Abdul Rahman was forced to flee with his family in 1891 to

¹ Ibn Saud's children today lay claim to this heritage by describing themselves as Al Faisal Al Saud—i.e., King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz Al Faisal Al Saud.

the independent sheikhdom of Kuwait.¹ This is considered the end of the second Saudi state.²

THE THIRD SAUDI STATE³

In 1902, Abdul Rahman's 22-year-old son Abdul Aziz (Ibn Saud) led a group of fifty armed men out of Kuwait and, in a daring night raid, seized control of Riyadh back from the Rashid tribe. Realizing his son was a more effective leader, Abdul Rahman abdicated in his favor.

Regaining control of former Saudi territory proved a difficult task for Ibn Saud. In the next ten years he succeeded only in ousting the rival Rashid clan from the Qasim region that lies between Riyadh and Hail to the northwest. His advance was contested from within the Al Saud family by the descendants of his father's elder brothers, who threw in their lot with the Rashids. Ibn Saud captured three of them in 1906, and instead of killing them, offered them a home and a place in the family. But an attempt by two nephews to poison him in 1910 illustrated the treacherous nature of this side of the family, and the rebellion continued for another six years.⁴

Ibn Saud's military prowess was reinforced in 1912 when he inaugurated the *Ikhwan* (brethren), a religious brotherhood of the nomadic tribes, and gave them the task of conquering Arabia in the name of Wahhabism. The eastern region of Hasa fell in 1913, and three years later the last and most powerful of the Rashids, Saud bin Rashid, surrendered. Using a technique for which he became renowned, Ibn Saud moved swiftly to remove the threat of opposition from the Rashid clan by marrying Saud bin Rashid's widow, adopting her children, and making peace with her relatives.

¹ The irony of the Kuwaiti ruling family having to flee to sanctuary in Saudi Arabia when Saddam Hussein invaded in 1990 was appreciated in both countries.

² Saudi officials emphasize the role of external forces in destroying the first and second Saudi states, preferring to ignore the actions of neighboring non-Saudi tribes and the effect of the squabbling over power within the Saudi dynasty.

³ Some historians refer to this as the second Saudi dynasty, grouping together the whole of Saudi history from 1745 to 1891 as the first Saudi dynasty.

⁴ For this and other instances of treachery, the clan became known as the *Araif*, a term usually given to camels lost in one tribal raid and then recaptured in another.

6 AFTER KING FAHD

In a similar vein, he had earlier pardoned Saud Al Kabir, an opposing relative, and given his favorite sister, Nura, to him as a wife. Ibn Saud's purpose for such marriages was blatantly political: it brought opposing groups onto his side in the conquest of the country.

In 1921, Ibn Saud's forces seized the Asir region from Yemen, and finally took control of the Hail area from the Rashids. By the end of 1925, the Ikhwan had also conquered the Hijaz area, giving Ibn Saud control of the two Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The ruler of the Hijaz, Sherif Hussein, was forced to flee, but the British—grateful for the help Hussein had given them against the Ottoman Turks—installed his sons Abdullah and Faisal as the rulers of Transjordan and Iraq, respectively.

By now the Ikhwan were operating virtually out of control. They had carried out massacres at Taif in 1924 and in the Nejd in 1929, and were raiding deep into Jordan and Iraq, which were British protectorates. Ibn Saud had reached agreements on borders with the British, who used aircraft equipped with machine guns to enforce them, and knew he had to take action to suppress the *Ikhwan*. He finally did so at the battle of Sibila in 1929.

Since 1927, Ibn Saud had called himself king of the Hejaz, the Nejd, and its dependencies, but in September 1932, he declared himself king of Saudi Arabia.

THE CADET BRANCHES

One of the legacies of such a history is the emergence of a variety of different branches of the family, at varying distances from the main line of inheritance and thus from power. A key strength of the House of Saud this century has been its ability to unite the various branches of the family in the common purpose of running the country, rather than openly feuding about which branch is paramount and where the line of succession should run. Although many members do not have a direct role in government, their unity and support are crucial in maintaining rule by the Al Saud.

Of additional importance is their sheer number. The main line of the House of Saud numbers in the hundreds (Saud bin Abdul Aziz alone had more than fifty sons), but the so-called "cadet branches" (sometimes also known as the "collateral branches")

multiply that figure many times. In the mid-1970s there were estimated to be as many as 20,000.¹

The senior of these cadet branches, and nominally the titular senior branch of the family, are the Al Saud Al Kabir, the descendants of Saud, the elder brother of Abdul Aziz's father. In 1903, the son of this Saud, another Abdul Aziz, contested the right of Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rahman to become the ruler. The feud was only dissipated when Ibn Saud arranged for his sister Nura to marry the most powerful surviving member of the clan, Saud Al Kabir. Since then, the Al Kabir clan have become an influential branch of the Saudi royal family, but they tend to be kept away from political power.

Another branch is the Bani Jiluwi, descendants of the younger brother of Abdul Aziz's grandfather Faisal. The Bani Jiluwi allied themselves with Ibn Saud to defuse the threat of the Al Kabir clan. Abdullah Al Jiluwi served as Ibn Saud's deputy commander and helped to conquer the eastern region of Arabia. A third branch, the Al Turki, are the descendants of another of Faisal's brothers. A fourth branch is the Thunayyan, who descend from a brother of Muhammad, first ruler of the Al Saud, and who have the additional legitimacy of providing the ninth emir, Abdullah. A fifth branch, the Al Farhan, descend from one of Muhammad's other brothers.

OTHER CRUCIAL CLANS

Two other groups that have married into the Al Saud have become crucial, and therefore deserve mention. The Al al-Sheikh are the descendants of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, the original *sheikh* of Wahhabi Islamic orthodoxy. The family has traditionally provided the *ulema* (religious leaders) who hold crucial positions in law and education, both as government ministers and in the supreme religious council. Today they are spread throughout the civil service, security services, and military. The original marriage link was made at the beginning of the dynasty, when Muhammad bin Saud cemented his relationship with Muhammad Abdul Wahhab by marrying his daughter, and the intermarriage has

¹ Lees, p. 64. The same figure is also given in Holden and Johns. Members of these branches can describe themselves as princes, with the additional honorific of "His Highness," abbreviated as HH. By contrast, direct male descendants of Abdul Aziz call themselves "His Royal Highness" or HRH. Saudi tribal leaders can use the title "prince" but cannot use the honorific HH nor HRH.

continued. For example, the mother of the late King Faisal was also an al-Sheikh.

The Al Sudairi are an Arabian tribe that became linked with the royal family through one of its leaders, Ahmad bin Muhammad Al Sudairi, an early supporter of Ibn Saud. His daughter Hassa was married to Ibn Saud and bore the king seven sons (including the current King Fahd) known as the Sudairi Seven.¹ Two other Al Sudairis, Jauhara bint Saad and Haiya bint Saad, were also wives of Ibn Saud. The sons of Ahmad bin Muhammad Al Sudairi—and, in recent years, his grandsons—have held key positions as governors and deputy governors of some of Saudi Arabia's thirteen provincial sub-divisions.²

THE DEATH OF IBN SAUD

In the early years, Ibn Saud assigned only his very oldest sons to government roles in order to consolidate his rule. His son Faisal had effectively been his foreign minister since 1919, and from 1926 was the local ruler of the Hijaz. Saud, Faisal's older brother and, since the death of Turki in 1919, the oldest son, took on a similar role for the central Nejd province in 1932. But for many other roles, Ibn Saud looked to other branches of the family, as well as to tribes such as the Al Sudairis that supported him. With such an extensive family tree there were many candidates, but the choice was difficult: as king, Ibn Saud had to spread his relatives throughout the country in order to extend his control, but not give them sufficient power to contest his leadership or demand a right to the succession.

The shrewd king achieved a balance of tensions by building consensus in the bedouin tradition of tribal democracy, wherein the *sheikh* reaches agreement with the heads of the different families, a method that continues to epitomize decision-making in the kingdom today (one former ambassador labeled it a "bedoucracy"). In 1933 Ibn Saud defused potential problems among his own sons and other relatives by making it clear that Faisal would be Saud's crown prince when the latter became king. Family

¹ Apart from Fahd, the other sons are (in order of birth) Sultan, Abdul Rahman, Nayef, Turki, Salman, and Ahmad.

² Michael Field, *Regional Development in Saudi Arabia* (London: Committee for Middle East Trade, 1983), p. 53. Field gives a partial Sudairi family tree showing six sons and seven grandsons as (or having been) governors or deputy governors. See *Middle East Economic Digest*, October 1, 1993 for a list of provincial governors, showing that three are Al Sudairis.

loyalty, it was felt, would focus more readily around a partnership than a single figure.¹ To give legitimacy to the decision, Ibn Saud had it approved by the *ulema*.

In 1947 an American doctor who examined Ibn Saud reported that apart from arthritis in his knees, he had a life expectancy of at least ten to fifteen years. Three years later, however, other American medical experts found him increasingly senile and permanently confined to a wheelchair. He eventually died in November 1953, eight months after delegating some of his powers to Crown Prince Saud and a council of ministers. On the day of his death, Saud was proclaimed the new king of Saudi Arabia.

By the time Ibn Saud died, the kingdom had started on the road to modernity. Standard Oil of California had struck oil in the kingdom in 1938, and was soon joined by Texaco. World War II established the crucial role of oil in the world economy, and by 1948 Standard Oil of New Jersey (now Exxon) and Socony-Vacuum (Mobil) had joined what became known as the Arabian American Oil Company, or Aramco. The expansion provided extra capital and marketing outlets, and the group became the single largest American enterprise outside the United States.

Saudi Arabia had yet to become wealthy, however. During the early years of World War II, Ibn Saud had to rely on cash and goods from Britain and advances against oil royalties. In 1943, Washington started supplying direct financial assistance, goods, and bullion worth \$33 million over the next two years. This was followed in 1945 by a \$57 million aid package.

SAUD'S REIGN: YEARS OF CRISIS

In many ways Saud was a strange appointment as king, reflecting perhaps uncertainty rather than confidence in the royal family. As early as 1933, when he was appointed crown prince, Saud's leadership qualities were already considered inferior to those of his immediate younger brother, Faisal. By the time Ibn Saud died, the disparity in abilities was even more apparent. As one source commented, "Saud was already known as a good-for-nothing." A spendthrift, Saud celebrated his accession by demolishing one lavish palace and building an even more opulent one in its place.

¹ Robert Lacey, *The Kingdom* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981).

The challenges that quickly faced Saud were not principally economic, however, but rather reflected the political turbulence of the region. Saud did not perceive the overthrow of the king of Egypt and the emergence of Gamal Abdul Nasser as leader in 1952 as a threat to other Arab monarchies like his own, but instead as a way of taking revenge against what he saw as the sins of British and American imperialism. Washington was blamed for the establishment of Israel, while London had blocked a Saudi bid to seize the Buraimi oasis on the border of what is now the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

In 1955, King Saud joined Egypt and Syria in a joint command against the Baghdad Pact, a British-led alliance with Turkey, Iraq, and Pakistan that was intended to stop the spread of Soviet influence into the Middle East. In 1956, he supported Egypt when British and French forces seized the Suez Canal. To make matters worse, Saud was also maneuvering at home to prevent Faisal's eventual succession by engineering the accession of his own son, Muhammad.

By March 1958, the other members of the royal family had had enough, and they called for a full transfer of domestic, foreign, and financial policy to Crown Prince Faisal, although Saud was not asked to give up the throne. Two days later the transfer of power was announced on Mecca Radio. The following month Faisal issued a new foreign policy statement declaring rapprochement with Britain and France, and drew up a charter for the council of ministers. In May, he discovered that the treasury was nearly bankrupt and had to prune budgets and suspend payments on government debts to restore fiscal stability. In June, he banned luxury imports.

Saud, meanwhile, was annoyed at the turn of events and determined to regain power. Faisal's economic stringency played into his hands: Saud was able to use his personal funds for building projects attractive to the tribes, while also seeming to encourage reform by offering a form of representative government. By December 1960, support for Faisal had so eroded that he resigned, and Saud formed a new council of ministers with himself as prime minister. His brother Talal was appointed minister of finance, but resigned a few months later when he realized that Saud was not as interested in constitutional change as he was. A year later and under pressure from the senior royal princes, Saud put Faisal in charge while he went abroad for medical treatment. It was a position Faisal was determined not to relinquish.

To the public eye, however, the chaos of the Al Saud continued. Prince Talal openly sided with Nasser by congratulating him when Egypt test-fired a long-range missile. Despite Nasser's statement that, in order "to liberate all Jerusalem, the Arab peoples must first liberate Riyadh," Talal was joined in Cairo by his brothers Badr and Fawwaz and a cousin. Back in Riyadh, his brother Abdul Mohsin voiced support for their alignment with Nasser and Talal's appeal for the creation in Saudi Arabia of a constitutional democracy within a monarchical framework.

In the meantime, Saud's continued ill-health allowed Faisal to strengthen his own position. In March 1962, Faisal appointed Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani as oil minister, and a few months later replaced Saud's sons with some of his own brothers on the council of ministers. By the end of 1963, with Faisal again in charge during one of Saud's absences, it became clear that the king was having increasing doubts about whether he would ever be able to regain full powers.

In March 1964 Faisal provoked a crisis in Riyadh by issuing an ultimatum (delivered by the grand *mufti*) that he intended to retain power and wanted Saud's acceptance of this state of affairs. Saud refused and mobilized his royal guard; Faisal countered by ordering the much stronger National Guard to surround Saud's forces. The royal guard surrendered and the *ulema* issued a *fatwa* (legal opinion) transferring executive powers to Faisal while still allowing Saud to remain king. Eight months later, Saud abdicated and swore his allegiance to Faisal.

Faisal did not appoint a crown prince until the spring of 1965. The obvious contender for the position was the next in line, Muhammad, but he was considered unsuitable due to his bad temper and frequent drunkenness.¹ Muhammad is also said to have been disinterested in the administrative and ceremonial functions of the office and so, some weeks after Faisal's accession, he also stepped aside.

¹ Because of these personality traits, Muhammad was known as Abu Sharrain, "father of the twin evils." He later ordered the death by shooting of his granddaughter Mishail after she was found to be having an adulterous affair; her lover was beheaded. The story was told in a 1980 British film documentary, *Death of a Princess*, after which the British ambassador was temporarily withdrawn at Saudi insistence.

The next in line was Khalid, a full brother to Muhammad and two years younger. Unlike his brother, Khalid was a calmer individual and, although also uninterested in government, an able conciliator within the family. This was a much needed role after the schisms of Saud's reign.¹ Faisal remained the prime minister but gave the title of deputy prime minister to Khalid.

THE ASSASSINATION OF FAISAL

Faisal's reign came to an abrupt end in March 1975, when he was shot by his 26-year-old nephew, also called Faisal, who was the son of his half-brother Musaid. Faisal bin Musaid had gone to the king's office on the pretext of a meeting and fired three shots at close range. One tore an artery in the king's throat, and he died within an hour. The American-educated prince was probably seeking revenge for the death of his ultra-religious brother Khalid, who was shot by Saudi police in 1965 during a demonstration against the introduction into the kingdom of television, which he considered counter to Islam.

The shock of Faisal's death was doubled by the realization that the assassin came from within the family. The nation learned of it from an announcer on Riyadh Radio, who broke down sobbing while giving the news. A subsequent broadcast the same day announced that Khalid had become king.

The appointment of Fahd as crown prince was less straightforward. Two brothers born before him, Nasir bin Abdul Aziz and Saad bin Abdul Aziz, theoretically had prior claims, but both were considered weak candidates. By contrast, Fahd had served as minister of education from 1953 to 1960 and minister of interior from 1962 to 1968, and had gained substantial experience and an unequalled reputation as a successful technocrat, both of which the increasingly wealthy kingdom needed. Moreover, since 1968 he had served as the second deputy prime minister—effectively Faisal's

¹ For years after his deposition, official Saudi history ignored Saud and his portrait was not seen in public places alongside those of Ibn Saud, Faisal and Khalid. Only in 1979, fifteen years after his deposition and ten years after his death, was his memory revived. His portrait or photograph now appears in Saudi official literature, although a booklet published by the Saudi embassy in London to mark Saudi national day (September 23) in 1993 avoided the problem by including pictures of only Ibn Saud and King Fahd.

deputy, since Khalid's position as first deputy prime minister was purely honorific.

In fact, Fahd's credentials were such that some diplomats in Jeddah thought Khalid would be passed over entirely and Fahd would become king, but they underestimated the Al Saud's sense of family unity. The key player in the action was the previously passed over Prince Muhammad, who met with Khalid and the other brothers in Riyadh that evening. Greeting Khalid, he gave him the *baya* (oath of loyalty) and then turned and gave Fahd the same oath. In so doing, he established the line of succession that was not challenged by the other brothers present. Indeed, Nasir and Saad were said to have been the next princes to swear their allegiance.

THE DEATH OF KHALID: A SMOOTH TRANSITION

Khalid's reign was, not surprisingly, undynamic. The tribulations of government—including the fall of the Shah of Iran in January 1979 and the takeover by religious fanatics of the grand mosque in Mecca in November that same year—were handled for the most part by Fahd, who retained the title of first deputy prime minister but was in effect prime minister as well.

But the appointment of Abdullah, commander of the National Guard and theoretically the next in line, as second deputy prime minister sparked off a family debate about the degree to which Fahd's role should be formalized. By 1977 there were real concerns about Khalid's health and strong rumors that he would have to retire.¹

The question of whether Abdullah should be given additional authority as a crown prince-in-waiting became pertinent, with some princes said to prefer Sultan, Fahd's oldest full brother, who had served as the minister of defense and aviation since 1962. Fahd was believed to prefer Sultan as well. Abdullah, however, seemed determined to remain commander of the National Guard, feeling that otherwise Sultan, as minister of defense, would be physically able to stop him from succeeding. According to one report, the issue was debated in Riyadh by 250 princes on August 16, 1977.

¹ Khalid had open heart surgery in 1972 while crown prince, two operations on his left hip in 1977, and went on to have a heart bypass operation in 1978. The rumors appeared as reports in the Arab media, but were officially denied by the Saudis.

At this meeting or around this time, Fahd is said to have offered to appoint Abdullah as crown prince if the latter agreed to give up control of the National Guard, which would then have either remained a separate force under the command of Prince Salman (another of Fahd's full brothers) or been integrated into the regular armed forces under Sultan. Abdullah rejected this offer, however, and the line of succession remained unresolved. When Khalid died in May 1982, Fahd was proclaimed king by senior princes led by Prince Muhammad, and he nominated Abdullah crown prince the same day.

FAHD ATTEMPTS TO SET THE SUCCESSION

While Khalid's appointment of Abdullah as second deputy prime minister was a simple acknowledgment of his claim to the throne, Fahd had greater problems after he became king. In a move that created renewed fears among his half-brothers, Fahd named Sultan as the second deputy prime minister. Along with their other five full brothers (the so-called "Sudairi Seven"), Fahd and Sultan were renowned for their ability and ambition, and Ibn Saud's other sons were reportedly worried that they would lose their chance to become king if the Sudairis retained succession and eventually passed it to their sons.

The nomination of Sultan as second deputy prime minister was not without opposition. Two other brothers were in line ahead of him. Any protestations by the younger, Musaid, could be ignored, since his son had assassinated King Faisal. But the interests of Bandar, born in 1923 (the same year as Abdullah), were harder to disregard. Not only did he want to be the next in line, he also wanted to be minister of defense. A family dispute resulted, and his claim on the defense ministry was ultimately rejected on the grounds that he had no previous administrative experience. As compensation, two of his sons were given high positions.¹

¹ Mansour is the commander of the air base at the Red Sea port of Jeddah, and Faisal is governor of Qassim province.

II FACTORS AFFECTING SUCCESSION

The process by which decisions are made in Saudi Arabia remains obscure despite continual analysis by diplomats, oil executives, military specialists, and others. The more well-informed believe that the number and identity of the princes and non-royal participants involved varies from issue to issue, with important decisions being made by the king alone once he feels a consensus has been reached. When consensus remains elusive, decisions are merely delayed. This system owes its origins to the traditional way decisions are made in nomadic bedouin Arab tribes—the so-called “bedoucracy” in which the ruling *sheikh* consults with the elders of the tribe. The process is not one of equality, but it generally ensures loyalty and acquiescence rather than protest and revolt.

Succession, however, is a special decision that tolerates little delay. Although the crown prince and heir apparent can immediately assume the reins of power, they are curiously rather powerless in confirming the process. In a theoretical sense, the rest of the royal family is powerless too, due to the established role of the *ulema*.

THE ROLE OF THE *ULEMA*

According to convention, a new Saudi king relies upon the other princes to confirm his position by swearing an oath of allegiance. The *ulema* must then declare the new king an *imam* (Muslim leader). This declaration can only be made on the basis of a *fatwa* that the succession is legitimate. The approval of the nation’s religious leaders not only authenticates the succession on religious grounds, but also serves as a reminder of the historically close relationship between the House of Saud and the Wahhabi sect.

In theory, there is a danger that the *ulema* will be independent in their judgment and issue a *fatwa* bequeathing leadership outside the normal line of succession, but this has never happened. The *ulema* who issue the *fatwa* are appointed by the king to the Supreme Religious Council. They have never taken a view independent of the wishes of the senior members of the family. (It was perhaps King Saud's mistake not to have appointed more loyal religious leaders, so as to prevent the *fatwa* issued against him in 1964 that legalized his deposition.)

Thus, the choice of king is effectively the preserve of the royal family, although the individuals involved and the relative size of their "votes" varies substantially.

THE ROYAL BROTHERS

When Ibn Saud chose his eldest son Saud as crown prince in 1933, Saud had already been heir apparent since 1919, when first-born Turki died in an influenza epidemic. While the decision to confer the title on Saud appears to have been his own, Ibn Saud's declaration that Faisal should be Saud's crown prince was more complicated. Not only did it make clear that the succession would pass from brother to brother among his sons, but it was also intended to ward off criticism from other family members who thought Saud would be a poor king, by showing that the government would partly be in Faisal's more capable hands. The princes who may have expressed disquiet about the dangers of Saud taking the throne were probably Ibn Saud's brothers—Muhammad bin Abdul Rahman, Saud, Abdullah, and Saad. Substantially older than both Saud (who was only 31 in 1933) and Faisal (only 29), they had the wisdom of age and authority of experience the sons lacked.

Ibn Saud's brother Abdullah bin Abdul Rahman ultimately played an important role in the deposition of Saud and his replacement by Faisal in the years of crisis between 1953 and 1964, by ensuring that the *ulema* would issue the *fatwa* deposing Saud. But the crucial votes in securing the backing of the other princes seem to have been delivered by three of Ibn Saud's sons: Muhammad, Fahd, and Abdullah.

Similarly, when Faisal was assassinated, any doubts about Khalid's suitability were dispelled by the forceful arguments of his older—but passed over—brother Muhammad.

By the time Fahd became king in 1982, all of his father's brothers were dead. But the process of approval now had to

accommodate the sons of Faisal, the one king since the death of their father whom the brothers universally respected. According to one source, Prince Saud Al Faisal represented the views of the sons of Faisal at the family gathering in which Fahd received the oath of allegiance and Abdullah was named as crown prince. Apparently Prince Saud was not asked directly for his views at this meeting, but was merely there to demonstrate that the opinions of the sons of Faisal were taken into account. Nonetheless, this was a significant breakthrough: it opened the door to future and deeper involvement of Ibn Saud's grandsons in the choice of king and crown prince.

Many standard works on Saudi Arabia refer to a decision-making body variously known as the royal council or *ahl al-aqd wa'l-hall* (literally, "those who bind and loosen"). In reality this appears to be an informal body of senior, important princes, wherein the size of individual votes varies with age, closeness of relationship, and government position.¹

With the death of all of Fahd's older brothers (the last, Saad, died in July 1993), the voting constituency of Ibn Saud's sons now numbers only twenty-six. But based on Saudi history, most of their votes are irrelevant anyway. As long as Abdullah is of sound mind, he will be able to win an oath of allegiance by force of personality and, if necessary, by challenging his chief rival, Sultan, not to upset the process. Sultan is also likely to be handicapped by his own questionable health.

THE ROLE OF ROYAL WOMEN

Despite a general belief to the contrary, the women of the House of Saud play a role in the politics of succession in at least three ways. First, they are the "masters" of their own homes, where behind the privacy of the walls they are thought to let their husbands and sons know their views in a forthright manner. Second, intermarriage within the House of Saud means that alliances can be built up between different branches, depending on the degree to which a wife has maintained strong links to her original family and is liked within her new family. Third, King Fahd is said to conduct a *majlis* (meeting) with the women of the Al Saud on a regular basis in order to explain his views and listen to their own. This illustrates the extent to which consensus-building is considered important.

¹ One source said he had been told by a member of this council that it comprised sixty-five people in the mid-1980s, but he did not attach any particular truth to this claim.

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA

Although there are doubts whether Ibn Saud ever said that his sons should succeed him in order of their age (provided they are fit), chronology of birth remains the preeminent qualification. The Al Saud respect age more than almost anything else. The rest of Ibn Saud's widely quoted (though unsourced and apparently apocryphal) pronouncement—that the future king must be a good Muslim and should not drink or be the child of a foreigner—has also been observed.

The last condition is a reference to whether a candidate's mother was a non-Saudi slave, as were those of eleven princes. Talal's mother, for example, was Armenian. By the same criteria, the current Saudi ambassador to Washington, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, would also be disqualified. His mother was a Sudanese servant, which explains his particularly dark features.

One former ambassador to the kingdom, perhaps wary of defining what constitutes a good Muslim and feeling that a prince who did not like alcohol was too difficult to find, listed additional attributes central to the selection process, in no particular order:

- **Experience.** Holding public office is important in persuading the rest of the family that a candidate can actually govern. Fahd's experience as minister of education, minister of interior, and prime minister was unsurpassed when Khalid died. Khalid himself had held no government office and expressed no interest in governing. He made Fahd prime minister and left him to get on with the tasks of running the government.

- **Acumen.** It is not surprising that Saudis want kings with wisdom and a steadiness of touch. But these qualities, which Faisal combined with intellectual ability, are proving hard to repeat.

- **Popularity.** Since consensus is central to Saudi decision-making, the ability to achieve it is highly rated. The simplest measure is the style of *majlis* a prince holds. Is he generous? Is the food good? Is there plenty of it? Will favors be granted? Sultan reportedly gives a good *majlis*, but Saud Al Faisal has never been known to hold a single one. A prince with ambition likes to know what the people are thinking, and he gets a feel for that by allowing ordinary people to see him.

- **Stability.** In any large family there are mentally less-stable members, and the Al Saud is no exception (and perhaps more so

because of intermarriage). Muhammad, apart from having a bad and quick temper, also had the reputation of being a drunkard. He was passed over as king when Faisal was assassinated, although his honor was partially saved by the appointment of his full-brother Khalid as monarch. Saad, whose death in July 1993 made Fahd the oldest surviving son, had been of unstable mind for several years. Nasir, who died in 1984, spent his last years in a wheelchair, an appearance of weakness that would have also disqualified him.

As if being the son of an Armenian slave and one of the so-called "Liberal Princes"¹ were not enough, Talal is also considered slightly unstable. While very bright and engaging, he is given to laughing outrageously in a manner that unnerves Saudis and Westerners alike. Faisal bin Fahd, a son of the present king, is deemed similarly unreliable.

- **Maternal Uncles** (*akhwal*). Another way of looking at the need to have a Saudi mother is the importance of having relatives to back one's candidacy. Talal's lack of such uncles means there will be no votes for him. Bandar bin Sultan's marriage to a daughter of the late King Faisal gives him important brothers-in-law who might be the next best thing.

¹ Along with Badr and Fawwaz, Talal supported domestic political reforms and the Arab radicalism of Egyptian President Nasser in the 1960s.

III FUTURE SUCCESSION: FAHD'S EDICT OF MARCH 1992

Although there was no written explanation of the succession process, most Saudis probably thought they had a basic understanding of how it worked. But on March 1, 1992, King Fahd decided to spell it out—clarifying it for some, making it ambiguous to others and, in either event, providing a tremendous impetus for maneuvering within the royal family to obtain the kingdom's ultimate prize.

The twenty-two articles of the Basic Law of Government he announced were divided into four chapters. One dealt with the general principles of the state, its religion, its constitution (the *Koran* and the *Sunnah*, a supplement to the *Koran*), its language, its holidays, its flag, and its emblem. Another chapter described the features of the Saudi family, calling it the kernel of Saudi society, emphasizing its Arab and Islamic values, and noting the importance of education to make its people love their homeland and proud of its history. A further chapter on economic principles says that all the country's resources are the property of the state, that public money is sacrosanct, and that taxes are to be imposed only on the basis of justice and when the need for them arises.

But it was the second chapter of the basic law that was of greatest interest and proved to be a bombshell both within and outside the Al Saud.¹ The edict (issued in the form of a royal decree that had the force of law from its date of publication) states that the throne passes to the sons of Ibn Saud, and to their sons. The most upright among them is to receive allegiance in accordance with the principles of the *Koran* and the tradition of the Prophet

¹ The full text of the second chapter is included in the appendices.

Muhammad. The king chooses his heir apparent and can relieve him of his duties by royal order. The heir apparent takes over the powers of the king on the latter's death, until the oath of allegiance has been carried out.

According to several sources, this law was received with consternation by several senior princes. Crown Prince Abdullah was said to have been "outraged"¹ that his position as heir apparent was defined as being at the whim of King Fahd, rather than as his right as the next in line, because he was healthy and considered himself a good Muslim.² Prince Sultan was also said to be concerned that he would have to lobby and fight harder to achieve the position of heir apparent to Abdullah, who could now choose a crown prince from among the next generation, the grandsons of Ibn Saud.

The purpose of Fahd's edict was to provide for future stability not only in regard to succession but across the whole range of conceivable constitutional issues, although the king was careful to deny that there had been any form of "constitutional vacuum" (Fahd's own words) before. This process was completed in August 1993 with a decree limiting members of the council of ministers to a maximum term of four years, and stipulating that they could not take advantage of their position, either directly or by proxy, to obtain financial gain. At around the same time, the members of the national consultative assembly were announced, along with an outline of laws governing similar local consultative councils in Saudi Arabia's thirteen provinces.³

¹ This was the expression used by a former senior Western official, although there is no other confirmation of Abdullah's reaction.

² As if to underline the point, King Fahd issued another decree on March 1 that said that Crown Prince Abdullah was to continue as commander of the National Guard.

³ Whereas thirty-two of the sixty members of the consultative assembly had advanced degrees from western universities (two-thirds of them in the United States), the conservative religious establishment was only moderately represented. A Saudi source close to Fahd said that technocrats were deliberately chosen because they would advocate the national interest, as opposed to the more narrow pressure group interest of a tribe, merchant family, or senior religious figure. But *The Economist* reported on January 15, 1994 that a large proportion of the seats on the thirteen provincial councils had gone to "heads of locally important tribes and members of well-known merchant families," which it attributed partly to the influence of Crown Prince Abdullah.

One surprising feature of these decrees was the activity they suggested on the part of King Fahd, who had otherwise been almost universally considered a lethargic monarch, not only physically but also in policy terms, particularly as compared to his vitality as crown prince in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Although the origins of the reforms date back to King Faisal's rule and had been repeatedly promised after Fahd came to power in 1982, there was nevertheless considerable surprise when they were finally announced. A variety of different and often mutually exclusive explanations were offered. Some thought Fahd had been determined to introduce them earlier, but had been delayed by Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Others believed that the Gulf War had strained the royal family's relations with its people, and the decrees were in fact political concessions. A further interpretation, of possibly considerable significance, was that Fahd's realization of his own mortality had made him more determined than ever to establish the secure foundations of the rule of the Al Saud, not so much in terms of dictating succession, but in trying to establish institutions that would have some permanence in the kingdom. Lastly, still others explained the whole exercise as a reaction to increasing signs of internal opposition and criticism of the Al Saud from constituencies previously considered loyal, such as middle class technocrats and religious groups who used Islam to criticize the ruling family rather than confirm its legitimacy.

IV SUCCESSION WITHIN THE CURRENT GENERATION

If King Fahd, who is 73, dies before the end of 1994, Crown Prince Abdullah will almost certainly win the immediate backing of the rest of the family to become king. But if Fahd lives longer than this, the future is harder to predict.

The main challenge to the current system is that the sons of Ibn Saud are a dwindling constituency. There are currently twenty-six surviving sons, the youngest of whom (Hamoud) is 47 this year. Fahd was 61 when he took over on Khalid's death, but eight of his brothers are already older than that, and family members have a history of death in their early seventies.¹ As one official interviewed for this study opined, given this problem "a parrot will be falling off the perch every two or three years."

Can the system tolerate the deaths of successive kings at such close intervals, with the consequent family politics involved in deciding on the crown prince and heir apparent at the same time?

An additional challenge is that Crown Prince Abdullah, 71, might die before Fahd, leading to a premature contest for the position of crown prince and heir apparent. The conventional wisdom is that Prince Sultan, Fahd's full brother and minister of defense and aviation, would be the next in line. Non-Saudis point out that he is the second deputy prime minister (Crown Prince Abdullah is the first deputy prime minister), but others note that

¹ King Abdul Aziz died at 73, King Saud died at 67, King Faisal was assassinated at 71, and King Khalid died at 69. Of Fahd's elder brothers who were not king, Nasir died at 64 and Saad at 73. Ironically perhaps, the one who lived longest—Muhammad, who died at 78—was a renowned drunkard.

Bandar bin Abdul Aziz, the immediate younger brother to Abdullah, should not be discounted. While Bandar's claim is probably overstated (to the point of being considered ridiculous by some), Sultan's succession is far from automatic.

This complicated picture can be most simply described using a variety of scenarios:

**SCENARIO ONE:
FAHD CONTINUES LIVING FOR SEVERAL YEARS**

As long as he is alive, Fahd will remain king unless he decides to abdicate of his own accord. Even if he becomes progressively less able to perform his duties, it is extremely unlikely that his brothers would force him to give up the throne. Rather, they would cover up for his deficiencies.¹ Only if he tried to retain full powers while it became increasingly obvious that he was incapable of exercising them would his deposition be forced. This is unlikely to happen, as it would raise the issue of mental suitability for the throne, an issue the House of Saud would not want debated even in a domestic Saudi context—because some princes would fail. Instead, the royal family would prefer to keep Fahd on as a figurehead ruler, perhaps giving up the role of prime minister, but preserving the dignity of his leadership. This was the role adopted by King Khalid, who was prime minister in name only and did not concern himself with everyday matters of government.²

**SCENARIO TWO:
CROWN PRINCE ABDULLAH DIES BEFORE FAHD**

Abdullah is reportedly healthy and vigorous, particularly when compared with his notably corpulent half-brother King Fahd, but the possibility that he might die before the king cannot be ruled

¹ By 1993 Fahd was showing increasing signs of advancing age, according to one source. His powers of concentration are limited; he tells the same anecdote several times in the same meeting; and he prefers reminiscing about events of twenty years ago rather than dealing with issues of the moment.

² On becoming king, Khalid made Fahd prime minister and effectively handed over all executive authority to him. When Khalid met then British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, he told her that if she wanted to talk about the desert and hunting, she should talk to him, but on matters of policy and government she should speak to Fahd.

out.¹ If he does, the major question emerges of who will replace him as crown prince. In theory, the choice is King Fahd's alone; in practice, it will be reached by consensus.

The obvious choice is Sultan, who combines bureaucratic experience as the minister of defense and aviation with considerable ambition.² But two of Ibn Saud's other sons are older than Sultan. Both, like Abdullah, were born in 1923. Musaid is not considered a likely candidate. His son Khalid was shot by security forces during riots protesting against the introduction of television in the kingdom in 1965, and another son, Faisal, assassinated his uncle King Faisal in 1975 in retribution and was beheaded. The other elder brother is Bandar, an uncle of the ambassador to Washington. He is often depicted as a religious recluse and has already failed once in an attempt to obtain a senior government position. In 1982 he could not muster sufficient support within the family to be named minister of defense, and was denied the position on the grounds that he lacked experience in government. It is not clear whether he ever formally renounced his claim to the throne, although he is widely regarded as having done so. But Bandar has a measure of popular support, probably stemming from his religious rectitude.³

An additional potential obstacle to Sultan being named crown prince is that it would further reinforce the grip of the Sudairi Seven on government, which Ibn Saud's other sons, some only half brothers, resent and seek to diminish. One way to accomplish this would be to instigate an internal crisis, the resolution of which

¹ At the age of 70, Abdullah still has four wives, two of whom are semi-permanent, while, according to one source, "numbers three and four roll over." Anecdotes about King Fahd's weight problem are legion, although he is reported to have lost weight in 1993. The king's personal Boeing 747 includes a device that carries him on a chair from the tarmac through the baggage compartment directly to the dome of the aircraft, so that he avoids having to climb any stairs. An oil executive employed by Saudi Arabia said that one of Fahd's palaces includes the world's smallest escalator—just one step—to avoid straining the monarch as he moves from one floor level to the next in adjoining rooms.

² Without specifying the ailments, one observer doubted whether Sultan was sufficiently healthy to ever become king.

³ A popular joke in the kingdom in 1992 envisaged who would be king if Saudi Arabia were a democracy: if the electorate included the whole country, Bandar would win; if only the royal family could vote, Salman would be chosen. Nayef would receive only one vote—his own, and Sultan would get as many votes as he could buy.

would require taking one of the powerful government positions—the defense or interior ministry—away from the Sudairi.

**SCENARIO THREE:
CROWN PRINCE ABDULLAH SUCCEEDS WHEN
FAHD DIES**

There is little doubt that Abdullah wants the job of king and thinks it is his by right. But if and when he succeeds—and contrary to what the kingdom or its apologists will say—there will be both a government crisis and considerable energies spent on devising new assumptions on succession.

Unlike Fahd and his six full brothers, five of whom hold important government posts, Abdullah has no full brothers. He must make other alliances within the royal family if he is to govern effectively. Otherwise it is widely expected that the surviving Sudairi brothers will refuse to allow themselves or their sons to lose the crucial jobs they currently hold. But retaining these jobs could sharply curtail Abdullah's ability to govern. "There will be policy gridlock," according to one former envoy to the kingdom.

Abdullah is already preparing the ground by building alliances with some of his half brothers. Badr is the deputy commander of the National Guard; although widely considered feckless,¹ he owes a debt to Abdullah, who rescued him from the disgrace of having been one of the "Liberal Princes."

A more fruitful area for potential alliances is among the sons of the late King Faisal, known collectively as the Al Faisal and renowned for their intellectual and administrative (rather than political) abilities. Saud Al Faisal has considerable experience as foreign minister, but under Fahd has rarely been allowed to use his skills fully. Instead, parts of the job have been performed by Fahd himself or by his protégé Prince Bandar, the ambassador to Washington. Turki Al Faisal, the head of Saudi intelligence, is highly regarded by foreign service officers and intelligence officials, but has to accept having Fahd's son Saud imposed on him as his deputy. A third Al Faisal to watch is Khalid, the governor of Asir province.

¹ One British military attaché, exasperated with the apparent futility of training the National Guard, is credited with the pun: "We have to get Badr before things get worse."

Abdullah can also look to his own sons for support, but they are currently confined to his own court or command positions in the National Guard, and none is noted for his ability or political savvy.

SCENARIO FOUR: A YOUNGER BROTHER EMERGES AS THE BEST CANDIDATE

To avoid having to determine the line of succession every two or three years, several of the older brothers would have to be persuaded to forgo their claims on the throne in order to give a younger man a chance.¹ Assuming good health and barring accident, this might result in ten or more years of continuous rule. Fahd has been on the throne for twelve years, although some might argue that his recent indecisiveness has been no bonus for the kingdom. A better example perhaps is the eleven years of Faisal's rule, seen as a time of successful transition from a poor tribal society to a technologically modern state.

The candidate who most immediately springs to the minds of both Saudis and Westerners is Prince Salman, born in 1938. He has been governor of Riyadh province, which includes the capital and stretches down to the border with Yemen. He has the reputation, rare in the Saudi royal family, of being able, hardworking, and free of corruption.²

In addition, Ibn Saud's second youngest son, Miqrin, is a former air force pilot and the current governor of Hail, the province between Riyadh and the Jordanian border. According to one former ambassador, "he would make a good king."

The main difficulty in this scenario is that it is considered highly unlikely that several of Ibn Saud's older sons would allow

¹ There is a precedent for this: on the death of Faisal in 1975, both Nasir and Saad stood down from the succession, allowing the then 54-year-old Fahd to become crown prince. (Fahd was 61 when he eventually became king.)

² Through the Shaf Corporation, Prince Salman was a shareholder in the now defunct and disgraced Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI). A March 1988 list of BCCI shareholders (Luxembourg) gave his holdings as .71 percent of the total. Other royal Saudi shareholders were Prince Nayef and Prince Turki bin Nasir bin Abdul Aziz with a total of 1.21 percent. Sheikh Khalid bin Mahfouz and his brothers, who controlled the National Commercial Bank (the largest bank in Saudi Arabia) and were effectively bankers to the royal family, held 20 percent, and other non-royal Saudis accounted for 16 percent.

themselves to be passed over for the throne. The best example is Prince Nayef, a full brother of King Fahd who has held the crucial internal security job of interior minister since 1975. But another of Fahd's full brothers, Abdul Rahman, is older than Nayef, and he and Mitab, the minister of public works, almost certainly consider that they have a right to be king as well. Turki is also older than Nayef, but has been ostracized by the family for marrying into the socially unacceptable Al Fassi clan.

Further questionable candidates include the Liberal Princes—Talal, Badr, and Fawwaz—who, according to foreign assessments, have lost their right to the throne; Mishari, who shot the British consul in Jeddah in 1951; and Mishal, who is considered bad-tempered.¹

¹ One source described Mishal as being “the most corrupt of the sons of Ibn Saud,” while another described him as “the best investor.” The expressions are not contradictory, but rather illustrate how the best gloss can be put on some disagreeable aspects of Saudi behavior.

V SUCCESSION TO THE NEXT GENERATION

There is a fifth possible scenario: the line of succession could jump a generation to Ibn Saud's grandsons.¹ Although the competing claims of generational branches would seem a largely hypothetical issue while so many of Ibn Saud's sons are still alive, the dwindling number of sons means they will soon have to include his grandsons in the selection process in order to win confirmation,² and this will in turn make it harder to ignore their claims to be considered as candidates themselves.³

King Fahd's March 1992 edict formally opened up the succession to Ibn Saud's grandsons, but made no mention of

¹ In one sense the label "grandsons" is misleading, as some are already grandfathers themselves, others have high-profile bureaucratic jobs, and still others have not yet finished their education. One observer gave the following profile of a typical grandson who wants his voice to be heard: in his twenties or thirties, with an annual income of around \$3 million (of which a small fraction derives from his government job, the rest from investments) and his own palace in the kingdom. When traveling abroad, he usually stays in his father's residences. If he needs more money for a new palace, he either arranges for a commission on a business deal, or asks his father for the cash.

² Most sources said the grandsons currently have no voice in choosing the king and crown prince other than perhaps lobbying their individual fathers, which may or may not be effective. But one former ambassador was emphatic in saying that when Fahd was made king and Abdullah crown prince, Saud Al Faisal attended the meeting as an observer and representative of the sons of the late King Faisal.

³ The grandsons are said to be intensely interested in the subject of succession and discuss it continually among themselves and often with foreign friends. One source said that he had "walked hand-in-hand in the desert with a Saudi prince, discussing succession."

jumping a generation or what the line of succession would be after such a jump. Should it go to the oldest suitable son of the late King Saud, at one time disgraced but now posthumously rehabilitated? After that, should it go to the oldest suitable son of the late King Faisal? And what about the sons of the late Prince Muhammad, who renounced his own succession in 1965 so his younger full brother Khalid could become crown prince?¹

THE AL FAISAL

Many Saudi princes have government jobs, but only a few can be said to deserve them on merit. Those who do are sons of the late King Faisal. When pressed to suggest who would be a candidate after a generational leap, senior Saudis refer to the Al Faisal, and they are also the favorites of Westerners with experience in the kingdom. Three in particular stand out: Saud, the foreign minister; Turki, the director of foreign intelligence; and Khalid, the governor of Asir province along the southwest border with Yemen.

Saud has been foreign minister since 1975, and is well liked by diplomats. But because so many of the senior princes have carved their own foreign policy niches, Saud's is an especially difficult and sensitive post. Its most important international aspect—handling relations with the United States—is effectively out of his hands, with Fahd keeping this link to himself, or increasingly delegating it to his ambassador to Washington, Prince Bandar bin Sultan.² Within the region, Crown Prince Abdullah takes a personal interest in ties with Syria, while Prince Sultan handles links with Yemen, and Prince Turki, Saud's brother, has built up an expertise dealing with Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Saud has suffered these humiliations silently and loyally, but now in his fifties and already a grandfather, he is said to be looking forward to retirement. If and when Crown Prince Abdullah becomes king, however, he is likely to be urged to undertake a more active role. Lacking full blood brothers, Abdullah has looked to the Al Faisal to support him. In return, the Al Faisal hope to remain important rather than be swept away by a tidal wave of Al Sudairi cousins.

¹ Muhammad apparently does not believe that he renounced his sons' right to succeed, because he later threatened to "unrenounce" his own claim to the throne.

² The relationship between King Fahd and the Al Faisal is viewed by one source as difficult at best, with the monarch failing to give them any special recognition.

The second most well-known of Faisal's sons is Turki, who has been the director of foreign intelligence since 1977, and before that deputy director from 1968. Apart from access to valuable information, this has also provided him with close contacts in the intelligence services of the kingdom's allies. He is in charge of liaison with the local representatives of the CIA and the British intelligence service, based under diplomatic cover in their embassies in Riyadh. He is described as "very bright"—probably correctly, although the term is used far too frequently by many Westerners to describe members of the royal family.

Like Saud, Turki is sure of a senior position if Abdullah becomes king. It may well be the same title he has now, but with expanded responsibilities designed to undercut the Al Sudairi stronghold at the interior ministry, where Fahd's full brothers Nayef and Ahmed are currently minister and deputy minister, respectively. A slight question mark hangs over Turki because he was nearly asphyxiated along with his wife in the mid-1980s when a heater malfunctioned in their camper van in the desert. He spent several months out of work recuperating, but is said to have made a full recovery.

Of the other Al Faisal brothers, Muhammad helped set up the water desalination program in the 1960s. Considered a straight player, he is also credited with the idea that the kingdom could solve its fresh water problems by towing icebergs from the Antarctic. He heads the private Islamic bank Dar al-Mal al-Islami, which operates in several countries but not in Saudi Arabia itself.

Khalid is the governor of Asir province; Abdul Rahman commands a tank unit in the Saudi army; and Saad heads the Faisal Foundation, a charitable institution set up in memory of their father that funds good works.

THE SONS OF FAHD

As sons of a current king, the sons of Fahd have a special position of privilege and power. Referred to as the Al Fahd (although the term is sometimes confusingly applied collectively to all seven Sudairi brothers and their sons), they were rich even before their father became king, having taken advantage of Fahd's crucial position as prime minister under Khalid. In the last few years some have added government experience to their credentials.

The most capable is probably Muhammad, currently the governor of the Eastern Province but previously a deal maker most famous for the outrageous commissions he charged his clients.¹ Fahd appointed him governor in 1985 in what has proved to be an adroit political move. The Eastern Province runs from the Kuwaiti border along the Gulf to Oman, and contains most of Saudi Arabia's minority Shi'a Muslim population. The governor had previously been drawn from the Jiluwi clan, which had provided crucial help to Abdul Aziz in extending his control over the area in 1913. The traditional method of ruling the Eastern Province was to be nasty to the Shi'a, who comprise only 5 percent of the kingdom's total population but are a local majority in many parts of the province. Saudi Shi'a were very receptive to the calls for Islamic revolution coming across the Gulf from Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, who overthrew the Shah in 1979. There were Shi'a riots in 1979 and 1980, and when Abdul Mohsin bin Jiluwi became ill in 1985, Fahd moved swiftly to appoint Muhammad as governor. Many people say Muhammad has done well in the job, swiftly defusing much Shi'a resentment by investing heavily in roads and facilities.²

Fahd's oldest son Faisal is president of Youth Welfare, a cabinet-level position that gives him responsibility for sports facilities and liaison with foreign federations like the International Olympic Committee. But Faisal has a checkered past ("drink, drugs, and gay," according to one former ambassador), is considered unreliable even by Saudis, and not taken seriously as a future king. Another son, Sultan, has military experience and is currently the vice-president of Youth Welfare, but is not highly regarded.

A classic example of the obscurity of Fahd's sons is Saud, who has been deputy to Prince Turki at the foreign intelligence organization since 1985. Seen by some commentators as an example of the encroachment of the sons of the Al Sudairi on positions of power, the opposite seems a better explanation. A visitor to the intelligence headquarters in Riyadh was introduced to Saud on one occasion, but on a later visit noticed he was not there. On inquiring after him, a senior official dismissively explained that Saud rarely

¹ He is thought to have earned as much as \$500 million for helping a Dutch-Swedish consortium win a telephone contract in the late 1970s. His antics led to an objection by the U.S. ambassador.

² The Saudi government remains cautious about the loyalty of the Shi'a. The official role of several National Guard units based in the Eastern Province is to protect the region's oil facilities, but the King Abdul Aziz Mechanized Brigade, based in the Shi'a city of Hofuf, is trained in house-to-house combat.

came to work "as he does not like to read." In fact, a better explanation may be his reputation for religious observance.

THE SONS OF ABDULLAH

If and when Abdullah becomes king, his sons will be in a crucial position to obtain senior office. Until then, any rank they hold will have been bequeathed upon them by their father—usually in the National Guard, which is effectively Abdullah's private army. The eldest son, Khalid, was once director of administration in the National Guard, and the second son, Mitab, is head of the National Guard academy and effectively its most senior uniformed officer. A third son, Abdul Aziz, did National Guard service after studies in England before becoming an advisor in the crown prince's court.

Whether such experience amounts to military expertise or readiness for a more active government role is another matter. Khalid went on to become deputy head of the National Guard, but gave this up in 1992 after a bureaucratic dispute and now dabbles in arranging business deals. Mitab is well-regarded as a nice man and a good soldier, but also has commercial interests, owning the Ford agency for the central region of the kingdom. A fourth son, Faisal, was sent for officer training at the Sandhurst military academy in England but, according to a Sandhurst training officer, gave up after twice going absent without leave.¹

Overall, the sons of Abdullah are not considered to be in the same league as the Al Faisal. As a monarch, however, Abdullah can make up for this deficiency by seeking alliances with the Al Faisal or with the sons of the late King Saud. One, Mishari bin Saud, is a brigade commander in the National Guard; another, Muhammad, is governor of Baha province; and a third, Moataz, is ostensibly studying in Washington, but stands ready to act as one of the links with the Clinton administration.

THE SONS OF SULTAN

Of all the sons of Defense Minister Prince Sultan, Bandar has achieved the most international prominence by virtue of his position as ambassador to Washington since 1983. His stature was briefly eclipsed during the Gulf crisis by his elder brother Khalid,

¹ Faisal bin Abdullah seems quite a rascal in the old Al Saud tradition. In early 1993, he escaped serious injury when he overturned his car in the kingdom while driving at 4 A.M.

who was the commander of Saudi troops serving alongside U.S. and other coalition forces, but Bandar has apparently since recovered his pre-eminence.¹

Bandar is the son of a Sudanese servant, and therefore not considered to be a candidate for king. His high-profile position in Washington has also irritated more senior members of the family, who hold his evident enjoyment of his position against him. A further problem is that he reportedly is not particularly close to his father, and instead owes his position to his relationship with his uncle, King Fahd.

Khalid's problems are different and probably even larger. Before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Khalid had been the commander of the Saudi air defense forces, an independent arm of the Saudi military. The high profile of his position during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, when he was almost constantly seen in the company of the allied commander, Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, developed his ego enormously. After the victory over Iraqi forces, Khalid expected a promotion but there was nowhere for him to go, because traditionally Saudi heads of service are not members of the royal family. This did not stop him, according to several sources, from issuing an ultimatum to King Fahd either to promote him or accept his resignation. In the end, the king called his bluff and told him to retire, perhaps also disturbed by Khalid's publicly stated recommendation that Saudi Arabia establish a large, permanent army, presumably under his command.²

There is little doubt that the king, as well as other members of the royal family, were thoroughly fed up with Khalid by this stage. After the Gulf War victory he became larger than life, appearing to forget that Saudi society generally abhors a cult of personality, which he seemed to promote by embarking without permission on a well-publicized tour of other Gulf states.³

Khalid's other problem was the perception that he made far too much money from the war. Estimates vary from several hundred

¹ Another of Sultan's sons to keep an eye on is Fahd, the governor of Tabuk, the province on the northwestern border near Israel.

² In October 1993, Khalid visited London and spoke at the Royal United Services Institute where he called for the creation of a Gulf joint military command, to be based in Riyadh, to ensure the "stability of the region."

³ Evidently, Khalid bin Sultan had long maintained an especially high opinion of himself. Sent to Sandhurst to train as an officer, he left before his course ended because he did not feel obliged to see it through.

million dollars to up to \$7 billion, according to senior Western officials. He had insisted that the Saudi ministry of defense arrange all the transport, accommodation, and supplies of local food and water using local Saudi contractors and had then reportedly taken a cut on every deal. Although such procedures are common in Saudi Arabia, the sums even embarrassed his father, Defense Minister Prince Sultan, whose name is synonymous in Saudi Arabia with the process of commissions on public contracts.

OTHER NOTABLE GRANDSONS

Salman's sons are also worthy of some examination, as they include two who have occasionally been in the public eye. Sultan was the first Arab astronaut, serving as a member of the crew on the U.S. space shuttle *Discovery* in 1985.¹ He is now a lieutenant-general in the Saudi army. Abdul Aziz is an assistant oil minister who has for years had a running battle with the oil minister himself, Hisham Nazer. Publicly, they present a unified front, along with the other assistant oil minister, Prince Faisal bin Turki; privately, according to his Western friends, Abdul Aziz holds the minister in contempt and is considered the source of frequent stories that undermine Nazer's position.²

Although the sons of the other Sudairis—Abdul Rahman, Nayef, Turki and Ahmed—are not considered significant in the leadership stakes, it is important to note that they could act as powerful backers for one or other of the Sudairi claimants.

¹ The flight also included a woman astronaut, Sally Ride. A spacecraft allows for very little privacy, although this fact went unreported in the Saudi media.

² There are thought to be two essential difficulties in the arrangement: first, the oil minister sees himself as a technocrat dealing with the *country's* oil, while Abdul Aziz, as a member of the royal family, sees it as *his* oil. Second, Abdul Aziz is thought to consider that Nazer takes commercial advantage of his position.

VI SUCCESSION AND THE U.S.-SAUDI RELATIONSHIP

Of Saudi Arabia's links with foreign countries, those with the United States are the most important. The dominant influences in the relationship have been oil,¹ security, and Islam. The U.S. need for a reliable source of oil and the Saudi need for security have drawn the two countries together; Islam, and in particular the local Wahhabi version, is a pervading factor in Saudi society, reinforcing its traditional roots and ensuring that there remains a distance in the links.²

In addition, as the recent contract for the purchase of commercial aircraft underscores, U.S. officials have also come to recognize Saudi Arabia's importance to the U.S. economy. The United States has been the largest supplier of imported goods to the kingdom for many years, particularly military hardware, with current orders totaling more than \$30 billion (although there are doubts about its ability to pay for them³). The oil companies' links

¹ The kingdom has one-quarter of the world's known oil reserves, and its oil fields have some of the lowest production costs. It is also the largest oil exporter in the world, and currently supplies about 25 percent of U.S. oil demand.

² The centrality of Islam in understanding Saudi Arabia was emphasized in a valedictory dispatch written by departing British ambassador Sir James Craig in 1983. In the document (which was subsequently leaked), he identified three principal Saudi characteristics: Islam, insularity, and incompetence.

³ See "Strapped Saudis Seek to Stretch Out Payments for U.S. Arms," *Washington Post*, January 7, 1994. In December 1993, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, told a gathering of senior aircraft manufacturing executives from the McDonnell Douglas

are now being supplanted by corporations supplying equipment and services to the Saudi military and other purchasers of American technology and expertise.¹

PROTECTING THE HOUSE OF SAUD

Although the economic part of the relationship is most important to the United States, security is the crucial element for Saudi Arabia. The Saudis have defined their security in various ways over the years, but it has always centered on a fear of encirclement expressed by Ibn Saud as early as 1948.² In those days he perhaps meant communism; later on the concern was radical republican Arab regimes. Today, despite all its riches and numerical military strength, Saudi Arabia remains deeply concerned about its security.

Of its neighbors, three are particular threats: Iraq, Iran, and Yemen.³ (Publicly, Saudi officials would probably name only Israel, not wanting to openly criticize Arab neighbors like Iraq and Yemen, or upset Muslim feelings by mentioning Iran. Although the idea of a direct military threat from Israel is ridiculous, Saudi officials do consider the as yet unresolved Israeli-Palestinian dispute an open sore in the region.) Geographically at least, the notion of encirclement is still an appropriate one.

It has been the Saudi judgment that the only country that can provide sufficient security guarantees is the United States, which thus far has been willing to do this. Every U.S. president from

Corp., General Dynamics Corp. and Hughes Aircraft Co. that the kingdom was short of cash and needed more time to pay for the weapons it had agreed to buy.

¹ Saudi Aramco was formed in 1988 to take over Aramco's managerial and operational responsibilities for Saudi oil production. The involvement of the Aramco partners—Chevron, Exxon, Mobil, and Texaco—has since diminished. Although they still provide services on contract, the relationship is far less close than in the past.

² Lecture by former U.S. Ambassador Hermann Eilts at an October 1993 conference on Saudi Arabia in London.

³ Yemen is Saudi Arabia's "real enemy," to use the words of one source, reflecting a view that is common among Middle East analysts. Yemen has a population of around 12 million (about the same as Saudi Arabia), some of whom worked in the kingdom mainly in menial capacities until the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, after which the Saudis abruptly expelled them because their government sided with Saddam Hussein. There is also a border dispute involving oil, as well as old territorial claims, which seem to defy resolution.

Truman through Bush has given an oral security commitment to Saudi Arabia guaranteeing its territorial integrity.¹

Saudi Arabia has been satisfied with this commitment, considering it sufficient in itself and not requiring a deployment of forces on a permanent basis. Saudi leaders have also accommodated a large U.S. expatriate community in the kingdom—including overstuffed military advisory missions—to act as a “plate glass window of American assurances.”²

SAUDI INSULARITY

Saudi Arabia remains a traditional, largely unindustrialized, semi-feudal monarchy.³ Without government subsidies and spending on infrastructure, incomes would be more parlously dependent on local commerce and desert or semi-arid agriculture. At the same time, corruption among the royal family is tolerated to the extent of institutionalizing it.⁴

¹ In an October 1993 lecture in London, former U.S. Ambassador Hermann Eilts said that President Clinton had yet to give such a commitment but he had no doubt that he would.

² An expression used by former Ambassador Eilts in his London lecture. He noted that the size of the military missions, which was greater than the equipment warranted, was at the Saudis' request. Washington went along with this even though boredom caused morale problems among the U.S. members of the missions.

³ A number of observers referred to Saudi Arabia as a feudal society, implying the social and political relationships of fourteenth century Europe; one Englishman suggested eighteenth century New England might be a better analogy.

⁴ Prior to King Faisal's rule, members of the royal family received a princely government stipend. According to sources who explained the current system, princes with government jobs receive a salary and usually also take by right a cut on any contract they approve. On arms deals this can be as high as 30 to 40 percent of the notional contract value, although the percentage is usually much lower on multi-billion dollar contracts. (This is not to say pay-offs are not common in other parts of the world; but in Saudi Arabia, as in many parts of the Third World, they are an accepted way of doing business.) It is not clear whether King Fahd personally accepts commissions, but people around him—particularly his close relatives—certainly do. Princes without government jobs often rely on their ability to broker business deals, intervening on behalf of companies with more senior members of the family who decide which companies will be awarded government contracts. One-time payments can be secured by selling land that is distributed by the king in order to facilitate such profit. Other monies are distributed to junior princes by more senior members of

Islam dominates the entire country—the practice of other religions is banned, and public stonings, beheadings, and amputations of hands are used as criminal penalties. Although individual adherence to Muslim religious strictures varies, government-employed zealots ensure that, at least in public, there is total conformity.

A particular aspect of this persisting social ethos is an insularity in both attitude and communication. Many aspects of American and other Western cultures are not only prohibited, but also apparently little desired. Even Saudis who travel abroad and enjoy the lifestyles of foreign countries are said to be mostly happy to return home to the altogether more austere cultural life of the kingdom.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that a large number of the younger princes who have been educated abroad (and particularly in the United States) have absorbed an appreciation of Western values, and subsequent vacations in Europe and the United States suggest they identify with the West. But other princes, particularly the sons of Ibn Saud, were educated exclusively in the kingdom and their world view is harder to discern. Crown Prince Abdullah, for example, appears more likely to vacation in (Arab and Islamic) Morocco than in Europe.

But, according to observers, there is little doubt of the strength of the link between the princes and the country. A member of the royal family serving in a government position sees himself as a “shareholder,” making decisions for “his” country. This shared assumption of the family role no doubt extends to being prepared to overlook intra-family differences in order to reach consensus in times of crisis, but does not guarantee either that the debate will be private or that consensus is achievable.

Political dissent within the kingdom is prohibited and often harshly punished, even for activities that would be seen in the West as inviolate political rights, such as membership in a political party, trade union, or voluntary association. But fear of arrest does not

the family if there is deemed a special need, such as marriage or construction of a new palace. Additionally, princes and their entourages do not pay to fly on the national airline, which would bump ordinary passengers to accommodate them. Also, in the unlikely event a prince receives a bill for electricity, telephone, or water, he would not pay it and would not be disconnected as a consequence.

explain why Saudis are so reluctant to share their thoughts on political developments. According to several observers, it is probably rather a feeling that these matters are no business of a foreigner.

Although individual Saudis do speak against the ruling family (and there are good historical reasons to think that many share their views), a traditional respect for authority and the existing system makes the kingdom a much firmer society than many commentators suggest.

When it comes to individual members of the ruling family, there is a similar reluctance to discuss politics with foreigners.¹ Royal Saudi caution toward foreigners means that foreigners seldom meet more than a few princes, and are able to speak candidly with only one or two. The rare access and consequent secrecy of meetings between Westerners and senior members of the Saudi royal family mean that foreign links with the Saudi elite are shrouded in mystique. Outsiders suggest that they have contacts and knowledge, but rarely claim it outright so as not to jeopardize any access.

THE U.S. VIEW OF THE KINGDOM

Because of its interest in the free flow of oil at reasonable prices as well as the important role Saudi Arabia plays in the American domestic economy, the United States tolerates these differences. U.S. officials generally avoid making value judgments about Saudi Arabia, and are content to show approval of the general direction of broader political participation in the kingdom rather than comment directly on Saudi Arabia's progress and compare it with other countries. What little improvement there is on an issue, such as human rights, for example, usually reflects quiet diplomatic pressure—e.g., to ensure that an American accused of drinking alcohol is expelled rather than lashed. But there is nothing that amounts to a permanent concession by Saudi authorities.

Thus, President Clinton offered congratulations in August 1993 when King Fahd named the members of the kingdom's consultative council, despite a widespread view that the kingdom remains unacceptably undemocratic. This view is not only current in the United States but also within the kingdom as well, although it has probably been diminished, at least among more pro-Western

¹ A former British ambassador said the Saudis clearly regarded him as a spy, even though they also saw him as sympathetic to their country.

middle class technocrats and businessmen, by the first meetings in early 1994 of the *Majlis al-Shura* (the consultative council).

In fact, the more vocal arguments came from conservative religious quarters, which called for greater adherence to the strictures of Islam and occasionally for greater accountability from the royal family. This twin criticism is awkward for the United States, which has difficulty relating to fundamentalist thinking and concerns.¹ (Cultural barriers also inhibit American understanding of even pro-Western sectors of Saudi society.)

In addition to limitations on democracy, there are also Western concerns about official corruption, the status of women in society, intolerance of religions other than Islam, and public executions. The U.S. Department of State's 1993 annual worldwide survey of human rights is a severe indictment of Saudi Arabia, noting that "human rights continue to be pervasively abused" in the kingdom.²

Saudi officials react with indignation to such criticism. What is seen in the West as corruption—the insistence on commission payments in order to approve a deal—is regarded by senior Saudis simply as a right and a means of distributing funds through the system to fulfill obligations.³ They emphasize the central role of Islam in the kingdom to explain religious discrimination and

¹ Despite some contrary views among observers, the broad assessment was that the short-lived Committee for Legal Rights, which emerged in the kingdom in May 1993 but was banned shortly afterwards, had little to do with human rights as some Western groups assumed. "Make no mistake," said one source. "These people want power and want to take the kingdom back to the eighth century."

² A September 1993 report by the human rights group Amnesty International noted a clear pattern of discrimination against religious minorities, particularly resident Christians and Saudi Shi'a Muslims. The report said hundreds of men, women, and children have been arrested and detained, most without charge or trial. Scores have been tortured, flogged, or subjected to other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

³ American officials and businessmen claim that since U.S. law forbids the payment of commissions, this aspect of Saudi behavior is not a U.S. concern. According to a British business executive, who was responsible for arranging commission payments for British companies, this is nonsense. He claimed he was frequently asked by U.S. associates how commissions were paid, so they could devise ways around U.S. law. Another source noted that even some Saudi princes disapprove of the widespread commission payments, terming them "funny business."

public executions, which are said to be required by Islamic law.¹ Another explanation often given is that the royal family personally disapproves of harsh punishments and religious intolerance, but that the general populace demands that these customs be maintained.²

U.S.-SAUDI INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Current U.S. policy in the Middle East views Saudi Arabia as one of its regional allies, along with the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Egypt, Israel, and Turkey.³ U.S. strategy is to contain the radicalism and adventurism of both Iran and Iraq (the so-called "dual containment" policy), promote Arab-Israeli peace, stem the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, and promote a vision of a more democratic and prosperous region "for all the peoples of the Middle East."⁴

How the Saudi royal family views the kingdom's role in international affairs remains largely unknown. It almost certainly varies, often widely, depending on the issue. In regard to oil prices, for example, the princes probably view themselves as a developing country seeking higher prices and prepared to risk the antipathy of the West. In contrast, on the issue of the oil supply, at least under

¹ Some religious experts contest this, however, and other Islamic countries, with the sole exception of Sudan, do not operate a similar judicial process.

² Amnesty International reported in May 1993 that 105 people were publicly executed during the previous year. The Saudis are clearly sensitive to criticism on this issue. From the August 1990 invasion of Kuwait until its liberation from Iraqi forces at the end of April 1991, there were no public executions, which are subject to review by the king.

³ Apart from Saudi Arabia, the other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

⁴ This policy was laid out by Dr. Martin Indyk, special assistant to President Clinton and senior director for Near East and South Asian affairs at the National Security Council, at a symposium organized by The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, May 18, 1993. The content of the policy is not particularly different from that of the previous Bush administration as enunciated by Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs Edward Djerejian, at Meridian House in Washington on June 2, 1992. Djerejian called for Arab-Israeli peace, and security arrangements to ensure stability and unimpeded commercial access to the vast oil reserves of the Gulf. But in emphasis the Clinton policy is tougher on Iraq and Iran and more earnest in its determination to bring greater political participation to the region.

Fahd's leadership, responsible links with the West have been emphasized.

The royal family's penchant (some would say obsession) for discretion has sometimes made Riyadh a useful partner in promoting U.S. foreign policy objectives.¹ But on matters of concern to the Muslim world, members emphasize their leading role as custodians of the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The Saudis have given full support to the predominantly Muslim Bosnian government and pressured the West to take tougher action against the Serbs. They have also urged countries to flout the United Nations embargo by supplying arms to the Bosnian Muslims and may well have done so themselves.

Saudi views on the resolution of the Arab-Israeli dispute have to absorb multiple and partly contradictory factors, including the kingdom's role as an Arab state, Jerusalem as a Muslim shrine, the treachery of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat during the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and a desire to help the United States achieve a settlement. Small wonder the Saudis appear to do less to help push through a settlement than to sort out some of their own contradictions.

Official Saudi statements on the September 1993 Israel-PLO peace accord emphasized the rights of the Palestinians and the return of Jerusalem; they ran alongside statements calling for U.S. and Western action in support of Muslims in Bosnia. And despite support for U.S. efforts to secure Arab-Israeli peace, Saudi Arabia continues to impose the primary and secondary boycott of Israel.

The Saudi attitude toward Israel is easy to understand in terms of the kingdom's traditional caution in changing policy direction. But there appears to have been no attempt to influence the local media to be less anti-Israel, even though newspapers slavishly follow the official line on other issues. The public stance is particularly disappointing to U.S. officials who for years have listened to Saudi missives on the need to deal with the Arab-Israeli dispute. There

¹ These links were sometimes controversial, as in the funding of the "contra" guerrillas in Nicaragua during the Reagan administration, but Saudi financial support for the Afghan guerrillas was crucial in destabilizing Soviet forces in Afghanistan, a development that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. More recently, the Saudi decision to withhold funds from the PLO contributed to Yasser Arafat making a deal with Israel. The United States is now looking to Saudi Arabia again to fund Arafat in order to strengthen his role in the peace process.

seems to be a clear distinction between what King Fahd says privately to Washington, often via Saudi Ambassador Prince Bandar, and what is said and done back in the kingdom.

THE U.S. VIEW OF SUCCESSION

U.S. policy seems never to have concerned itself seriously with succession in the past. There arose no need to do so, and U.S. policymakers—oilmen and diplomats—thought they could neither affect the outcome nor should they try. The Saudis knew the way out of individual crises; and there was little or nothing for the United States to do but watch it happen. The oil continued to flow, so there was no overriding requirement for action.

The rise in prominence of the pro-American Fahd, who became *de facto* prime minister on Faisal's death in March 1975, reinforced the closeness of the Saudi-American relationship. With only occasional displays of independence,¹ this relationship has continued and indeed strengthened, reaching its high point with U.S. support of the kingdom and the military defeat of Iraq following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

The future is not likely to be nearly as smooth, although previous views that Crown Prince Abdullah—most likely the next king—is anti-American have been substantially revised.² The problem is not simply that there is uncertainty over whether Sultan, only slightly less pro-American than his brother Fahd, will be the next king after Abdullah.³ There are, after all, many countries in the world where it is difficult if not impossible to predict who the next leader will be; the fact that a succession process exists is more important than knowing who the successor will be.

¹ The decision to buy long-range Chinese missiles capable of hitting Iran and Israel was a major shock to Washington, particularly because the United States learned of the deal only when they were delivered in 1988, and because the deal had been put together by Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the ambassador to Washington. When the United States formally protested to King Fahd, the Saudi monarch demanded that U.S. Ambassador Hume Horan be replaced.

² Since Operation Desert Storm, Crown Prince Abdullah has been "enthusiastically grateful" for U.S. support, according to a source who saw him soon afterwards.

³ According to a senior American official, "the bets are off after Abdullah."

Rather, the problem is that despite the efforts of King Fahd to leave a legacy of more systemized government, future successions will apparently remain just as much the naked tussles for power they have been in the past, albeit behind palace walls. This is especially disconcerting given the central role that Saudi Arabia plays in the U.S. approach to Gulf security as well as the role the Clinton administration would like Saudi Arabia to play in America's economic well-being. The United States faces a dilemma: anything approaching involvement in succession will be condemned,¹ but it will have to pick up the pieces of any mess in the world economy that might be caused by confusion or infighting in the Saudi royal family.

The conventional wisdom among experts on Saudi Arabia and Saudi officials willing to talk (off the record, of course) about succession is that the stakes are too high for the members of the royal family to argue about succession so strenuously that any rifts are either permanent or public. This view endorses the consensus-building qualities of Saudi decision-making and the deference that princes show to their seniors. It also takes a rosy view of royal Saudi history, arguing that the perils of disagreement (e.g., public embarrassment over the Liberal Princes in the 1960s, the loss of family power in the nineteenth century) are obvious to all and therefore will not be allowed to happen again.

The contrary view—that the succession process remains an unprincipled struggle for ultimate power and is already causing political rifts within the family—seems to have just as much validity. According to several observers, “succession politics seem to be the order of the day in Riyadh,” particularly among the grandsons of Ibn Saud.²

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY

The advent last year of a Democratic administration in Washington during what is probably the final period of King Fahd's reign suggests that a reexamination of U.S.-Saudi links is appropriate and overdue. As former U.S. Energy Secretary James Schlesinger told a Madrid conference in September 1992, just prior

¹ U.S. interest in internal politics causes “immediate Saudi heartburn,” according to a senior U.S. official.

² One senior, well-connected Saudi argued it both ways: succession is a battle for power, but the members of the royal family would not go so far as to endanger the whole of the institution to which they belong in this struggle for power.

to George Bush's electoral defeat, "in effect, our present policy seems to be premised upon King Fahd's living forever, remaining firmly in control of Saudi oil policy, and remaining benign, while the existing stability in the political-military balance in the Persian Gulf continues for the indefinite future."¹ Indeed, current U.S. policy has inherited from previous administrations a reluctance to upset the Saudi royal family, which has resulted in official American silence even on issues that might threaten the stability of the regime and thus endanger the U.S.-Saudi relationship.²

Internal Saudi debate on succession assumes that the United States will maintain its oil/security pact no matter who is king or what he does. The Saudis seem unaware that, although the dominant view among Western experts on Saudi Arabia is that "there is nothing the West can or should do to affect succession in Saudi Arabia," this is often followed by the qualification that "even if the House of Saud collapses, the country will still have to export oil."

The current relationship developed under King Fahd is unusual in its warmth and closeness, and is unlikely to be repeated. This is particularly true if there is further growth in sentiments that challenge the institutionalized Islamic hierarchy in the kingdom on which the Al Saud base their legitimacy.

Considering these challenges, and to minimize the danger to bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia in this period prior to the next succession, the United States should consider the following modest steps:

- Seek to establish closer links with Crown Prince Abdullah (while not undermining the authority of King Fahd) in order to encourage his shift in sympathies toward the United States and learn his particular concerns. He should be invited to visit Washington if he indicates a willingness to accept.
- Restore diplomatic balance to the relationship by raising the profile of the U.S. ambassador in Riyadh. The lack of ambassador-level representation there since mid-1992 has meant that Prince

¹ See "U.S.-Saudi Ties Grow, Benefiting Americans But Troubling Some," *Wall Street Journal Europe*, October 29, 1992.

² An exception to this was a meeting between U.S. diplomats and members of the short-lived opposition Committee on Legal Rights just days before the committee was disbanded by official edict. The Saudi government is thought to have been furious at the contact.

Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador to Washington, who has his own personal interests in the next succession, has become the main and often sole top-level line of communication with the United States. It is important that President Clinton's choice for envoy, former Mississippi Governor Ray Mabus, be viewed as a major player in the forging of U.S.-Saudi ties, despite his lack of any previous experience in the Middle East.

- Seek ways of encouraging the development of the new consultative council, which—though modest—does include representation of the technocratic class on whom the future of the U.S.-Saudi relationship may rely.
- Encourage Saudi budgetary reform so that the worsening financial crisis brought on by falling oil revenues and unwise spending practices does not cause an internal political crisis as well.¹
- Encourage Saudi Arabia to behave more publicly as one of the principal partners of U.S. policy in the Middle East, particularly at this time of breakthrough in Israeli-Palestinian relations. Lack of public Saudi support for U.S. policy aims, together with little funding for the self-government experiment, could have a devastating impact on the future willingness of the American public to be involved in any new Middle East crisis involving the kingdom, especially if it requires the commitment of large numbers of American troops.
- Offer its good offices, either directly or through a third party like Oman, to help sort out the lingering border dispute with Yemen so there is a workable replacement when the current treaty

¹ The Saudi budget for 1994, announced at the beginning of January, envisages cutting government spending by 20 percent, in order to eliminate the 1993 budget deficit of \$7.4 billion. No details of the cutbacks were given. King Fahd was quoted by the Saudi Press Agency on January 2, 1994 as saying there would be no more "signing of new government contracts that put additional financial burdens on the state," which seems a recipe for government paralysis. Some economists faulted the arithmetic of the budget, noting that it implied an oil price of \$15 per barrel, when the price had already fallen below \$14 per barrel and showed signs of further weakness. In 1992, Saudi Arabia earned over \$45 billion from the export of crude oil and petroleum products, but this fell to under \$40 billion in 1993. Sales in the first few months of 1994 were running at an annual rate of \$31 billion.

expires this year.¹ In view of King Fahd's declining health, this dispute could develop into a major problem and become a factor in succession politics.²

None of these initiatives amounts to an attempt to influence succession. They should be represented as the help of a friend and ally, intended to minimize or solve problems before they become crises, at a time when Saudi Arabia might be slower than usual in solving them itself. There is no magic recipe for preserving a relationship that has served both Saudi Arabia and the United States reasonably well, but there is much at risk for the stability of both the Middle East and the industrialized economies of the West and Japan if it goes wrong.

¹ Other Saudi borders are also in dispute. In 1992, there was an armed clash between Saudi and Qatari forces. The extent of Saudi territorial claims on its neighbors is indicated in a map distributed as part of an information packet distributed by Saudi embassies. Several hundred square miles of northern Yemen are shown as being Saudi, as is an even larger area of western Oman. A "finger" of the kingdom is also shown stretching toward the Strait of Hormuz, "annexing" the UAE town of Al Ain and the Buraimi oasis in Oman. In addition, there is no common border between Qatar and the UAE—Saudi territory is shown as extending to the Persian Gulf in this sector, when the real situation is more ambiguous. Finally, a sliver of territory in northwest Saudi Arabia, bequeathed to Jordan for industrial expansion, is shown as being Saudi.

² Saudi-Yemen relations have in recent years been overseen by the defense minister and nominal second-in-line to the throne, Prince Sultan.

APPENDICES

- I SAUDI ARABIA: BORDERS AND ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARIES
- II BASIC LAW OF GOVERNMENT, MARCH 1, 1992
- III THE AL SAUD: MAIN LINE OF SUCCESSION AND CADET BRANCHES
- IV MATERNAL LINKAGES AMONG THE SONS OF KING ABDUL AZIZ
- V PRINCIPAL SONS OF PRINCIPAL PRINCES
- VI CHRONOLOGY
- VII A-Z OF SAUDI PRINCES
- VIII INTERVIEWS

APPENDIX I



APPENDIX II**BASIC LAW OF GOVERNMENT
MARCH 1, 1992**

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.
[Decree] No. A/90, dated 27th Sha'ban 1412.

With God's help, we Fahd Bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, Monarch of the Saudi Arabian Kingdom;

having taken into consideration the public interest and in view of the development of the state in various fields and out of the desire to achieve the objectives we are seeking, have decreed the following:

(1) The promulgation of the Basic Law of Government in the attached form.

(2) All regulations and orders and decrees force shall remain valid when this Basic Law comes into force until they are amended to make them compatible with it.

(3) This decree shall be published in the official gazette and shall come into force on the date of its publication.

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:

**THE BASIC LAW OF GOVERNMENT
System of Government****Article Five:**

(a) The system of government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is monarchy.

(b) Rule passes to the sons of the founding King, Abd al-Aziz Bin Abd al-Rahman al-Faysal Al Saud, and to their children's children. The most upright among them is to receive allegiance in accordance with [the principles] of the Holy *Koran* and the tradition of the Venerable Prophet.

(c) The king chooses the heir apparent and relieves him [of his duties] by royal order.

(d) The heir apparent is to devote his time [to his duties] as an heir apparent and to whatever missions the king entrusts him with.

(e) The heir apparent takes over the powers of the king on the latter's death until the act of allegiance has been carried out.

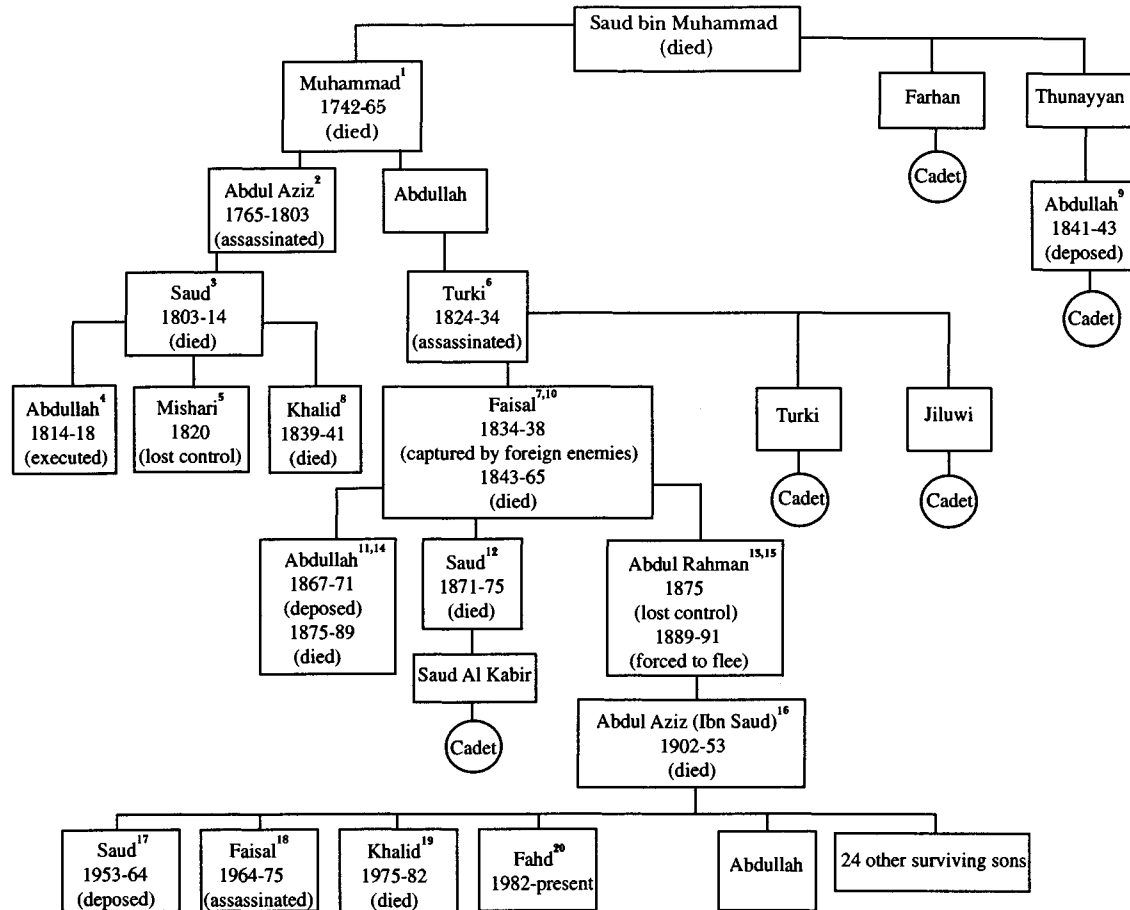
Article Six: Citizens are to pay allegiance to the king in accordance with the Holy *Koran* and the tradition of the Prophet, in submission and obedience, in times of ease and difficulty, fortune and adversity.

Article Seven: Government in Saudi Arabia derives power from the Holy *Koran* and the Prophet's tradition.

Article Eight: Government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is based on the premise of justice, consultation [*shura*] and equality in accordance with the Islamic *sharia*.

APPENDIX III

THE AL SAUD: MAIN LINE OF SUCCESSION AND CADET BRANCHES



Note: Dates indicate period(s) of rule; superscript numbers indicate order of succession. Cadet branches no longer have a direct claim on succession.

APPENDIX IV

MATERNAL LINKAGES AMONG THE SONS OF KING ABDUL AZIZ

D.O.B.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1900	<i>Turki</i>																
1902	<i>Saud</i>																
1904		<i>Faisal</i>															
1910			<i>Muhammad</i>														
1912			<i>Khalid</i>														
1920				<i>Nasir</i>	<i>Saad</i>												
1921						Fahd											
1922							<i>Mansur</i>										
1923					Musaid			Abdullah	Bandar								
1924						Sultan											
1925					<i>A. Mohsin</i>												
1926								Mishal									
1928								Mitab									
1931						A. Rahman				Talal							
1932											Mishari						
1933						Nayef				Nawwaf		Badr					
1934						Turki			Fawwaz								
1935												A. Illah					
1936						Salman											
1937													Majid	<i>Thamir</i>			
1940						Ahmad						A. Majid		Mamdouh			
1941															Hidhlul		
1942														Mashhur			
1943													Sattam			Miqrin	
1947																	Hamoud

Source: Lees, Brian. *A Handbook of the Al-Saud Ruling Family of Saudi Arabia*. (London: Royal Genealogies, 1980).

This chart lists the sons of King Abdul Aziz (Ibn Saud) and indicates their fraternal relationship to one another. Each number along the horizontal axis represents a different mother; names in the same column are thus full blood brothers. Sons in the same row were born in the same year. Names in italics are deceased. In several cases, dates and relationships are in dispute.

APPENDIX V**PRINCIPAL SONS OF PRINCIPAL PRINCES¹**

Sons of the late King Faisal:

Abdullah (b.1921)
 Muhammad (b.1937)
 Khalid (b.1941)—governor of Asir province
 Saud (b.1941)—foreign minister since 1975
 Abdul Rahman (b.1942)
 Saad (b.1942)
 Bandar (b.1934)
 Turki (b.1945)—director of foreign intelligence

Sons of the so-called “Sudairi Seven”:

- Fahd (b.1921)—king and prime minister since 1982
 - Faisal (b.1945)—president of Youth Welfare
 - Khalid (b.1947)
 - Saud (b.1950)—deputy head of external intelligence
 - Muhammad (b.1950)—governor of Eastern Province
 - Sultan (b.1951)—vice president of Youth Welfare
 - Abdul Aziz
- Sultan (b.1924)—second deputy prime minister since 1982 and minister of defense and aviation, full brother of King Fahd
 - Khalid (b.1949)—Saudi commander in Operation Desert Storm
 - Fahd (b.1950)—governor of Tabuk
 - Faisal (b.1950)—in ministry of planning
 - Bandar (b.1943)—ambassador to United States since 1983
 - Nayef
 - Muhammad
 - Turki—director of press department, ministry of information

¹ The exact number and names of all princes is not publicly available. Abdul Aziz is known to be King Fahd’s youngest son, but Prince Sultan has a much larger—and younger—family. A senior Saudi official told the author that Prince Sultan had seventeen sons, as well as eighteen daughters.

- Abdul Rahman (b.1931)—vice minister of defense and aviation since 1962, full brother of King Fahd
Turki
- Nayef (b.1933)—minister of interior, full brother of King Fahd
Saud—deputy governor of Eastern province since February 1993
Muhammad
- Turki (b.1934)—vice minister of defense until 1978 but forced to resign after family dispute, full brother of King Fahd
Faisal—oil ministry
Fahd
Khalid
Sultan
- Salman (b.1936)—governor of Riyadh province since 1962, full brother of King Fahd
Fahd—deputy governor of Eastern Province until February 1993
Sultan—lieutenant colonel in air force, former astronaut
Ahmad—director of firm that owns *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* newspaper
Abdel-Aziz—advisor to oil minister
- Ahmad (b.1940)—vice minister of interior since 1978, full brother of King Fahd
Nayef—in army special forces
Abdul Aziz—partially blind

Sons of Crown Prince Abdullah (b.1923)—crown prince, first deputy prime minister, commander of National Guard

Khalid—deputy governor of western region until 1992
Mitab—deputy head of National Guard
Abdul Aziz (b.1964)—advisor in his father's court
Faisal
Mishal
Turki

APPENDIX VI**CHRONOLOGY**

- 1720 Saud bin Muhammad becomes local *sheikh* (ruler) of area around Dariyah in central Arabia.
- 1745 Saud's son Muhammad joins forces with Muslim preacher Abdul Wahhab on a campaign of religious purification and conquest. This is the start of the first Saudi state.
- 1818 First Saudi state ends with occupation of Dariyah by forces of the Ottoman Turks and execution of then ruler Abdullah, a great-grandson of Muhammad bin Saud.
- 1824 Seizure of Riyadh from Egyptian forces by a grandson of Muhammad bin Saud marks the beginning of second Saudi state.
- 1843-65 Second period of Faisal's rule, noted for prosperity and stability.
- 1865-89 Arguments over succession after death of Faisal reduces territory under control; tribe becomes dominated by neighboring Rashid clan.
- 1891 Second Saudi state ends when ruler Abdul Rahman seeks refuge in Kuwait along with 11-year-old son Abdul Aziz.
- 1902 Abdul Aziz leads small group of men in attack on Riyadh and seizes control.
- 1912 Abdul Aziz establishes the *Ikhwan*, a religious brotherhood of tribesmen who serve as his shock troops.
- 1913 Abdul Aziz seizes control of Gulf coast.
- 1925 Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina captured along with rest of the Hejaz (the western region).
- 1926 Abdul Aziz declares himself king of the Hejaz.
- 1927 Abdul Aziz declares himself king of the Hejaz and the Nejd (the central region).
- 1929 Rebellious *Ikhwan* forces defeated.

- 1932 Modern Saudi Arabia established. Abdul Aziz declares himself king.
- 1933 Abdul Aziz (Ibn Saud) appoints eldest son Saud as crown prince and declares that next eldest Faisal will be crown prince when Saud is king.
- 1938 Oil discovered in Saudi Arabia.
- 1948 State of Israel established.
- 1953 Death of King Abdul Aziz. Prince Saud, his oldest surviving son, becomes king.
- 1958 Prince Faisal, next eldest son of Abdul Aziz, takes over executive authority after Saud surrenders powers under pressure from the royal family.
- 1960 King Saud resumes executive authority.
- 1962 Crisis of the Liberal Princes. Talal, Badr and Fawwaz present themselves as liberal backers of Saud against the conservatism of Faisal. Their cause is embraced by President Nasser of Egypt.
- (Sept.) Monarchy overthrown in Yemen. Egypt and Soviet Union back new revolutionary government.
- (Oct.) Faisal named head of council of ministers and announces ten-point reform plan including the abolition of slavery.
- 1963 Egyptian air force makes bombing raids on Saudi Arabia.
- 1964 At instigation of royal family, *ulema* (religious leaders) declare Saud unfit to govern. Faisal becomes king.
- 1965 Khalid is named as crown prince.
- 1967 Six Day War in Middle East. Israel seizes territory from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Egypt withdraws troops from Yemen.
- 1969 Former King Saud dies in exile in Greece.

- 1973 October War between Israel and Arabs. Saudi Arabia proposes oil embargo against the United States and western supporters of Israel.
- 1975 King Faisal assassinated by a nephew, and Prince Khalid becomes king. His elder brother Muhammad renounced his place in the line of succession in 1964, and the next two oldest sons, Nasir and Saad, stepped aside. The next in line after them, Fahd, becomes crown prince, responsible for organizing development and running the government.
- 1977 Khalid unwell. Sultan maneuvers to try to prevent Abdullah from becoming crown prince when Khalid dies.
- 1979 Revolution in Iran. Shah forced to flee by forces supporting Ayatollah Khomeini.
- (Mar.) Camp David agreement between Israel and Egypt. Baghdad summit expels Egypt from Arab League.
- (Nov.) Mecca uprising by 250 followers of Sunni Muslim extremist. Siege of Grand Mosque lasts for two weeks before last of rebels surrender. Shi'a Muslims riot in Eastern Province.
- 1980 Start of Iran-Iraq War.
- 1982 Israel invades Lebanon. King Khalid dies. Crown Prince Fahd becomes king. Next eldest son of Ibn Saud, Abdullah, becomes crown prince. First Saudi budget deficit.
- 1985-86 Oil prices plummet to less than \$10 per barrel.
- 1986 King Fahd changes his title from "majesty" to "custodian of the two holy places."
- 1987 (May) Iraqi missile attack on U.S.S Stark. Reflagging of Kuwaiti tankers and U.S. naval protection of oil convoys.
- (July) More than 400 people, mostly Shi'a Muslims from Iran, die in riots in Mecca after National Guard opens fire on demonstrators.
- 1988 (March) U.S. intelligence discovers that Saudi Arabia has taken delivery of medium-range missiles from China, with the potential to hit both Tel Aviv and Tehran. U.S.

Ambassador Hume Horan delivers a formal protest, after which King Fahd demands that he be replaced.

- (July) End of Iran-Iraq War.
- 1989 Death of Ayatollah Khomeini.
- 1990 Iraqi President Saddam Hussein invades Kuwait. U.S. forces rush to defend kingdom.
- 1991 U.S.-led forces liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation.
- 1992 King Fahd issues edict defining principles of succession, basic law, and promises to start setting up a consultative assembly within six months.
- 1993 (July) Prince Saad dies, making King Fahd the oldest surviving son of King Abdul Aziz.
- (Aug.) King Fahd names the members of the consultative council.
- (Dec.) Members of consultative council are sworn in.
- 1994 (Jan.) First sessions of consultative council.

APPENDIX VII**A-Z OF SAUDI PRINCES¹**

- Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz (b.1964)—advisor in the court of his father, the crown prince
- Abdul Aziz bin Ahmad bin Abdul Aziz—nearly blind, active in Saudi Blind Society
- Abdul Aziz bin Fahd bin Abdul Aziz—early 20s, allegedly King Fahd's favorite and youngest son. Involved in business ventures with the Al Ibrahim brothers whose sister is King Fahd's wife
- Abdul Aziz bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz—early 30s, advisor to minister of oil
- Abdul Illah bin Abdul Aziz (b.1935)
- Abdul Majid bin Abdul Aziz (b.1940)—governor of Medina province
- Abdul Rahman bin Abdul Aziz (b.1931)—full brother of King Fahd, vice minister of defense and aviation since 1962
- Abdul Rahman bin Faisal bin Abdul Aziz—military service in armored corps
- Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz (b.1923)—crown prince since 1982, commander of National Guard
- Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz bin Musaid bin Jiluwi—governor of Northern Border province
- Abdullah bin Faisal bin Abdul Aziz (b.1921)—oldest son of late King Faisal, poet, businessman

¹ Dates of birth or approximate age are given where known. Few princes do not engage in business. Western notions of conflict of interest do not apply in the kingdom. Individual involvement is given where known. An admittedly incomplete—and now out-of-date—list is provided by J.R.L. Carter in his book, *Leading Merchant Families of Saudi Arabia* (London: Scorpion, 1981). The book is noteworthy for listing King Fahd's son Abdul Aziz as a shareholder in two joint ventures with two American Companies, Carlson Group and Nalco Chemical. The young prince was not even a teenager at the time.

Abdullah bin Faisal bin Turki—early 40s, son of King Fahd's favorite sister, head of Royal Commission in charge of developing major ports of Jubail and Yanbu and associated industrial areas

Abdullah bin Musaid bin Abdul Rahman (b.1945)—wide business and banking interests

Ahmad bin Abdul Aziz (b.1940)—full brother of King Fahd, vice minister of interior since 1978

Ahmad bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz—ex-army, director of holding company that owns London-based Saudi newspaper, *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*

Badr bin Abdul Aziz (b.1933)—one of the Liberal Princes who sided with President Nasser of Egypt in 1960s, now deputy commander of National Guard

Badr bin Abdul Mohsen bin Abdul Aziz (b.1953)—founder of the Saudi arts society

Bandar bin Abdul Aziz (b.1923)—low-profile, considered religious, businessman

Bandar bin Abdullah bin Abdul Rahman (b.1944)—assistant deputy minister in interior ministry

Bandar bin Faisal bin Abdul Aziz (b.1943)—air force officer

Bandar bin Khalid bin Abdul Aziz (b.1935)—businessman

Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz (b.1950)—ambassador to Washington, rejected by his father as a child, grew up with Abdullah bin Faisal bin Turki, trained at British air academy at Cranwell, fighter pilot, married to a daughter of the late King Faisal

Fahd bin Abdul Aziz (b.1921)—king since 1982

Fahd bin Abdullah bin Saud al-Kabir—assistant minister of defense in charge of civil aviation and offset investment, formerly head of air force operations

Fahd bin Khalid Al Sudairi—governor of Najran province

- Fahd bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz—deputy governor of Eastern province until early 1993, keen on racing horses
- Fahd bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz (b.1950)—governor of Tabuk province since 1988
- Fahd bin Turki bin Abdul Aziz—major in army special forces
- Faisal bin Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz—dropped out of Sandhurst military academy in Britain
- Faisal bin Bandar bin Abdul Aziz—governor of Qassim province
- Faisal bin Fahd bin Abdul Aziz (b.1945)—President of Youth Welfare, effectively the minister for youth
- Faisal bin Muhammad bin Saud bin Abdul Aziz (b.1951)—businessman
- Faisal bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz (b.1950)—a director-general in ministry of planning
- Faisal bin Turki bin Abdul Aziz—advisor to minister of oil, a comparable position to Abdul Aziz bin Salman
- Fawwaz bin Abdul Aziz (b.1934)—one of the Liberal Princes, later governor of Mecca, resigned in 1979
- Hamoud bin Abdul Aziz (b.1947)—youngest son of Ibn Saud, involved in business providing transport for military programs, lives in Paris
- Hidhlul bin Abdul Aziz (b.1941)—businessman
- Khalid bin Abdullah bin Faisal bin Abdul Aziz (b.1942)—businessman
- Khalid bin Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz—eldest son of Crown Prince Abdullah, deputy head of National Guard
- Khalid bin Fahd bin Abdul Aziz (b.1947)—runs Al-Bilad company
- Khalid bin Faisal bin Abdul Aziz (b.1941)—governor of Asir province

Khalid bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz (b.1949)—commander of air defense forces and Saudi commander in Operation Desert Storm. Retired September 1991. Now owns United Press International

Khalid bin Turki bin Abdul Aziz—businessman

Majid bin Abdul Aziz (b.1937)—nominally governor of Mecca province, but of declining effectiveness; Saud bin Abdul Mohsin has been acting governor since 1992

Mansour bin Bandar bin Abdul Aziz—air force general in command of Jeddah air base

Mamdouh bin Abdul Aziz (b.1940)—chairman of the Strategic Studies Bureau

Mashur bin Abdul Aziz (b.1942)

Miqrin bin Abdul Aziz (b.1943)—governor of Hail province, married to a member of the Rashid tribe

Mishal bin Abdul Aziz (b.1926)—said to be most unpopular member of the royal family, and the most corrupt

Mishal bin Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz

Mishal bin Muhammad bin Saud bin Abdul Aziz (b.1936)—businessman

Mishari bin Abdul Aziz (b.1932)—reputation as a drunkard, shot dead British consul in Jeddah in 1951

Mishari bin Saud bin Abdul Aziz—National Guard commander in the Eastern Province

Mitab bin Abdul Aziz (b.1928)—minister of public works and housing

Mitab bin Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz—deputy head of National Guard, head of Guard academy, agent for Ford Motor Company

Moataz bin Saud bin Abdul Aziz—early 30s, captain in National Guard, now assigned to Saudi National Guard office in Washington, D.C. while studying part-time at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies

- Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Faisal bin Abdul Aziz (b.1943)—
businessman
- Muhammad bin Fahd bin Abdul Aziz (b.1950)—governor of Eastern
province since 1985, previously businessman
- Muhammad bin Faisal bin Abdul Aziz—"father" of Saudi
desalination program who suggested towing icebergs to
kingdom to provide fresh water, now head of Faisal Islamic Bank
group headquartered in Switzerland, which does not do business
in the kingdom
- Muhammad bin Nayef bin Abdul Aziz—businessman in association
with his brother Saud, runs SNAAS company now that his
brother is deputy governor of Eastern Province
- Muhammad bin Saud bin Abdul Aziz—governor of Baha province
- Muhammad bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz
- Muhammad bin Turki Al Sudairi—governor of Jizan province
- Musaid bin Abdul Aziz (b.1923)—father of Faisal, who assassinated
King Faisal
- Nawwaf bin Abdul Aziz (b.1933)
- Nayef bin Abdul Aziz (b.1933)—minister of interior
- Nayef bin Ahmad bin Abdul Aziz—in army special forces
- Nayef bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz
- Saad bin Faisal bin Abdul Aziz—head of Faisal foundation
- Salman bin Abdul Aziz (b.1936)—governor of Riyadh province since
1962, full brother of King Fahd
- Sattam bin Abdul Aziz (b.1943)—vice governor of Riyadh province
- Saud bin Abdul-Mohsin bin Abdul Aziz—acting governor of Mecca
since 1992, previously vice governor, father was a Liberal Prince,
married to daughter of late King Faisal

Saud bin Fahd bin Abdul Aziz (b.1950)—formerly businessman, part-owner of Carlson Al-Saudi (which went bankrupt in 1986), became deputy head of intelligence in 1985

Saud bin Faisal bin Abdul Aziz (b.1941)—foreign minister since 1975

Saud bin Nayef bin Abdul Aziz—deputy governor of Eastern province since early 1993, earlier career as businessman in SNAAS company

Sultan bin Abdul Aziz (b.1924)—second deputy prime minister since 1982, minister of defense and aviation

Sultan bin Abdul Rahman Al Sudairi—governor of Jouf province

Sultan bin Fahd bin Abdul Aziz (b.1951)—formerly in armed forces, now vice-president of Youth Welfare

Sultan bin Salman—late 30s, astronaut, lieutenant-colonel in air force

Sultan bin Turki bin Abdul Aziz

Talal bin Abdul Aziz (b.1931)—leader of Liberal Princes who sided with President Nasser of Egypt in 1960s, businessman, radio ham, special envoy to UNESCO

Turki bin Abdul Aziz (b.1934)—vice minister of defense until 1978 but was forced to resign after family dispute, full brother of King Fahd

Turki bin Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz

Turki bin Abdul Rahman bin Abdul Aziz

Turki bin Faisal bin Abdul Aziz (b.1945)—head of general intelligence department since 1977

Turki bin Nasir bin Abdul Aziz—air force general in command of Dhahran air base

Turki bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz—an official in ministry of information

Walid bin Talal bin Abdul Aziz (b.1955)—son of Prince Talal, the leader of the Liberal Princes in the 1960s. In 1991 he invested \$590 million in Citicorp, making him the bank's largest individual shareholder

APPENDIX VIII

INTERVIEWS

Mike Ameen—former vice president, government relations, Aramco; and former president, Mobil Middle East Development Corporation

—by telephone, August 12, 1993

Frank Brenchley—British charge d'affaires, Jeddah (1963)

—London, May 18, 1993

Noel Brehony—former senior British foreign office official

—London, September 23, 1993

Sandra Charles—former director for Near East and South Asian affairs, U.S. National Security Council

—Washington, D.C., July 28, 1993

Brigadier Nick Cocking—British advisor to Saudi National Guard (1985-93)

—London, July 22, 1993

Sir James Craig—British ambassador to Saudi Arabia (1979-84)

—London, June 3, 1993

Walter Cutler—U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia, (1984-87, 1988-89)

—Washington, D.C., August 16, 1993

Hermann Eilts—U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia (1966-70)

—by telephone, August 23, 1993

Charles Freeman—U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia (1990-92)

—Washington, D.C., August 24, 1993

David Gore-Booth—British ambassador to Saudi Arabia since 1993

—London, June 30, 1993

John Grundon—director-general of Middle East Association, London, and former Middle East Coordinator, British Petroleum

—London, July 15, 1993

Martin Indyk—senior director for Near East and South Asian Affairs and special assistant to the president, U.S. National Security Council

—Washington, D.C., August 11, 1993

David Long—former U.S. diplomat in Saudi Arabia, State Department specialist, academic and author
—Washington, D.C., August 10, 1993

Sir Alan Munro—British ambassador to Saudi Arabia (1989-93)
—London, July 22, 1993

Richard Murphy—U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia (1981-83), head of embassy political section (1963-66)
—Washington D.C., August 10, 1993

James Placke—U.S. deputy chief of mission and charge d'affaires, Jeddah (1979-81)
—Washington, D.C., April 29, 1993

William Quandt—senior Middle East director, U.S. National Security Council (1976-80)
—Washington, D.C., April 30, 1993

Charles Waterman—U.S. embassy, Jeddah (1979-81), and National Intelligence Officer for Near East and South Asian affairs (1981-85)
—Washington, D.C., July 30, 1993

Another ten people spoke only on condition that their names not be listed.

(Note: Foreign embassies were in the Red Sea port city of Jeddah until 1984, when they moved to the capital, Riyadh.)

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Simon Henderson has been a journalist with the *Financial Times* of London since 1978 and is currently editor of its East European Markets newsletter. From 1980-89, he was editor of the *Financial Times'* Mideast Markets newsletter. Previously, Mr. Henderson served as a freelance correspondent in Islamabad, Pakistan for the BBC, *Financial Times*, and the *London Observer*. He is the author of *Instant Empire: Saddam Hussein's Ambition for Iraq* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1991).



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ISBN 0-744029-55-8