

King Khalid died in June 1982, and succession passed to his brother, Fahd. Like Khalid, King Fahd has continued various regional, social and economic development programs.

The above historical factors have left an indelible impression on the Kingdom:

- The 5,000 male members of the Al Saud family, especially the forty-plus sons of King Abdul Aziz, rule the country. They and various scions of the royal family occupy almost all the key positions in government.
- The Korean and rigidly enforced Islamic law (Shariah) provide the basic precepts under which the country is governed. This accounts for such characteristic features of the Kingdom as the public separation of the sexes, and the total ban on alcohol and pork products.
- The Al Saud family continues to maintain its close identification with the Wahhabi religious leaders and the observance of the Islamic faith, keys to the maintenance of authority among a devout and conservative people.

Saudi Arabia has displayed a remarkable degree of stability and adaptability over the past four decades. Most notably, it has been able:

- to defy successfully the threats to the regime's existence posed by radical opponents in the Arab world;
- to use its oil wealth to move to a welfare state while still maintaining internal stability;
- through OPEC and the key position it holds in that organization, to play a significant role on the world economic scene.