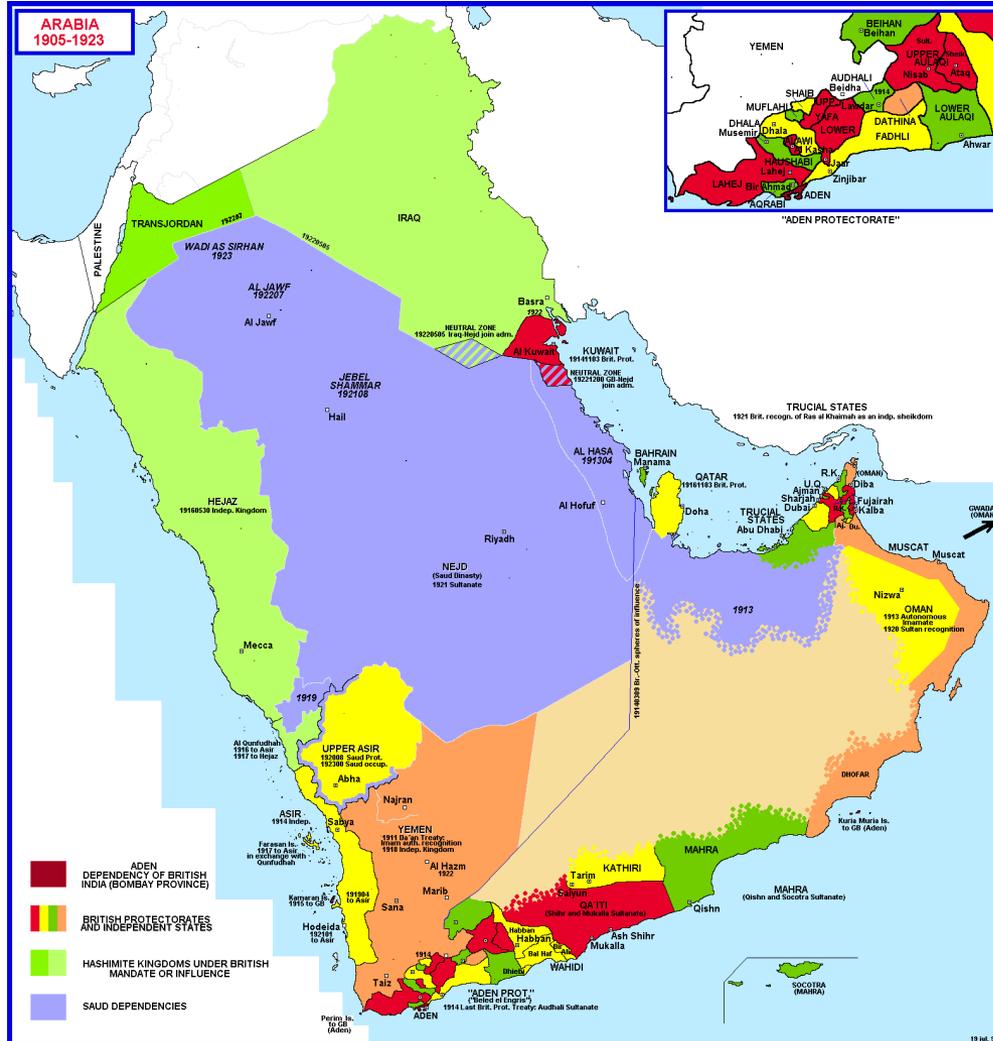


Saudi Arabia



Dominant Perceptions: The Bedouin

- The camel-riding and nomadic **Bedouin** who lives in a tent among the sand dunes, separated from the outside world.
- This echoes views about the rural or tribal colonial subject in Africa and Asia.



Dominant Perceptions: The Terrorist

- Saudi males are seen as innately **fundamentalist**, which in the Western mind implies adherence to religious dogma and anti-Western ideology.
- Kingdom rule by an incompetent and parasitic nouveau riche.



Creation of the Saudi State

■ PHASE ONE

- From the early 18th century the Saud clan were the rulers of Diriyah, a settlement in the Eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula known as the Najd. Diriyah was small settlement, probably consisting of no more than 70 households.
 - Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the founder of the Wahhabi sect of Islam, belonged to one of the many sedentary groups of the Najd and whose family produced several religious scholars.
 - Purification of Islam
 - Opposed the worshipping of intermediaries between humans and Allah (God)
 - Encouraged communal prayer
 - Promoted the strict and even violent enforcement of beliefs.
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- In 1744 Ibn Saud and Wahhabi signed a pact, which rested on three main tenets, which have defined the relationship between the two groups since then.
 - Saud offered protection to Wahhabi and his followers.
 - Wahhabi declared his loyalty to the Saud clan.
 - Both supported jihad against unbelievers.

 - Wahhab 'provided theological justification for blind obedience of the Imam (Emir), permanent Jihad against heretic (rival) tribes, neighbouring Shia towns and above all revolt against the Ottoman Caliph.'
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Expansion

- Wahhabism appealed to disaffected groups, who rallied around the alliance against their local rulers.
 - By the end of the 18th century the Saudi-Wahhabi movement had asserted its control over most of the Najd region.
 - And by the early 1800s had taken control over most urban settlements in the Hejaz.
 - In 1801 the Wahhabi-Saud alliance attacked the Shia holy city of Karbala (in modern southern Iraq) and massacred 5000 people.
 - In 1818 Muhammad Ali took control of the region, pushing the Saudi-Wahhabi alliance back to the eastern frontier.
 - One of the few successful commanders of the Saudi forces was a woman, Ghaliya, who scored an important victory against the Ottoman forces in 1814.
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Phase Two (1824-1891)

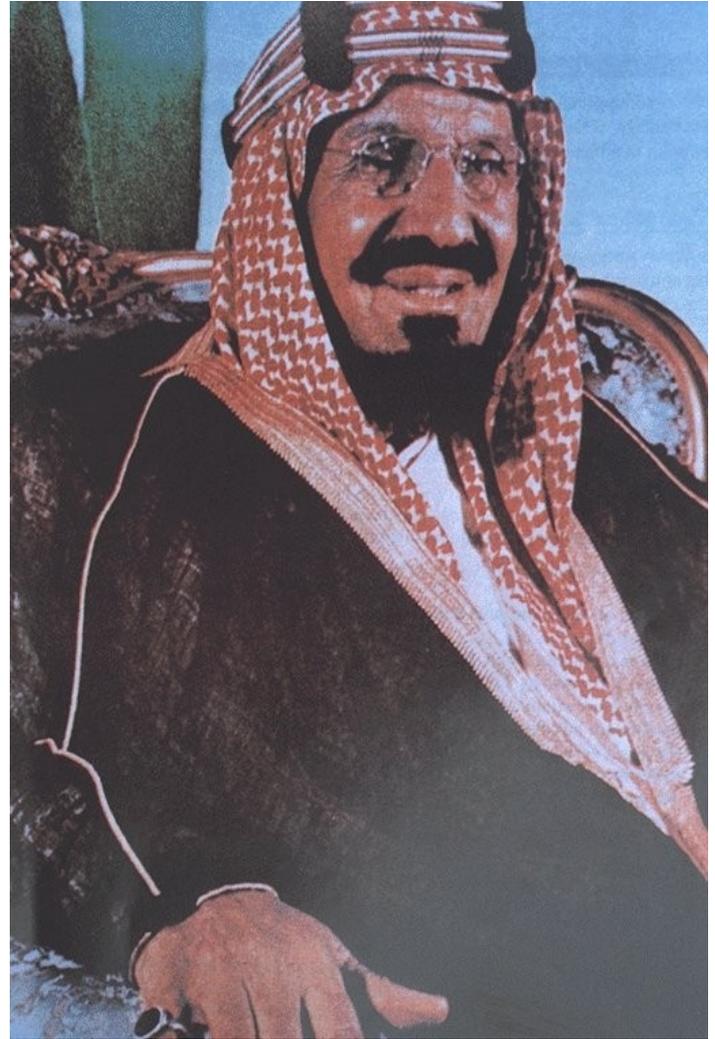
- The 19th century was characterised by an uneasy balance of power between the Ottoman Empire, which controlled the Hejaz, and the Saudi-Wahhabi alliance, which controlled large parts, but not the entire Najd region.
 - The Saudis began to regroup in the early 1820s and managed to recapture Riyadh in 1824.
 - The Rashidi clan consolidated its political position in the Najd during the second half of the 19th century. In 1884 they supplanted the Saudis as the hegemonic power in the region.
 - Hashemites took control of the Hejaz area and declared themselves the Sharifs (protectors) of Mecca and Medina.
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Phase Three: Birth of a new state

- This period marks the decline and eventual dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, which also weakened its allies such as the Rashidis.
 - The British became increasingly influential in determining the political landscape of the region.
 - The post-war reconfiguration strengthened the position of the imperial powers, which carved up the region to serve their particular imperial interests.
 - From the 1920 the USA began to make inroads into the region, primarily by forging an alliance with the Saudis.
 - The discovery of oil transformed the political economy of the peninsula and especially enhanced the authority of the Saud clan.
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Abdelaziz Ibn Saud

- Ibn Saud was the most influential figure in the making of the kingdom and dominated Saudi politics until 1952, and beyond.
- With British support Ibn Saud regained control of Riyadh in 1902.
- In 1903 Ibn Saud declared himself Sultan of Najd.
- The Rashidis still held power but their authority was dependent on the Ottomans.
- In 1915 Ibn Saud was declared King of the Najd.



Subjugation & Unification

- In 1916 Sharief Husayn declared himself king of the Arabs with the tacit support of the British.
 - After the war the British installed Hashemite leaders in Jordan and Iraq, but favoured Saudi rule in Arabia. Ibn Saud kinghted in 1915.
 - In 1924 Ibn Saud took control of Mecca.
 - Ibn Saud mobilised a special military unit made up of Bedouins, the Ikhwan (brothers) to subjugate rival clans.
 - Loyalty from other clans were won through marriage.
 - In 1926 Ibn Saud declared himself King of Hejaz and Sultan of Najd.
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Character of the kingdom

- Relied heavily on British patronage and military support.
 - It gained legitimacy as the protector of Islam's holy places despite having usurped that role.
 - Saudi-Wahhabi alliance became the cornerstone of the political and religious framework that defined the new state.
 - Feudal dictatorship run by a family, based on patriarchy and patronage.
 - Ibn Saud acquired one hundred wives and concubines, motivated by the desire to cultivate strategic alliances.
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Political Intolerance

- Saudi ruling elite proved itself intolerant of any opposition or potential rival authority.
 - Ikhwan mobilised to subjugate the population and to wipe out opposition.
 - Committee for the Advancement of Virtue and Elimination of Sin (CAVES), which gave the Ikhwan virtually free reign forcibly to impose their fanatical beliefs on the Saudi public.
 - Majlis (consultative assembly or parliament) was instituted ostensibly as an open and democratic forum.
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Oil, Oil, Oil

- Saudi Arabia has the largest proven supply of oil. Estimated today at about 260 billion barrels.
- Aramco has held a virtual monopoly over oil production.
- GDP (2006 est.): \$374 billion.
- Population (2007 est.): 27.6 million (22.0 million Saudis, 5.6 million foreign nationals).
- Per capita GDP (2006 est.): \$13,800.



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Arab-American Oil

- Britain was initially unenthusiastic about the prospects of oil production in the peninsula as its main interest lay in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's.
 - US oil company Standard Oil Company of California (SOCAL) successfully negotiated a very favourably 60 year concession that gave it control over about 50% of the kingdom.
 - Extraction of oil increased rapidly from 0.5 million barrels in 1938 to 21.5 million barrels in 1945.
 - The Arab American Company (Aramco), formed in 1944, became a key player in the oil industry in the entire Middle East.
 - The income derived from oil revenue was invested in some developmental programme but mainly to enrich the elite, who were members or associates of the Saud clan.
 - From the 1950s Saudi Arabia emerged as the USA's third most important ally in the region after Israel and Iran.
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