Chapter Fourth

Religio-Political Relations in the 19th and 20th Centuries
Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab emphasized the necessity to conform with the laws of the Qu'ran and the practices exemplified in the Sunnah of the Prophet, as interpreted by the early scholars of Islam. These views meant that the ultimate goal of the Muslim community was to become the living embodiment of God's laws on earth. Toward that end, he encouraged religion education, which pleased the devout Muhammad ibn Saud. Moreover, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's philosophy complemented the political ambitions of the secular leader, because the reformer called for obedience to a just Muslim ruler. Thus emerged a community of believers in which an oath of allegiance was bestowed on a just Muslim ruler who ensured the application of God's laws. For the 'Najdis, the union between the Ulama and those who held political power was, and remains, the hallmark of a true Islamic government.

It was a pure coincidence that the Shaykh met Al Saud and the two were united in their resolve to purify the community of all later accretions. The respect given to the Shaykh's family is because they never held temporal authority. When the Shaykh died he was bankrupt whereas the wealth of the Saudis was tied to the public treasury. The Shaykh's family members have always been advisers to the Saudis and religious leaders whereas the Saudis were in between the temporal and religious authority. The Saudis belong to both the families descending on the mother's side.
from Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and thus getting all the prestige, and from the father’s side they descended from politicians and warriors. The Saudis gave importance to the right of the Imam to choose his heir, they realized fully well that their claims to political authority were associated with the success of the Wahhabi call and its support of their hereditary claims.²

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

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

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

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

The founder of the modern state of Arabia lived much of his early life in exile. In the end, however, he not only recovered the territory of the first Saudi Empire, but initiated to develop a state out of it. Abd al-Aziz did this by maneuvering among a number of forces. The first was the religious
fervor that Wahhabi Islam continued to inspire. His Wahhabi army, the Ikhwan (brethren), for instance, represented a powerful tool.\footnote{7}

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

\begin{quote}
"- - - this very transition was violent enough to be dangerous. The people had absorbed only a small amount of religious education and principle, but they came to think that this alone constituted the whole of religion and that everything else was heresy. They even went so far as to believe evil of Imam Abd al-Aziz, their own chief. They came to regard the turban as the only proper and traditional headgear, scorning the head cloth and band as an undesirable innovation, some even going so far as to regard it as the sign of an `infidel' to be shunned by true believers. Many, too, began to believe that no Bedouin, however virtuous he was
\end{quote}
and however much he disliked the evils of desert life, could be called Moslem unless he lived in a hijrah; they refused to greet Bedouin with the customary “Salam aleikum “ and if they were themselves greeted refused to reply. They would not even eat the food of these people.”

The government looked after the organization of the various hijras by choosing their locations and establishing schools, and residential places there and the supply of seeds and tools for farming, side by side with the supply of arms and ammunitions. Religious teachers (mutawwi) were frequently sent to these hijras acquaint the Ikhwan with the teachings of Islam. They were also supplied with religious literature composed for this very purpose under the guidance of Shaykh `Abd Allah b. Muhammad b. `Abd al-Latif, a descendant of Shaykh Muhammad b. `Abd al-Wahhab. This literature was based on, and prepared from, Hanbali teachings. Consequently the Ikhwan were soon infused with such religious zeal that they became extremists. They proved to be men of uncompromising religious temperament and fearless fighters, whose chief fault was over-zealousness. Nevertheless, through the religious teachings they were moulded to become honest and law abiding citizens when they were not at war. They called themselves `Knights of God’s unity, and those who obey God.
In 1929 King 'Abd al-Aziz founded the Committee for the Enforcement of Virtue and the Discouragement of Vice in conformity with the Qur’anic dictum *al-Amr bi‘l-Ma’ruf wa‘l-Nahi ‘an al-Munkar*. This was intended to promote Islamic values and eradicate the vices of smoking, singing and alcoholic drinking. Shari’a forms the core and basis of Sa’udi law. Nevertheless, an important principle was enacted in 1926 that new measures of ‘secular law’ could supplement and complement the Islamic law. The Saudi Kingdom has been variously described as an ‘absolute monarchy’, a ‘theocratic monarchy’, and so on. But a Saudi source disputes both these labels: it is not an absolute monarchy, ‘since the monarchy derives its power from the people of the country. As a result of this, some scholars have preferred to describe the Saudi monarchy as a ‘monocracy’ (a state ruled by law); in this case, it is a monarchy ruled by divine law (Shari’a).

King Saud

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

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

**King Faisal**

Faisal ibn Abdul Aziz Al Sa'ud, was King of Saudi Arabia from 1964 to 1975. As king he is credited with rescuing the country's finances and implementing a policy of modernization and reform, while his main foreign policy themes were pan-Islamism, anti-Communism, and anti-Zionism. When Faisal became King (1964-75), he set himself the task of modernizing the kingdom. His first two official acts were protective,
directed toward safeguarding the nation from potential internal and external threats that could thwart development. Faisal's religious idealism did not diminish his secular effectiveness. For him, political functioning was a religious act that demanded thoughtfulness, dignity, and integrity. Faisal continued to pursue modernization while always making sure to couch his policies in Islamic terms.

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

Early in his reign, when faced by demands for a written constitution for the country, Faisal responded that "our constitution is the Quran".
Faisal also supported monarchist and conservative movements in the Arab world, and sought to counter the influences of socialism and Arab Nationalism in the region by promoting pan-Islamism as an alternative. To that end, he called for the establishment of the Muslim World League, visiting several Muslim countries to advocate the idea.\(^{22}\)

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

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

In 1963, Faisal established the country's first television station, though actual broadcasts would not begin for another two years.\(^{24}\) As with
many of his other policies, the move aroused strong objections from the religious and conservative sections of the country. Faisal assured them, however, that Islamic principles of modesty would be strictly observed, and made sure that the broadcasts contained a large number of religious programmes.

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

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

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

Respect for Faisal increased in the Arab world based on the remarkable changes within Saudi Arabia, his excellent management of the
holy cities, his reputation as a stalwart enemy of Zionism, and his rapidly increasing financial power.

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

King Khalid

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

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

The King's first diplomatic coup was the conclusion in April 1975 of a demarcation agreement concerning Al Buraymi Oasis, where the frontiers of Abu Dhabi, Oman, and Saudi Arabia meet. Claims and counterclaims over this frontier had exacerbated relations among them for years. The conclusion of negotiations under Khalid added to his stature as a statesman.28
Khalid's leadership style was remarkably different from Faisal's. He was more liberal in terms of informing the press of the rationale behind foreign policy decisions. And although he largely used the same policymaking team as Faisal did, he allowed them greater latitude in decision-making within their separate portfolios. In regional affairs he permitted the governors considerably more autonomy and even authorized their use of discretionary funds. Above all, he valued consensus and the team approach to problem solving.  

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

King Khalid oversaw the implementation of the second five-year development plan (1975-1979) and the creation of the third five-year development plan (1980-1984). Saudi Arabia began to diversify its economic base and edged towards the completion of its infrastructure.
also emphasized upon development and his reign was marked by an almost explosive growth in the country’s physical infrastructure. It was a period of enormous wealth and prosperity for Saudi Arabia.

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

King Fahd

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

Fahd was appointed Crown Prince when Khalid succeeded their half-brother King Faisal, who was assassinated in 1975. Fahd was viewed as the de facto Prime Minister during King Khalid's reign in part due to the latter's ill health.
In 1962, Fahd was given the important post of Interior Minister and five years later he was appointed Second Deputy Prime Minister. After the death of King Faisal in 1975, Fahd was named first Deputy Prime Minister and Crown Prince.33

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

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

The New Government System

King Fahd directed a giant advance in government restructuring in the Kingdom. On March 03, 1992 (27/08/1412 H) he announced the establishment of four new systems.
1. The Basic Government System.
2. Al Sh'ura Council System
3. The Provincial System
4. The Council of Ministers System.

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

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

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

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

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

One of King Fahd’s greatest accomplishments in Saudi Arabia was a series of projects to expand the Kingdom’s facilities to accommodate the millions of pilgrims who come to the country each year. These projects
involved major expansions of Islam’s two holiest sites, the Holy Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet’s Mosque in Madinah.37

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

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

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

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

Fahd suffered a debilitating stroke November 29, 1995, after which he was unable to continue performing his full official duties. His half-
brother, Abdullah, the country's Crown Prince, served as *de facto* regent of the Kingdom and succeeded Fahd as monarch upon his death on August 1, 2005.
REFERENCES:

2. Sayyid Ahsan: Trends In Islam In Saudi Arabia. (Aligarh,1988) p. 73
3. Philby, Arabia, p. 106
4. J. G. Lorimer, op.cit. p. 1094
6. Ibid., also, www.saudiembassy.net (article; the history of Saudi Arabia)
8. Hafiz Wahba, Arabian Days , pp. 126-7
10. G. Rentz, Al-Ikhwan, in Encyclopedia of Islam 2nd Ed. vol. 4, p.1065
11. Muhammad Abdul Jabbar Beg, op. cit.
   Also, www. The Saudi.net/al saud/saud.htm
13. Ibid., also king saud.net/inside/red/index 4.html
14. Ibid., also king saud.net/inside/blue3/index7_c.html
15. Wikipedia. op.cit.
16. Ibid.


26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.


29. Ibid.


31. Wikipedia; op.cit.

32. Ibid.
33. www.the-saudi.net/al-saud/fahd.htm

34. Saudi net/Saudi_Arabia/ op.cit.

35. Ibid.

36. Saudiembassy.net/Info main.asp

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Wikipedia; op.cit.