**King Abdulaziz 'Ibn Saud'**

Abdulaziz ibn Abdul Rahman ibn Faisal ibn Turki ibn Abdullah ibn Muhammad Al Saud (Arabic: عبد العزيز بن عبد الرحمن آل سعود‎, Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Abd ar-Raḥman Āl Sa'ūd; 15 January 1875[1] – 9 November 1953), usually known within the Arab world as Abdulaziz[2] and in the West as Ibn Saud,[3] was the first monarch and founder of Saudi Arabia, the "third Saudi state".[4]

He reconquered his family's ancestral home city of Riyadh in 1902, starting three decades of conquests that made him the ruler of nearly all of central Arabia. He consolidated his control over the Najd in 1922, then conquered the Hejaz in 1925. He extended his dominions into what later became the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932. As King, he presided over the discovery of petroleum in Saudi Arabia in 1938 and the beginning of large-scale oil production after World War II. He fathered many children, including 45 sons,[5] and all of the subsequent kings of Saudi Arabia.

**Early life and family origins**

Ibn Saud was born on 15 January 1875 in Riyadh in the region of Najd in central Arabia.[6][7] He was the son of Abdul Rahman bin Faisal, last ruler of the Emirate of Nejd, the "Second Saudi State", a tribal sheikhdom centered on Riyadh. His family, the House of Saud, had been a power in central Arabia for the previous 130 years. Under the influence and inspiration of Wahhabi Islam, the Saudis had previously attempted to control much of the Arabian peninsula in the form of the Emirate of Diriyah, the "First Saudi State", until its destruction by an Ottoman army in the Ottoman–Wahhabi War in the early nineteenth century.[8] Ibn Saud's mother was a member of the Sudairi family,[9] Sarah Al Sudairi.[10] She died in 1910.

In 1890, the House of Saud's long-term regional rivals, the Rashidis, conquered Riyadh. Ibn Saud was 15 at the time.[12] He and his family initially took refuge with the Al Murrah, a Bedouin tribe in the southern desert of Arabia. Later, the Al Sauds moved to Qatar and stayed there for two months.[13] Their next stop was Bahrain, where they stayed briefly. Their final destination was Kuwait, where they lived for nearly a decade.[13]

In the spring of 1901, Ibn Saud and some relatives, including a half-brother, Mohammad, and several cousins, set out on a raiding expedition into the Najd, targeting for the most part tribes associated with the Rashidis. As the raid proved profitable, it attracted more participants. The raiders' numbers peaked at over 200, but numbers dwindled over the ensuing months.[citation needed]

In the autumn, the group made camp in the Yabrin oasis. While observing Ramadan, he decided to attack Riyadh and retake it from the Al Rashid. On the night of 15 January 1902, he led 40 men over the walls of the city on tilted palm trees and took the city.[14] The Rashidi governor of the city, Ajlan, was killed in front of his own fortress. The Saudi recapture of the city marked the beginning of the Third Saudi State.

**Rise to power**

King Ibn Saud signature in a document to Eqab bin Muhaya

Following the capture of Riyadh, many former supporters of the House of Saud rallied to Ibn Saud's call to arms. He was a charismatic leader and kept his men supplied with arms. Over the next two years, he and his forces recaptured almost half of the Najd from the Rashidis.

In 1904, Abdulaziz of Al Rashid (a.k.a. Ibn Rashid) appealed to the Ottoman Empire for military protection and assistance. The Ottomans responded by sending troops into Arabia. On 15 June 1904, Ibn Saud's forces suffered a major defeat at the hands of the combined Ottoman and Rashidi forces. His forces regrouped and began to wage guerrilla warfare against the Ottomans. Over the next two years, he was able to disrupt their supply routes, forcing them to retreat. The victory of Ibn Saud in Rawdat Muhanna, in which Abdulaziz died, ended the Ottoman presence in Najd and Qassim by the end of October 1906.

He completed his conquest of the Najd and the eastern coast of Arabia in 1912. He then founded the Ikhwan, a military-religious brotherhood, which was to assist in his later conquests, with the approval of local Salafi ulema. In the same year, he instituted an agrarian policy to settle the nomadic pastoralist Bedouins into colonies and to replace their tribal organizations with allegiance to the Ikhwan.

During World War I, the British government established diplomatic relations with Ibn Saud. The British agent, Captain William Shakespear, was well received by the Bedouin.[15] Similar diplomatic missions were established with any Arabian power who might have been able to unify and stabilize the region. The British entered into the Treaty of Darina treaty in December 1915, which made the lands of the House of Saud a British protectorate and attempted to define the boundaries of the developing Saudi state.[16] In exchange, Ibn Saud pledged to again make war against Ibn Rashid, who was an ally of the Ottomans.

The British Foreign Office had previously begun to support Sharif Hussein bin Ali, Emir of the Hejaz by sending T. E. Lawrence (a.k.a. Lawrence of Arabia) to him in 1915. The Saudi Ikhwan began to conflict with Hussein, Sharif of Mecca also in 1917, just as his sons Abdullah and Faisal entered Damascus. The Treaty of Darin remained in effect until superseded by the Jeddah conference of 1927 and the Dammam conference of 1952, during both of which Ibn Saud extended his boundaries past the Anglo-Ottoman Blue Line. After Darin, he stockpiled the weapons and supplies which the British provided him, including a 'tribute' of £5,000 per month.[17] After World War I, he received further support from the British, including a glut of surplus munitions. He launched his campaign against the Al Rashidi in 1920; by 1922 they had been all but destroyed.

The defeat of the Al Rashidi doubled the size of Saudi territory because, after the war of Ha'il, Ibn Saud sent his army to occupy Al-Jouf and the army led by Eqab bin Mohaya,[clarification needed] the head of Talhah tribe. This allowed Ibn Saud the leverage to negotiate a new and more favorable treaty with the British. Their treaty, signed at Uqair in 1922, where he met Percy Cox, British High Commissioner in Iraq, to draw boundaries[18] saw Britain recognize many of his territorial gains. In exchange, Ibn Saud agreed to recognize British territories in the area, particularly along the Persian Gulf coast and in Iraq. The former of these were vital to the British, as merchant traffic between British India and the United Kingdom depended upon coaling stations on the approach to the Suez Canal.

**Oil discovery and his rule**

Petroleum was discovered in Saudi Arabia in 1938 by American geologists working for Standard Oil Company of New York (SOCONY) in partnership with Saudi officials.[citation needed] Through his advisers St John Philby and Ameen Rihani, Ibn Saud granted substantial authority over Saudi oil fields to American oil companies in 1944, much to the dismay of the British who had invested heavily in the House of Saud's rise to power in hopes of open access to any oil reserves that were to be surveyed. Beginning in 1915, he signed the "friendship and cooperation" pact with Britain to keep his militia in line and cease any further attacks against their protectorates for whom they were responsible.

His newfound oil wealth brought with it a great deal of power and influence that Ibn Saud would use to advantage in the Hijaz. He forced many nomadic tribes to settle down and abandon "petty wars" and vendettas. He also began widespread enforcement of the new kingdom's ideology, based on the teachings of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. This included an end to traditionally sanctioned rites of pilgrimage, recognized by the orthodox schools of jurisprudence, but at odds with those sanctioned by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. In 1926, after a caravan of Egyptians on the way to Mecca were beaten by his forces for playing bugles, he was impelled to issue a conciliatory statement to the Egyptian government. In fact, several such statements were issued to Muslim governments around the world as a result of beatings suffered by the pilgrims visiting the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.[citation needed] With the uprising and subsequent decimation thereafter of the Ikhwan in 1929 via British air power, the 1930s marked a turning point. With his rivals eliminated, Ibn Saud's ideology was in full force, ending nearly 1400 years of accepted religious practices surrounding the Hajj, the majority of which were sanctioned by a millennium of scholarship.

Ibn Saud established a Shura Council of the Hijaz as early as 1927. This Council was later expanded to 20 members, and was chaired by the king's son, Faisal.

**Foreign wars**

Ibn Saud was able to gain loyalty from tribes near Saudi Arabia, tribes such as those in Jordan. For example, he built very strong ties with Prince Rashed Al-Khuzai from the Al Fraihat tribe, one of the most influential and royally established families during the Ottoman Empire. The Prince and his tribe had dominated eastern Jordan before the arrival of Sharif Hussein. Ibn Saud supported Prince Rashed and his followers in rebellion against Hussein.

Prince Rashed supported Izz ad-Din al-Qassam's defiance in 1935 which led him and his followers in rebellion against Abdullah I of Jordan. In 1937, when they were forced to leave Jordan, Prince Rashed Al Khuzai, his family, and a group of his followers chose to move to Saudi Arabia, where Prince Rashedi lived for several years in Ibn Saud's hospitality.

**Later years**

King Ibn Saud converses with President Franklin D. Roosevelt (right) through interpreter Colonel Bill Eddy, on board the USS Quincy, after the Yalta Conference. Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy (left) watches.

Ibn Saud positioned Saudi Arabia as neutral in World War II, but was generally considered to favor the Allies.[30] However, in 1938, when an attack on a main British pipeline in the Kingdom of Iraq was found to be connected to the German Ambassador, Fritz Grobba, Ibn Saud provided Grobba with refuge.[31] It was reported that he had been disfavoring the British as of 1937.[32]

In the last stage of the war, Ibn Saud met significant political figures. One of these meetings, which lasted for three days, was with U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt on 14 February 1945.[33] The meeting took place on board USS Quincy in the Great Bitter Lake segment of the Suez Canal.[33][34] The meeting laid down the basis of the future relations between the two countries.

The other meeting was with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in the Grand Hotel du Lac on the shores of the Fayyoun Oasis, fifty miles south of Cairo, in February 1945.[36] However, Saudis report that the meeting heavily focused on the Palestine problem and was unproductive in terms of its outcomes, in contrast to that with Roosevelt.

In 1948, Ibn Saud participated in the Arab-Israeli War, but Saudi Arabia's contribution was generally considered token.

While most of the royal family desired luxuries such as gardens, splendid cars, and palaces, Ibn Saud wanted a royal railway from the Persian Gulf to Riyadh and then an extension to Jeddah. This was regarded by all of his advisers living in the country as an old man's folly. Eventually, ARAMCO built the railway, at a cost of $70 million, drawn from the King's oil royalties. It was completed in 1951 and was used commercially after the king's death. It enabled Riyadh to grow into a relatively modern city. But when a paved road was built in 1962, the railway lost its traffic.

**Personal life**

In accordance with the customs of his people, Abdul Aziz headed a polygamous household comprising several wives and concubines. According to some sources, he had twenty-two consorts. Many of his marriages were contracted in order to cement alliances with other clans, during the period when the Saudi state was founded and stabilized. Abdul Aziz was the father of almost a hundred children, including forty-five sons.

He was a heavy man standing between 1.93 m (6 ft 4 in)[38][39] and 1.98 m (6 ft 6 in).

**Relations with family members**

Ibn Saud was said to be very close to his paternal aunt, Jawhara bint Faisal. From a young age, she ingrained in him a strong sense of family destiny and motivated him to regain the lost glory of the House of Saud. During the years when the Saud family were living almost as refugees in Kuwait, Jawhara bint Faisal frequently recounted the deeds of his ancestors to Abdulaziz and exhorted him not to be content with the existing situation. She was instrumental in making him decide to return to Najd from Kuwait and regain the territories of his family. She was well educated in Islam, in Arab custom and in tribal and clan relationships. She remained among the king's most trusted and influential advisors all her life. Ibn Saud asked her about the experiences of past rulers and the historical allegiance and the roles of tribes and individuals. Jawhara was also deeply respected by the king's children. Ibn Saud visited her daily until she died around 1930.

Ibn Saud was also very close to his sister Noura, who was one year older than him. On several occasions, he identified himself in public with the words: "I am the brother of Noura."Noura died a few years before Ibn Saud.