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*King Fahd
Courtesy
Embassy of Saudi Arabia*

ties, in addition to that of king, include president of the Council of Ministers (commonly known as prime minister) and commander in chief of the Saudi Arabian armed forces. He is assisted by the crown prince, the heir apparent to the throne, who also acts as deputy prime minister, and by the second deputy prime minister, who is assumed to be next in line to become king. Both King Khalid (1975–82) and King Fahd (1982–) delegated considerable responsibility to their deputies—as crown prince, Fahd ran much of the day-to-day business of government; Crown Prince Abdallah was thought to have had somewhat less authority delegated to him, although he presided often over weekly meetings of the Council of Ministers as well as weekly meetings with senior ulama, and received official foreign delegations in addition to heading the Saudi Arabian National Guard.

Ultimate authority in virtually every aspect of government rests with the king. All legislation is either by royal decree or by ministerial decree, which must be sanctioned by the king. The

king also appoints all ministers, other senior government officials, governors of the amirates (provinces), and military officers above the rank of lieutenant colonel. He also appoints all ambassadors and other foreign envoys, and all foreign diplomats in Saudi Arabia are accredited to the king. He also acts as the final court of appeal and has the power of pardon.

The primary executive office of the king is the Royal Diwan, or the King's Household. The principal advisers to the king have offices in the Diwan. In the early 1980s the chief royal adviser continued to be Dr. Rashad Pharaon, a Syrian who had been private physician to Abd al Aziz and had undertaken his advisory role under Faisal. Much of the king's routine daily affairs is conducted from his private office within the Diwan, where regulations and royal decrees are also drafted. A number of departments are located in the Diwan, thus giving their heads direct access to the king. These include the chief of protocol; the Office of Beduin Affairs; the Department of Religious Research, Missionary Activities, and Guidance, which was headed by the most senior of the ulama, Shaykh Abd al Aziz bin Baz; and representatives of the committees for public morality.

It is also in the Diwan that the king holds his regular majlis (see Glossary), where subjects can personally appeal to the king for redress or assistance in almost any matter. Abd al Aziz held a daily majlis and used it effectively as a major institution of his rule. Gradually, however, it became less important to successive kings, although local amirs continued to treat the majlis as an important institution of governing in the amirates.

The Council of Ministers is the major executive organ of government, although it contains no authority separate from the king, who has also acted as prime minister since 1964. The gradual expansion of the council has been the major accomplishment in the institutionalization of the government under Saudi rule. Abd al Aziz created the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1930, the Ministry of Finance in 1932, and the Ministry of Defense in 1944. In 1951 he established the Ministry of Interior, and in 1953, just before his death, he formally created the Council of Ministers and increased the number of ministries to nine. Three more were added during the reign of Saud, and two were established under Faisal. In 1975 King Khalid expanded the Council of Ministers by six, adding public works and housing; municipal and rural affairs; higher education; industry and electricity; planning; and telegraph, post, and telephone to the list of ministries. The already existing ministries were named agriculture and water; commerce; communications; defense and aviation; education; finance and na-

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tional economy; foreign affairs; health; information; interior; justice; labor and social affairs; petroleum and mineral resources; and pilgrimage affairs and religious trusts. The heads of these 20 ministries, together with King Fahd, Crown Prince Abdallah, and three royal advisers who acted as ministers of state without portfolio, made up the Council of Ministers at the beginning of 1984.

Of these 25 individuals, six were from the royal family. In addition to the king and crown prince, Prince Sultan bin Abd al Aziz acted as second deputy prime minister and as minister of defense and aviation; Prince Nayif bin Abd al Aziz acted as minister of interior; Prince Saud bin Faisal, son of King Faisal, was minister of foreign affairs; and Prince Mitaab bin Abd al Aziz was minister of public works and housing. Another half brother of the king had led the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs until 1979, when he was made governor of Makkah. Although the number of representatives of the House of Saud in the Council of Ministers gradually declined in the 1970s, they continued to hold the key political and military positions. During the early 1980s, the deputy ministers of defense and aviation and of interior were also sons of Abd al Aziz.

Another family—Al ash Shaykh—also figured prominently, having three positions in the Council of Ministers. The participation of Al ash Shaykh members as ministers of justice, higher education, and agriculture and water thus provided continuity with the eighteenth-century family alliance that proved so crucial to the House of Saud.

The remaining 16 members—13 ministers and three advisers—were commoners who came from widely differing backgrounds. Many were known as technocrats—highly trained persons (often holding Ph. D. degrees from universities in the United States or Britain) who were put in charge of agencies that oversee the nation's economic development. Most technocrats achieved their high positions by displaying competence while rising in the ranks of the civil service. As the Council of Ministers grew over the years, technocrats gradually assumed a greater role in government (see *The Challenge of Modernization*, this ch.).

Even in 1984, however, policy decisions made by the technocratic elite continued to be subject to the approval of the royal family. Thus, the attributes of the Council of Ministers, as stated in the regulatory law issued in 1958 and still in effect, include "the determination of the internal, foreign, financial, economic, educational, and defense policies as well as all public affairs pertaining to the Kingdom. However," it qualifies, "the de-

cisions of the Council of Ministers shall not come into effect until they are sanctioned by the King."

The Council of Ministers held regular weekly meetings in which matters of state were considered and from which decisions emerged as ministerial decrees. During 1983 these sessions were generally presided over by Crown Prince Abdallah acting as deputy prime minister; only on occasion did King Fahd preside. All ministerial decrees were subsequently reviewed by the king within the Bureau of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

The Civil Service and Independent Agencies

The nine-member Civil Service Board, responsible to the Council of Ministers and headed by Abdallah, exercises formal authority over the employees of all ministries, government organizations, and autonomous agencies. It presides over the Civil Service Bureau, which implements the decisions and directives of the Civil Service Board that pertain to grade classification, rates of pay, recruitment and manpower needs, and personnel evaluation. The number of civil service employees in Saudi Arabia increased dramatically with the widening scope of government. Between 1972 and 1982 government employees—including teachers and health workers but excluding military personnel—increased in number from some 150,000 to nearly 400,000. Reliance on foreign nationals grew gradually over the decade; by the early 1980s almost 30 percent of government employees were non-Saudis. This trend is expected to be reversed in the future as overall growth in the civil service slows and more university-educated Saudis become available to the government.

The growth in the number of ministries contributed partly to the increase in the number of government employees. Also contributing were the growing responsibilities of each ministry. Because decisionmaking remained essentially confined to the top echelon—to the minister and his deputy minister—the growth of the ministries was accompanied by increasing inefficiency as important decisions were being increasingly delayed. In an effort to improve efficiency, administrative authority was dispersed in the early 1980s to a new tier of officials—assistant deputy ministers—and to the regional directors of ministry branch offices in the amirates.

Another major means of institutional growth of the Saudi government has been the autonomous agencies. In the early 1980s one author counted 66 of these agencies. Most fell administratively under the auspices of a particular ministry. Each had a

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separate budget allocation, however, which gave it considerable independence. The heads of some, such as the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) and the General Petroleum and Mineral Organization (Petromin), held ministerial rank, and their importance and influence rivaled those of the ministers to whom they were theoretically responsible. A few agencies, such as the General Audit Bureau, were not attached to a particular ministry. Three other independent agencies that were of particular relevance to the civil service were the Board of Grievances, which hears complaints of misconduct by government employees; the Investigation and Control Board, which investigates the complaints; and the Organization for Public Services and Discipline, which dispenses disciplinary action in such cases.

Civil servants were classified into one of two categories—government officials (professionals who counted for nearly three-quarters of total government employees in 1982) and lower paid hired employees. All civil servants were ranked according to grade, and advancement depended on merit and seniority. Manpower training was provided within each ministry and also at the Institute of Public Administration, an autonomous government agency with training centers in Riyadh, Jiddah, and Dammam.

Local Administration

The nation that Abd al Aziz forged during the early twentieth century represented a consolidation of numerous regions, each ruled by a local tribal shaykh. The most important regions were Najd, in central Arabia including Riyadh; the Hijaz, the western region incorporating Jiddah and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina; Hasa (or the Eastern Province [Ash Sharqiyah]), the oil-producing region bordering on the Gulf and populated largely by Shiite Muslims; and Asir, in the southwest bordering the Yemen Arab Republic (Yemen [Sanaa]). Abd al Aziz ruled from Najd, placing trusted lieutenants (often the same traditional local shaykhs who were now aligned with the House of Saud) in charge of local government. Abd al Aziz traveled extensively throughout the kingdom, holding frequent royal majlises where the positions and desires of tribal shaykhs were made known to the king. Because of transportation and communications difficulties, however, those local rulers who were distant from Riyadh ruled with considerable autonomy from the king's authority (see *The Institutionalization of the Saudi State*, this ch.).

It was not until 1963 that local administration was formally institutionalized and the nation divided into amirates governed

by local amirs (called governors) as representatives of the king. Even then Faisal only gradually ended the traditional style of Saudi rule. Two decades later the emirates continued to be governed with considerable, though decreasing, autonomy from the central government. There also remained a marked ad hoc quality to local administration; personal relationships between the local amirs and the king were often more important than the formal structures of government. Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, Saudi officials discussed the need for reforms that would standardize local administration throughout the kingdom and relieve the growing burden being placed on governors as a result of development projects increasingly being placed in the emirates. As of early 1984, however, no major reforms had been undertaken. At that time the kingdom was divided into 14 emirates (see fig. 1). A previous distinction between major and minor emirates was no longer made, although the importance of a particular administrative subdivision could generally be gauged by who was appointed by the king to govern in his name. Eight of the emirates (Ar Riyadh, Al Qasim, Tabuk, Al Hudud ash Shamaliyah [Northern Frontier], Makkah, Al Madinah, Asir, and Hail) had governors who were sons or grandsons of Abd al Aziz. The governors of four smaller emirates (Al Jawf, Al Qurayyat, Najran, and Jizan) were from the Sudairi family, which had produced the mothers of both Fahd and Abd al Aziz. The emirate of the Eastern Province remained in the hands of an Al Jiluwi family member—a prerogative first bestowed by Abd al Aziz on this branch of Al Saud. Finally, the governor of the tiny emirate of Al Bahah belonged to the Ibrahim clan.

Governors hold ministerial status and act as the king's representative in the emirates. In effect, they act as a liaison between the central government and the tribes. They govern from a principal city, although by tradition these cities are not designated as capitals. The major responsibility of the governor is the maintenance of security within the emirate. He commands local police and Saudi Arabian National Guard units and supervises the recruitment of local males for these forces (see Personnel, ch. 5). Another prime responsibility of the governor is to hear the petitions of local citizens in his majlis, which in the early 1980s continued to be held on a daily basis. Local disputes were often brought to a governor's majlis, and he could arbitrate the matter himself or refer it to the appropriate court. Governors in larger emirates had a number of special secretaries who assisted in the investigation of disputes and in requests for certain kinds of assistance. The third major responsibility of the governors was to over-

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see the work of both central government agencies and municipal officials within the emirate.

Formally, the emirate is linked to the central government by the Ministry of Interior. In actual practice, however, the more powerful governors were able to bypass Minister of Interior Nayif and report directly to the king. In the early 1980s the central government greatly increased its activities in the emirates. The upgrading of their importance was signaled by the appointment of four additional sons of Abd al Aziz as governors and by the expenditure of a significantly larger amount of money on economic development in the emirates in the wake of the disturbances in Mecca and the Eastern Province in late 1979 and early 1980 (see *Traditionalism Versus Modernization*, ch. 1; *Threats to Internal Security*, ch. 5). Governors must supervise officials from the ministries of planning, education, public works and housing, industry and electricity, and agriculture and water in the planning and implementation of these development projects in their areas.

The governors were assisted by one, or sometimes two, deputy governors and, in some instances, by one or more deputy assistant governors. The more populous emirates were divided into districts and subdistricts. The leading officials in the districts (sometimes known as minor emirates) were also known as governors. These "junior" governors administered a portion of an emirate and, in theory at least, were subordinate to the "senior" governors. The need for provincial councils, elected or appointed bodies of local elders that would advise and assist the governors, has been discussed at length over many years, but none had been implemented by the early 1980s.

Mayors, who were sometimes assisted by municipal managers, were the chief officials in municipalities, towns, and villages. These local officials were formally responsible to the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs, although in fact they often answered directly to the local governor. Municipal councils once existed throughout much of the Hijaz; by the early 1980s only Medina still had an active council of local elders that assisted the mayor. In Jiddah a municipal council existed on paper but had long been inactive.

The Judicial System

Until 1970 the judicial system was under the authority of the office of the grand mufti and a committee of senior muftis. The grand mufti was a senior member of the Al ash Shaykh family, whose approach to the rigidly orthodox Hanbali interpretation of

DURING ITS INFANCY in the 1930s the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia needed little as far as national security was concerned—protection of the king and the royal family, protection of the holy places, and nominal defense of its territory, much of which needed no other defense than that provided by its natural desolation. Fifty years later, however, the kingdom was in the limelight on the world stage. As producer and largest exporter of oil to much of the industrialized world and owner of about one-quarter of the known reserves, this land of the House of Saud had assumed a significant role in international politics. Its national security had become a major concern not only to the king and the royal family but also to those industrialized countries that depend on Saudi oil to make the wheels turn. The well-being of the economies of the United States, many of the countries of Western Europe, and Japan depended to a large extent on the flow of Saudi oil.

King Abd al Aziz bin Abd ar Rahman Al Saud, restorer of the House of Saud and founder of the kingdom in 1932, had many sons, four of whom (all born of different mothers) have succeeded him to the throne: Saud, 1953–64; Faisal, 1964–75; Khalid, 1975–82; and Fahd, whose reign continued in early 1984. King Fahd bin Abd al Aziz Al Saud (as he is formally known) had been crown prince and deputy prime minister under King Khalid and was frequently in charge, acting for Khalid during several illnesses. Fahd, therefore, was no stranger to royal power or to the international politics of the “oil kingdom” when he succeeded his half brother in June 1982. During his first two years as king, Fahd demonstrated his awareness of the security of the kingdom and of the forces responsible for that security, which he heads as commander in chief.

The defense and security organizations initiated under Abd al Aziz, and particularly promoted by Faisal, have grown and developed into the armed forces, paramilitary forces, and police and security forces that defend and protect the kingdom. In early 1984 the king was at the apex of the security system, which was essentially divided into three segments, headed by princes of the royal family—all sons of Abd al Aziz. The regular armed forces—army, navy, and air force—were under the Ministry of Defense and Aviation, headed by Prince Sultan. The police, coastal, and border security forces were under the Ministry of Interior, headed by Prince Nayif. The Saudi Arabian National Guard, a paramili-

common corporal punishment. Despite criticism of their system from outside, however, the Saudis usually take pride in being a law-abiding society that has a low incidence of crime and, reportedly, a low incidence of imprisonment for political reasons.

Armed Forces in Government and Society

Military Background

The kingdom was founded in 1932, some 30 years after Abd al Aziz had begun the reconquest of the Arabian Peninsula for the House of Saud, which in the eighteenth century had established hegemony over many of the tribes of the peninsula but had lost it during the nineteenth century. In his early twenties, leading a small band of tribal warriors, Abd al Aziz captured Riyadh in January 1902. Riyadh, which had been the seat of the earlier Al Saud Dynasty, was of great symbolic importance to the young Saudi chieftain who then used it as a center of operations against the Al Rashid lineage, his strongest rival. The charismatic leadership of Abd al Aziz, plus the militant puritanism of his followers, led to victory after victory for the House of Saud, which by 1906 had extended its control over the central Najd region (see fig. 5).

The Islam of the forces led by Abd al Aziz was based on Wahhabism (see Glossary), the creed of the Saudis since the eighteenth century, which was spread rapidly by missionaries sent out by Abd al Aziz to win over beduin tribal leaders and secure their loyalty to him and to his cause. Specifically, he sought the establishment of Ikhwan (brotherhood) communities in which the nomadic beduin tribesmen would settle and adopt a sedentary way of life. The first Ikhwan community was founded in 1912 at Al Artawiyah, an oasis north of Riyadh. Abd al Aziz supplied seed, farm tools, and money, as well as arms and ammunition, as each such community was established. Mosques, schools, and dwellings were also built for those agreeing to settle down to the community life. In return for his investment, Abd al Aziz received the pledge of the tribal leaders to supply him with warriors to fight the battles in his continuing efforts to unite the peninsula.

The Ikhwan became dedicated, even fanatical followers of the young Saudi leader who, at times, needed all of his talents to keep his fierce warriors fighting under his banner. Acquiescence to discipline was not an Ikhwan virtue, but Abd al Aziz was an uncommon leader who was able to use to his own advantage the power of the brotherhood and its prowess in battle. As the Ikhwan reputation for utter ruthlessness spread fear through the ranks of

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enemies and potential enemies, the House of Saud's territories and fortunes increased markedly. By 1913 an outlet to the sea had been secured between Kuwait and Qatar, providing an income from coastal shipping for the first time and also providing new taxable citizens. The desert warfare carried on by Abd al Aziz and his Ikhwan in the early twentieth century was much the same as it had been for generations or even centuries. In *The House of Saud* by David Holden and Richard Johns, a 1915 battle between the Saudis and the Rashidis is described as "a completely traditional desert affray of bedouin horsemen, camel cavalry and thousands of barefoot tribesmen battling hand to hand among the sand dunes."

Although part of the Ottoman Empire, most of the peninsula had been almost a world unto itself until the tribes were drawn into larger outside conflicts during World War I. Relying on the Ottomans to maintain stability in the Middle East before the war, Britain had earlier disdained a pact with Abd al Aziz, but after the declaration of war against Turkey in October 1914, the British sought an alliance with the House of Saud. By a treaty signed in December 1914, the British recognized Saudi independence from the Ottoman Empire and presented Abd al Aziz with 1,000 rifles, a supply of ammunition, and 20,000 British pounds. A subsequent agreement in 1915 gave the Saudi leader a monthly subsidy of 5,000 British pounds plus a gift of 3,000 rifles and a supply of ammunition. As his part of the deal, Abd al Aziz promised to keep 4,000 men in the field against the house of Rashid, which was associated with the Ottomans. The British-Saudi pact continued throughout World War I.

The greatest Ikhwan success came with the conquest of the Hijaz after the war, but their bold exploits also marked the beginning of their end. When Hussein, the Hashimite ruler of the Hijaz, entered into military negotiations with the Rashidis, Abd al Aziz' reaction was swift and harsh. He sent the Ikhwan against the Rashidi stronghold at Hail, which was captured without too much difficulty in 1921. Emboldened by their success, however, the warriors disregarded orders and crossed the border into Transjordan. The raiding and plundering of their Hashimite ally aroused the British, who mounted a counterattack that defeated the Ikhwan force.

Recognizing that the wild forays of the Ikhwan could only be a constant irritant and source of danger to his leadership, Abd al Aziz began to form a more conventional and more disciplined army. Later, when the fanatical soldiers of God—as the Ikhwan thought of themselves—repeatedly moved without orders against

any targets of their choosing, the Saudi leader used his new army to bring the recalcitrant warriors back under his control. Having reestablished his command authority, he then occupied Mecca and laid siege to Jiddah and Medina, which were occupied by the end of 1925. Upon the capitulation of the Hashimite kingdom of the Hijaz, Abd al Aziz had extended Saudi hegemony over the greater part of the peninsula, excepting only the Yemen in the southwest and the British protectorates along the Persian Gulf coast.

Having acquired such a tremendous area, Abd al Aziz was then faced with the task of ruling it, but even before he could properly organize for that task, he had to deal with the once more rebellious Ikhwan, who had been so instrumental in all of his conquests. The militant puritans of the brotherhood feared that Western-influenced modernization would dilute the fundamentals of Islam that had been their *raison d'être* since the beginning of their association with the House of Saud. Disenchanted, the Ikhwan leadership revolted against Abd al Aziz, who took to the field in person to lead his army, which was now supported by four British aircraft (flown by British pilots) and a fleet of 200 military vehicles (symbols of the modernization that the Ikhwan abhorred). By January 1930 the Ikhwan had been eliminated as an organized military force.

A short time later the forces of Abd al Aziz were again engaged, this time against the Yemenis. The border with Yemen was poorly defined, resulting in a series of incidents in late 1931 and early 1932. Abd al Aziz claimed that his territory had been invaded by the forces of the Yemeni leader, Imam (see Glossary) Yahya. The Yemenis were driven back in the spring of 1932, but negotiations for a settlement dragged on into 1934. Abd al Aziz, who in the interim had made himself king, decided on further military action to resolve the stalemate and sent his eldest living son, Saud, at the head of an army that soon occupied much Yemeni territory. The renewed military action attracted the attention of European powers that were interested in maintaining the status quo on the Arabian Peninsula. Britain, France, and Italy sent warships to the port of Al Hudaydah on the Red Sea but, unintimidated, the Saudi king ordered his troops to hold their positions pending the outcome of negotiations that had opened in At Taif. Magnanimous in victory, as was his custom, Abd al Aiz restored most of the occupied territory to Yahya.

The remainder of the 1930s was a time of consolidation for the kingdom; no further military ventures ensued, nor did the existing forces expand to any significant degree. The king allowed

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