



# After King Abdullah

## Succession in Saudi Arabia

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Simon Henderson

Policy Focus #96 | August 2009



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Front cover: Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah, center front, with officials at a Riyadh airport, March 2006. (AP Photo/Francois Mori, Pool)

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# About the Author

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*After King Abdullah* updates Henderson's seminal 1994 Washington Institute Policy Paper *After King Fahd: Succession in Saudi Arabia*, an examination of King Fahd's then newly codified Saudi succession rules. His other recent Washington Institute publications include *The New Pillar: Conservative Arab Gulf States and U.S. Strategy*; *Reducing Vulnerability to Middle East Energy Shocks: A Key Element in Strengthening U.S. Energy Security* (with Patrick Clawson); and *Energy in Danger: Iran, Oil, and the West*.



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## Note on Royal Saudi Names

THE CORRECT FORM of a Saudi prince's name consists of his given name, followed by the name of his father and sometimes that of his grandfather; each name is separated by *bin* (Arabic for "son of"). A family name is sometimes added, such as *al-Saud*, meaning "the family of Saud." *Saud* in this case refers to the father of the first leader of the dynasty, who ruled 270 years ago, rather than to King Saud, who ruled from 1953 to 1964.

To provide an example: The full name of the Saudi interior minister, Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz al-Saud (usually abbreviated as Prince Nayef), indicates that he is the son of Abdulaziz in the family of Saud. The full name of his son Prince Muhammad, the assistant interior minister, is therefore rendered Prince Muhammad bin Nayef bin Abdulaziz al-Saud.

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



# Preface

*After King Abdullah: Succession in Saudi Arabia* builds on the author's Washington Institute Policy Paper *After King Fahd: Succession in Saudi Arabia*, first published in 1994 and revised in 1995. The study was based on research conducted after King Fahd codified, for the first time, the rules of succession in the 1992 Basic Law of Governance.

This new Policy Focus draws on the author's earlier research and examines the likely consequences of King Abdullah's 2006 announcement regarding the formation of an Allegiance Council intended to give a group of senior princes a potential role in the choosing of future crown princes.

A review of the last 270 years of al-Saud succession is excerpted, with minor updates, from the earlier study. *After King Abdullah* also relies on important research obtained for the earlier study by private interviews with U.S. and British officials, former diplomats, military advisors, and oil company executives who had direct knowledge of the Saudi royal family.



# Executive Summary

WITHIN THE NEXT several years, the kingdom of Saudi Arabia will likely undergo some dramatic leadership changes. Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah is the fifth son of King Abdulaziz (the kingdom's founder) to rule the desert country, and none of his predecessors achieved his advanced years. Abdullah's longevity raises the questions: who will be the next king and how might his rule affect U.S.-Saudi relations? This particular succession will likely be crucial to U.S. Middle East policy, as the character and ruling style of the next Saudi king could either help or hinder American aims on a broad range of important regional issues, including those involving Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Middle East peace process, and energy security.

Abdullah's most likely successor will be one of his powerful half brothers, Crown Prince Sultan, eighty-five, or Interior Minister Prince Nayef, seventy-six. Both are reported to be ailing. Succession currently passes from brother to brother among the sons of King Abdulaziz (often referred to as Ibn Saud), but this filial generation is aging, and many of King Abdullah's surviving brothers and half brothers are thought to lack the qualities or experience necessary to rule. Just as the particulars of the Saudi royal succession lineage are unclear, so is the role of the untested Allegiance Council, established in 2006 to defuse succession battles within the House of Saud.

The king is preeminent in Saudi political decision-making. Although he initially seeks consensus among the senior members of the royal family, he makes decisions either personally as king, or governmentally as prime minister. Nevertheless, many Saudi rulers have, in effect, ceded to key constituencies outside royal circles much of the decisionmaking in the two areas that have distinguished Saudi Arabia as a regional and international power: Islam and oil. Religious policy, interpreted in a broad way, is influenced strongly by the country's senior Muslim clerics, and oil policy is driven by the kingdom's technocrats. Yet even in these critical areas, Saudi political decisionmaking—never an efficient or expedient process—could easily become

paralyzed amid a succession crisis that features several short reigns of ailing elderly kings.

Over the past decade or so, the U.S.-Saudi relationship has undergone a fundamental reappraisal from both ends, particularly since the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, in which fifteen of the nineteen terrorists were Saudi nationals. During much of the Bush administration, U.S.-Saudi ties were cool: Saudi leaders often seemed to emphasize divergence rather than convergence with the United States on regional and strategic issues, particularly with regard to the Middle East peace process, the nature of the al-Qaeda threat, the invasion of Iraq and overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the price of oil, and the ascendancy of Iran as a regional power.

But the passage of time, the global recession of 2008–2009, and the election of U.S. president Barack Obama have contributed to an improvement in bilateral ties. High oil prices—a significant factor in the worldwide economic downturn—boosted the kingdom's financial reserves, making Saudi Arabia a crucial player in international forums seeking new policies to mitigate the global financial meltdown. King Abdullah's efforts to develop relations between Islam and other faiths raised his personal international standing. And in a relatively brief period, he has developed close relations with President Obama, who visited Riyadh in June 2009 on his first trip to the Middle East.

Although U.S.-Saudi relations are based on enduring and respective national interests, a close working relationship between the top political leaders of both countries is central to strong bilateral ties, especially given the importance of personal connections in the Saudi political system. Yet establishing close relations at the top requires both time and effort. With the kingdom facing the prospect of enthroning a new king every two or three years (or even at closer intervals), the U.S. president faces the prospect of having to work with several Saudi monarchs during one term alone. The inevitable time required for each new Saudi leader to become acquainted with his U.S.

counterpart could indeed detract from progress on the bilateral agenda.

The obvious solution to the problems associated with a series of elderly Saudi successors is a younger king. Twenty sons survive Ibn Saud, including Abdullah, but, as noted, many lack the qualities usually deemed necessary to be king, including government experience and the relative social standing of their mothers. Tapping the next generation of potential leaders—the grandsons of Ibn Saud—increases the number of younger contenders, but it also increases uncertainty with regard to the resulting succession lineage.

Given the power and patronage centralized within the office of the Saudi king, family rivalry could be intense. Succession since Ibn Saud's death in 1953 has worked in a variety of circumstances; a new king has been enthroned quickly after the death, incapacitation, deposition, or assassination of his predecessor. But the apparent smoothness of Saudi power transitions actually masks fierce intrafamily rivalries that often fester for long periods. In the 270 years that the House of Saud has largely dominated the political arena of the Arabian peninsula, such internal rivalries have

occasionally led to leadership ruptures. A succession of short-lived, ailing Saudi kings could raise the specter of political instability or even a succession crisis in the kingdom.

As befits a family who rules over an eponymous state, the al-Saud can be expected to put its own interests first. With an ingrained fear of foreign encroachment on family prerogatives, the House of Saud will resent any attempt by the United States to influence Saudi succession. U.S. restraint will be a decided challenge, because American officials remain apprehensive about the manner in which Sultan or Nayef would rule the kingdom. (Sultan's reputation for corruption limits his popularity within the kingdom; Nayef is considered to be "difficult.")

Despite such skepticism, U.S. policymakers need to maintain close working ties with Saudi Arabia's top political echelon to manage regional problems, such as a nuclear Iran's push for regional hegemony, the threat posed by Islamist extremism, the Middle East peace process, and the need for energy security. In this regard, U.S. officials should make every effort to enhance such close working ties with their Saudi counterparts.

# 1 | The History of Succession<sup>1</sup>

THE MODERN STATE of Saudi Arabia was founded by King Abdulaziz (Ibn Saud) in 1932. From a Saudi perspective, however, the kingdom is far older—certainly older than the United States—despite occasional interruptions in Saudi rule and even though the Western notion of sovereign independence was not achieved by the Saudis until this century. As founder of the modern Saudi state, Ibn Saud could trace his forebears to the middle of the fifteenth century, when they arrived in the center of Arabia from the Hasa region to the east. 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 identified patriarch of the family was Saud bin Muhammad, who was succeeded as sheikh (local ruler) upon his death in 1725 by his son Muhammad, who is usually described as the first ruler of the al-Saud dynasty. (King Abdulaziz was given the name Ibn Saud by the British, recalling this ancestor, Muhammad bin Saud, or Ibn Saud.)

In 1745, Muhammad bin Saud, who had already achieved a reputation as a tough fighter in defending the local date palm plantations from 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. Combining Muhammad bin Saud’s tribal leadership and fighting prowess with Abdul Wahhab’s religious zeal, they planned a jihad (struggle) to conquer and purify Arabia. The strategy was simple: those who did not accept the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam would either be 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, partnering now with the sheikh’s son, Abdulaziz bin Muhammad. They ended up controlling most of the central area of Arabia known as the Nejd, including the town of Riyadh, today 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 in the north, south, and east countered Wahhabi raids with campaigns of their own.

Abdul Wahhab died in 1792, but Abdulaziz bin Muhammad continued the raiding parties, pillaging the Shiite Muslim holy city of Karbala (in what is now Iraq) in 1802 and conquering Mecca the following year. Such activity and success prompted reaction. Abdulaziz was assassinated in 1803, probably by a Shiite seeking revenge for the desecration of the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad’s grandson Hussein in Karbala. Also, the Ottoman sultan in Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul), who regarded himself as the guardian of Mecca, asked the ruler of Egypt, Muhammad Ali, to mount an expedition to regain Mecca as well as Medina, the second holiest city, which had fallen to Wahhabi forces in 1805.

Confronted by Egyptian forces, the Wahhabis, under the command of Abdulaziz’s son Saud, lost control of both Mecca and Medina. Upon Saud’s death in 1814, his son Abdullah concluded a truce with the Ottoman and Egyptian forces. In 1816, another Egyptian army pushed into the Nejd region of central

1. This historical narrative is drawn from the author’s earlier work, *After King Fahd: Succession in Saudi Arabia*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Washington Institute, 1995). For that study, twenty-seven current and former U.S. and British diplomats, senior officials, and oil executives were interviewed, seven of whom agreed to be listed by name. Other books referenced for that study include Robert Lacey, *The Kingdom* (London: Hutchinson, 1981), and David Holden and Richard Johns, *The House of Saud* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1981).

Arabia, razing Dariyah in 1818. 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 had ended with the death of Abdullah.

### The Second Saudi State

In 1824, Turki bin Abdullah, whose father was one of Abdulaziz's brothers, evicted the Egyptians from the Nejd and occupied Riyadh. Egyptian forces were pushed back to the Red Sea coastal area of the Hejaz region 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 to the Nejd 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 length (twenty-two years), its restoration of order, and its comparative prosperity. To this day, Saudi princes lay claim to this heritage by describing themselves as al-Faisal al-Saud—for example, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al-Faisal al-Saud. But this era is also remembered for the chaos that ensued after Faisal's death in 1865, when two of his sons squabbled over the succession. The eldest, Abdullah, assumed the throne initially but lost the position to his brother Saud in 1871. Concurrently, the family also lost control over much of central and eastern Arabia, where it had previously exerted influence.

On Saud's death in 1875, leadership of the family passed briefly to a third brother, Abdulrahman. But Abdullah regained power the same year and retained the position until his death in 1889, when Abdulrahman became head of the clan 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, Abdulrahman was forced to flee with his family in 1891 to the independent sheikhdom of Kuwait, marking the end of the second Saudi state. Official Saudi accounts emphasize the role of external forces and rival tribes like the al-Rashid in destroying the first and second Saudi states, preferring to ignore the effect of squabbling over power within the Saudi dynasty.<sup>2</sup>

### The Third Saudi State

In 1902, Abdulrahman's twenty-two-year-old son, Abdulaziz (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 that his son was a more effective leader, Abdulrahman 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 Qassim region, which lies between Riyadh and Hail to the northwest. His advance was contested from within the al-Saud by the descendants of his father's older brothers, who threw in their lot with the Rashids. Ibn Saud captured three members of this clan in 1906; however, instead of killing them, he 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. (For this and other instances of treachery, the clan became known as the *Araif*, a term usually applied to camels that are lost in one tribal raid and then recaptured in another.)

Ibn Saud's military prowess was reinforced in 1912 when he inaugurated the Ikhwan (brethren), a religious brotherhood of nomadic tribes, and assigned them the task of conquering Arabia in the name of Wahhabism. The eastern region of Hasa on the Persian Gulf coast fell to the Ikhwan in 1913, and three years later the last

2. See, for example, <http://www.saudiembassy.net/about/country-information/history>.

and most powerful of the Rashids, Saud bin Rashid, surrendered.

Adopting a technique for which he became renowned, Ibn Saud moved swiftly to block the threat of opposition from the Rashid clan by marrying Saud bin Rashid's widow, adopting her children, and making peace with her relatives. In a similar vein, Ibn Saud 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 facilitating 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 Hejaz area, giving Ibn Saud control of Mecca and Medina. The ruler of the Hejaz, Sharif 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, as well as initiating raids deep into Transjordan and Iraq, which were British protectorates. In response, British forces used aircraft against the Ikhwan, killing them with machine guns. The British, who had reached border agreements with Ibn Saud, pressed him to respect the accords. Ibn Saud, realizing he had to take action against the Ikhwan, started to suppress them, eventually defeating their remnants at the battle of Sabila in 1929.

### The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Is Declared

Since 1927 Ibn Saud had called himself king of the Hejaz, the Nejd, and its dependencies, and in September 1932, he declared himself king of the new country, Saudi Arabia. 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 with twenty-two wives; although, in keeping with Islamic tradition, he was never married to more than four at a time. In addition Abdulaziz had four concubines;

he would also have been offered a young female companion by his host whenever he had to stay away from home overnight while traveling. (Any offspring from such temporary unions were not counted as his official children, but would have conferred honor and perhaps royal subsidies on the host family or tribe.)

In the early years as he consolidated his rule, Ibn Saud assigned only his oldest sons to government roles. His son Faisal had effectively been his foreign minister after 1919; after 1926 Faisal was the local ruler of the Hejaz. 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.

Ibn Saud looked to other branches of the family, as well as to loyal tribes, to assign other roles. With such an extensive family tree, the candidates were numerous, but the choice was difficult. As king, Ibn Saud had to spread his relatives throughout the country in order to extend his control, while denying them sufficient power to contest his leadership or demand a right to the succession.

With shrewdness, the king achieved a balance of tensions by building consensus in the Bedouin tradition of tribal democracy, whereby the sheikh reaches agreement with the heads of the different families, a method that continues to epitomize decisionmaking in the kingdom today. 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 loyalty, it was felt, would focus more readily around a partnership than a single figure. To give legitimacy to the decision, Ibn Saud had it approved by the *ulama* (a group of high-level clerics).

In 1947 an American doctor who examined Ibn Saud reported that apart from arthritis in his knees, the king had a life expectancy of at least ten to fifteen more years. Three years later, however, other U.S. medical experts found him increasingly senile and permanently confined to a wheelchair. He 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 Ibn Saud's death, Saud was proclaimed the new king of Saudi Arabia, and he named the next in line, Faisal, crown prince and heir apparent.

It is uncertain 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. Ibn Saud's thinking was possibly that apart from demonstrating pride in his offspring, he should avoid any repetition of earlier disasters in al-Saud family history. Etched in his memory was the knowledge that succession had often been crucially mishandled in the more than two hundred years of his family's dominance of the Arabian Peninsula. On occasion, arguments between brothers and cousins had led to temporary weakening of the dominance of the al-Saud and, at other times, had resulted in the total loss of power.

### **The Crisis Years of Saud's Reign**

In many ways Saud was a strange appointment as king, reflecting, perhaps, uncertainty rather than confidence within the royal family. As early as 1933, when he was appointed crown prince, Saud's leadership qualities were considered inferior to those of his immediate younger brother, Faisal. By the time Ibn Saud died, the disparity in abilities was even more striking: Saud, according to a Western diplomat stationed in the kingdom at the time, 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.

However, Saud's main challenges were not economic but rather what he saw as the sins of British and U.S. imperialism. Although King Farouk of Egypt had been overthrown by Egyptian officers led by Gamal Abdal Nasser, and other Arab monarchies faced republican challenges, Saud did not feel threatened, at least not at first. In inter-Arab politics, he allied himself with Egypt against the Hashemites and the British. Though his political vision dictated that he blame Washington for the establishment of the State of Israel, he needed the American relationship to counterbalance the British patrons of Iraq and Jordan. His hostility to Britain was increased by his anger toward London for blocking 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 in the Middle East. In 1956, he supported Egypt when British and French forces seized the Suez Canal, but the rising power of Nasserist pan-Arabism began to make Saud feel insecure. After the crisis he worked to improve relations with Iraq and distanced Saudi Arabia from Egypt. At home, Saud was maneuvering to prevent Faisal's eventual succession by engineering the accession of his own son, Muhammad.

In March 1958 Saud was implicated in an attempt to assassinate President Nasser of Egypt. The international embarrassment gave other members of the royal family the opening they had been seeking. 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. He also distanced himself from the United States and adopted a policy of neutrality in inter-Arab affairs, a change that was read as pro-Egyptian. In May, he discovered that the kingdom's financial reserves were nearly zero, and he had to prune budgets and suspend payments on government debts to restore fiscal stability. In June, he banned luxury imports.

Infuriated at being sidelined, Saud was determined to regain power, and Faisal's economic austerity played into his hands. Saud was able to use his personal funds for building projects attractive to the tribes, while also appearing to encourage reform by offering a form of representative government. By December 1960, support for Faisal had eroded so substantially that he resigned. In turn, Saud formed a new council of ministers, naming himself as prime minister. His brother Talal was appointed minister of finance, but he resigned a few months later when he realized that Saud's interest in constitutional change was very limited. A year later, in a further twist, Saud, under pressure from senior princes, put Faisal in charge while he went abroad temporarily for medical treatment. This time, Faisal was determined not to relinquish the position.

Despite Faisal's return to effective power, to the public eye, the chaos of the al-Saud continued. Prince Talal openly sided with President Nasser by congratulating him when Egypt test-fired a long-range missile. He went to Cairo despite Nasser's statement that in order "to liberate all Jerusalem, the Arab peoples must first liberate Riyadh." Talal was joined in the Egyptian capital by his brother Fawwaz, his half brother Badr, and a cousin; the group was dubbed the "free princes" or "liberal princes." Back in Riyadh, Talal's half brother Abdulmohsin voiced support for the group and for 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 he appointed Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani as oil minister, and a few months later he altered the council of ministers, dropping some of Saud's sons and replacing them with his brothers Fahd and Sultan. By the end of 1963 it had become clear that Saud was having increasing doubts as to 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) stating 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 *ulama* issued a *fatwa* (legal opinion) transferring executive powers to Faisal while still allowing Saud to remain king. Eight months later, Saud abdicated and went into exile in Europe, dying in Greece in 1969.

Faisal did not appoint a crown prince until the spring of 1965. The obvious contender was the next in line, Muhammad, but he was considered unsuitable due to his bad temper and frequent drunkenness. He was known within the al-Saud as Abu Sharrain—"father of the twin evils."<sup>3</sup> (He later ordered the death by shooting of his granddaughter after she was

found to be having an adulterous affair; her lover was beheaded. The story was told in a 1980 British television docudrama, *Death of a Princess*, after which, at Saudi insistence, the British ambassador was forced to temporarily return to London.)

Muhammad stepped aside from his claim to the throne, and after several weeks, Faisal chose Muhammad's younger full brother Khalid. Although this confirmed the trend of the throne going from brother to brother among the sons of Ibn Saud, at the time it was seen as confirmation that leadership should be passed to the eldest acceptable candidate, without specifying whether it should be brother or son. Neither Muhammad nor Khalid would have been considered based on administrative experience or ability; both were uninterested in actually running the country. Khalid's qualifications were that he was calmer than Muhammad and an able conciliator. This was a much needed role in the al-Saud after the discord of Saud's reign. Faisal retained the title and office of prime minister but made Crown Prince Khalid deputy prime minister. (In 1968, Faisal created for Fahd the position of second deputy prime minister, effectively, given Khalid's disinterest, the king's administrative deputy and, it was speculated, crown prince in waiting.)

## The Assassination of Faisal

Faisal's reign came to an abrupt end in March 1975, when he was shot by a twenty-six-year-old nephew, also named Faisal, who was the son of Musaid bin Abdulaziz. The U.S.-educated prince was probably seeking revenge for the death of his ultrareligious brother Khalid, who had been 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 a Riyadh Radio announcer, who broke down sobbing while delivering the news. A subsequent broadcast the same day declared that Khalid had become king.

3. Lacey, *The Kingdom*; Holden and Johns, *The House of Saud*.

The appointment of Fahd as crown prince was less straightforward. Two brothers born before him, Nasir and Saad, 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, gaining substantial experience and an unequaled reputation as a successful technocrat, both of which the increasingly wealthy kingdom needed. In fact, Fahd's credentials were such that some foreign diplomats in the kingdom thought Khalid would be passed over entirely and Fahd would become the new king. But they underestimated the al-Saud's sense of family unity.

The key player in the action was the previously passed-over Muhammad, who met with Khalid and the other brothers in Riyadh the evening of the assassination. Greeting Khalid, he gave him the *baya* (oath of loyalty) and then turned and gave Fahd the same oath. In doing so, he established the line of succession, which was not challenged by other brothers present. Indeed, Nasir and Saad were said to have been the next princes to swear their allegiance.

### The Death of Khalid, and a Surprisingly 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 of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by religious fanatics in November that same year—were handled for the most part by Fahd, who held the title of first deputy prime minister but was in effect prime minister. (Upon meeting British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, Khalid is reputed to have said he would be happy to discuss falcons with her, but for all matters of administration she should talk to Fahd.)

In succession terms, it was the appointment of Abdullah, commander of the Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG), as second deputy prime minister, and therefore notionally crown prince in waiting, that became increasingly contentious within the royal family. Khalid was plagued by ill health. In 1972, as crown prince, he had undergone open heart surgery. In 1977 he had two operations on his left hip; in 1978 he had a heart

bypass operation. There were persistent rumors that he would have to give up the throne to Fahd, with Abdullah becoming crown prince, or at least confer the title of prime minister on Fahd, with Abdullah as deputy prime minister. Some princes were said to prefer Sultan, Fahd's oldest full brother, who had served as minister of defense and aviation since 1962, as next in line, instead of Abdullah. Fahd himself was believed to prefer Sultan as well and was backed by his other full brothers, known as the al-Fahd or the "Sudairi Seven" after the tribe of their mother. Together they were the largest single group of full brothers among the sons of Ibn Saud and often appeared to act as a group; Ibn Saud's other wives had produced only three, two, or a single son, as was the case with Abdullah.

Whether Abdullah should be pressed to give up command of the SANG as the price for his appointment

### The Sudairi Seven

**Fahd** (1921–2005)  
King

**Sultan** (b. 1924)  
Crown Prince  
Deputy Prime Minister  
Minister of Defense

**Abdulrahman** (b. 1931)  
Vice Minister of Defense

**Nayef** (b. 1933)  
Second Deputy Prime Minister  
Minister of Interior

**Turki** (b. 1934)  
Lives in exile in Cairo

**Salman** (b. 1936)  
Governor of Riyadh Province

**Ahmad** (b. 1940)  
Vice Minister of Interior

was the subject of family debate. Abdullah resisted this notion, not having a full brother to whom he could have passed the role.<sup>4</sup> He also felt that if he himself lacked command of the SANG forces, Sultan, as minister of defense, would be physically able to stop him from succeeding to the throne. The SANG acts as a praetorian guard for the al-Saud (though there is also a smaller royal guard). Except for SANG barracks, Saudi military bases are normally located at a distance from the main towns and cities, probably to prevent a military coup. SANG personnel are recruited from tribes traditionally loyal to the al-Saud, and they receive training from both the United States and Britain. Apart from protecting the royal family, they also guard key infrastructure sites, including oil and gas facilities.

The issue of Abdullah retaining the command of the SANG was reportedly debated in Riyadh by 250 princes in August 1977. At the meeting, or around this time, Fahd is said to have offered to appoint Abdullah as his crown prince, after Khalid's eventual death, but only if Abdullah agreed to give up control of the national guard. Under the proposal, the SANG would either stay as a separate force, but under the command of Prince Salman (another of Fahd's full brothers), or be integrated into the regular armed forces under Sultan. Abdullah rejected the offer, however, and the line of succession remained unresolved. In May 1982, when Khalid died, Fahd was proclaimed king by senior princes led by Prince Muhammad, and the new king nominated Abdullah as crown prince the same day. But the campaign of opposition to Abdullah's appointment by Fahd and his brothers, particularly Sultan, had scarred the new crown prince. For years, Abdullah could barely hide his resentment over what had happened to him and his distrust of Fahd and his full brothers.

### Fahd's Attempts to Set the Succession

On becoming king, Fahd created renewed fears about the succession among his half brothers by naming Sultan

as second deputy prime minister, the crown-prince-in-waiting slot. Fahd's non-Sudairi half brothers, including Crown Prince Abdullah, feared a Sudairi monopoly on succession, with either Fahd or Sultan eventually passing it down a generation to one of his sons.

Opposition to Sultan's appointment as second deputy prime minister came in particular from two other half brothers, Musaid and Bandar, both of whom, like Abdullah, were born in 1923 and therefore were older than Sultan, who was born in 1924. The protestations of Musaid could be ignored because it was his son who had assassinated King Faisal. But the interests of Bandar were more difficult to disregard. Not only did he want to be the next in line but he also wanted to have Sultan's job as minister of defense. A family dispute developed, and Bandar's claim on the defense ministry was ultimately rejected on the grounds that he had no previous administrative experience. But, as compensation, two of his sons were given important jobs: Mansour bin Bandar as commander of the Jeddah Air Base and Faisal bin Bandar as governor of Qassim province.

Abdullah remained sensitive to the notion that the throne would still slip from his grasp, particularly in March 1992 when Fahd issued the Basic Law of Governance. Seen as an attempt to write down Saudi laws and procedures, on succession matters it merely confirmed what everybody thought anyway: "Rule passes to the sons of the founding king, Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman al-Faisal 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."

But the next sentence disturbed Abdullah: "The king chooses the heir apparent and relieves him [of his duties] by royal order." Abdullah saw this clause as threatening his right to the throne. The crown prince began to apply himself to ensuring his position was strengthened. Among other steps were efforts to rid himself of a debilitating stutter, which impaired his public performances. (A female American speech therapist was credited with this success.)

4. Douglas F. Graham, *Saudi Arabia Unveiled* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1991).

Abdullah's suspicions were likely rekindled after Fahd suffered a stroke in November 1995. Officially described as needing to be in the hospital for "some ordinary check-ups," he was subsequently said to be "in good form."<sup>5</sup> Yet on January 1, 1996, Fahd, via a royal order, asked Abdullah "to undertake the affairs of state while we enjoy rest."<sup>6</sup> Abdullah became regent, but for just six weeks. By mid-February, Fahd returned to his duties, chairing a meeting of the council of ministers;<sup>7</sup> in reality, however, Abdullah remained de facto ruler even though rival princes denied him the legitimacy of the title. Meanwhile Fahd steadily declined, suffering a series of further strokes.

Until the end, Saudi officials continued to insist that Fahd was king, to the extent of producing him for an audience with visiting U.S. secretary of state Condoleezza Rice just a few weeks before his death, an occasion that was said to be an embarrassment to both sides because of his poor condition. His death was announced on August 1, 2005.

### **Abdullah vs. the Remaining Sudairis**

In the end, Abdullah's succession was smooth enough. He promptly named Sultan as his crown prince. But, departing from the precedents of the previous several decades, Abdullah made no effort

to appoint a second deputy prime minister, a crown prince in waiting. This omission was widely seen as representing Abdullah's determination to exclude Nayef, the long-serving interior minister, a logical choice in terms of age and experience. Nayef, a full brother of Sultan, was said to want the post and considered it his right. But, in what can be interpreted as an effort to block the Sudairi princes, Abdullah refused to give it to him. Nayef was apparently shocked by Abdullah's decision but could do nothing about it because, at the time, Sultan respected Abdullah's preference on the matter.

A further move against the Sudairi princes was Abdullah's announcement in October 2006 of the formation of an Allegiance Council. Although the council is intended to come into operation only after Sultan has become king, it could be used earlier if either Abdullah or Sultan, or both, become incapacitated. The council would confirm a new king and agree on a new crown prince—this latter role was previously the king's prerogative. In theory, Sultan, as king, could abolish this council. In March 2009, further doubts about the council's role arose when Prince Nayef was appointed second deputy prime minister and, presumably, crown prince in waiting.

5. Simon Henderson, "King Fahd's Illness and the Challenges to U.S. Policy," PolicyWatch #176 (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, December 6, 1995), <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pdf.php?template=C05&CID=2884>.

6. Associated Press, "Saudi King Delegates Authority," January 1, 1996.

7. Reuters, February 13, 1996.

## 2 | Factors Affecting Succession

THE PROCESS BY WHICH government decisions are made in Saudi Arabia remains obscure despite continual analysis by diplomats, oil executives, foreign business executives, and others. The more well-informed analysts believe that the number and identity of the princes and nonroyal participants varies, depending on the issue. Important decisions are made by the king alone but usually only once he feels a consensus has been reached. (The senior Muslim clergy, the *ulama*, have a leading role in making religious decisions, but since they depend on the king for their appointment, they are probably reluctant to oppose any royal family consensus. They can dither, however: when the Grand Mosque in Mecca was seized in 1979, the *ulama* reportedly took thirty-six hours to approve the use of military force.) When consensus remains elusive, decisions are delayed. This was the case in the late 1990s when Crown Prince Abdullah was seeking to involve foreign companies in the development of the kingdom's natural gas resources. The decision was postponed and the proposal eventually dropped after opposition from the petroleum company, Saudi Aramco, and the Saudi ministry of oil, assumed to be backed by Abdullah's rivals in the royal family. (The exception that proves this rule is said to be King Fahd's decision to ask for U.S. military support after the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Other senior princes, including then Crown Prince Abdullah, wanted time to consider other options, but they were overruled by Fahd.)

This decisionmaking process 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. According to convention, a new Saudi

king relies on the other princes to confirm his position by swearing an oath of allegiance. The *ulama* must then declare the new king an imam (Muslim leader). The declaration can only be made on the basis of a *fatwa* indicating that the decision 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 dominant Wahhabi version of Islam in the kingdom.

In theory, a danger exists that the *ulama* will be independent in its judgment and issue a *fatwa* bequeathing leadership outside the normal line of succession, but this has never happened. The *ulama* issuing the *fatwa* comprises members of the Supreme Religious Council, appointed by the king. This group has never taken a view independent of the wishes of the senior members of the family, as part of what appears to be an unwritten bargain in which the *ulama* can largely do as it wishes on religious issues so long as it does not tread on areas the royal family sees as essential for national security. (It was perhaps King Saud's mistake not to have appointed religious leaders who were sufficiently loyal. This might have prevented 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 "vote" has, at least in the past, varied substantially. Standard books on Saudi Arabia refer to a decisionmaking body loosely known as the royal council or *ahl al-aqd wa'l-hall* (literally, "those who bind and loosen").<sup>1</sup> In reality this group 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. In the mid-1980s, diplomats based in the kingdom said this group comprised sixty-five people. This will change in the future if the Allegiance Council, announced in

1. *Saudi Arabia: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1993).

2006, takes on the role of helping select future kings, at least at the level of crown prince. By 2009, the number of living sons of Ibn Saud had fallen to twenty. Prior to the establishment of the Allegiance Council, the number of these princes with crucial votes in choosing future leaders would probably have been fewer than ten. The Allegiance Council, with thirty-five members, has effectively given voting power to princes or their sons who were otherwise thought to have been of little consequence within the al-Saud family.

**The role of the 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 true “masters” of their homes; behind the privacy of the palace walls they are thought to let their husbands and sons know their views in a forthright manner. Second, intermarriage within the al-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, at least in the case of King Fahd, meetings occurred regularly with the women of the al-Saud so that the king could explain his views and listen to those of the women. It was yet another example of the importance attached to building consensus.

**The role of the wider family.** During the years of crisis in the reign of King Saud, some of Ibn Saud’s brothers were influential in ensuring that the *ulama* could issue a *fatwa* deposing Saud. By the time Fahd became king in 1982, all his father’s brothers had died. But a role had opened up for the sons of Faisal, the one king since the death of Ibn Saud who was respected universally within the family. Apparently, one of Faisal’s sons, Saud al-Faisal, was at the gathering when Fahd received the oath of allegiance, a presence perceived as opening the door to future involvement by Ibn Saud’s grandsons in the choice of king and crown prince.

An unknown is the extent to which other branches

of the family, other than the sons and grandsons of Ibn Saud, have any voice at all. One of the legacies of more than 250 years of history is the emergence of multiple branches on the family tree, at varying distances from the main line of inheritance and thus from power. A key strength of the House of Saud for the past century has been its ability to unite the family’s various branches 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 the sheer number of princes in these branches (distinguished by the honorific “HH,” meaning “His Highness,” rather than the “HRH,” meaning “His Royal Highness,” conferred on the sons and grandsons of Ibn Saud). The main line of the House of Saud numbers in the hundreds (King Saud alone had more than fifty sons), but the so-called cadet branches, sometimes known as the “collateral branches,” multiply that figure by many times. In the early 1990s, an estimated twenty thousand males<sup>2</sup> were entitled to call themselves “prince,” with the prefix HH or HRH. (Confusingly, Saudi tribal leaders can also use the title *amir* [prince] but not the honorific prefix.)

The senior of the cadet branches, and nominally the titular senior branch of the family, is the al-Saud al-Kabir, the descendants of Saud, the elder brother of Ibn Saud’s father. In 1903, the son of this elder brother contested the right of Ibn Saud to become the head of the al-Saud. The feud was only smoothed over 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 has become an influential branch of the Saudi royal family, but it tends to be kept away from political power.

Another branch is the Bani Jiluwi, descendants of the younger brother of Ibn Saud’s grandfather, Faisal. The Bani Jiluwi allied themselves with Ibn Saud to defuse the threat posed by the al-Kabir clan. Abdullah

2. Ibid.

al-Jiluwi served as Ibn Saud's deputy commander and helped conquer the eastern region of Arabia. The members of a third branch, the al-Turki, descend from 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 ruler, Abdullah. A fifth branch, the al-Farhan, descend from one of Muhammad's other brothers.

These cadet branches were represented in a family council established by then Crown Prince Abdullah in 2000. Its eighteen members included Abdullah and Prince Sultan along with a spread of princes across the family tree. At the time, there was speculation that the council would be involved in a decision to allow then-ailing King Fahd to retire and be replaced by Abdullah. A different line of speculation held that the council would have a private role, internal to the royal family, perhaps tackling vexing issues like establishing guidelines for royal involvement in business and allowing al-Saud princesses to marry commoners. Perhaps significantly, Prince Salman, the governor of Riyadh province who is known as a family conciliator, was a member. Interior Minister Prince Nayef was not named to the council, but any thought that he was being sidelined was blunted by his public statement at the time that the council would have no political role.<sup>3</sup>

### What Makes a King?<sup>4</sup>

**Age.** Whether Ibn Saud ever said his sons should succeed him by order of birth (given fitness to rule) is doubtful. But since the al-Saud respect age more than almost any other attribute, order of birth remains the preeminent qualification.

**Being a good Muslim.** Ibn Saud is said to have decreed that a future king must be a good Muslim. By this he

is supposed to have meant that the person should not drink alcohol. Yet this condition would narrow the field considerably, and so it has been ignored.

**Having a Saudi mother.** Ibn Saud supposedly said that a king should not be the child of a foreigner. This is a probable reference to the fact that many of his twenty-two wives were not Arab. (In keeping with Islamic tradition, Ibn Saud had only four wives at any one time.) Excluding the children of Ibn Saud's foreign wives would substantially limit the number of sons still eligible to be king. The mother of Bandar bin Abdulaziz was Moroccan, while the mothers of Miqrin and Hidhlul were Yemeni. At least these mothers were Arab: the mothers of Mishal, Mitab, Talal, and Nawaf were Armenian.<sup>5</sup> Excluding these princes reduces the pool of those now eligible from twenty sons to just thirteen. Another way of looking at the need to have a Saudi mother is the importance of having maternal uncles (*akhwal*) to back one's candidacy.

**Experience.** Whereas King Khalid had neither experience nor interest in governing, administrative capability is increasingly cited as necessary. Many of Ibn Saud's sons have had government experience, but their competence has varied. Those with current official positions are few. Apart from Abdullah, Sultan, and Nayef, office holders today are Mitab (minister of public works and housing), Abdulrahman (vice minister of defense), Ahmad (vice minister of interior), Salman (governor of Riyadh province), Sattam (vice governor of Riyadh province), and Miqrin (head of General Intelligence Directorate).<sup>6</sup>

**Acumen.** It is not surprising that Saudis want kings with prudence and a steady touch. However, with the exception of Faisal, who combined these qualities with intellectual ability, acumen has often been more evident in

3. Simon Henderson, "Saudi Family Council Suggests Transition Is Imminent," PolicyWatch #469 (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 9, 2000), <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pdf.php?template=C05&CID=1347>.

4. This section is based on a briefing by a former British ambassador to the kingdom who did not want to be identified as the source.

5. Alexander Bligh, *From Prince to King: Royal Succession in the House of Saud in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1984).

6. Updated from Nawaf E. Obaid, *The Oil Kingdom at 100: Petroleum Policymaking in Saudi Arabia*, Policy Paper #55 (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000).

the public relations presentation of kings than in reality.

**Popularity.** Since consensus is central to Saudi decisionmaking, the ability to achieve it rates high. The simplest measure of popularity is the style of the *majlis*—a forum for listening to ordinary people’s concerns—held by a prince. 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 not been known to hold such gatherings. (Perhaps

this is an indication of his total lack of ambition to be king, despite being named often by foreigners as a possibility.) 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, certain members lack mental stability, and the al-Saud is no exception (and perhaps the more so because of inbreeding). As noted, Muhammad, apart from having a bad and quick temper, also had the reputation of being a drunkard. Saad, who died in 1993, had been of unstable mind for several years.

### 3 | Future Succession: The Role of the Allegiance Council

SINCE THE SAUDI announcement of the formation of an Allegiance Council<sup>1</sup> in October 2006, most observers have assumed that it would have a major role in the appointment of a new crown prince and even a new king, but such a conclusion is increasingly far from certain.

The declared role of the council was to help appoint a crown prince after Abdullah dies and Sultan becomes king. As such, it was probably an idea that surprised Sultan, who most likely had assumed that he could choose his own crown prince. Under the new system, his choice would need to be approved by the wider family. And if Sultan's choice were voted down, he would have to accept a compromise pick selected by the other members of the council.

Even the creation itself of an Allegiance Council showed the limits of Abdullah's power. Since it would not come into operation until Sultan became king, theoretically, as king, he could simply change the rules of the council or abolish it completely. A further indication of the constraints on Abdullah's authority, or perhaps just another case of slow Saudi administration, was the December 2007 announcement of the council's members, more than a year after its creation.

The setting up of the council seems to indicate Abdullah's belief that the arrangement from the time of Fahd's first stroke in 1995 until his death in 2005 was most unsatisfactory. The core aspects of the new council's articles (see appendix 6) deal with the possibility of either the king or crown prince—or both—being ill, or both dying. In the event that neither the king nor the crown prince is deemed fit to rule, a five-member transitory council would run state affairs for a week, at most, until choosing a new king and crown prince. But the articles did not truly grasp the challenge of an increasingly aged and decrepit leadership passing power to the next generation.

The council comprises the other surviving sons of Ibn Saud and senior sons of princes who have died or

are infirm. The list shows the essential counter-Sudairi aspect of Abdullah's thinking. In the thirty-five-member council, the surviving six Sudairi princes (and Sultan's eldest son, Khalid, also a member) would be easily outvoted by the others. The role of the council's chairman was given to Prince Mishal, who, by virtue of having an Armenian mother, no recent government experience, and a reputation for pursuing his business interests, is not considered a contender for the throne.

The articles of the Allegiance Council were a radical development from the previously accepted notion of succession, first codified in the Basic Law of Governance issued by King Fahd in March 1992. The edict (presented in the form of a royal decree that had the force of law from its date of publication) stated that the throne passes to the sons of Ibn Saud, and to their sons. It continues: "The most upright among them is to receive allegiance in accordance with the principles of the Koran and the tradition of the Prophet 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."

Since 1992, other state institutions have been developed, principally the Majlis e-Shura or consultative council. This group has no direct role in addressing issues such as succession; indeed it can only advise on policy. But the council does represent a forum for the nonroyal middle class, and its members offer a wealth of experience, with many of them holding postgraduate degrees. From an original 60 appointed members and a chairman in 1993, it has been expanded after each four-year term, first to 90, then to 120, and now to 150 members. However, little evidence suggests that the council members are anything but the most loyal of Saudi society, and nothing indicates that they would take a view, either individually or collectively, at odds with what is officially sanctioned. There is also little evidence to date that the Shura council will evolve to have a say on

1. The council is also sometimes referred to as the Allegiance Institution or the Allegiance Pledge Commission. See appendix 6.

## Al-Saud Family Council

The council, established in the name of the ailing King Fahd, was seen as an attempt by Crown Prince Abdullah to set up a private forum for the debate of controversial issues such as involvement of the al-Saud in business and the marriage of al-Saud princesses to nonroyals. The June 4, 2000, public announcement of the council and its membership was viewed as reflecting Crown Prince Abdullah's quest to broaden his personal support across the many historical branches of the family, outflanking his principal rivals, his Sudairi half brothers, only two of whom were council members out of a total membership of eighteen.

### Sons of Abdulaziz (Ibn Saud):

Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz (chairman)  
 Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz (deputy chairman) [Sudairi]  
 Prince Badr bin Abdulaziz  
 Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz [Sudairi]  
 Prince Talal bin Abdulaziz

### Son of the king:

Prince Muhammad bin Fahd bin Abdulaziz [son of Sudairi]

### Sons of former kings:

Prince Mishal bin Saud bin Abdulaziz (listed as being "on behalf of Prince Muhammad bin Saud bin Abdulaziz")  
 Prince Khalid al-Faisal  
 Prince Bandar bin Khalid bin Abdulaziz

### Son of senior prince:

Prince Fahd bin Muhammad bin Abdulaziz

### Sons of brothers of Ibn Saud:

Prince Abdulrahman bin Abdullah bin Abdulrahman  
 Prince Bandar bin Muhammad bin Abdulrahman

### Representatives of cadet branches:

Prince Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Abdulaziz [bin Saud al-Kabir]  
 Prince Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Jiluwi  
 Prince Faisal bin Turki bin Abdulaziz bin Turki  
 Prince Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Miqrin bin Mishari  
 Prince Abdullah bin Fahd bin Faisal bin Farhan  
 Prince Saud bin Abdullah bin Thunayyan

an issue as delicate as succession. (The kingdom's other attempt to broaden political participation—elections to municipal councils in 2005—has had little impact. In May 2009, the council of ministers postponed the coming municipal elections, scheduled for October 2009, by extending the terms of existing councils by two years. Although the media speculated that changes to the law giving women the vote were being considered, and the extra time was needed to study this proposal, the decision was also seen as reflecting the power and influence of the new second deputy prime minister, Prince Nayef, considered to oppose such a change.)

The announcement of an al-Saud Family Council in 2000 was initially seen as a mechanism to ease

the ailing King Fahd from the throne. Like the Allegiance Council, it was noteworthy for its broad membership. Indeed, membership was even broader than that of the Allegiance Council in that, along with then Crown Prince Abdullah as chairman and Prince Sultan as deputy chairman, the other sixteen princes on the council represented almost all the al-Saud's historical branches. Since then, the Family Council has had a low profile and is assumed to offer a forum where issues such as marriages of royal princesses to Saudi commoners and arguments over business interests are discussed.<sup>2</sup>

In early 2009, it appeared that the Allegiance Council would face its first test. Crown Prince

Sultan, whose reported ill health had been the subject of much speculation, appeared to be dying. He had undergone surgery in late 2008 in New York City, followed by recuperation in Morocco and a return to the United States for more treatment. The death of Sultan, ahead of King Abdullah, would have allowed Abdullah to guide the Allegiance Council into choosing a non-Sudairi prince as the new heir apparent. But at the end of March 2009, a brief announcement declared that Prince Nayef had been appointed second deputy prime minister. Nayef, who had been sidelined after Fahd's death in 2005, was back in contention. The move prompted Prince Talal, obviously unhappy with the turn of events, to fax a statement to the Reuters news agency saying: "I call on the royal court to clarify what is meant by this nomination and that it does not mean that he [Prince Nayef] will become crown prince."<sup>3</sup> There was no

response. It was reasonably clear that, if Sultan were to die, Nayef's claim to become crown prince might be incontestable.

But predictions of Sultan's imminent demise were premature. In April 2009, he flew from the United States to Morocco to recuperate further. And on May 26, King Abdullah, in an interview with the Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Seyassah*, announced that "the Almighty has cured Sultan.... We look forward to his return [to Saudi Arabia] in the next six weeks." In succession terms, the possibility of Sultan being deemed no longer healthy enough to be considered as king or to retain his position as crown prince had already been dented by the visit of Mishal bin Abdulaziz, the chairman of the Allegiance Council. In a trip to Morocco in mid-May, interpreted as being a check on Sultan's health, Mishal was reported as being "reassured about the health condition of Crown Prince Sultan."<sup>4</sup>

2. Simon Henderson, "Saudi Family Council Suggests Transition Is Imminent," PolicyWatch #469 (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 9, 2000), <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pdf.php?template=C05&CID=1347>.
3. Reuters, "Prince Talal bin Abdul Aziz Questions Saudi Succession Plan," March 29, 2009.
4. Saudi Press Agency, May 12, 2009, <http://www.spa.gov.sa/english/readsinglenews.php?id=663522&scroll=1>.

## 4 | Succession Within the Current Generation

AT THE TIME OF THIS WRITING, June 2009, it is not clear who will succeed King Abdullah upon his death. The picture is complicated by the advanced age and poor health of Saudi Arabia's senior princes and the unpredictable order in which they will die, the lack of knowledge regarding how the remaining sons of Ibn Saud will form a consensus, and the unknown extent to which the newly formed Allegiance Council will have a role. All twenty surviving sons of Ibn Saud are older than sixty-five—past what would be considered normal retirement age in most parts of the world. Of these sons, eight are in their seventies, and six are in their eighties.

With an established precedent in the kingdom for age-based seniority, multiple transitions could occur within a short period of time, a state of affairs reminiscent of the last years of the Soviet Union. Whether the system can tolerate the deaths of successive kings at such close intervals is questionable, given the politics involved in deciding on a new crown prince and heir apparent at the same time.

This complicated future can be most simply described using a variety of scenarios, some of which overlap.

### **SCENARIO 1: Crown Prince Sultan dies before King Abdullah.**

Despite official reports that he is in good health, Crown Prince Sultan is widely believed to be mortally ill and unlikely to live beyond the end of the year. If Sultan dies before Abdullah, the king would find himself under enormous pressure from his senior brothers to appoint Interior Minister Prince Nayef as crown prince. Theoretically, such a move should be endorsed by the Allegiance Council, but it is far from clear that this would happen. With King Abdullah turning eighty-six this year, and Nayef reportedly suffering from leukemia at seventy-six, this new leadership partnership would not last long. If Abdullah were to die next, Nayef would become king.

### **SCENARIO 2: King Abdullah predeceases Crown Prince Sultan.**

If Abdullah dies while Sultan is alive, unless a group of medical experts appointed by the Allegiance Council says the latter is not sufficiently healthy to become king, then Sultan will almost certainly claim the throne. At that point, the only obstacle to him becoming king would be the refusal by other princes to swear the *baya* (oath of allegiance) to him. He would likely appoint Prince Nayef, his full brother, as crown prince, who would become king when Sultan dies.

### **SCENARIO 3: Both King Abdullah and Crown Prince Sultan experience failing health.**

If Abdullah and Sultan both confront serious health problems, theoretically the Allegiance Council would appoint a five-member transitory ruling council, which would temporarily govern the country. Meanwhile, the council would choose a suitable candidate to be king. The makeup of the Allegiance Council suggests strongly that he would not be chosen as the next king. Nayef, however, would likely challenge a ruling to block his ascent. How much of this maneuvering would be visible is unclear—the procedures of the council are secret—but, as interior minister, Nayef commands substantial police and paramilitary forces. Deploying such forces would amount to launching a coup d'état, but this should not be ruled out as a possibility. (Nayef would probably choose his Sudairi brother Salman, the governor of Riyadh province, as crown prince, although his non-Sudairi half brothers would oppose such a move. Salman has the reputation of being a family conciliator, so he might be able to achieve support.)

### **SCENARIO 4: At some point, consensus emerges to choose a younger son of Ibn Saud.**

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 to the throne in order to give a younger man a chance.

Assuming good health and barring accident, this might result in ten or more years of continuous rule. Fahd provided what is regarded as strong rule for ten years after becoming king in 1982, though afterward he became indecisive and then had a stroke. A better example may be found in the eleven years of Faisal's rule, seen as a time of successful transition from a poor tribal society to a technologically modern state.

In the past, Salman, seventy-three this year, has been seen as the obvious candidate among Ibn Saud's younger sons, even though, having had two sons die from heart problems, his own health is probably not robust enough for a lengthy period of rule. In his favor, however, are his experience as the governor of Riyadh province and his reputation, rare in the Saudi royal family, of being able, hardworking, and free of corruption (although he was once a shareholder in

the criminal Bank of Credit and Commerce International). As a fellow Sudairi prince, he is possibly the only rival for whom Nayef would give up, in the face of royal family opposition, his own claim to the throne.

A long-shot candidate in this scenario is the youngest surviving son of Ibn Saud, Miqrin, a former air force pilot, provincial governor, and now head of the General Intelligence Directorate, the Saudi foreign intelligence service. But his mother was not Saudi, a fact that probably disqualifies him.

**SCENARIO 5: The sons of Ibn Saud decide that succession should go to the next generation.**

Who are the candidates? Although not immediately likely, this question is so large that it is considered separately in the next chapter.

## 5 | Succession to the Next Generation

SUCCESSION TO THE NEXT generation is an obvious way of finding a king who is younger, healthier, and yet still experienced. Many of the grandsons of Ibn Saud are already grandfathers; some have years of government experience. But which line should be favored in this next generation is among the most contentious aspects of succession.

In discussing the younger generation, it is worth noting that sons of past kings are usually not considered worthy of mention. The respect accorded them and the extent to which they have a leadership claim seem to diminish upon the death of their fathers. Crucially, without their fathers' backing, most seem to fall out of contention. The largest single group of second-generation princes are the sons of Saud, numbered at more than fifty (and a similar number of daughters), only a few of whom have any public role.

The sons of King Faisal—Saud, Khalid, and Turki—are recognized as being able, certainly by foreign ambassadors, but they are said to be regarded unfavorably within the al-Saud because of their perceived airs of intellectual superiority. (A 1985 British Ministry of Defense briefing paper referred to Saud as “[v]ery bright but perhaps not so bright as he thinks.”<sup>1</sup>) As long-serving foreign minister, Saud is well known abroad and generally respected. But he suffers from both a bad back and Parkinson's disease, and so he would probably rule himself out on health grounds. He also displays little interest in the role, having never been noted for holding a *majlis*, the forum where he can listen to ordinary people's complaints and also be judged as a good and generous host. Khalid is the governor of the Mecca province, an artist, and a friend of Prince Charles, the heir to the British throne. His brother Turki is also well known internationally, having served as head of the Saudi General Intelligence Directorate (GID), the equivalent of the Central Intelligence Agency, as well as ambassador in London and

then in Washington. But he resigned as head of the GID in 2001 (just ten days before the September 11 attacks), and later reportedly lost the trust of King Abdullah when assigned as ambassador to the United States. (Turki is now chairman of the board of the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies in Riyadh, perhaps the closest institution in the kingdom to a Western policy think tank.)

The sons of King Khalid have little public profile and almost certainly would not be considered.

The most significant son of the late King Fahd is Muhammad bin Fahd, the long-serving governor of the Eastern province, but he is seldom mentioned as a future king. Fahd's youngest and supposedly favorite son, Abdulaziz, is a minister of state in King Abdullah's administration and president of the Cabinet Presidency Court (notionally responsible for running the council of ministers) but has seen his influence diminish steadily.

The other main group to consider consists of the sons of King Abdullah and those of the senior Sudairi princes—Sultan, Nayef, and Salman.

King Abdullah's senior son is Mitab, who effectively runs the Saudi Arabian National Guard—in June 2009 this position was formalized with his appointment as deputy commander for executive affairs. Abdullah has placed Abdulaziz in his court as an advisor. (Abdulaziz is also a member of the board of the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology.) In 2009, Abdullah's son Mishal was made governor of Najran province. His son Faisal is the president of the Saudi Red Crescent Society. And his youngest son, Badr, is just seven years old. In Saudi terms, he is evidence of the king's continuing physical health. (Badr was presented to President Barack Obama when the U.S. leader visited the kingdom in June 2009.<sup>2</sup> President George W. Bush also met Badr during a trip to the kingdom a year earlier.)

1. British Ministry of Defense, “Briefing for the Prime Minister's Meeting with Prince Sultan,” London, September 25, 1985.

2. Saudi Press Agency, “U.S. President Obama Arrives in Riyadh,” June 3, 2009, <http://www.spa.gov.sa/english/print.php?id=670973>.

Crown Prince Sultan’s eldest son is Khalid, the Saudi commander in Operation Desert Storm, the U.S.-led effort to liberate Kuwait in 1991. Khalid is the assistant minister of defense and effectively ran the defense ministry even before his father traveled to the United States in 2008 for medical treatment. Sultan’s most well-known son is Bandar, the former long-serving ambassador to the United States. Since 2005, Bandar has been secretary general of the newly established Saudi National Security Council, but he has kept a surprisingly low profile. His greatest handicap to a claim on the throne is his mother’s status as either a slave or a concubine in his father’s household.

Salman’s sons are Sultan, the former astronaut on a 1985 *Discovery* flight now in charge of the Supreme Tourism Commission; Faisal, who runs the Saudi Research

and Marketing Group media empire, which includes the *al-sharq al-Awsat* newspaper; and Abdulaziz, who serves in the oil ministry. (Two other sons, Fahd and Ahmad, died in 2001 and 2002, respectively.)

Nayef’s sons are Saud, the ambassador to Spain, and Muhammad, the assistant minister of interior, who has gained a high reputation with foreign security professionals for his organization and leadership of Saudi counterterrorism forces.

Of Ibn Saud’s other grandsons, probably the best known abroad is al-Waleed, the son of Prince Talal. Being the son of a controversial father, and having a non-Saudi grandmother and a Lebanese mother, would rule him out from any consideration. Al-Waleed, though, likes to suggest he would consider the throne if it were offered to him.<sup>3</sup>

3. Kerry A. Dolan, “I Just Can’t Wait to Be King,” *Forbes*, March 30, 2009, <http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2009/0330/092-cannot-wait-to-be-king.html>.

## 6 | Succession and the U.S.-Saudi Relationship

GIVEN SAUDI ARABIA'S strategic position and its leadership roles in both Islam and international energy markets, the close relationship between Riyadh and Washington is crucial to a range of U.S. policy concerns: Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Middle East peace process, and energy.

The character of the U.S.-Saudi relationship has often been dictated by the personality and style of the king at the time. King Fahd, who ruled from 1982 to 2005 (though he was plagued by poor health after a stroke in 1995), was seen as pro-American and cooperated closely, although often discreetly, with Washington on a range of foreign policy concerns, including in Central America, Afghanistan, and on the Middle East peace process. King Abdullah, whose rule began in 2005 but who had stood in for Fahd after 1995, has protected the relationship but has been more cautious and at times even confrontational. In 2002, with relations in turmoil because of the involvement of Saudis in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, the kingdom, apparently trying to deflect attention away from itself by spotlighting clashes between Israeli security forces and Palestinians, was even prepared to privately threaten a temporary cutoff in oil exports because of U.S. support for Israel.<sup>1</sup>

For this reason and others, the views and personalities of future kings should be of intense interest to officials and political leaders in Washington. Although U.S. oil companies provided the foundations for the kingdom's oil industry and U.S. arms exporters have supplied much of its military arsenal, the relationship involves far more than just oil and security. Even this analysis avoids the basic source of tension: the role of religion in Saudi life. As a departing British ambassador once noted: "Islam, which governs every detail of life, is the central feature of Saudi Arabia."<sup>2</sup> The result is that, despite the oil and security aspects of the

relationship, there remains a distance between the two countries because of their widely differing perspectives on such issues as political freedoms, religious tolerance, and women's rights.

For the United States, the possibility of Crown Prince Sultan becoming king is unattractive, even apart from his ill health, which would almost certainly make his reign short. Although he is seen as pro-American, his reputation for corruption is judged to make him unpopular among the royal family as well as the kingdom's general population. (Sultan's corruption is legendary: a former British ambassador to the kingdom once noted that, as defense minister, Sultan "has of course a corrupt interest in all contracts."<sup>3</sup>)

If the apparent crown prince in waiting, Second Deputy Prime Minister Prince Nayef, succeeds after or instead of Sultan, the U.S.-Saudi relationship could become even more awkward. Nayef has a reputation for being difficult, refusing, for example, to increase security in May 2003 before al-Qaeda attacks on foreign housing compounds in Riyadh in which nine Americans died despite the warnings of U.S. diplomats. He had earlier suggested, most famously, that Israel's intelligence service, Mossad, was behind the September 11 attacks on the United States. He has also come out against the need for elections or women running for office. While Saudi counterterrorism actions are now much improved, Nayef is still viewed as being too close to Saudi Arabia's conservative clerics, with their blinkered perceptions.

Even more challenging for the United States, both Sultan and Nayef were reportedly paying off Usama bin Laden in the late 1990s to prevent al-Qaeda from launching attacks in the kingdom. Western pressure on the kingdom to stop such payments, purportedly worth hundreds of millions of dollars, intensified after the September 11 attacks. The eventual termination of

1. Simon Henderson, "The Saudi Way," *Wall Street Journal*, August 12, 2002.

2. Sir James Craig, "Valedictory Number Two: The Saudi Arabians," British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, June 24, 1984.

3. David Leigh and Rob Evans, "Prince Sultan," *Guardian* (London), June 7, 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jun/07/bae21>.

payments may well have contributed to the al-Qaeda attacks in Riyadh in 2003, before which point the kingdom had not appeared to see itself as a terrorist target.<sup>4</sup>

U.S. officials steer well clear of any public comment about preferences for succession in Saudi Arabia. But the subject is often discussed among Saudis themselves, who judge that U.S. pressure could be effective, though this appears unlikely. (In 2003, a small, London-based Arabic newspaper reported that U.S. ambassador Robert Jordan had remarked at a private dinner party in Riyadh that after Abdullah, succession should skip Sultan and Nayef and go to someone in the next generation, such as Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal. In response, Jordan says he merely asked the other guests how they expected anyone from a younger generation to be named.)

Among the current generation of princes, Salman, the governor of Riyadh and a full brother of Sultan and Nayef, is often viewed favorably by foreign diplomats and appears well respected in the royal family and the wider population. But his health is thought to be uncertain (two sons have died of heart problems) and his worldview is colored by prejudice: he told the U.S. ambassador after the September 11 attacks that “[t]his has to have been a Zionist plot.”<sup>5</sup> Salman, however, remains a possible future compromise king; although younger than Nayef, he is arguably more acceptable to the royal family and, of the available choices, to the United States as well.

Whoever is king, Washington will hope for a continuation in the recovery in relations since the direct involvement of fifteen Saudis in the September 11 attacks. To the astonishment of many, by 2008 the relationship had already been largely repaired. Under the leadership of King Abdullah, especially since his accession to the throne upon the death of King Fahd in 2005, the kingdom has built a reputation for cracking down on extremist Islamists; made advances in interfaith dialogue; and, thanks to a period of high oil prices, established huge

financial reserves (thus becoming a key member of G-20 meetings of major economic powers).

In 2009, President Barack Obama confirmed this improvement in the relationship by briefly visiting the kingdom in June before traveling to Cairo to give a major speech on the relationship between the United States and Muslims. Photographs of Obama and Abdullah together suggested that the two men had developed a warm relationship.

Challenges remain, however. The al-Saud have urged the United States to be firmer in its response to the prospect of Iran developing nuclear weapons—but only in private. In public, the Saudi stance is ambiguous, but Riyadh is fearful that diplomatic engagement will not be sufficient. On the Middle East peace process, Riyadh still appears to be reluctant to engage with Israel in advance of an Israeli withdrawal as outlined in the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. As the price of oil strengthens from late 2008 lows, energy could also be a contentious issue, although President Obama has backed away from campaign rhetoric about the need to eliminate Middle East oil imports into the United States. Iraq is another source of tension—the Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad is too closely aligned to Iran for Riyadh’s liking. The Saudi dimension of the new Afghanistan-Pakistan, or AfPak, strategy also looms large—Riyadh’s help in legitimizing an antijihadist consensus in Pakistan could be crucial. But there is also a prospect that Saudi Arabia will look to Pakistan for nuclear guarantees to supplement or replace U.S. security promises.

What policies a new king will adopt—as opposed to his style—are not readily apparent from his stance while a prince. For example, Abdullah, prior to becoming king, had been considered cool, if not hostile, to the United States, opposing a request to Washington for military help after Saddam Hussein’s 1990 invasion of neighboring Kuwait. But this view of Abdullah has changed. In fact, his previous persona seems to have

4. Linda Robinson and Peter Cary, “Princely Payments,” *U.S. News & World Report*, January 6, 2002; Simon Henderson, “Saudi Brezhnev,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 3, 2005.

5. Robert Jordan, interview by *Frontline*, Public Broadcasting System, February 8, 2005, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saud/interviews/jordan.html>.

been deliberately constructed, both by him, to contrast himself with the “pro-American” Fahd, and by his detractors among the Sudairi princes, to undermine his claim to the throne. In fact, the many years of a U.S. supply and training relationship with Abdullah’s Saudi Arabian National Guard suggests Abdullah was always mindful of the importance of the U.S. relationship.

### **Recommendations for U.S. Policy Regarding Succession**

The U.S.-Saudi relationship is both longstanding and broad. This study confines its recommendations to steps that the United States can take to accommodate the kingdom’s leadership changes and to limit any resultant instability. Given the advanced ages of the Saudi princes, the reigns of the next several Saudi kings are likely to be short and their style uncertain.

The following actions can help the United States meet the Saudi succession challenge.

**Schedule regular visits to the kingdom by high-level U.S. civilian and military officials so that the king and senior princes can be kept fully informed about U.S. concerns and expectations on a range of policy issues.** The United States cannot select the kings of Saudi Arabia, but it can emphasize the importance that Washington places on bilateral ties and encourage the Saudis to avoid a candidate who will put that relationship in jeopardy.

**Appoint a U.S. ambassador of sufficient stature that daily diplomatic interaction no longer depends primarily on the Saudi ambassador in Washington.**

On June 4, 2009, the White House announced that Brig. Gen. James B. Smith, a retired U.S. Air Force F-15 pilot and former executive at Raytheon, had been nominated for the post in Riyadh; the appointment is now confirmed. Apart from a temporary assignment in 1990 following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Smith has no reported background in either Saudi affairs or

the Middle East. Like his five immediate predecessors, Smith is a political appointee, not a foreign service officer. Although his status as an appointee is not necessarily a disadvantage, the ultimately short tenures of recent U.S. ambassadors to Saudi Arabia are not helpful to bilateral relationship building. (The last Arabic-speaking U.S. ambassador serving in Riyadh was Chas Freeman, a foreign service officer, who served until August 1992. On June 1, 2009, retired U.S. ambassador Richard Erdman became charge d’affaires in Riyadh and was in place for President Obama’s visit to Saudi Arabia just two days later. Erdman will presumably depart Riyadh when General Smith arrives to take up the post of ambassador.)

**Boost the staff of the embassy in Riyadh and of the consulates in Jeddah and Dhahran.** The work of embassy and consulate staff, seldom easy, has been hampered in recent years by the need for tight security (the Jeddah consulate was attacked by terrorists in 2004); a shortage of Arabic speakers; and high staff turnover, a consequence of short, unaccompanied tours of duty. (In June 2009, Washington announced that adult dependents, that is, wives and husbands, of U.S. diplomats could return to the kingdom but, still apprehensive of the danger of terrorism, children could not.)

Diplomats, visiting officials, and military officers need to work with a broader range of Saudi princes so that the leadership transition, perhaps into the next generation of the royal family, can be effectively managed. This process will require extreme care. Overt U.S. efforts to influence succession would likely be resisted, as well as resented, and would therefore be counterproductive.

Saudi Arabia remains a key player in Middle Eastern politics as well as in the international economy. Once a new king has been selected, the United States will need to invest time and effort in developing a close relationship with him to help ensure that U.S. concerns are considered in Saudi decisionmaking.

# Appendix 1 | Saudi Arabia: Borders and Administrative Boundaries



## Appendix 2 | Maternal Linkages among the Sons of King Abdulaziz

DOB	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1900	Turki							
1902	Saud							
1904		Faisal						
1910			Muhammad					
1912			Khalid					
1920				Nasir	Saad			
1921						Fahd		
1922							Mansour	
1923					Musaïd			Abdullah
1924						Sultan		
1925					Abdulmohsin			
1926							Mishal	
1928							Mitab	
1931						Abdulrahman		
1932								
1933						Nayef		
1934						Turki		
1935								
1936						Salman		
1937								
1940						Ahmad		
1941								
1942								
1943								
1947								

This chart lists the sons of King Abdulaziz (Ibn Saud) and indicates their fraternal relationships. Each number along the horizontal axis represents a different mother; names in the same column represent full blood brothers. Sons in the same row were born in the same year. A gray background indicates that the person is deceased. In several cases, dates and relationships are in dispute.

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

Bandar

Talal

Mishari

Nawaf

Badr

Fawwaz

Abdulillah

Majid

Thamir

Abdulmajid

Mamdouh

Hidhlul

Mashhur

Sattam

Miqrin

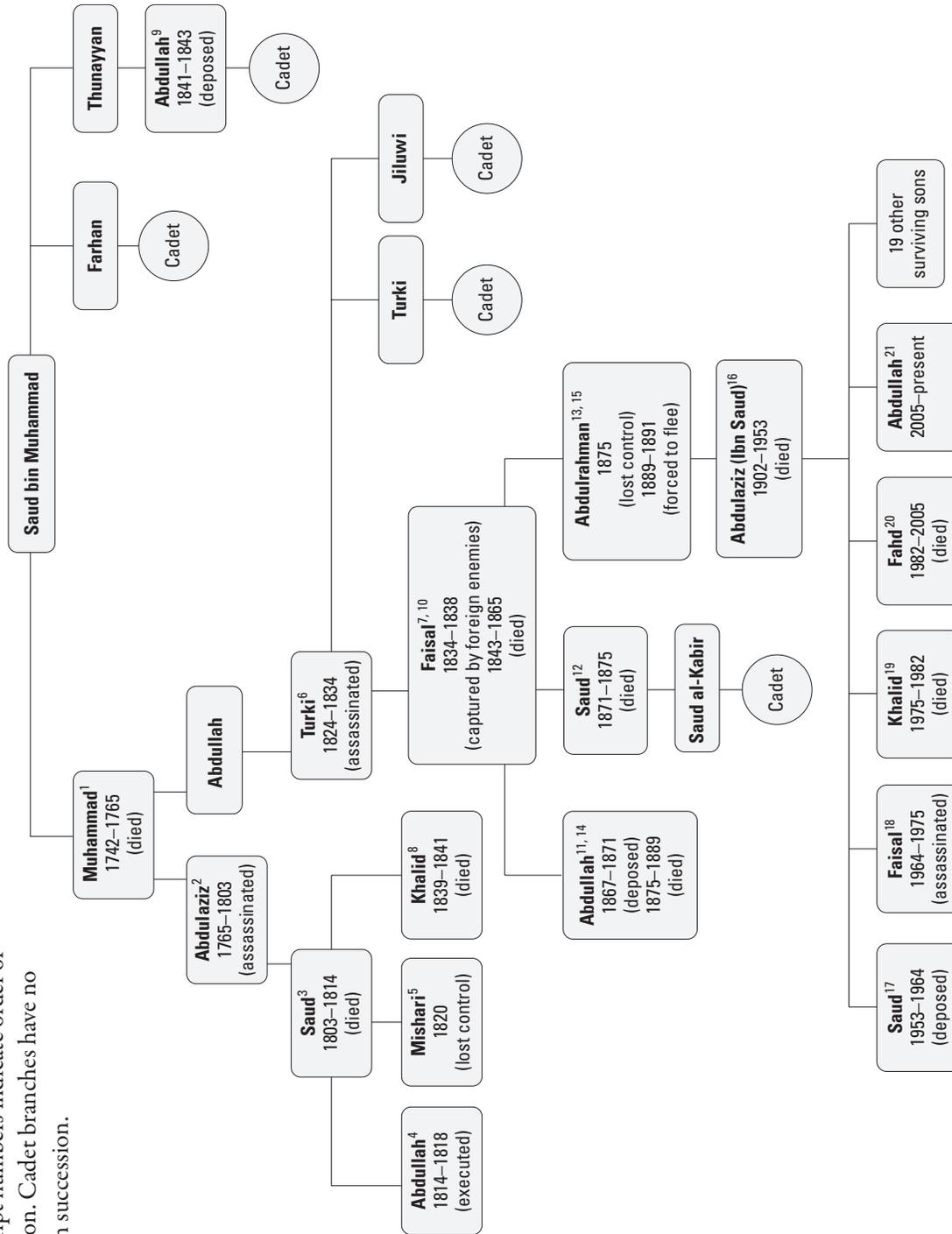
Hamoud

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# Appendix 3 | The al-Saud: Main Line of Succession and Cadet Branches

## The al-Saud: Main Line of Succession

Dates indicate period of rule; superscript numbers indicate order of succession. Cadet branches have no claim on succession.



## Appendix 4 | Chronology of Saudi History

**1745** Central Arabian sheikh Muhammad bin Saud joins forces with Muslim preacher Abdul Wahhab on a campaign of religious purification and conquest. This alliance is the start of the first Saudi state.

**1818** First Saudi state ends after defeat by forces of the Ottoman Turks and execution of then ruler Abdullah, a great-grandson of Muhammad bin Saud.

**1824** Turki, grandson of Muhammad bin Saud, seizes Riyadh from Egyptian forces. This marks the beginning of the second Saudi state.

**1891** Second Saudi state ends when ruler Abdulrahman, fleeing rival tribes, seeks refuge in Kuwait along with his eleven-year-old son Abdulaziz.

**1902** Abdulaziz leads small group of men in attack on Riyadh and seizes control.

**1912** Abdulaziz establishes the Ikhwan, a religious brotherhood of tribesmen who serve as his shock troops.

**1913** Abdulaziz seizes control of the Persian Gulf coast of Arabia.

**1925** Abdulaziz captures the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina, along with the rest of the Hejaz, the Red Sea coastal region.

**1926** Abdulaziz declares himself king of the Hejaz.

**1927** Abdulaziz declares himself king of the Hejaz and the Nejd (central region).

**1929** Rebellious Ikhwan forces defeated.

**1932** Modern Saudi Arabia established. Abdulaziz declares himself king.

**1933** Abdulaziz appoints his eldest son, Saud, as crown prince and declares that the next eldest, Faisal, will be crown prince when Saud becomes king.

**1938** Oil discovered in Saudi Arabia.

**1948** State of Israel established.

**1953** Death of King Abdulaziz. Prince Saud becomes king.

**1958** Prince Faisal takes over executive authority after King 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 Gamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt.

**September:** Monarchy overthrown in Yemen.

**October:** Faisal named head of council of ministers.

**1964** At the instigation of the royal family, the *ulama* (religious leadership) declares Saud unfit to govern. Faisal becomes king; Saud goes into exile.

**1965** Prince Khalid becomes crown prince.

**1967** Six Day War: Israel seizes territory from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria.

**1969** Former King Saud dies in Greece.

**1973** October War between Israel and Arab states. Saudi Arabia proposes oil embargo against the United States and Western supporters of Israel.

**1975** King Faisal assassinated by a nephew. Prince Khalid becomes king. Fahd becomes crown prince.

**1977** King Khalid is unwell. Sultan tries to prevent Abdullah from becoming crown prince when Fahd becomes king.

**1979** Revolution in Iran. Shah forced to flee by supporters of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

**November:** Mecca uprising by 250 supporters of Sunni Muslim extremist. Siege of Grand Mosque lasts for two weeks before last of rebels surrender. Shiite Muslims riot in Eastern province.

**1980** Start of Iran-Iraq War.

**1982** Israel invades Lebanon. King Khalid dies, Crown Prince Fahd becomes king, Abdullah becomes crown prince.

**1986** Fahd changes his title from “majesty” to “custodian of the two holy places.”

**1988** End of Iran-Iraq War.

**1989** Death of Ayatollah Khomeini.

**1990** Under leader Saddam Hussein, Iraq invades Kuwait. U.S. forces rush to defend Saudi Arabia.

**1991** U.S.-led forces liberate Kuwait.

**1992** King Fahd issues edict defining principles of succession and basic law, and promises to set up a consultative council.

**1993** King Fahd names members of the consultative council.

**1994** First session of consultative council is held.

**1995** King Fahd suffers debilitating stroke.

**1996** Crown Prince Abdullah briefly becomes regent.

**2001** Al-Qaeda strikes the United States; United States invades Afghanistan.

**2003** U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

**2004** Prince Sultan reportedly has operation for colon cancer.

**2005** King Fahd dies; Crown Prince Abdullah becomes king. Prince Sultan becomes crown prince and deputy prime minister. The position of second deputy prime minister is not filled.

**2006** King Abdullah announces the formation of an Allegiance Council to choose future crown princes (after Crown Prince Sultan).

**2007** King Abdullah names the members of the Allegiance Council.

**2008** Crown Prince Sultan flies to New York City for medical treatment.

**2009** After convalescing in Morocco, Crown Prince Sultan returns to New York for medical treatment, later returning to Morocco; Prince Nayef named second deputy prime minister.

# Appendix 5 | Excerpts from the Basic Law of Governance<sup>1</sup>

MARCH 1, 1992

*In the name of God, the most compassionate, the most Merciful.*

No: A/90

Dated 27th Sha'ban 1412 H

With the help of God, we, Fahd bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, Monarch of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, having taken into consideration the public interest, and in view of the progress of the State in various fields and out of the desire to achieve the objectives we are pursuing, have decreed the following:

- That the promulgation of the Basic Law of Governance is as the attached text.
- That all regulations, orders and decrees in force shall remain valid when this Basic Law comes into force, until they are amended to conform with it.
- That this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette, and shall come into force on the date of its publication.

## Chapter One General Principles

### Article 1:

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab Islamic State. Its religion is Islam. Its constitution is Almighty God's Book, The Holy Qur'an, and the Sunna (Traditions) of the Prophet (PBUH). Arabic is the language of the Kingdom. The City of Riyadh is the capital.

## Chapter Two The Law of Governance

### Article 5:

- Monarchy is the system of rule in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- Rulers of the country shall be from amongst the sons of the founder King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman al-Faisal al-Saud, and their descendants.
- The most upright among them shall receive allegiance according to Almighty God's Book and His Messenger's Sunna (Traditions).
- The Crown Prince shall devote himself exclusively to his duties as Crown Prince and shall perform any other duties delegated to him by the King.
- Upon the death of the King, the Crown Prince shall assume the Royal powers until a pledge of allegiance (*bay'a*) is given.

### Article 6:

In support of the Book of God and the Sunna of His Messenger (PBUH), citizens shall give the pledge of allegiance (*bay'a*) to the King, professing loyalty in times of hardship and ease.

### Article 7:

Government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia derives its authority from the Book of God and the Sunna of the Prophet (PBUH), which are the ultimate sources of reference for this Law and the other laws of the State.

### Article 8:

Governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is based on justice, shura (consultation) and equality according to Islamic Sharia.

1. Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Washington, D.C. See [http://www.saudiembassy.net/about/country-information/laws/The\\_Basic\\_Law\\_Of\\_Governance.aspx](http://www.saudiembassy.net/about/country-information/laws/The_Basic_Law_Of_Governance.aspx).

# Appendix 6 | Allegiance Institution Law<sup>1</sup>

OCTOBER 2006

## **Article 1:**

A royal decree announced the establishment of the Allegiance Institution, which comprises:

1. Sons of King Abdulaziz al-Saud, the founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia;
2. Grandsons of King Abdulaziz whose fathers are deceased, incapacitated (as determined by a medical report) or otherwise unwilling to assume the throne. Members appointed by the King must be capable and known for their integrity.
3. A son of the King and a son of the Crown Prince, both to be appointed by the King. They should be capable and known for their integrity.

If a vacancy arises on the Allegiance Institution committee, the King will appoint a new member in accordance with Sections 2 and 3 of this Article.

## **Article 2:**

The Allegiance Institution shall exercise its duties in accordance with this Law, as well as with the Basic Law of Governance.

## **Article 3:**

The Allegiance Institution will abide by the teachings of the Qur'an and the [Sunna]. It will also preserve the state's entity, protect the Royal Family's unity and cooperation as well as the national unity and the interests of the people.

## **Article 4:**

The Allegiance Institution will be based in Riyadh and will hold its meetings at the Royal Court. It may

convene at any of the Royal Court's locations within the Kingdom subject to the King's approval, or at any location specified by the King.

## **Article 5:**

Members and Secretary-General will swear an oath before the King prior to assuming their duties. The oath is as follows:

*I swear to Allah the Almighty to be loyal to my religion, King and country and not to divulge any of the country's secrets. I also swear that I will preserve the interests and laws of my country, protect the Royal Family's unity and cooperation and my country's national unity, as well as performing the duties assigned to me with all truthfulness, integrity, dedication and fairness.*

## **Article 6:**

If the King dies, the Allegiance Institution will pledge allegiance to the Crown Prince in accordance with this Law and the Basic Law of Governance.

## **Article 7:**

**A.** After consultation with the members of the Allegiance Institution, the King will choose one, two or three candidates for the position of Crown Prince. He will present his nominees before the Allegiance Institution, which is required to designate one of them as Crown Prince. In the event the committee rejects all of the nominees, it will name a Crown Prince whom it considers to be suitable.

**B.** The King may ask the Allegiance Institution to nominate a suitable Crown Prince at any time. In the event that the King rejects the committee's nominee, the Allegiance Institution will hold a vote to choose between the King's candidate and its own in accordance with Sections A and B of this Article. The

1. Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Washington, D.C., October 20, 2006. See <http://www.saudiembassy.net/archive/2006/transcript/Page4.aspx>.

nominee who secures the majority of votes will be named Crown Prince.

**Article 8:**

The nominee for Crown Prince should satisfy the conditions set forth in Section B of Article 5 of the Basic Law of Governance.

**Article 9:**

The appointment of a new Crown Prince must be completed within 30 days of the accession of a new King in accordance with Article 7.

**Article 10:**

The Allegiance Institution will set up a five-member Transitory Ruling Council which will temporarily assume the running of State affairs as provided for in this Law.

The Transitory Ruling Council will not have the right to amend the Basic Law of Governance, this Law, the Council of Ministers Law, the Shoura Council Law, the Law of the Provinces, the National Security Council Law or any other laws that are linked to the rule. It will not have the right to dissolve or reshuffle the Cabinet or the Shoura Council.

During the transition period, the Transitory Ruling Council should also protect the State's unity and laws in addition to its internal and external interests.

**Article 11:**

In the event the Allegiance Institution is convinced that the King is incapable of carrying out his duties for health reasons, it will issue a request to a medical committee in accordance with this Law to prepare a report on the condition of the King's health.

If the report finds that the King's inability to exercise his power is temporary, the Allegiance Institution will certify this finding and power will be temporarily transferred to the Crown Prince until the King recovers. If the King informs the Allegiance Institution's chairman in writing that he has recovered and the Allegiance Institution is convinced as such, it will authorize the medical committee to prepare a report on the King's health within 24 hours. If the medical report

finds that the King is capable of exercising his powers, the Allegiance Institution will certify this finding and the King will resume his powers.

If the medical report finds that the King's inability to exercise his powers is permanent, the Allegiance Institution will certify that finding and invite the Crown Prince to assume the position of King of the country after receiving pledges of allegiance. These procedures must be carried out in accordance with this Law and with the Basic Law of Governance within 24 hours.

**Article 12:**

If the Allegiance Institution finds that both the King and the Crown Prince are not capable of exercising their powers for health reasons, it will ask the medical committee to prepare a report on the health conditions of both. If the report finds that their incapacitations are temporary, the Allegiance Institution will certify that finding.

In this situation, the Transitory Ruling Council will assume administration of the affairs of State and oversee the interests of the people until either the King or the Crown Prince recovers. If either the King or the Crown Prince informs the Allegiance Institution in writing that he has recovered, and if the Allegiance Institution is convinced as such, it will request that the medical committee prepare a report within 24 hours. If the report finds that either the King or the Crown Prince is capable of exercising his powers then the Allegiance Institution will certify that finding, and the individual in question will resume exercising his powers.

If the medical report finds that the King and Crown Prince are permanently incapacitated, then the Allegiance Institution will certify as such, and the Transitory Ruling Council will assume administration of the State. The Allegiance Institution will select a suitable candidate from among the sons or grandsons of King Abdulaziz al-Saud within seven days and call on him to take over as the King of the country in accordance with this Law and the Basic Law of Governance.

**Article 13:**

If the King and the Crown Prince die simultaneously, the Allegiance Institution will select a suitable

candidate for governance from among the sons or grandsons of King Abdulaziz al-Saud. It will call for a pledge of allegiance to the new King in accordance with this Law and the Basic Law of Governance. The Transitory Ruling Council will then take over administration of the affairs of State until the new King ascends the throne.

**Article 14:**

The medical committee will include:

1. The supervisor of the Royal Clinics;
2. The medical director of the King Faisal Specialist Hospital;
3. Three medical college deans, to be selected by the Allegiance Institution.

The medical committee shall issue the medical reports mentioned in this Law. It may, at its discretion, seek assistance from any doctors as it deems appropriate.

**Article 15:**

The Allegiance Institution will be chaired by the eldest son of King Abdulaziz, with the second oldest brother as his deputy. In case neither is available, it will be chaired by the eldest grandson of King Abdulaziz.

**Article 16:**

All meetings of the Allegiance Institution will be held behind closed doors, after the King's approval. The meetings will be attended exclusively by the members of the Allegiance Institution, its Secretary-General and its rapporteur. With the King's approval, the Institution may invite individuals to provide explanations or information at the meetings, but those individuals will not have the right to vote.

**Article 17:**

The Chairman of the Allegiance Institution will call meetings in accordance with Articles 6, 11, 12 and 13 of this Law.

**Article 18:**

All members should attend the meetings and should not leave before the conclusion of any meeting without the permission of the chairman. If a member is unable to attend the meeting, he should inform the chairman as such in writing.

**Article 19:**

The chairman opens and closes the meetings, moderates discussion, gives permission to members to speak, determines the agenda, ends discussions and presents issues for vote. A new item can be included in the agenda with the approval of ten members.

**Article 20:**

For any meeting to be valid it should have a quorum of two-thirds of the members of the Institution, including its chairman or his deputy.

In accordance with Article 7, the Institution will approve its decisions with the consent of the majority of members present. In the event of a tie, the chairman will cast the deciding vote. In emergency situations in which the quorum has not been met, meetings may be held with half of the members present. Decisions may be passed with the approval of two-thirds of the members present.

**Article 21:**

For each meeting there should be a record that indicates the time and location of the meeting; the name of its chairman; the names of members present; the names of absent members and the reasons for their absence, if any; the name of the Secretary-General; the summary of discussion; the number of yea and nay votes; the result of the vote and the full text of the decisions.

The record should show whether the meeting was postponed or adjourned, and if so, the time when this took place. The record should also include anything that the chairman deems necessary. It should be signed by the chairman, present members and the Secretary-General.

**Article 22:**

Votes by the Allegiance Institution will be cast by secret ballot in accordance with a form to be prepared for this purpose.

**Article 23:**

Members of the Allegiance Institution may only review the agenda and all pertinent documents at the location in which the meeting is convened, and will not be permitted to remove any documents from the meeting hall.

**Article 24:**

The King appoints the Secretary-General[,] who will assume the responsibilities of inviting members of the Allegiance Institution, supervising the process of

preparing minutes and decisions and announcing the results of its meetings as decided by the chairman. After obtaining the King's approval, the Secretary-General may seek assistance as he sees fit. The King will appoint a deputy to the Secretary-General to take over during the Secretary-General's absence.

**Article 25:**

The provisions of this Law will be amended by Royal Decree after approval of the Allegiance Institution.

## Appendix 7 | Members of the Allegiance Council, December 2007<sup>1</sup>

Prince Mishal bin Abdulaziz  
Prince Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz  
Prince Mitab bin Abdulaziz  
Prince Talal bin Abdulaziz  
Prince Badr bin Abdulaziz  
Prince Turki bin Abdulaziz  
Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz  
Prince Fawwaz bin Abdulaziz<sup>2</sup>  
Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz  
Prince Mamdouh bin Abdulaziz  
Prince Abdulillah bin Abdulaziz  
Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz  
Prince Ahmad bin Abdulaziz  
Prince Mashhur bin Abdulaziz  
Prince Hazloul bin Abdulaziz  
Prince Miqrin bin Abdulaziz  
Prince Muhammad bin Saud, son of late King Saud  
Prince Khalid al-Faisal, son of late King Faisal  
Prince Muhammad bin Saad, son of late Prince Saad  
Prince Turki bin Faisal bin Turki, grandson of King Abdulaziz's eldest son  
Prince Muhammad bin Nasser, son of late Prince Nasser  
Prince Faisal bin Bandar, son of Prince Bandar, who is still alive  
Prince Saud bin Abdulmohsin, son of late Prince Abdulmohsin  
Prince Muhammad bin Fahd, son of late King Fahd  
Prince Khalid bin Sultan, eldest son of Crown Prince Sultan  
Prince Talal bin Mansour, son of late Prince Mansour  
Prince Khalid bin Abdullah, son of King Abdullah  
Prince Muhammad bin Mishari, son of late Prince Mishari  
Prince Faisal bin Khalid, son of late King Khalid  
Prince Badr bin Muhammad, son of late Prince Muhammad  
Prince Faisal bin Thamir, son of late Prince Thamir  
Prince Mishal bin Majid, son of late Prince Majid  
Prince Abdullah bin Musaid, son of Prince Musaid, who is still alive  
Prince Faisal bin Abdulmajid, son of late Prince Abdulmajid  
Prince Abdulaziz bin Nawaf, son of Prince Nawaf, who is still alive<sup>3</sup>

1. This list is based on content from the website of the Saudi embassy in Washington, D.C., <http://www.saudiembassy.net/archive/2007/news/page25.aspx>. Spellings have been regularized to conform with the rest of this publication.
2. Prince Fawwaz died in July 2008. He had only an adopted son, who presumably is not entitled to a place on the Allegiance Council. See Brian Lees, *A Handbook of the al-Saud Ruling Family of Saudi Arabia* (London: Royal Genealogies, 1980), p. 46.
3. Prince Abdulaziz is not the oldest son of Prince Nawaf, who had a heart attack in 2002. Abdulaziz was apparently nominated by Prince Nawaf in preference to Prince Muhammad bin Nawaf, who is the Saudi ambassador in London.

## Appendix 8 | Prominent Princes

*Estimates of the number of princes vary widely. A figure of five to six thousand is often mentioned in the literature. The importance of the following list is that its members are either sons of King Abdulaziz, prominent grandsons holding government posts, or have a public profile by virtue of reference in recent Saudi Press Agency reports. Year of birth is provided where known.<sup>1</sup>*

**Abdulaziz bin Abdullah bin Abdulaziz** (born 1964). Advisor to King Abdullah. Member of board of King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST).

**Abdulaziz bin Ahmad bin Abdulaziz** (born 1963). Partially sighted, active in Saudi Blind Society, member of board of trustees of International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness.

**Abdulaziz bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz.** Assistant chief of General Intelligence.

**Abdulaziz bin Fahd bin Abdulaziz** (born 1973). Youngest son of the late King Fahd. Head of court of the Presidency of the Cabinet, minister of state.

**Abdulaziz bin Majid bin Abdulaziz.** Governor of Medina province 2008–.

**Abdulaziz bin Salman bin Abdulaziz.** Assistant minister of oil.

**Abdulillah bin Abdulaziz** (born 1935). Advisor to King Abdullah.

**Abdullah bin Abdulaziz** (born 1923). After Bandar bin Abdulaziz and Musaid bin Abdulaziz, the third

oldest surviving son of King Abdulaziz, the founder of the kingdom. King and Custodian of the Two Holy Places 2005–. Crown prince 1982–2005. Commander of the National Guard 1962–.

**Abdullah bin Musaid bin Jiluwi.** Governor of Northern Border province.

**Abdullah bin Faisal bin Turki al-Saud** (born 1951). Former chairman of the Royal Commission for Jubail and Yanbu, and former chairman of the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority.

**Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz** (born 1931). Vice minister of defense 1962–.

**Abdulrahman bin Nasser bin Abdulaziz** (born 1947). Governor of al-Kharj province.

**Ahmad bin Abdulaziz** (born 1940). Vice minister of interior 1975–.

**Badr bin Abdulaziz** (born 1933). One of the “liberal princes.” Vice commander of the national guard 1968–.

**Bandar bin Abdulaziz** (born 1923). Oldest surviving son of King Abdulaziz, the founder of the kingdom.

**Bandar bin Salman bin Muhammad al-Saud.** Advisor to King Abdullah.

**Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz** (born 1950). Secretary general of the Saudi National Security Council 2005–. Ambassador to the U.S. 1983–2005.

1. Sources for dates of birth and other details include Simon Henderson, *After King Fahd: Succession in Saudi Arabia*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Washington Institute, 1995); Sharaf Sabri, *The House of Saud in Commerce: A Study of Royal Entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia* (New Delhi: I.S. Publications, 2001); and Nawaf E. Obaid, *The Oil Kingdom at 100: Petroleum Policymaking in Saudi Arabia*, Policy Paper #55 (Washington, DC: Washington Institute, 2000).

**Fahd bin Badr bin Abdulaziz.** Governor of Jouf province.

**Fahd bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz** (born 1950). Governor of Tabuk province.

**Faisal bin Abdullah bin Abdulaziz.** President of the Saudi Red Crescent Society.

**Faisal bin Abdullah bin Muhammad al-Saud** (born 1950). Married to King Abdullah's daughter Adila. Former assistant chief of General Intelligence Department. Minister of education 2009–.

**Faisal bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz** (born 1943). Governor of Qassim province 1992–.

**Faisal bin Khalid bin Abdulaziz** (born 1954). Governor of Asir province.

**Faisal bin Salman bin Abdulaziz.** Head of Saudi Research and Marketing media group.

**Faisal bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz** (born 1951). Secretary general of Crown Prince Sultan Charitable Foundation.

**Hidhlul bin Abdulaziz** (born 1941).

**Khalid bin Abdullah bin Abdulaziz** (born 1950). Member of board of trustees of KAUST.

**Khalid bin Faisal bin Abdulaziz, a.k.a. Khalid al-Faisal** (born 1940). Former governor of Asir province. Governor of Mecca province 2007–.

**Khalid bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz** (born 1949). Commander of Saudi forces during Operation Desert Storm, the effort to liberate Kuwait 1991. Assistant minister of defense and aviation 2001–.

**Majid bin Abdulaziz** (born 1937). Governor of Mecca until 1992.

**Mamdouh bin Abdulaziz** (born 1940). Former chairman of Strategic Studies Bureau.

**Mansour bin Abdullah bin Abdulaziz.** Member of board of KAUST.

**Mansour bin Mitab bin Abdulaziz.** Assistant minister of municipal and rural affairs.

**Mansour bin Nasser bin Abdulaziz.** Advisor to King Abdullah.

**Mashhur bin Abdulaziz** (born 1942).

**Miqrin bin Abdulaziz** (born 1943). Chief of General Intelligence Department 2005–. Governor of Hail province 1980–1999; governor of Medina province 1999–2005. Youngest surviving son of King Abdulaziz.

**Mishal bin Abdulaziz** (born 1926). Appointed first chairman of the Allegiance Council in December 2007. Prominent businessman. Earlier served as minister of defense (1951–1956), special advisor to King Saud (1957–1960), and governor of Mecca province (1963–1971).

**Mishal bin Abdullah bin Abdulaziz.** Governor of Najran province 2009–.

**Mishal bin Majid bin Abdulaziz.** Governor of Jeddah 1997–.

**Mishal bin Saud bin Abdulaziz.** Governor of Najran province until 2008, when he was “relieved” of the position.<sup>2</sup>

**Mitab bin Abdulaziz** (born 1928). Minister of municipal and rural affairs 1975–.

2. *Arab News*, “Prince Mishaal Relieved from Governorship of Najran,” November 5, 2008.

**Mitab bin Abdullah bin Abdulaziz** (born 1953). Deputy commander of the National Guard for executive affairs 2009–.

**Muhammad bin Fahd bin Abdulaziz** (born 1951). Governor of Eastern province 1985–.

**Muhammad bin Nasser bin Abdulaziz**. Governor of Jizan province.

**Muhammad bin Nawaf bin Abdulaziz** (born 1953). Ambassador to Britain 2005–. Ambassador to Italy 1995–2005.

**Muhammad bin Nayef bin Abdulaziz** (born 1959). Assistant minister of interior for security affairs 1999–.

**Muhammad bin Saud bin Abdulaziz** (born 1934). Governor of Baha province 1987–.

**Musaïd bin Abdulaziz** (born 1923). Father of Faisal bin Musaïd, who assassinated King Faisal in 1975.

**Nawaf bin Abdulaziz** (born 1933). Head of foreign intelligence 2001–2002. Retired after suffering a stroke at the 2002 Beirut Arab summit.

**Nawaf bin Faisal bin Fahd bin Abdulaziz**. Vice president general of Youth Welfare, vice chairman of Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee, vice president of Saudi Soccer Federation.

**Nayef bin Abdulaziz** (born 1933). Second deputy prime minister 2009–. Minister of interior 1975–.

**Salman bin Abdulaziz** (born 1936). Governor of Riyadh province 1963–.

**Salman bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz**. Assistant secretary general of national security council.

**Sattam bin Abdulaziz** (born 1943). Vice governor of Riyadh province.

**Saud bin Abdulmohsin bin Abdulaziz**. Governor of Hail province 1999–.

**Saud bin Faisal bin Abdulaziz, a.k.a. Saud al-Faisal** (born 1940). Foreign minister 1975–.

**Saud bin Nayef bin Abdulaziz** (born 1956). Ambassador to Spain 2003–.

**Sultan bin Abdulaziz** (born 1924). Crown prince 2005–. Minister of defense and aviation 1962–.

**Sultan bin Fahd bin Abdulaziz** (born 1952). President general of Youth Welfare and president of Saudi Soccer Federation 1999–.

**Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz (born 1955)**. First Arab astronaut 1985. President of the General Commission for Antiquities and Tourism 2000–.

**Talal bin Abdulaziz** (born 1931). President, Arab Gulf Program for United Nations Development 1986–.

**Turki bin Abdulaziz** (born 1934). Lives in effective exile in Cairo.

**Turki bin Abdullah bin Muhammad**. Advisor to King Abdullah.

**Turki bin Faisal bin Abdulaziz, a.k.a. Turki al-Faisal** (born 1945). Head of foreign intelligence 1977–2001. Ambassador to Britain 2002–2005. Ambassador to the United States 2005–2006.

**Turki bin Nasser bin Abdulaziz**. General president of Meteorology and Environment Protection Authority.

**Turki bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz** (born 1959). Assistant minister of culture and information 1996–.

**Waleed bin Talal bin Abdulaziz** (born 1957). Businessman, owner of the Kingdom Corporation.

## Appendix 9 | Council of Senior Scholars— The *Ulama*

### FEBRUARY 2009<sup>1</sup>

Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al-Ashaikh (chairman)  
Saleh bin Muhammad al-Lahaidan  
Saleh bin Abdulrahman al-Husayyen  
Saleh bin Humaid  
Abdullah bin Abdulmohsin al-Turki  
Abdullah bin Abdulrahman al-Ghedyan  
Abdullah bin Sulaiman al-Manie  
Saleh bin Fouzan al-Fouzan  
Abdul Wahhab Abu Sulaiman  
Abdullah bin Muhammad al-Ashaikh  
Ahmad Mubaraki  
Abdullah bin Muhammad al-Mutlaq  
Yaqub bin Abdul Wahhab al-Bahussain  
Abdul Kareem bin Abdullah al-Khodair  
Ali bin Abbas Hakami  
Abdullah bin Muhammad al-Khanin  
Muhammad al-Mukhtar Muhammad  
Muhammad al-Ashaikh  
Saad al-Shathri  
Qays al-Ashaikh Mubarak  
Muhammad al-Eissa

1. *Arab News*, “Bin-Humaid to Head New Supreme Judicial Council,” February 15, 2009, <http://arabnews.com/?page=1&section=0&article=119240&d=15&m=2&y=2009>.

# Appendix 10 | Ambassadors

## U.S. Ambassadors to Saudi Arabia

	YEARS OF APPOINTMENT	LENGTH OF APPOINTMENT
<b>Raymond Mabus</b>	1994–1996	1 year, 10 months
<b>Wyche Fowler</b>	1996–2001	4 years, 8 months
<b>Robert Jordan</b>	2002–2003	2 years
<b>James Oberwetter</b>	2003–2007	3 years, 4 months
<b>Ford Fraker</b>	2007–2009	2 years
<b>James Smith</b>	2009–	

## Saudi Ambassadors to the United States

<b>Prince Bandar bin Sultan</b>	1983–2005	22 years
<b>Prince Turki al-Faisal</b>	2005–2006	1 year 6 months
<b>Adel al-Jubeir</b>	2007–	

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