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THE FATE OF SAUDI ARABIA: REGIME EVOLUTION IN THE SAUDI MONARCHY

by

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December 2008

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  Samuel Huntington described the transformation process from an authoritarian regime to a democratic form of government as a direct transition. This model of transformation was applied to Saudi Arabia to analyze if it is displaying characteristics that led other authoritarian regimes to democratization. The relationship between the regime and the population is evolving and is facilitated by external and internal forces that represent an overall push toward democratization. The internal pressures are a growing population, increasing educational levels, growing internet and modern technology usage, and an increasingly critical press. The external sources are the international political and economic world order, Islamic extremism, security concerns, and non-governmental organizations. Several segments of society, including the *ulama*, merchants, technocrats, expatriates, tribes, and women are undergoing social changes that offer different political influences from what existed at the time of the creation of Saudi Arabia, and some of these groups demand more effective government. Several earlier attempts at liberal reforms failed to produce a lasting commitment and left the Saudi monarchy in total control. The social changes and internal and external forces will force the government to keep reforms in place to bring about an evolutionary change to a more liberal form of government.

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THE FATE OF SAUDI ARABIA: REGIME EVOLUTION IN THE SAUDI MONARCHY

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Samuel Huntington described the transformation process from an authoritarian regime to a democratic form of government as a direct transition. This model of transformation was applied to Saudi Arabia to analyze if it is displaying characteristics that led other authoritarian regimes to democratization. The relationship between the regime and the population is evolving and is facilitated by external and internal forces that represent an overall push toward democratization. The internal pressures are a growing population, increasing educational levels, growing internet and modern technology usage, and an increasingly critical press. The external sources are the international political and economic world order, Islamic extremism, security concerns, and non-governmental organizations. Several segments of society, including the *ulama*, merchants, technocrats, expatriates, tribes, and women are undergoing social changes that offer different political influences from what existed at the time of the creation of Saudi Arabia, and some of these groups demand more effective government. Several earlier attempts at liberal reforms failed to produce a lasting commitment and left the Saudi monarchy in total control. The social changes and internal and external forces will force the government to keep reforms in place to bring about an evolutionary change to a more liberal form of government.

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I.   INTRODUCTION

Saudi Arabia is undergoing changes. The population is growing and the education level is increasing. The oil driven economy has not been able to meet the demands of the changing Saudi society and high unemployment rates leave the Kingdom open to a variety of internal and external pressures. The Saudi monarchy instituted several changes in the political system to deal with the growing pressure, but are these changes cosmetic bandages or do they mark a trend that will lead to democratization? If these changes mark a democratization movement in the kingdom, will the movement usher in a social revolution in the country that will slowly bring the Saudi polity to a free democratic state or will there be a political revolution that will upset the balance of power in the entire region?

Samuel Huntington states that the third wave of democracy has five patterns of change. Direct transition was one of these changes that occurred when a stable authoritarian regime switched to a stable democracy fueled by the institutions created by the ruling regime for stability. Huntington discusses the democratization trend in Latin America, central Europe, and Southeast Asia, but the movement stalled in the Middle East. If the world is experiencing the third wave of democracy, is Saudi Arabia a future candidate for a direct transition and will the change be evolutionary or revolutionary?

The research question is important for two reasons. First, Saudi social, political and economic conditions are rapidly changing and a majority of the research concerning Saudi Arabia is outdated. One aspect of the outdated research suggests that the Saudi monarchy will end when the oil money runs out.[1] Although this hypothesis may be true in the long run, a forecast for greater future demand from developing countries like India and China eliminates the possibility that oil revenues will be insufficient for some time. In short, the current trend of oil demand will ensure the reign of the Saudi regime for many years if oil prices are the sole factor promoting change. By considering the

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[1] Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani, *The Rentier State* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 1-21; Terry Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) quoted in Benjamin Smith, "Oil Wealth and Regime Survival in the Developing World 1960-1999," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Apr 2004): 232-246.

demographic and political changes in Saudi Arabia through a democratization lens provided by Samuel Huntington, not only can a more accurate analysis of the factors affecting the fate of the Saudi monarchy be obtained, but the character of the change can also be analyzed.

Secondly, why is the character of the change in Saudi Arabia important? Saudi Arabia is the largest economy in the Middle East and is economically, politically, and militarily integrated into the region and internationally. The Saudi monarchy is a firm US ally, but this position is increasingly unpopular in the region. If the monarchy lost power by revolution, the world would witness a change in Saudi Arabia that might cause a shift in the regional power distribution similar to the power shift that occurred in 1979 with the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The past research assumes revolutionary change because political change in the region is normally revolutionary. However, given the stability and resources in Saudi Arabia relative to other regional regimes, it is not clear whether change will follow the same revolutionary path. The character of the change is important because changes in Saudi Arabia would likely mark changes throughout the region given their regional political position. If these changes are evolutionary, this will influence other regional actors, and promote greater stability throughout the Middle East.

Why is the research question important? It applies democratization from a global perspective to the Saudi regime to examine the forces promoting change and predicting the character of the change. Saudi Arabia is the strongest Muslim force maintaining stability in the region and it will be facing demographic changes that will stress the ability of even the most skilled politician. Change is coming to the kingdom; the question is will it be evolution or revolution? No past work addresses this concern.

The issues that are raised by the research are (1) the changing demographics of Saudi Arabian society and the stress it places on the political environment, (2) the political elements of Saudi society and their demands on and criticisms of the monarchy, and (3) the stability of the institutions created under monarchical rule. Saudi Arabia's population is growing by approximately 2% per year and the literacy rate is over 70% for men and women. There is an increase of citizens traveling out of the country to get higher education from Western schools, but they are returning to an economy that is

dominated by the state and face an unemployment rate of approximately 25% (even higher for women). Most citizens are employed by a highly inefficient civil service system while others go into service oriented jobs in a private sector that makes up 40% of the economy.[2] This combination creates stresses on the state dominated economy.

There are several political groups that compete for patronage and political currency. They are separated into older groups (those which existed from the start of the kingdom) and the relatively newer ones. The older groups are the religious conservatives, tribal sects, old merchant families, and the royal family. The newer groups are technocrats, merchants that gained power during the oil boom, and women, who have considerable economic power, but have not been able to transfer economic power to political currency. These groups are interacting in a society with loosened restrictions on the press and new technologies that are giving greater voice to dissenting opinions in the kingdom.

The King recently created institutions that may solve some of the problems by giving power to lower levels of society. These institutions include the Allegiance Commission and the Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council). The evolving relationships between the Saudi monarchy and the population are examined using Samuel Huntington's direct transition framework described in *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. This examination will determine if the governmental changes will create stable institutions that will develop a more liberal government. Although many scholars suggest the Saudi Arabian monarchy will face revolutionary upheaval that has marked the Middle East when the population outgrows the ability of the monarchy to sustain it with revenues from oil, the recent institutions the Saudis are developing will provide the avenues necessary to conduct a progressive social evolution via a coalition of technocrats, merchants, and women that will not result in a revolution. This research will answer the following: Are these institutions signs of a reform policy

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[2] "Saudi Arabia," Central Intelligence Agency, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2116.html (accessed June 1, 2008).

that was instituted to meet social changes in Saudi Arabia, and are these changes evidence of a direct transition of an authoritarian regime evolving into a more liberal form of government?

Several scholars agree that Saudi Arabia is headed for a change. "Their population is not only growing at a rate that makes the maintenance of the oil welfare state problematic, but it is also becoming more literate, educated, and urban—all characteristics of other societies that have experienced political upheaval."[3] The issue of succession is coming and there is no formal process to choose the king. This opens the regime to feuding, but the short-term prognosis for regime stability is good, because it seems that there is enough oil money to keep the system working.[4] The view that Saudi money is the reason the regime has survived does not account for political activity over the life of the monarchy that co-opted Islamic and tribal resistance into the government. The problems mentioned are historical signs of revolution, but the monarchy is giving more power to society as a whole and taking steps to expand the economy and create a stable environment that may not lead to a revolution, but rather a social evolution.

The first problem of government in Saudi Arabia was is the process of choosing leaders does not ensure competent leadership or produce a formalized succession process to stem generational rivalry. If the monarchy begins a feud it will be the end of the Saudi regime.[5] This opinion was rendered prior to the creation of a council of royal family members whose purpose was to elect the leader of Saudi Arabia, and prior to the Basic Law which made all sons from King Abd al-Aziz's branch of the al-Saud family eligible to rule. An Allegiance Commission created by royal decree in October 2006 established a committee of Saudi princes that will play a role in selecting future Saudi kings,[6] but the

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[3] Patrick Clawson, Eleanor Doumato, and Gause, F. Gregory, "Dialogue: Saudi Arabia," *SAIS Review*, Vol. 22, No. 2, (Summer-Fall 2002): 199-228, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/sais_review/v022/22.2clawson.html (accessed June 1, 2001).

[4] Ibid.

[5] Patrick Clawson, Eleanor Doumato, and Gause, F. Gregory, "Dialogue: Saudi Arabia," *SAIS Review*, Vol. 22, No. 2, (Summer-Fall 2002): 199-228, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/sais_review/v022/22.2clawson.html (accessed June 1, 2001).

[6] Simon Henderson, "New Saudi Rules on Succession: Will They Fix the Problem," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, (October 25, 2006). http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2526 (accessed October 19, 2008).

new system will not take effect until after Crown Prince Sultan becomes king.[7] The Basic Law, which acts functionally as a constitution, was passed in 1992. This expanded the pool of eligible Kings, which makes more talent available, and which can, in turn, lead to more capable leaders on the throne. Whether this system of selecting a king will prevent rivalries that existed in European monarchies remains to be seen, but the Allegiance Commission and Basic Law formalizes the succession process and will give more of the royal family a formal leadership opportunity and stake in the monarchy. King Abd al-Aziz advised his sons to "avoid differences, beware if you separate."[8] The new institutions may not solve the problem, but the Saudi family is aware of the danger of division and there is a concerted effort supported by the "nobles" in maintaining the monarchy intact.[9]

The second threat to survival is dependence on oil revenues.   This is the prevalent view of scholars describing the Saudi monarchy and the economic situation as a welfare state, *rentier* state, or distributive state.[10] This view is summed up by Dirk Vandewalle.

> The creation of well-developed, coherent, and relatively independent economic bureaucracies are crucial to long-term economic development, but their creation for anything but distributive purposes is likely to be delayed in distributive states during boom periods. In sum, the large role assumed by the state in distributive economies does not accurately gauge either its strength or its autonomy. On the contrary, state participation is often an indication of weakness.[11]

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[7] Central Intelligence Agency, "Saudi Arabia," Central Intelligence Agency, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sa.html. (accessed June 1, 2008); Rasheed, Madawi, "An Elected King in a Gerontocracy" (Personal website, Dec. 31, 2007) http://www.madawialrasheed.org/index.php/site/more/141/ (accessed June 23, 2008).

[8] Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud, "House of Saud," *Frontline*, DVD, directed by Jihan el-Tahri (Alexandria, VA: PBS Video, 2005).

[9] Patrick Clawson, Eleanor Doumato, and Gause, F. Gregory, "Dialogue: Saudi Arabia," *SAIS Review*, Vol. 22, No. 2, (Summer-Fall 2002): 199-228, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/sais_review/v022/22.2clawson.html (accessed June 1, 2001).

[10] Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani, *The Rentier State* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 1-21; Terry Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) quoted in Benjamin Smith, "Oil Wealth and Regime Survival in the Developing World 1960-1999," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Apr 2004): 232-246.

[11] Dirk Vandewalle, *Libya Since Independence: Oil and State-Building* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998), 17-38.

In short, the Saudi monarchy continues to remain in power because of the money generated from oil revenues. When the population requirements exceed oil money, the regime will not be able to quell the masses.

Although money is an important reason why the Saudi monarchy has survived, it is not the only reason. The monarchy made political decisions to incorporate Islam and tribalism into the government, which stabilized the regime during "bust" periods in the oil market.[12] Money played an important part in the patronage system, but the regime extracted legitimacy and support from these segments of society to aid in their survival, while quelling these movements when they overstepped their bounds. The European model intertwined state-making with the ability to wage war, provide services, and extract from the population.[13] Saudi Arabia does not fit the Tilly model because the population is not taxed. The Saudi regime does not extract taxes or services from the population, but society and the ruling class are not isolated from one another because Islam and tribalism forms a link between the state and the population.

Tribal ties helped people politically and economically and Islam played a vital role in state formation by sedentarizing the nomadic tribes and providing legitimacy to the royal family. They "developed significant support for the existing political systems in the Gulf monarchies, while losing much of the ability they had in the past to challenge those systems."[14] Tribal political influence faded when the population urbanized, but tribal values and Islam play an important part in Saudi Arabian identity. This dissenting opinion portrays the Saudi governmental institutions stronger than contemporary scholars suggest because it takes into account the process in which societal identities have been incorporated into the government.

The final threat to the survival of the regime is the changing population. The population is becoming more literate, urban, and educated. Segments of society are

[12] Benjamin Smith, "Oil Wealth and Regime Survival in the Developing World 1960-1999," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Apr 2004): 232.

[13] Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," quoted in Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Peter Evans, *Bringing the State Back In* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 171-191.

14 F. Gregory Gause and F. Gregory Gause III, Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States (New York: Council on Foreign Relation Press, 1994), 3.

changing including: the *ulama*, technocrats, tribes, expatriates, merchants, and women.
No one group is monolithic in their support or opposition to the royal family. The
religious conservatives are tied to the historical forging of the country, but they also form
the greatest opposition to the royal family. The *ulama* that were co-opted into the
government provide religious legitimacy to the royal family and support government
policies in return for control of conservative social issues. More extreme religious
elements defy the established *ulama* by protesting the foreign presence and introduction
of Western culture and religions, while some religious groups support Western
concepts.[15] Technocrats educated in Western universities represent about 8% of society
and are mostly concentrated in the lower levels of government.[16] They favor a
progressive movement to take power from the royal family to transform it into a Western-
style government, but they do not want to take power away by revolt because this would
favor an Islamic fundamentalist-backed government.

Tribal elements helped Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud consolidate the kingdom. Once the
kingdom was consolidated, they lost their usefulness. Moreover, the monarchy has
undermined tribal ties. Their position in the government is relegated to the Saudi
Arabian National Guard. The erosion of tribal influences in Saudi society reduced the
individual's dependence on tribal identity. This eliminated a large impediment to
independent thought which is crucial in a free society. Expatriates generate little
domestic friction, but they receive international attention and do have some sway over
domestic policy, such as when the royal family tried to implement income tax and many
expatriates resigned, causing the royal family to rescind the decree. Merchant families
are mostly business oriented and support the family because while the family is in power
their position is protected. The family has also increasingly participated in the economic
scene with the merchant class, something the merchants have found extremely
displeasing.[17]

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[15] Madawi Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 176-186.

[16] Peter Wilson and Douglas Graham, *Saudi Arabia: The Coming Storm* (New York: M. E. Sharp, 1994), 22-32.

[17] Ibid.

Saudi women are also an important political force in the region, but they do not have the political power their economic and numerical means warrant. Eleanor Doumato explains their situation:

> The reason is two-fold. First, Saudi Arabia's social fabric was not disturbed by a colonial experience; western influence is of a very recent date and has arrived, to some degree selectively, by the Saudis' own choosing. Second, social conventions and religiously based attitudes supporting sex-segregation, female domesticity and dependence on men have been incorporated into public policy.[18]

Women's roles in Saudi society are the most rapidly changing dynamic. Women have moved from being solely child bearers, to productive members in the economic sectors of society.[19] In 2005 the Saudi minister of labor made "job opportunities available for the Saudi woman … to enable them to join the establishments of the private sector, provided that the recruitment of the woman suits her nature and does not run counter to the teachings of the Islamic Shariah and the deep-rooted traditions of the Saudi society."[20] Any progressive movement in Saudi Arabia will require support from women to succeed and will therefore have to address the role of women in society.

To accommodate the changing society, the Saudi regime has taken several actions. Politically, a Consultative Council (150 members and a chairman appointed by the monarch for four-year terms), was announced in October 2003. This had been planned in the 1992 Edict. The royal family intends to introduce elections for half of the members of local and provincial assemblies and a third of the members incrementally over a period of four to five years, but no such elections had been held by the end of 2008. Economically, the government promotes growth in the private sector and has focused on a Saudization policy to increase the number of Saudi nationals in the local economy. Unemployment is high because the population's educational training and

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[18] Eleanor A. Doumato, "Gender, Monarchy, and National Identity in Saudi Arabia," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 1, (1992): 34.

[19] Sandra Mackey, *The Saudis: Inside the Desert Kingdom.* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 143-168.

[20] Saudi Arabia Market Information Resource and Directory, "Plans to provide more Job Opportunities for Women," (August 13, 2005), http://www.saudinf.com/main/y8526.htm (accessed July 2, 2008).

technical skills do not meet the demands of the private sector. In response, the government increased spending on job training and education.[21]

In what Samuel Huntington and Francis Fukuyama called "the King's dilemma," the centralization of power required to undertake social and economic transformation discourages monarchs from expanding their social base and prevents them from accommodating the political demands of the new social groups that are produced by the very same social and economic change.[22] The Saudi regime is facing these social changes that have led to upheavals in other countries, but the question is: Will social changes occur without resistance from the government, or will the government try to hold back the changes, inciting revolution revolution? Manfred Halpern's examination revealed more flexibility from monarchies, in principle, because the monarchs had the option to limit their own prerogatives, but he was not optimistic that the Saudis would do so.[23] The literature, as a whole, suggests the Saudi monarchy will end when the money runs out, but the regime has proven to be resilient in boom and bust periods and enjoys legitimacy from tribal and religious elements of a society ingrained at the creation of the modern Saudi state. Revolution as the norm in the region potentially serves as an omen that Saudi Arabia will experience the same fate rather than an evolutionary change. However, incorporating greater swaths of the royal family and population into the political process, conducting reform in the educational and economic system, bending to internal and external pressures, and acknowledging and combating the social changes in the society suggest a regime facilitating evolutionary rather than revolutionary change.

Huntington asked two questions. "To what extent would the third wave go beyond the first and second waves? Would countries that had not experienced democracy in the past become stable democracies in the future?"[24] Huntington listed a

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[21] Central Intelligence Agency, "Saudi Arabia," (1999), http://www.umsl.edu/services/govdocs/ wofact99/263.htm; CIA "Saudi Arabia," (2008), https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/.

[22] Lisa Anderson, "Absolutism and the Resilience of Monarchy in the Middle East," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 106, No. 1, 2 (1991): 2.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 44.

set of factors that other researchers cited as promoting democratization including: a high overall level of economic wealth, a relatively equal distribution of income and/or wealth, a market economy, a feudal aristocracy at some point in the history of the society, the absence of feudalism in society, a strong bourgeoisie, a strong middle class, and high levels of literacy and education. Some of the factors mentioned are apparent in Saudi society, but Huntington emphasizes that no certain combination of factors can be said to exist in every country where a democracy blooms.[25] Huntington's direct transition process stated that an authoritarian regime would create institutions that made the regime more stable. These institutions would then be the foundation of the change to a democratic government. The factors that created the impetus for change were new policies of external actors, declining legitimacy, transformation, and economic growth. Historical and current developments in the monarchical rule in Saudi Arabia, the changing sections of Saudi society, and external and internal pressures on Saudi governance are discussed to analyze their relation to the factors observed in direct transition democracies. These developments are then classified as evolutionary or revolutionary to investigate the possibility of Saudi Arabia going through an evolutionary change to a more liberal society by means of direct transition.

The first chapter discusses the evolving role of the Saudi Arabian government's leadership and governing process. It concentrates on the royal family by analyzing the historical creation of Saudi Arabia and discusses the institutions developed during the formation of the modern state. It focuses on the development of the royal family, the *ulama*, and the military as Saudi governmental institutions, defines their relationships with each other, and discusses key events that altered the relationship of the governing body with the population.

The second chapter discusses individual segments of society that have changed since the creation of Saudi Arabia and their political demands and criticisms of the monarchy. The groups include the *ulama*, tribes, merchants, expatriates, technocrats, and women. Each group's political power and tendency to support liberal reform is assessed.

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[25] Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993) 38.

This chapter reveals a society where merchants, technocrats, and women are gaining more power and will inevitably push for a more liberal society.

The third chapter discusses external and internal pressures on Saudi Arabia. These include changes in per capita GDP, education, population size, and unemployment levels, the international community, the internet, satellite TV, non-governmental organizations, Islamic fundamentalism, and security concerns. The present conditions are discussed and an assessment made to show how these changes affect Saudi society. This chapter demonstrates that the Saudi society is exhibiting social changes from external and internal pressures that will push for a direct transition from authoritarian rule to a more liberal governing process. The conclusion will summarize the comparisons, restate the hypothesis, and confirm or deny whether the hypothesis was proven.

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II. THE EVOLVING ROLE OF LEADERSHIP

A. INTRODUCTION

The House of Saud has a long history on the Arabian Peninsula. In many ways, it is one of the last standing monarchies dominated by the original ruling family. This feat was achieved due to the absence of a hegemonic power. The Ottoman Empire controlled the east and west coastlines of the Arabian Peninsula, leaving the interior untouched. The Mongol Empire also neglected the heart of the peninsula. The rough terrain and scarce water supplies made the region unwelcoming and undesirable for the exertion of direct control. The Prophet Mohammed consolidated the area under the flag of Islam, and this influence lasted until the middle of the 13th century. From here, the area was isolated from the developing Muslim Empire. The region also escaped the ancient Persian, Greek, and Roman Empires. The absence of an empire's control affected the region in two profound ways. First, social dimensions in the community were virtually unmolested except by Muslim influence. This led to a deep link to Islam and promoted religious homogeneity. The second was a lack of accountability to central power. This left the tribal element the strongest social link between individuals. These two variables would shape the eventual character of the state that emerged in 1932.

The tribal element of the developing society played out on many levels. The tribe controlled every aspect of the individual's life. A man could not marry without the tribe's consent. One's possessions could not grow without the tribe's vital resources. The individual could not fend off attack from rival tribes without the backing of his own.[26] It is no surprise that the tribal conflict of the mid 18th century produced the eventual architects of the state. The al-Saud attempted to consolidate the peninsula against rival tribes such as the al-Rashid. The al-Saud managed to take control of the interior and tried to extend its power to Mecca and Medina. These were important because they were centers of trade and the birthplace of Islam. As long as the fighting

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[26] Sandra Mackey, *The Saudis: Inside the Desert Kingdom* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 109-112.

was contained in the interior, the exploits of the tribe were largely ignored by the Ottoman Empire. As soon as the resistance reached the periphery of Ottoman controlled land, the Empire decapitated the rebellion and the head of the House of Saud.[27] This marked the end of the first al-Saud conquests, but they would not be the last. Two more attempts led to the creation of the Saudi state three hundred years later.

The religious element played a similar role in the development of the region. Pre-Islamic history in the region depended on the tribe, but religion supplied a different approach to life. In some ways, the rise of Islam presented a strong resistance to tribal influences. The tribal leaders subscribed to a form of pagan religion that did not limit their power and authority. The strict regimen presented by Islam formed the first structural challenge to the tribal system. The tribe formed the identity of its members, but Islam sought to define a different relationship. Islam proposed that the master of man was God and all other entities fell short of his dominance. Islam also proposed inheritance rights for women and better treatment of female children and orphans. This did not eliminate the tribal system. The tribal system incorporated the religion and the combination of the two changed the inner workings of the society.[28]

The way the tribal system changed Islam is evident in the version of Islam that emerged. This version is an austere form of Islam that rebuked the *itjihad*, religious discourse, which ended in the 13th century. The strict form of Islam suited the harsh realities of desert life.[29] The first rise of the al-Saud tribe depended heavily on soldiers conformed to the Wahhabi teachings from the Nadj. This alliance between al-Saud and Wahhabism would survive over time. The type of leaders formed from the tribal and religious connection lasted to the new state, and isolation from the developing empires of antiquity and the Middle Ages stalled the social changes experienced elsewhere on the Arabian peninsula.

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[27] Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 15-23.

[28] Sandra Mackey, *The Saudis: Inside the Desert Kingdom* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 65-66.

[29] Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 49-58.

The tribal and religious elements in society helped forge two kingdoms and elevated many leaders to power in Saudi Arabia. A successful leader was usually the most effective alliance builder. The process of choosing leaders has evolved, which is evidence of a shifting relationship between the royal family and Saudi Arabia as a whole. The salient juncture in the House of Saud's system of succession of power occurred in 1992 under King Fahd. The 1992 Edict, which created The Basic Rule of Law, was an inflection point in the decision making process to determine the leader of Saudi Arabia. This chapter investigates Saudi succession prior to 1992 to form a historical analysis of the succession process and examine the structure of the government. The 1992 Edict and Allegiance Commission are discussed to reveal the changes in the succession process and project long term effects on the system of government. The role of the family and other elements of the government have evolved since Mohammad ibn Saud from a hostile desert carnage to a complex political alliance system which resembles the behavior of modern political parties and legislative bodies. This formal structure fits into Huntington's transformation model, which observed voluntary power erosion by nondemocratic leaders in favor of democratic processes.

B.   MUHAMMAD IBN SAUD

Running Saudi Arabia was a family business. The Saudi Arabian flag bears the name of the House of Saud. The very name of the state is evidence that no one in the kingdom, or the entire world, disputes that Saudi Arabia is the house that Ibn Saud built. The modern state was created in 1932, but the journey which led to the domination of the Arabian Peninsula began much earlier. The first attempt to control the region began with Muhammad ibn Saud in the mid 18th century. The house of Saud made a pact with Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab which proved beneficial for both parties. Al-Saud, which will be referred to as Saud1744 to mark the date of his original pact with al-Wahhab and not to confuse him with later progeny of the same name, was fighting a battle with rival tribes in the region to spread his influence. The pact made between the two coupled a religious fervor from al-Wahhab, with the political and military prowess of Saud1744. He gained power in al-Diriyah and his successors expanded his original gains to much of what is presently known as Saudi Arabia. The small gains carved out in the

unforgiving political landscape in al-Diriyah were enjoyed and expanded by Saud1744's oldest son and successor, Abdul Aziz, and his successor and oldest son, Saud, because they continued to conduct successful military campaigns. The success of the campaigns limited the legitimacy of competitors vying for control in the region. Saud ibn Muhammad groomed his son to be the next leader, but the expansion of Saudi territory alerted the Ottoman Empire to a growing threat in the region and Muhammad Ali of Egypt was authorized to crush the rebellion. This is known as the First Saudi Kingdom and it ended with the beheading of Abdullah, the great grandson of Saud1744, in Egypt.[30]

The second Saudi kingdom arose after the Ottoman Empire lost interest in the interior peninsula. This gave rise to Turki bin Abdallah's attempt to control the region. Turki was able to consolidate power and gain control in Riyadh, but his reign and lineage were interrupted by a series of internal and external threats. The second kingdom ended in 1891 with the ejection of the al-Saud from Riyadh by the al-Rashid. Although the al-Rashids were formidable adversaries to the al-Saud, dissension in the al-Saud tribe, and overall weak leadership, contributed to the demise of the second kingdom. Abd al-Rahman, now the head of the al-Saud, fled to Kuwait, which would be the future staging point for his descendants to start the third kingdom.[31]

The important lesson from the first two kingdoms was there was always competition for leadership and alliances were crucial for stability. The smoothest transition of power occurred during the first kingdom. Saud1744 passed the mantle of leadership to his eldest son and his eldest son passed it to his eldest son. This was a smooth transition because the former leader designated the next generation of leadership and the next generation conducted successful military campaigns. The successful expansion led to greater prestige, which reduced the legitimacy of competing family members. Competing claims to the thrown came from uncles of the new leader because age equated to experience and carried a natural prestige in tribal politics. The successful military conquest was the main reason the uncles' claims to power were held at bay.

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[30] Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 15-23.

[31] Ibid., 23-26.

The second kingdom was plagued with assassinations, civil wars, and insidious plots to gain power. The second kingdoms' failure pointed out the strengths in the first kingdom. Land conquest started in Riyadh and expanded to Hasa. The time between 1824 and 1891 was the date of the second kingdom. Turki was able to gain control in Riyadh in 1824. Abd al-Rahman was the last ruler eventually exiled to Kuwait once the al-Rashid tribe gained dominance from the northern Najd and took control in Riyadh. The al-Saud had roughly six leaders, but eleven power changes took place. The constant power changes hurt the al-Saud because they could not build an alliance to effectively defeat internal and external rivals.[32] The successful land conquest of the earlier leaders could not be duplicated due to the growing al-Rashid power and the continued Ottoman presence in the Hijaz so the former "territory legitimacy" was not there. The sheer competition opened the door to the al-Saud capitulation to the al-Rashid, but the competition would eventually lead to the strongest al-Saud family branch vying for power in the later empire. The failure of the second kingdom also demonstrated the crucial importance of alliances.

C.   KING ABD AL-AZIZ

The rise of the modern kingdom started with Abd al-Aziz ibn Abd al-Rahman ibn Saud in 1902. Abd al-Rahman was exiled in Kuwait after the al-Rashid tribe took over Riyadh. From Kuwait, he conducted several unsuccessful military operations to regain power in the Nadj. [33] Unable to accomplish his desired return to power, he relinquished his power to his son Abd al-Aziz, who will be referred to as Ibn Saud. Ibn Saud learned from his family's successes and failures and desired to restore his ancestral claim on the peninsula. The most important lesson he learned was the value of alliances, both internal and external, as evidenced in the process he used to garner support and return to the Nadj.[34]

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[32] Joseph A. Kechichian *Succession in Saudi Arabia* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 16-18; Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 23-26.

[33] Alexander Bligh, *From Prince to King: Royal Succession in the House of Saud in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 13.

[34] Joseph A. Kechichian *Succession in Saudi Arabia* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 17.

The first alliance he solicited was that of the Kuwaiti tribe which provided support because they believed the al-Rashid tribe was a mutual threat. With this alliance, and 40 men, he conducted a surprise attack on Riyadh and regained control.[35] After Riyadh, Ibn Saud was able to conquer as far north as Qasim. Ibn Saud was able to get backing from the British as his adversary received Ottoman support. He was able to fight the war to a stalemate, but the territorial conquest was a clear success because it roughly divided the Nadj in half. After a tenuous treaty was signed with the rulers of the northern Nadj, he turned his military toward the east and consolidated his power in Hasa. After World War I, the Ottoman Empire disintegrated, but the British continued to support Ibn Saud. By 1921, Ibn Saud was able to capture Hail. The rest of the peninsula submitted to Saud rule by 1925 through a number of well executed military operations and a clever strategy soliciting tacit approval from the British. In the end, the Hijaz, Asir, Nadj, and Hasa were consolidated for the first time since Saud1744, and Mecca and Medina were under Saud control. [36]

The external alliance developed with Kuwait and Britain allowed Ibn Saud to eliminate outside interference in forging the Saudi State, but he also made internal alliances with the *mutawwaa* and the ikhwan which promoted his success. The *mutawwaa* were the religious "specialists" of the Nadj. They were trained in the teachings of al-Wahhab, but they mostly enforced the ritualistic aspects if Islam such as prayer, zakat, and the hajj.[37] They also had a strong belief in *tawid*, oneness of god, and rejected innovations to Islamic doctrine. The *mutawwaa* taught that a leader was a legitimate imam to the community if he upheld proper religious traditions. The definition of this type of loyalty to a leader formed a necessary foundation for legitimacy for Ibn Saud. The relationship between Saud1744 and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab was a

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[35] Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 40.

[36] Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 40-49; Alexander Bligh, *From Prince to King: Royal Succession in the House of Saud in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 23.

[37] Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 49-52.

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salient point for the *mutawwaa's* support of Ibn Saud and they saw his conquest as an opportunity to spread their form of Islam.[38]

The ikhwan were a product of the *mutawwaa* teachings. The Nadj was a conglomerate of nomadic tribes that were very leery about surrendering allegiance to any leader not related to the tribe. The *mutawwaa* were able to sedentarize portions of the tribe and indoctrinate them into their religious beliefs. Once the partnership was made with Ibn Saud, they taught the tribesman that he was the legitimate imam of the community and they owed him their loyalty and zakat. This was crucial as a mechanism for state building because the main opposition to any ruler that tried to assert control of the region was the autonomous tribal system. The teachings of the *mutawwaa* established a linkage with Ibn Saud and the tribes.[39] Ibn Saud was able to draft soldiers from this new political alliance and form an army to supplement his other forces. This army, and the system of allegiance to the tribal elements of the region, was crucial to conquering the Nadj and Hasa and establishing an effective taxation and loyalty system.

The alliance with the *mutawwaa* and ikhwan was effective and tenuous. It was effective because it incorporated two strong political forces in the region, but it was fragile because they did not share the same view of the expanding kingdom. Ibn Saud viewed the expansion of the Saudi kingdom as just that, the expansion of Saudi control over the region. Conquering the Arabian Peninsula became an al-Saud endeavor, the latest chapter of an ongoing saga. The *mutawwaa* viewed it as an expansion of their form of Islam, which meant that their primary purpose was to convert new realms. This view sparked resistance in newly acquired territory. The Hasa had Shia populations which came under strict religious scrutiny and the Hanafi followers in the Hijaz encountered the same hostility.[40] To the *mutawwaa*, this conflict was necessary to spread their religious views, but Ibn Saud did not believe the oppression was beneficial because of the unrest it created.

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[38] Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 56-59.

[39] Ibid., 59-62.

[40] Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 52-67.

The ikhwan viewed the expansion as an opportunity for them to consolidate their own prosperity. Several tribal leaders hoped for a high post or new land in the Saudi domain. They saw themselves more as partners in the conquest rather than tools of the conquest. The coalition between the *mutawwaa* and ikhwan demonstrates the challenges Ibn Saud faced in governing, and the eventual friction between segments of society that would have to be addressed to form an effective government. First, Ibn Saud had to gain legitimacy. The way he gained legitimacy in the first stage of conquest was from his family name and tribal affiliation, and the alliance between his descendant and al-Wahhab. This allowed him to consolidate power in the Nadj. He built on this legitimacy in later expansions by the use of force.

The next challenge Ibn Saud faced was transforming the alliances into a stable government. The region had powerful political players that kept it fragmented. To succeed in consolidating the region under one central government, Ibn Saud co-opted segments of society. The first was the *mutawwaa*. He gained their support and in return gave them control over religious matters. The second was the tribes. The *mutawwaa* taught the tribes he was the legitimate leader and they gave him their support. The third way was he married many times to create alliances between different families and tribes.[41] He thought that if the powerful challengers to his reign had a stake in his kingdom, they would be more apt to support him rather than seek his demise. Fourth, he formed external relationships that effectively let internal force decide the affairs of the region. He learned this from the earlier failures of his ancestors and chose his conquest wisely to not invite outside intervention. Lastly, he solidified family backing. The second Saudi state was weakened by family rivalry and he was determined to eliminate this impediment. He was not able to completely stave-off family resistance as evidenced by the uprising of a rival branch of the family that was put down by force,[42] but he was more successful than the second kingdom. He did this through marriage, patronage, and monetary gifts.

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[41] Alexander Bligh, *From Prince to King: Royal Succession in the House of Saud in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 39-42; Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 76-77.

[42] Alexander Bligh, *From Prince to King: Royal Succession in the House of Saud in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 29-32.

There are three institutions that come out of the reign of Ibn Saud. The first was the royal family. The king was the supreme decision maker, but the family had political capital. This was evident because it was necessary to co-opt branches of the family by internal marriages and monetary patronage systems to get political support. The family ran Saudi Arabia because they were placed in all the political offices from the governorships to military and foreign policy positions. This system gave the family a vested interest in the success of the king and also revealed the necessity of keeping the family satisfied, which promoted good governance by the king. The second institution was the *mutawwaa,* which acted as the religious organization or *ulama*. The *mutawwaa* were successful in helping Ibn Saud garner support from the masses to raise armies and promote a lawful society, but they also served as a strong check to the king's power. The king filtered decisions through the religious establishment to ensure he had their support.[43] The religious organization also collected zakat, which was like a modern day tax collector, and functioned as the judicial branch. The modern religious organization transformed itself into a formal branch of the government used by King's of Saudi Arabia to root out dissent and promote proper governance.[44]

The last organization was the military forces. From its conception, the military was a tool to promote political goals rather than a force with political power to influence government policy. The ikhwan rebellion was an attempt by the military to win a stronger position in the political arena, but this attempt failed. The aftermath saw the military subordinated to the political will of the royal family.[45] The royal family acts as a party because the monarch must form alliances to support his decisions. Ibn Saud formed these alliances through patronage and marriage, but this institution has evolved. The check the *ulama* provides to the monarch resembles a judicial branch because they

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[43] Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 70.

[44] Said Aburish, *The Rise, Corruption and Coming Fall of the House of* Saud (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 27-28, 85.

[45] Joseph A. Kechichian, *Succession in Saudi Arabia* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 92; Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 69-71, 88.

provide a coherent link to the Koran, their founding document of law. These institutions are not democratic, but they are stable institutions which resemble democratic institutions.

D.   KING SAUD'S ABDICATION

The institutional relationships formed during the reign of Ibn Saud were evident during the abdication of King Saud, the first monarch after Ibn Saud. The problems arose early in King Saud's reign. They were a combination of financial difficulties, internal resistance movements, external threats, and his attempt to consolidate power for his progeny.[46] The process, which limited the power of the king and then forced him to abdicate, was led by a rival family alliance that ultimately determined the fate of the kingdom.

Three divisions crystallized during the struggle. The two main sections divided themselves between King Saud and Crown Prince Faysal. King Saud's alliance was composed of his sons, whom he strategically placed in the government. The Faysal alliance was composed of his half brothers, including the Sudayri Seven and several brothers of Abd al-Rahman, the non-ruling branch of the al-Saud. A third radical group was composed of younger princes led by Talal which had liberal reformist ideas for the kingdom.[47] They were a very weak group because of their age and the improbability of their actually becoming rulers. They also had very radical ideas relative to the conservative monarchy. The source of their political power came from their willingness to change allegiance. Their dubious loyalties forced the leading factions to patronize them for their support or neutralize their influence.

The patronage for their support was evident "in the early 1960s, [when] rumors were spread that the king wanted to introduce a nominated parliament and to implement certain reforms in the Saudi political system."[48] This parliament was not pursued beyond

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[46] Alexander Bligh, *From Prince to King: Royal Succession in the House of Saud in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 56-64.

[47] Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 109.

[48] *Economist*, April 30, 1960 quoted in Alexander Bligh, *From Prince to King: Royal Succession in the House of Saud in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 67.

the rumor, but the Talal-led group saw this as a positive sign of reform and aligned with King Saud. Faysal tried to neutralize a populace backing which supported reform by lifting strict controls over the newspapers, which had been instituted under Ibn Saud.[49] The final theoretical divisions were described as a liberal government versus the conservative status quo. King Saud had no intentions of pursuing the liberal policies, but this move garnered him populace support that was crucial in staving-off the coup attempt. The move revealed an underlying sentiment in 1960 Saudi society toward liberal policies. This sentiment was fueled by the greater movements in the Arab region of figures such as Gamal Nasser and events in Iraq.

The reign of Saud ended in 1964. The process that led to his demise was a general consensus of the royal family, the exile of Talal, which ended the reformist led faction, and the agreement of the religious and tribal factions solicited by the Faysal faction to gain broader acceptance of the family's decision.[50] When Faysal took control he advocated a ten point plan for development that advocated "the drafting of a basic law and a judicial council."[51] These two reforms were the most liberal policies stated by the monarchy, but King Faysal did not progress toward either. The call for liberal policies in the kingdom was evident in newspapers after Faysal lifted censorship, but it is unclear of the links between the views in the paper and the general population. Liberal dissension was most likely a scholarly debate rather than a general desire due to the intricate patronage system established by the al-Saud family which gave most tribal and religious leaders a stake in the success of an al-Saud-run government.

The first liberal views within the family were represented by prince Talal, who, when exiled from the country, continued his political activity by promoting the framework for a constitutional monarchy that advocated the continued rule of the al-Saud family, supplemented by a formal council partially appointed by the king and partially

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[49] Alexander Bligh, *From Prince to King: Royal Succession in the House of Saud in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 67.

[50] Alexander Bligh, *From Prince to King: Royal Succession in the House of Saud in The Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 74, 79; Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 114.

[51] Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 114.

elected by the populace.[52] This impetus was rooted in the growing liberal political movements in the region and external Western views inspired by the foreign education of the elite returning to the kingdom. Once again, the royal family acted like a political party building alliances and spawning a conservative/liberal debate. The debate was won by the conservative branch of the family, but the liberal branch was evident in the younger progeny of the al-Saud.

E.   THE 1992 EDICT

The successions of King Khalid and Fahd were smoother than that of Saud to Faysal, but the future difficulty in succession stemmed from one source: the generational question. When would the next generation take control? The royal family institution was a fragile alliance structure that centered on the sons of Ibn Saud, but a generational shift would radically change the alliance structure because numerous next generation princes would have equal legitimacy claims. They would also have to fight against younger sons of Ibn Saud for the throne. King Fahd was the first to present a royal decree that attempted to settle the problem. The 1992 Basic Law and subsequent decrees from King Abdullah further defined the process of succession and created other governmental branches to formally share power with the king.

The 1992 Edict was a revolutionary concept, but by no means was it the first attempt at liberal change. King Saud used a liberal platform to garner support from the masses when his reign was in jeopardy. Once Faysal took power he had a ten point plan that advocated several liberal views that failed to materialize. Ibn Saud had stated that he favored mass participation in the newly conquered Hijaz and Khalid kept promising liberal reforms, but neither delivered.[53] The common link was liberal promises were made to gain political stability, but once the stability was achieved, the monarch went back to consolidating, not sharing, power.

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[52] Alexander Bligh, *From Prince to King: Royal Succession in the House of Saud in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 70-75.

[53] Rashed Aba-Namay, "The New Saudi Representative Assembly," *Islamic Law and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1998): 235-265, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3399342 (accessed February 10, 2008).

The 1992 edict did three things: (1) it created basic laws for Saudi Arabian citizens, (2) it redefined the succession process, and (3) it created a larger council of advisors. Each of these issues affected the monarchy in profound ways by redefining his relationship with the people and the royal family.[54] Each item shared more power, but did not limit the absolute authority of the monarch. The looming question was would these changes become institutionalized or were they fleeting promises that would be eliminated when an ultra conservative monarch took control?

The succession process was changed to address the generational succession problem facing the royal family by expanding the possible claimants to the thrown. It stated that "the most upright among them shall receive allegiance according to the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet."[55] This statement opens the Kingship to every male member of the family at the discretion of the king. At first glance this step seemed like an attempt to change the succession from his brother to his sons, but when he allowed Abdullah to remain Crown Prince this reason was discredited. The alternative reason was that he saw the danger in disunity of the family if the next generation did not have a legitimate way to enter the succession process.[56]

King Abdullah took further steps to codify the line of succession. "Future crown princes will have to be approved by an 'allegiance commission' made up of Ibn Saud's sons, the eldest sons of the brothers who have died since Ibn Saud's death, as well as the sons of the current king and crown prince."[57] The allegiance council works as an approval entity that acts to serve the interest of the royal family. Before the allegiance council, the King named the crown prince without a formal system to oppose the decision. The king did ensure the family supported the decision of succession that

[54] Rashed Aba-Namay, "The New Saudi Representative Assembly," *Islamic Law and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1998): 235-265, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3399342 (accessed February 10, 2008).

[55] "The New Constitution: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," *Arab Law Quarterly,* Vol.8, No. 3 (1993), 258-270, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3381589 (accessed February 10, 2008).

[56] Rashed Aba-Namay, "The New Saudi Representative Assembly," *Islamic Law and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1998): 235-265, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3399342 (accessed February 10, 2008).

[57] Simon Henderson, "New Saudi Rules on Succession: Will They Fix the Problem," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, (October 25, 2006). http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2526 (accessed October 19, 2008).

usually took into account seniority, prestige in the family, uprightness as a Muslim (or at least the image of uprightness), tradition, and ability to govern.

The modern succession usually went along the line of the eldest sons of Ibn Saud, but some were passed over.[58] The crown prince would usually have a family alliance that ensured his succession, and this family backing ensured a balance of power between the King and the Crown Prince. Now, the balance of power between the family and the King was codified in the allegiance council because the family formally weighs in on the decision. The formality in the system was new, but the informal process was more or less the same. It was crucial that the process was formalized because the generational change of power was looming. The allegiance council transforms the participation by the royal family in the political process. The royal family is evolving from a monarchical system to one that displays the characteristics of a single party system. The allegiance council codifies this change.

The Majlis al-Shura was the biggest step in changing the form of the Saudi government. The majlis was an institution in Arabian tradition. The leader of a tribe would have individuals come to his tent and they would discuss matters that pertained to governance and culture in their society. The majlis was used by Abd al-Aziz to show his acumen in governing and to display the abundance of his conquest and grandeur of his rule. The majlis was a forum to request favor from the king, but it was also a platform for the king to reveal policy and solve problems in the kingdom. In its own right, the forum gave the king legitimacy because others saw that other power brokers in the community came to seek patronage and show support for Ibn Saud. The Majlis al-Shura was an extension of this tradition, but it expands the rudimentary role of executing policies to govern.[59] The 1992 Edict created a Majlis al-Shura by appointment to debate policies in the realm and produce advice for the king. The Majlis, in this light, was only an echo of the king's power because he appointed the members of the system and could abolish it at his discretion. The king also did not have to take advice from the Majlis.

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[58] Alexander Bligh, *From Prince to King: Royal Succession in the House of Saud in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 90.

[59] Rashed Aba-Namay, "The New Saudi Representative Assembly," *Islamic Law and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1998): 235-265, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3399342 (accessed February 10, 2008).

King Abdullah expanded the legislative powers of the Majlis in October of 2003, but still did not allow elected seats, although many reform elements called for elections. The dilemma with the Majlis al-Shura is two fold. First, a legislative branch of any kind comes under attack from a religious perspective because the Koran is considered the only legitimate source of laws that govern a Muslim society and legislation is not needed to interpret the will of god. In this respect, religious scholars are against institutional developments that challenge the Koran's governing credibility.[60] Their view is that the Koran is a stand-alone embodiment of the law that governs from an omniscient perspective and any legislative branch of government smacks of secular intrusion in defining the law, a role the men of religion have played for 1400 years.

Second, a legislative body has always served as a direct challenge to absolute control by a monarch. A monarchy is a centralized method of governing by means of suppressing challenges to legitimacy and competency of the crown. The Majlis al-Shura does not infringe on the power of the monarch because it acts purely as an advisory body. In this respect it does not threaten the rule of the king; it only enhances his ability to be an effective ruler. Any expansion of a legislative body would continue to erode the power of the monarch, which is why King Abdullah and the royal family are apprehensive about allowing the election of a portion of the Majlis. As long as it is viewed as an advisory board (as stated in the 1992 Edict), it does not challenge legitimacy or competency. If the elections were allowed, as the reformists desire, the advisory role would still exist, but there would be greater pressure to follow the advice. As long as the members are appointed, the power of the position comes from the king and does not diminish his sovereignty in any way. If the member is elected, the power comes from the people and his advice cannot be discarded without some consequence to public opinion.

F.   ASSESSMENT

The Majlis al-Shura and the Allegiance Commission are signs of democratic evolution because they are institutions created by the monarchy which codify a process to

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[60] Rashed Aba-Namay, "The New Saudi Representative Assembly," *Islamic Law and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1998): 235-265, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3399342 (accessed February 10, 2008).

solve challenges to the crown. Successful successions have occurred because of the successor's strong alliances and elements of society having a stake in the success of the power change. The institutions represent an acknowledgement of the evolving process, and an attempt to formalize the alliance process within the royal family with the Allegiance Commission, and increase the stakes of Saudi society in the government by having an advisory council that seeks to co-opt greater swaths of society. The next logical step, if there is an evolution toward democracy, would be to expand the allegiance council from the royal family to the Saudi citizens and to extend elections to the Majlis al-Shura, but these institutions are untried. The creation and success of these institutions thus far has been examined from the view of the ruling power brokers in the society, but examining the elements which forced these changes may serve to better understand if the changes are attempts to quell the masses for a while and then renege, or if the changes are lasting institutions that are the first steps of many that are taking place to evolve the Saudi Arabia to a more liberal society.

III. POLITICAL GROUPS EVOLVING IN SAUDI ARABIA

The relationship between the sovereign and the population has slowly evolved from viewing the population as subjects, to fostering citizenry. The resistance to the evolving relationship endures because the religious beliefs of the society perpetuate the antiquated relationship. The religious element perpetuated the "subject" mentality by teaching the population that the al-Saud were the rightful rulers,[61] and the tradition of *baya*,[62] or oath to the leader. Both of these relationships were codified in The Basic Law of Rule. Article 6 states that:

> The Citizen shall acknowledge the rule of the King according to the Book of God and the Sunna of his apostle, and to yield and obey him in time of scarcity and of abundance, as well as in times of unpleasantness and good.[63]

The relationship was reinforced by the royal family supplying the trappings of government. The tangibles they provided were security, economic growth, and social services. The intangibles were upward mobility, prestige in a high position for allies to the family, and the opportunity to pursue an austere Sunni Muslim life. In return, the King wanted oil revenues, loyalty, and a subject that submitted to al-Saud rule. The inevitable friction emerged when segments of society felt left out of the intangibles, and desired new liberties that their government did not provide.

A.   THE RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT

The most powerful group in Saudi Arabia, absent the royal family, is the religious establishment. The religious "clergy" in Muslim society is the *ulama*, but the early Saudi strain of the *ulama* lacked the doctrinal expertise and educational prowess of religious leaders in other, more established areas. This deficiency was due to the Nadj lacking a

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[61] Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 56.

[62] Sandra Mackey, *The Saudis: Inside the Desert Kingdom* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 245; Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 159.

[63] "The New Constitution: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," *Arab Law Quarterly,* Vol.8, No. 3 (1993), 258-270, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3381589 (accessed February 10, 2008).

center of religious learning.[64] The early practitioners of religious clergy functions were called *mutawwaa*. The relationship of religion to the state reaches back to Saud1744 and was instrumental in building the modern day Saudi Arabian state. Many of the Bedouin traditions spawned a deep tribal system that presented a strong resistance to central control, but the *mutawwaa* were able to sedentarize some 150,000 tribesman by 1930 and disciplined them in the ways of Wahhabi teachings. This made them less dependant on nomadic ways and more dependent on state control to thrive.[65] By 1980, only 5% of Saudi Arabia "remained wholly nomadic."[66] The Bedouin value system remained in Saudi culture, but the nomadic lifestyle perished.[67] The abolition of the nomadic way of life was a necessary step in state-building in Saudi Arabia and the *mutawwaa* role in recruiting tribesman into a sedentary life style was crucial to this task.

The *mutawwaa*, which institutionalized to form the legitimate *ulama* in Saudi Arabia, also contributed to Ibn Saud's domination by providing the doctrine to support his legitimacy.[68] Ibn Saud grasped the advantages of *ulama* and used them to promote political decisions and to deal with resistance movements. In 1927 the *ulama fatwa*, a religious decree that undermined the ikhwan position to rebel against Ibn Saud, gave the *ulama* the authority to sanction politics in the kingdom.[69] They also sanctioned the abdication of King Saud.[70] The *ulama* provided crucial support by issuing a *fatwa* that

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[64] Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 50.

[65] J. Habib, *Ibn Saud's Wariors of Islam: The Ikhwan of Najd and their Role in he creation of the Saudi Kingdom, 1920-1930* (Leiden: Brill, 1978) cited in Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 61.

[66] Sandra Mackey, *The Saudis: Inside the Desert Kingdom* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 105.

[67] Sandra Mackey, *The Saudis: Inside the Desert Kingdom* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 117.

[68] Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 51.

[69] Ibid., 68.

[70] Alexander Bligh, *From Prince to King: Royal Succession in the House of Saud in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 79.

supported the 1979 retaking of the mosque in Mecca from religious extremists.[71] In these roles, the *ulama* gave their approval, which has made it necessary for all Kings to seek their advice in such matters.

As the Saudi Kingdom grew from the Nadj, other religious groups were incorporated into the kingdom. The Nadj was isolated from the culturally diverse coastal regions and the strain of religion was characteristic of the isolation. The Wahhabi teachings were absent the six centuries of scholarly *itjihad* (religious discourse). The stringent teachings made its followers intolerant of other Islamic sects, which caused conflict as the kingdom spread beyond the Najd. Hasa, the Hijaz, and Asir practiced more liberal forms of Islam. Once Ibn Saud conquered these regions, the *mutawwaa* moved in and exerted strict religious adherence to expand the dominance of Wahhabi teachings to all areas of the new Ibn Saud kingdom. The religious organization was the original foundation of the House of Saud, but a rift has developed between the religious establishment and the royal family, and within the religious establishment itself.

The *mutawwaa* have a long history of strict enforcement in regions outside the Nadj. This exacerbated the hostilities between the "state religion" and other sects:

> They [*mutawwaa*] terrorized people under the guise of enforcing the sharia, Islamizing Arabia and reforming religious practices. Their worst atrocities were committed in Hasa against the Shi'a population in 1913 and the Hijazi resort of Ta'if in 1924.[72]

When Ibn Saud marched into Hijaz, the Wahhabi *ulama* followed and destroyed age old Muslim shrines. The Ismaili sect in Asir faced the same treatment. The ruthless tactics of the *mutawwaa*, aided by the ikhwan, were successful in gaining dominance for the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam throughout Saudi Arabia, but several cleavages still exist.

The historical support of the Wahhabi clerics for the House of Saud, and their hostile relations with the other religious sects in the Kingdom, creates a dilemma that kings have dealt with in various ways. The actions taken to resolve this dilemma have separated the religious organization into three political entities. The first was the *ulama*

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[71] Joseph A. Kechichian, *Succession in Saudi Arabia* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 100-101.

[72] Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 61.

that were co-opted into the political system. This group has the most political power. The reason they were co-opted was because the kingdom needed them to acquiesce to advance progressive building policies to propel Saudi Arabia into the modern era. The modernity driven policies were in conflict with austere religious doctrine. The immense prosperity due to oil revenues also spawned a lavish life style for the builders of Saudi society. To continue policies that promoted modernity, the House of Saud needed to incorporate the religious *ulama* into the process.

This was accomplished using three methods. First, the *ulama* became an official part of the government. The Committee for the Protection of Virtue and Prevention of Vice was created under Ibn Saud. The *mutawwaa* were recruited for the purpose of policing the morals of society. They physically punished citizens that did not meet their standards of appearance and imprisoned those that they accused of more serious infractions.[73] They evolved into an organization "which enforced Wahhabi *fatwa*s and punished those who did not fulfill their religious obligations."[74] They acted, for the most part, independent of government influence, but the King has restricted their actions as needed. Further institutionalization of the *ulama* occurred in later years. The Grand Mufti became the head of the religious establishment and presided over the Board of Senior *Ulama* (BSU) and The Permanent Committee for Scientific Research and Legal Opinion (CRLO). The BSU "issues *fatwa*s on major public issues . . . was established in 1971 and provide the ultimate decrees on sharia." The CRLO "conducted research and administered private *ifta,* religious guidance." These offices contained the most powerful clerics. Lesser members of the *ulama* influenced Saudi Arabia in other institutions.

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[73] Sandra Mackey, *The Saudis: Inside the Desert Kingdom* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 69.

[74] Shmuel Bachar, Shmuel Bar, Rachel Machtiger, and Yair Minzili, "Establishment *Ulama* and Radicalism in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan," *Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World*, (2006), 15, http://www.futureofmuslimworld.com/docLib/ 20061226ulamaandRadicalismfinal.pdf (accessed December 4, 2008).

These institutions include the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Instructions, and Teaching which "propagates Islam and religious guidance," local mosque, and judiciary and legal appointments.[75]

Second, they allowed the *ulama* to influence the educational system. King Faisal upset the *ulama* on issues centered on modernity. The term modernity was equivalent to "Westernized" and one of the big issues was schools for girls. Faisal simply said that if you do not want schools for girls, do not send your girls, and if your town did not want one, they would not have one. Faisal allowed the *ulama* to control the curriculum in the schools in return for their backing of modernity policies.[76] Lastly, Saudi Arabia became the proliferators of Wahhabi doctrine around the world by funding charitable projects and building Mosques in foreign countries through the Moslem World League.[77]

This group of the *ulama* is usually older and aligned with the royal family, but King Abdullah battles with "dogmatic admonitions of the entrenched Wahhabis"[78] to further reform efforts. Because this relationship was literally as old as the kingdom, this portion of the *ulama* sees their fate tied to that of the royal family. The *ulama* by no means do everything the royal family desires, but they do what is necessary to promote their own survival. This group is most likely motivated to support the royal family in the face of any progressive political reforms at all cost. Because their survival is so closely linked to the survival of the royal family, and the idea of a progressive government is in contradiction to their religious teachings, they are firmly against liberal reform.

The second group of the *ulama* is generally younger and not as involved in the formal *ulama* that have been co-opted by the royal family. They view the co-option of religious leaders as a "corruption" of Islamic teachings and pushed for a shift in power

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[75] Shmuel Bachar, Shmuel Bar, Rachel Machtiger, and Yair Minzili, "Establishment *Ulama* and Radicalism in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan," *Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World*, (2006), 15, http://www.futureofmuslimworld.com/docLib/ 20061226_UlamaandRadicalismfinal.pdf (accessed December 4, 2008).

[76] "House of Saud*," Frontline*, DVD, directed by Jihan el-Tahri (Alexandria, VA: PBS Video, 2005).

[77] Shmuel Bachar, Shmuel Bar, Rachel Machtiger, and Yair Minzili, "Establishment *Ulama* and Radicalism in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan," *Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World*, (2006), 15, http://www.futureofmuslimworld.com/docLib/ 20061226_UlamaandRadicalismfinal.pdf (accessed December 4, 2008).

[78] Mai Yamani, "Saudi Arabia's Theatre of Reform," *Project Syndicate* (2007), http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/yamani16 (accessed November 30, 2008).

from the royal family to a religiously appointed council. Their criticisms were addressed in two petitions to King Fahd in 1991 and 1992. The first called for the creation of an independent Consultative Council appointed by the clergy with legislative powers, and the second elaborated on their demands, leveling sharp criticisms of government inefficiency. [79]

Their philosophies are influenced by the extremist political movements in the region and they view the established *ulama* as advocating religious doctrine to support the crown, rather than adhering to the Koran. Their views are not aligned with that of the royal family so they are restricted from participating in the government. Therefore, their numbers are lower and they generally have less financial backing and thus fewer followers. The most extreme of this group see the royal family as illegitimate and believe that they should promote jihad against them. Their recommendations to the King reveal a limit to his power by an *ulama* appointed legislative body, but they do not go as far as liberal rights bestowed on the masses.

The third group is non-Sunni groups that have been oppressed by the Sunni establishment. In general, their religious views are more tolerant to outside ideas. These groups consist of the Shia in the Eastern province, the Hanafi schools in the Hijaz, the Ishmali in Asir, and non-Muslim Christians and Jews. They are treated as second class citizens in some cases and are victims of a repressive system. The royal family does not provide adequate protection for these groups, but they do restrain the main stream *ulama* to reduce unrest and promote economic prosperity.

The Shi'a is the largest religious dissident group in Saudi Arabia. In the Eastern Province, the Shia population is roughly half a million.[80] The Wahhabi have sought to deny them high ranking positions in the military and the government. Human Rights Watch conducted a study in 2008 which revealed a systematic oppressive system against Shia all over the country and cited specific violations of human rights ranging from

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[79] Joseph A. Kechichian, *Succession in Saudi Arabia* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 108.

[80] Ibid., 97.

denying marriage between a Sunni man and Shia woman,[81] to denying property to Shia via a *fatwa* on the basis that it would support "their corrupt religion and evil creed."[82] Shia have gone on strike to battle religious intolerance and poor economic treatment in 1953, 1956, 1970, and 1979.[83] King Abdullah promoted a series of public meetings called "National Dialogue" which brought together opposing views in Saudi Arabia in 2005.[84] The Wahhabi establishment did not legitimize the meetings, which did not solidify the reform hoped for by the Shia and minority religious groups.[85]

The dominance of the Wahhabi *ulama* co-opted into the Saudi government does not bode well for liberal change in Saudi Arabia. King Abdullah was labeled a reform minded king, but his greatest challenge to reform is the *ulama*. The minority religious groups will be less opposed to liberal reforms because they represent a moderate political view which is open to democratic ideas. The Shia are susceptible to liberal reform because they are largely influenced by Iran and Grand Ayatolla Sustani in Iraq. These governments are Shia run and are more liberal.[86] The theocratic republic in Iran, and the emerging democracy in Iraq, gives the Shia in Saudi Arabia a model for political participation that could end the oppressive practices of the Saudi religious establishment.

B.   THE ROLE OF WOMEN

The role of women in Saudi society is overwhelmingly defined by Islam. The life of a woman can be described as one left waiting:

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[81] "Saudi Arabia: Shia Minority Treated as Second-Class Citizens," Human Rights Watch, September 25, 2008, http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/09/25/saudi-arabia-shia-minority-treated-second-class-citizens (accessed November 15, 2008).

[82] "UN: World Leaders Should Press Saudis on Intolerance," Human Right Watch (November 10, 2008) http://www.hrw.org/en/content/un-world-leaders-should-press-saudis-intolerance (accessed November 15, 2008).

[83] Joseph A. Kechichian, *Succession in Saudi Arabia* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 97.

[84] Gerald Butt, "Saudi Arabia: Political Overview," *BBC News,* February 10, 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3784879.stm (accessed December 4, 2008).

[85] Mai Yamani, "Saudi Arabia's Theatre of Reform," *Project Syndicate* (2007), http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/yamani16 (accessed November 30, 2008).

[86] Mai Yamani, "Washington Will Prop Up the House of Saud – For Now," July 5, 2004, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/jun/05/usa.saudiarabia (accessed November 30, 2008).

A woman waits to be married; then she waits for the next time she will have a sexual union with her husband; then she waits for her next child to be born; and finally she waits for old age, when relieved of her childbearing duties, she assumes a place of honor within her family.[87]

A woman in the lower class was not affected much by the vast changes in Saudi society. The largest changes to her life were the increased services enjoyed by all Saudi citizens, such as improved health care. Women of wealthy families are preoccupied with trips outside the country on shopping sprees to Europe, or remaining in Saudi Arabia to do the same, but their purposes were, ironically, the same as lower class women, even though their education level is generally higher than that of men, and they normally speak several languages.[88] Women in the middle class were the group most affected by the changes in Saudi Arabia. They entered the professional world and were often highly educated relative to their male counterparts. This group displayed a rebellious undercurrent that took shape in several movements.

A protest against a gender-based driving ban occurred in 1990 during the time period when American soldiers were stationed in the Kingdom. The impetus for the event was largely due to the American women soldiers and their visible independence. "47 women met at a car park. Fifteen of them – those with international driving licenses – dismissed their drivers and got behind the wheel as the other women piled into the cars."[89] The car protest was followed up 18 years later with a video protest broadcast on the web.[90] The protest did not have many participants and was dealt with quickly and severely, but it was evidence that women do want more rights and will risk moderate protest to get them.

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[87] Sandra Mackey, *The Saudis: Inside the Desert Kingdom* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 144

[88] Ibid., 143-150.

[89] Donna Abu-Nasr, "Only One Regret for Women Who Defied Saudi Driving Ban," NewsScots.com, November 15, 2008, http://news.scotsman.com/world/Only-one-regret-for-women.4697585.jp (accessed November 16, 2008)

[90] "Saudi Women Make Video Protest," *BBC News,* March 11, 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7159077.stm (accessed November 16, 2008).

Amnesty International published a report on the state of women's rights in Saudi Arabia in 2006 and found that reform efforts were taking place. King Abdullah proposed judicial changes to codify rights for women, and the Grand Mufti issued statement banning the practice of forcing women to marry. The municipal elections of 2005 were a disappointment because women did not vote, but activists petitioned the King to appoint women in local municipal positions.[91] Saudi women's rights activist Wajiha al-Huweidar expressed the concerns of Saudi women that desired liberal reforms: "When a woman begins to become liberated, she is not respected by society . . . [the state] shows no respect for a woman who speaks freely. She pays the price on every level; her family, religion, and society."

Women have gained more education and more jobs and Islamic law gives them the right to an equal portion of their husband's estates, but this has not transferred to political rights. Officials interviewed in Saudi Arabia in 2008 indicate that women will participate in the 2009 elections.[92] Women are favorable to democratic change because they see it as a way to gain basic rights, such as to drive. Protection from violent crimes, and laws that lift restrictions in the workplace, are also on the activists' agenda. The political backing to accomplish this is small, but they have wealth as a group from inheritance[93] and are gaining more in education than their male counterparts, which is a recipe for greater participation in the government.

C.   TRIBES

The most significant political power of the tribes was the continued participation in the Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG). The force from a 1992 estimate was roughly 75,000 troops, of which 20,000 were in a reserve status. Their purpose was to protect the royal family, but they were more than just a security force, as evidenced in

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[91] "Amnesty International Report 2006 – Saudi Arabia," *UNHCR,* December 4, 2008, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,AMNESTY,,SAU,447ff7b725,0.html (accessed December 4, 2008).

[92] Kim Ghattas, "Saudis' First Exercise in Democracy," *BBC News*, February 10, 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4252305.stm (accessed November 30, 2008).

[93] Carla Power, "Middle East: Women's Money Talks," *Time*, July 30, 2008, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1827866,00.html (accessed December 4, 2008).

their participation in the Persian Gulf War.[94] The SANG was a direct descendent of the ikhwan, but they have been modernized and trained to meet present internal and external challenges. The SANG was a remnant of the tribal element in Saudi Arabia that survived.

Other tribal links have been diluted due because of population migration in urban areas. The tribe played a major role in the fledgling Saudi state because it provided protection and security for the individual. In a pre-modern era these services were crucial to surviving in the harsh desert environment because resources were scarce. The basic building-block of the tribe was the family. The tribe was a way to promote the well-being of the family. As the state grew and sedentarized ever increasing portions of the tribe, the state evolved into the protector and the deliverer of well-being the family.[95] The family unit as the building-block remained the same, but the state was the new patron to which greater swaths of Saudi society linked their fortunes. The SANG holds a prestigious position in Saudi society and a member of the royal family serves as the head, but it is merely a position that garners support for the head. The military body plays no significant political role.

D.   TECHNOCRATS

Technocrats are a small portion of Saudi society. They are characterized by having higher education from Western schools, participation in the Saudi bureaucracy, and some type of financial backing from a wealthy family or from the Saudi government in the form of grants. The rise of the technocratic class of Saudi citizens is directly related to the oil boom and the increased educational funding in Saudi Arabia. Before the secular educational system was created in Saudi Arabia, the *ulama* played a large part in educating the population. After the consolidation of Saudi Arabia, Ibn Saud faced a population that was 95% illiterate. In the late 1940s, the oil revenues spawned two avenues of education to Saudis. One path sent Saudis to Egypt to be educated. The other

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[94] "Saudi Arabian National Guard," *Global Security.org,* http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/gulf/sang.htm (accessed November 30, 2008).

[95] Sandra Mackey, *The Saudis: Inside the Desert Kingdom* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 103-115.

was backed by ARAMCO, which selected employees to be educated in the American University in Beirut and other American Universities.

The next step in education occurred under King Saud when he created the ministry of education in 1953. Under the new ministry, with help from then Crown Prince Faysal, education was expanded to include women and a national strategy was attempted to educate the Saudi population. The religious conservatives had a strong hand in the embryonic educational system, which was characterized by as much as one third of the curriculum devoted to religious teachings. The break from religious teachings occurred on the higher education levels with the establishment of state schools in 1953 and 1954 bearing the names of King Abd Aziz and King Faysal. During this period, students began to study abroad. There were 20,000 in Saudi run universities, whereas 5,000 were in universities outside the country.[96] The 1980s would see these numbers rise to about 18,000 studying in the US alone, and 100,000 in Saudi Universities producing 20,000 graduates annually combined.[97]

The influence of technocrats in high levels of the government began in the cabinet. The 14 member cabinet was formed in the waning years of Abdul Aziz, but the members were high princes and members of the *ulama*. These ministers formed the skeletal structure of what evolved into a government cabinet. In 1975 the number of positions on the Council of Ministers was increased from fourteen to twenty.   Eight of the positions were filled by princes and two by Islamic leaders. The rest were filled by the Western-educated technocrats. [98]

Once the students from abroad returned to the country they were given favored positions over the domestic graduates in government and Universities. This created animosity with two groups. One was the domestic graduates. They often reached a ceiling in the government and education ministries, unless the institution was controlled by the *ulama*. The second group was the *ulama* because they were battling for control of

[96] Mordechai Abir, *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society and the Gulf Crisis* (London: Routledge 1993) 15-21.

[97] Ibid., 21.

[98] Sandra Mackey, *The Saudis: Inside the Desert Kingdom* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 209.

the educational system. The *ulama* was opposed to the progressive educational view of King Faysal, but once he gave them control of the system, they used it to spread their form of Islam and promote the austere living they advocated. Once the technocrats started gaining control in higher learning facilities the *ulama* felt threatened because they believed Westernization would occur in their conservative institutions.

The higher positions the technocrats gained in the bureaucracy enabled them to wield an increased political voice in the government. Saudi Arabia was run by the clerics and the royal family for many years. This created a knowledge gap between those that ran the government and the general population. It is true that the royal family suppressed general participation in the government, but they could not participate even if they wanted to because they did not have any formal training in governmental affairs. The training abroad changed this dynamic and the increased exposure to Western governance and society facilitated a natural progressive infusion into the bloated and ineffective bureaucracy. This group, by far, had been the strongest supporters of reform in the Saudi government from the inside, where they have been able to stake a spot in the political infrastructure.

E.   EXPATRIATES

The expatriate, or foreigner, population had a significant role in building Saudi Arabia from a fledgling state. Their expertise has propelled Saudi Arabia into the 21st century. The expatriates are economically and ethnically diverse and are tightly controlled in the kingdom.[99] They range from prestigious ARAMCO employees providing the know how to extract the lifeblood of the country, to domestic servants that do cleaning and chauffer Saudi citizens around the country. Saudi citizens have an adverse attitude to manual labor, which creates many opportunities for foreign labor. There is also an unspoken hierarchy that dictating the treatment of expatriates. They do not share many of the rights Saudi citizens have, but they remain in the country under these harsh conditions for purely economic reasons.

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[99] Sandra Mackey, *The Saudis: Inside the Desert Kingdom* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 31-33.

Expatriates are too diverse to vie for political power in the country, but they make up from 30-40% of the total population.[100] Their sheer numbers activate their political power when something is done by the kingdom that adversely affects the entire group, but it also makes them a constant internal security threat. King Fahd tried to institute a tax on the expatriate population in 1988, but expatriates threatened to leave the country, which caused a rapid repeal of the law.[101] The expatriate population was not only large, but it was growing at about 7% from 1975-1980. "In 1980 there was one foreign worker for every adult Saudi."[102] The third development plan tried to reduce the growth rate to 1.2% to reduce the percentage of expatriates in the country as well as provide jobs to Saudi citizens, but this goal was not met. The sixth development plan focused on a Saudization plan to reduce unemployment of Saudi nationals, but Saudi citizens resisted the plan because the type of labor offered did not have the prestige or wages desired. Entrepreneurs did not like the plan because Saudi citizens wanted too much money.

In the end, expatriates are needed to keep the Saudi economy producing, but the growth of job markets in other locations in the region may lure workers to a better working environment. The continued criticisms by international groups of poor human rights for expatriates may also provide a push for more rights. The contribution of skills that build the kingdom and make life easier for Saudi citizens is the only commodity the expatriates bring. The demand for their labor will not diminish in the foreseeable future, which might eventually lead to greater human rights, but it is unlikely that expatriates will ever wield political power without some external element forcing a change.

F.   MERCHANTS

The merchant class was catered to during the rise of the al-Saud family. The farther the kingdom expanded from the Nadj, the more prevalent the merchant class was in the economy. The predominance of the merchant class in the Hijaz and Hasa was due

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[100] Andrzej Kapiszewski, *Nationals and Expatriates: Population and Labor Dilemmas of the Gulf Cooperation Council States* (Lebanon: Garnet and Ithaca Press, 2001), 38.

[101] Peter Wilson and Douglas Graham, *Saudi Arabia: The Coming Storm* (New York: M. E. Sharp, 1994), 31.

[102] Sandra Mackey, *The Saudis: Inside the Desert Kingdom* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 184.

to their proximity to the coast. These regions were far more integrated in trade outside the region and gave rise to a politically powerful merchant class. The merchant class was important because they were dutiful tax payers and generally had a more cosmopolitan perspective. They were also predominately indigenous whereas regions that experienced colonization or came under an empire's rule developed a foreign merchant class.

The merchant class grew in economic power during the oil boom years because the government collected oil revenues and redistributed it to the merchant class by land distribution and real estate speculation, promotion of extensive agriculture, government procurement, and government support to industry.[103] The wealthiest of the merchants number about 500,000.[104] "The Olayans, Mahfouzes, bin Ladens, Kamels, Ali Rezas, Zamils, Ghoseibis and Jamils imported food, cars and construction equipment and built highways, housing for workers and whole towns, dozens of schools, hospitals and, naturally, palaces and chichi army barracks. Now they provide services which keep the country going."[105] Saudi Arabia had 14 banks in the late 1970s, but these banks were taken over by Saudi citizens. They kept Western managers and conducted business as Western banks. They had a tremendous advantage over the indigenous banks because they operated with "interest" policies whereas Saudi banks did not have interest policies because it was against the Koran.[106]

The merchant class can be categorized as the bourgeoisie and have expanded their control from mere seekers of patronage from the Saudi family, to independent players in the global economy. Their diversification in foreign assets has weaned them from a *rentier* role and made them employment providers and economic engines in the Saudi economy. The government now relies on them to provide good paying jobs to the population, which allows the government to reduce expenditures in the bureaucracy.

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[103] Giacomo Luciani, "From Private Sector to National Bourgeoisie: Saudi Arabian Business," in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society and Foreign Affairs,* eds. Paul Aarts and Gerd Nonneman (London: Hurst and Company, 2006), 151.

[104] Ibid., 165.

[105] Said Aburish, *The Rise, Corruption and Coming Fall of the House of Saud* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 98.

[106] Sandra Mackey, *The Saudis: Inside the Desert Kingdom* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 175.

The actual merchant class perspective of the royal family is dubious. Some merchants have accrued wealth and have the ability to travel to foreign countries to live as they wish. Their freedom to find happiness outside the country makes them oblivious to the social situation in the country. Those that have considerable interest in the country have a different perspective on the society. Policies such as Saudization, which hurt their profits by forcing them to hire workers that demand higher wages and provide less quality labor forces the merchants to seek greater political power to dictate prudent economic policy. Second, their *rentier* dependence has faded, which means they are free to invest and build industries in other countries. This means that if conditions are not favorable in Saudi Arabia to support their business interests, they can move them to neighboring countries. This capital flight could become a concern to the King as larger numbers of Saudi nationals become unemployed because of this. The Saudi policy will either become more business friendly or the government will give entrepreneurs a greater say in government policy, which will lead to liberal political changes.

The merchants are satisfied with their wealth, but their views are not uniform on democratic reform. They do favor economic reform to open trade, promote privatization and less government manipulation of the market place.[107] The merchants also fear the intrusion of the royal family in the economic market because there is an unfair advantage in the system which favors Saudi princes. They fear "their influence to monopolize trade and relegate others to a secondary position."[108]

G.   ASSESSMENT

The political structure in Saudi Arabia is evolving. The *ulama* were the most powerful political group in the country with the exception of the royal family, but the group was never monolithic in its views. The co-opted *ulama* were Wahhabi Sunni clerics that posed little opposition to the conservative policies of the royal family. They have allowed the royal family to conduct progressive policies as long as they are allowed

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[107] Giacomo Luciani, "From Private Sector to National Bourgeoisie: Saudi Arabian Business," in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society and Foreign Affairs,* eds. Paul Aarts and Gerd Nonneman (London: Hurst and Company, 2006), 181.

[108] Said Aburish, *The Rise, Corruption, and Coming Fall of the House of* Saud (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 6.

to control the social and moral fabric of society through the educational system, state run mosques, and their judicial duties. They also approve of the proliferation of Islam around the world through charitable organizations funded by the Kingdom. This gives them clout in the Islamic world and a foundation to affect politics around the globe. The co-opted *ulama* were the most powerful religious group in the Kingdom, but they compete with the other religious sects.

The more extreme Sunni clerics are ultra conservatives compared to the co-opted *ulama*. They believe that the royal family's power should be limited by a Majlis al-Shura appointed by the clergy, which is more liberal than having sole monarchical rule, but falls short of democratic elections for such a legislative council. They do not support the liberal policies of the government and believe the most influential political religious clergy are nothing more than a rubber stamp on the royal regime. They believe that the *ulama* should be more independent and not just a rubber stamp on the regime's policies. Opposition to the co-opted *ulama* is shared with non-Sunni and more liberal forms of Sunni worship. These groups are geographically concentrated in specific areas and are oppressed by the religious establishment. They are more open to outside ideas because their religious views are not as stringent as the other two groups. For this reason, they welcome liberal changes to give them a stronger say in government, but they also do not want to be at the mercy of a conservative Sunni majority. The Shia are emboldened by recent circumstances in Iraq and Iran and support government change that will resemble these types of government.

Women, merchants, and technocrats support liberal reforms and act as a conduit to international norms and liberal ideology. Women challenge conservative norms by advocating better human rights policies. These policies range from domestic violence to voting and employment issues. Merchants challenge the conservative economic philosophies and promote Western-style financial institutions and liberal entrepreneur and trade policies. Technocrats challenge the bureaucratic system and promote Western-style governance. They invade the government via education and public works and services. Technocrats support reform and form the greatest challenge to the religious establishment in the educational system. They fill the lower and mid-level positions in

government where the royal family, religious groups, and government patrons dominate. They will vie for control of the bureaucracy in the future as they are promoted to higher positions. These three groups do not act together, but their behavior supports a consistent reform agenda that reflects international norms.

The tribes and expatriates have marginal political power. The tribes played an important part in forming the kingdom, but lost power when they were sedentarized and as the population urbanized. The expatriates did not play a significant political role, but provided much needed. As the kingdom pursues further Saudization of the work force, the population will evolve from one dependent on the patronage of the royal family through bureaucratic jobs, to one dependent on the growth of the private sector. The population will struggle to overcome the obstacle presented between educational training and private sector demand, which will spawn political interest in economic policies. This political interest in economic policies will grow to other political policies. The expatriates will serve as a buffer until Saudi Arabia is able to provide citizens with the needed training to meet the demands of the economy.

The royal family promotes policies that balance the needs of the religious conservative establishment with the needs of the reform minded political groups while seeking to neutralize the more extreme elements of each. Since the religious establishment was an institution that developed from the creation of the state, it wields much more political power due to its superior organization and vast and influential structure. Liberal groups are in the developmental stages of organization. As their organizations grow, they will become more effective at proposing, supporting, and instituting political platforms. The political spectrum in Saudi Arabia will resemble a Western conservative right and liberal left framework that the royal family will struggle to appease. The liberals must build up their institutions to compete with the conservatives. The next chapter covers the internal and external pressures which favor institutional changes fueled by the demographic changes occurring in Saudi Arabia and the international community.

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IV. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PRESSURES FORCING LIBERALIZATION

In addition to the vertical changes happening in particular political groups in Saudi Arabia, there are also large changes happening across the country on a macroscopic level. These changes are occurring rapidly and cleavages are widening the gap between the aristocratic form of governing and the general demographic changes of the population. The pressures felt by the al-Saud are coming from internal and external sources. The internal pressures are the rapidly growing population, increasing educational levels, growing internet and modern technology usage, and increasing criticism in the press. The external sources are the international political and economic world order, Islamic extremism, security concerns, and non-governmental organizations.

A. POPULATION

The first internal pressure comes from the growth of the population. The population growth is attributed to the oil boom period that started in the 1970s and ended in the early 80s. At the end of Ibn Saud's reign in 1953, Saudi Arabia was composed of 3 million native inhabitants and an unknown numbers of foreigners. The population grew to 5 million in the 70s, but it more than doubled by 1985 at the end of the oil boom, as shown by Figure 1. From the beginning of the oil boom to 2000, the per capita GDP of Saudi Arabia decreased by 40%.[109] The decrease was due to fluctuations in oil prices, but it was also eroded by population growth.

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109 Anthony H. Cordesman, Saudi Arabia Enters the Twenty-first Century (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 244, http://books.google.com (accessed November 29, 2008).
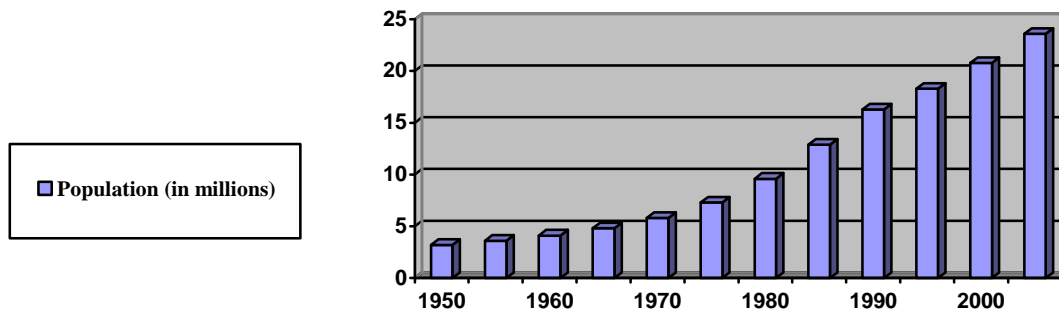
Figure 1.   Saudi Arabian Population Growth (1950-2005)[110]

The population growth placed a large demand on the Saudi infrastructure. These demands were combated by government spending as outlined in the Saudi 5 year plans starting in 1970. These plans sought to meet the demands of a growing population by funding large infrastructure projects such as schools, public works, and investments in the country's oil industry. The country was being modernized, but labor was imported from outside the country. The labor was needed in the 1970s to make up for the knowledge vacuum and to cater to the new found wealth that created a job market that Saudis viewed as beneath their stature. Once the "baby boomers" of the oil boom came of age, they faced a job market that either did not provide a job they wanted or did not provide a job they were trained to do. Unemployment became a problem, but Saudi Arabia did not have statistics that accurately portrayed the level of unemployment because the society absorbed the individual either in a family enterprise, charitable organization, or the governmental bureaucracy. These tools managed the unemployment problem, but were inadequate as more Saudis entered the job market. The first analysis of the unemployment data occurred in 2002 when the Saudi Central Department of Statistics calculated the levels for the first time. In 1999 the Department of Man Power:

> Showed a native unemployment figure of 8.1%, with 6.8% for males and 15.8% for women . . . These data figures are extremely suspect, however, and assume that only 19% of the population, and 35.3% of the population

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[110] "World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision Population Database," United Nations Population Division, http://esa.un.org/unpp/p2k0data.asp (accessed December 1, 2008).

of working age, actually participates in the labor force. This 19% compares with 33% in the rest of the Middle East, 41% in Latin America, 45% in Europe, 50% in the United States, and 56% in east Asia . . . It implies that sheer lack of Saudi participation in labor force amounts to a socioeconomic disaster and is a far worse problem than unemployment.[111]

The Saudi university dampened the initial unemployment numbers because they contained about 100,000 students for a number of years. This was only a temporary band-aid, because once the students graduated, if they completed the university, they would still enter a job market that had fewer opportunities in the bureaucracy and did not fully accommodate the type of education provided by the Saudi educational system. Foreign educated individuals faired much better than patrons of the domestic system, which left a large fraction of educated Saudis on the side lines or accepting jobs beneath their educational level. The 2000 GDP per capita shrank to $7,230,[112] but this number would increase to $19,800[113] in 2007 primarily fueled by the price of oil. Although the number increased, the distribution of oil rents did not affect the unemployment rate significantly.

Replacing of expatriates with Saudi nationals was the concentration of the 1985-1995 development plans. "Saudization policies introduced in the late 1990s are yet to be implemented in full, due to the resistance of Saudi employers and employees in absorbing the implications arising from the policies."[114] Saudi nationals demand greater wages and expect better working conditions than expatriates. They also value prestige over pay and despise manual labor-intensive occupations. A survey done in 1989 revealed that 80% of Saudis refused manual labor jobs.[115] Figure 2 shows the distribution of Saudi nationals and foreign workers in the Saudi Arabian job market. Defense and Public works and education are fields that are most preferred by nationals. The largest fraction of the

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[111] Anthony H. Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia Enters the Twenty-first Century* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 243, http://books.google.com (accessed November 29, 2008).

[112] Ibid., 244.

[113] "Saudi Arabia," Central Intelligence Agency, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/ (accessed November 29, 2008).

[114] Salah Madhi and Armando Barrientos, "Saudisation and Employment in Saudi Arabia," Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 76, http://www.emeraldinsight.com (accessed November 29, 2008).

[115] Salah Madhi and Armando Barrientos, "Saudisation and Employment in Saudi Arabia," Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 73

foreign workers are in building, manufacturing, domestic services, and wholesale and retailing, which are undesirable because they require manual labor and lack prestige. These demands of the job market and nationals are not compatible. This does not bode well for the prospect of employing 100,000 Saudis entering the job market annually.[116]

The second challenge to the Saudi economic market is the educational system. Universities introduce 20,000 university graduates to the job market per year, but the training received does not meet the demands of the job market. "Saudi Arabia emphasizes knowledge acquisition, rather than knowledge application."[117] Saudi Arabia has about 100,000 students in universities both foreign and domestic. Between 1995 and 1999, 120,000 graduated. Of these graduates, "only 8 percent studied technical subjects such as architecture or engineering. These students accounted for only 2 percent of the total number of Saudis entering the job market.[118] Overwhelmingly, the degrees are obtained in humanities, which does not supply the required skill set the market demands. The king is aware of both the decoupled school system and the unemployment challenges faced by Saudi Arabia. The efforts taken to combat this trend were announced in the sixth development plan, which was known as Saudization. This method mandates employers with job forces of 20 to increase Saudi employment.[119] This will employ more Saudis, which will help ease the unemployment burden, but there are questions from the business community about whether or not this will help the economy overall.[120]

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[116] "Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Country Overview," Encyclopedia of the Nations, http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/economies/Asia-and-the-Pacific/Saudi-Arabia.html (November 30, 2008).

[117] Salah T. Madhi and Armando Barrientos, "Saudisation and Employment in Saudi Arabia," Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 73, http://www.emeraldinsight.com (accessed November 29, 2008).

[118] Ian Bremmer, "The Saudi Paradox," *World Policy Journal* 21, no. 3, (Fall 2004), http://www.worldpolicy.org/journal/articles/wpj04-3/Bremmer.html (accessed November 29, 2008).

[119] Bethany Bell, "Saudi Arabia's Job Market Rethink," *BBC News*, August 10, 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4137898.stm (accessed November 29, 2008).

[120] Salah Madhi and Armando Barrientos, "Saudisation and Employment in Saudi Arabia," Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 74-76, http://www.emeraldinsight.com (accessed November 29, 2008).

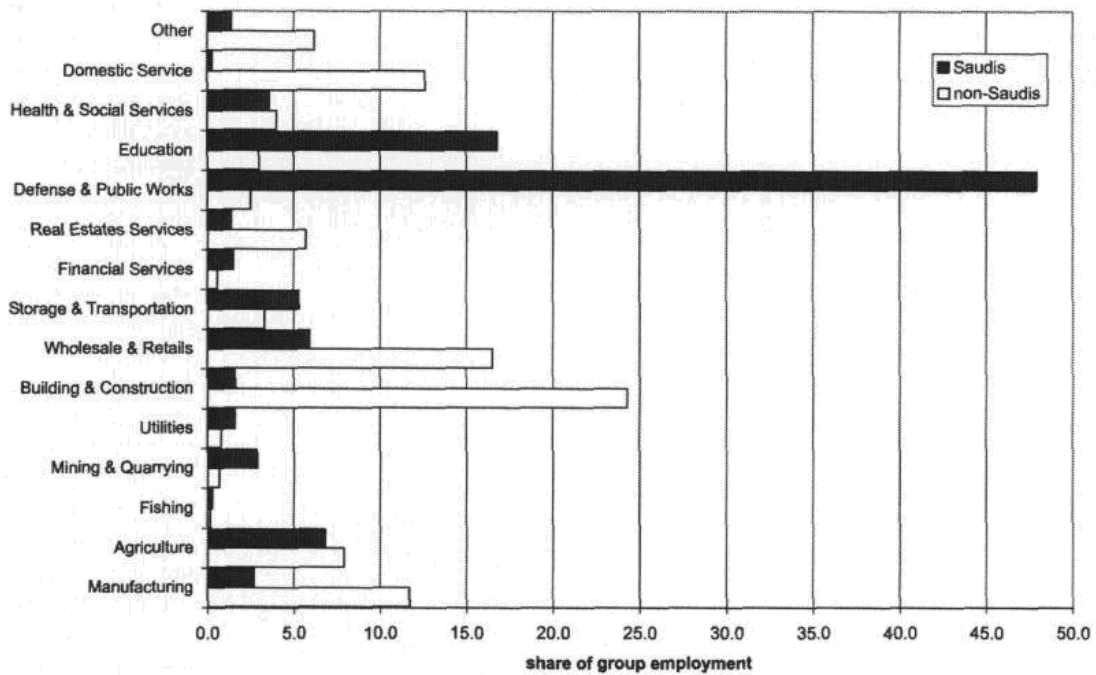Occupational distribution of Saudi and non-Saudi employees, 1992

Figure 2.   Occupational Distribution of Saudi and Non-Saudi Employees (1992) [121]

B.   INTERNET

The internet in Saudi Arabia is censored by the Internet Service Unit (ISU). A study was done by the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard Law School that examined the type of internet sites the 2001 Council of Ministers Resolution blocked in Saudi Arabia. The ISU stated the purpose of the resolution was to block web sites that were detrimental to Saudi Arabian culture. The study concluded that not only were sexually explicit sites banned, but:

> the Saudi government maintains an active interest in filtering non-sexually explicit Web content for users within the Kingdom; (2) that substantial amounts of non-sexually explicit Web content is in fact effectively

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[121] Salah Madhi and Armando Barrientos, "Saudisation and Employment in Saudi Arabia," Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 75, http://www.emeraldinsight.com (accessed November 29, 2008).

inaccessible to most Saudi Arabians; and (3) that much of this content consists of sites that are popular elsewhere in the world.[122]

While some sites are inconsistent with a religiously conservative society, such as those dealing with pornography and abortion, others, such as Amnesty International and Saudi.org are blocked because they reveal an unfavorable attitude toward the human rights record of Saudi Arabia.[123]

Although these sites are blocked, many dissident blogs are created daily to discuss politics and current events in the Arab world. The censorship efforts cannot expect to keep up with the growing number of users and internet sites in Saudi Arabia. From 2000 to 2007 internet usage in Saudi Arabia grew from 2% to 25%, which represents 5.74 million new users.[124] The growth of users represents a great desire to be connected with the world outside of Saudi Arabia, but also a need to connect with other Saudis. Arabs can form virtual political organizations to create an Arab "global village." As the number of users and sites grow, the Saudi ISU will be as ineffective as liberal democracies in controlling information on the internet, which will serve as a peaceful realm for Saudis to vent about their government. Extremist groups like al-Qaeda[125] have used the internet to promote their causes and this avenue is certainly a prospect for extreme dissident movements in Saudi Arabia, but peaceful protest by people such as a Waheha al-

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[122] Jonathan Zittrain and Benjamin Edelman, "Documentation of Internet Filtering in Saudi Arabia," Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard Law School http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/filtering/saudiarabia/ (accessed November 23, 2008).

[123] Jonathan Zittrain and Benjamin Edelman, "Documentation of Internet Filtering in Saudi Arabia," Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard Law School http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/filtering/saudiarabia/ (accessed November 23, 2008).

[124] "Internet Indicators: Subscribers, Users and Broadband Subscribers," International Telecommunication Union, http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ICTEYE/Indicators/Indicators.aspx# (November 30, 2008).

[125] Susan Glasser, "The Web as a Weapon," *Washingtonpost.com*, August 9, 2005, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/08/AR2005080801018.html (accessed December 4, 2008).

Howaider, a women's right activist, protesting the driving ban,[126] or the journalist Nadine al-Bedair, who has used the internet to display her views on equality for women are more prevalent.[127]

The internet is a window to the outside world including international governmental organizations. Amnesty International was one of the NGOs blocked. The specific page blocked discussed the hostile environment in Saudi Arabia toward reformers. This site was blocked in 2000 and was the only international NGO blocked at the time of this study, but it does not bode well for other such sites. The NGOs give the average Saudi citizens that do not travel outside the country a point of reference independent of government regulation. Although the sites are blocked, it is impossible to block the numerous internet blogs that reference the information. The Saudi government harasses bloggers, but there are thousands of blog sites, and more produced daily.[128] The NGOs will create pressure for the government to reveal practices in Saudi Arabia to the international community, as well as inform Saudi citizens of the international norms to promote internal reforms. If all the NGO's are able to be blocked, which is unlikely, the references to the NGOs from open media sources on the web will facilitate indirect pressure. The cyber battle will be a model of peaceful evolutionary rather than revolutionary change.

The religious authority in Saudi Arabia "issued an edict barring the use of cell phones with built-in cameras, blaming them for spreading obscenity."[129] This type of ban seems unseemly in Western countries, but the tight hold that the religious elite have on the society, and the threat they feel that comes from technology, are real. The edict

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[126] "Driving for Reform -16 March 08," YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SuCKt12_8M (accessed December 4, 2009).

[127] "Saudi TV Journalist Nadine Al Bedair Women in Saudi Arabia," YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hK8uo_vvryg (accessed November 23, 2008).

[128] "Freedom of the Press 2008 – Saudi Arabia," *Freedom House*, April 29, 2008, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,FREEHOU,,SAU,4871f62dc,0.html (accessed November 29, 2008).

[129] "Saudi Arabia Bans Cell Phone Camera," *MSNBC*, September 29, 2004, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6133475 (accessed November 29, 2008)

was revoked due to its unpopularity,[130] but the willingness of the state religious institution to maintain a conservative religious community, as well as their opposition to technology, is evident.

C.   MODERN TECHNOLOGY

Under King Fahd, satellite TV usage was on the rise in the country. The Saudis were exposed to ideas outside the control of the royals and they saw the shortcomings of their country when it came to human rights.[131] It is estimated that 93.9% of Saudi Arabia's households have Satellite TV.[132] Programs that are broadcast in neighboring countries provide sources for a variety of entertainment that sparks controversy with the king because of its political nature, as well as with the religious conservatives because of its explicit nature and contradictions to their conservative values. Oprah Winfrey's show is an example of the penetration of popular Western culture. Her appeal, as described by a Saudi woman, was attributed to her conservative dress and her plight as a woman. "She struggles with her weight. She overcame depression. She rose from poverty and from abuse. On all these levels she appeals to a Saudi woman. People really idolize her here."[133] An average Saudi citizen explaining Oprah's appeal is notable, but when Princess Reema bint Bandar al-Saud, daughter of Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the former Saudi ambassador to the United States, tells of Oprah's life story, this underscores the penetration of Western culture. The religious conservative's resistance was captured in the statement espoused by a high ranking religious official in the government. "There is no doubt that these programs are a great evil, and the owners of these channels are as

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[130] "Saudi Arabia Bans Sale of Dogs and Cats in Capital in Effort to Keep Sexes Apart," *Associated Press*, July 31, 2008, http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,395341,00.html (November 30, 2008).

[131] "House of Saud," *Frontline*, DVD, directed by Jihan el-Tahri (Alexandria, VA: PBS Video, 2005).

[132] "While 93.9% of Saudi Arabia's households have Satellite TV, some 48.4 % of households still tune into terrestrial TV," *Arab Advisors Group*, January 28, 2007, http://www.arabadvisors.com/Pressers/presser-280107.htm (accessed November 29, 2008).

[133] Katherine Zoepf, "Saudi Women Find an Unlikely Role Model: Oprah," *The New York Times*, September 18, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/19/world/middleeast/19oprah.html (December 2, 2008).

guilty as those who watch them. It is legitimate to kill those who call for corruption if their evil can not be stopped by other penalties."[134]

D.   A FREE PRESS

A free press is a signature institution in developed democracies. The institution is important because it provides a forum for the free discussion of politics, which serves to inform a citizen of the issues that affect their government. "The press is the best instrument for enlightening the mind of man, and improving him as a rational, moral and social being."[135]   Without a free press, facts can be manipulated or omitted by the government to hide irrational governing.   Saudi Arabia does not have a free press, but it also does not tell newspapers what to write. Former editor of the London based *al-Hayat* explains that no one ever told him what to write, but what not to write. "We [reporters] commit sins of omission, not commission." [136] This type of censorship is self-censorship because the papers depend on revenue from advertisements. If they print something that causes the Saudi government to ban the paper then they lose the revenue from the Kingdom. The Basic Law provides general guidelines for the press in article 39:

> All the means of information, publications and expression shall abide by the good word and observe the laws of the State; they shall contribute to the education, and support the unity, of the nation; anything that leads to sedition, divisiveness or is prejudicial to the nation's security and public relations, or is detrimental to human dignity and right are strictly prohibited. Specific laws shall set down relevant provisions.[137]

The guidelines for censorship are outlined in the Basic Law, but the mechanism to execute these policies was promulgated in the Press Law of 1964. Control is strictly

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[134] "Saudi Judge Condemns 'Immoral TV'," *BBC News*, September 12, 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7613575.stm (accessed November 30, 2008).

[135] Thomas Jefferson and John Foley, *The Jeffersonian Cyclopedia* (London England: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1900), 718, http://books.google.com (accessed November 30, 2008).

[136] Jihad B. Khazen, "Censorship and State Control of the Press in the Arab World," *The Harvard International Journal of Press Politics* 4.3, (1999) 87-92, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/harvard_international_journal_of_press_politics/v004/4.3khazen.html#authbio (accessed November 21, 2008).

[137] "The New Constitution: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," *Arab Law Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (1993), 258-270, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3381589 (accessed February 10, 2008).

enforced such as in an incident with *al-Hayat* in August of 2007. "The government confiscated copies of the Saudi daily *al-Hayat*, after one of its contributors criticized the health care system in the Kingdom."[138] Journalists are also controlled on an individual level. All journalists must register with the Ministry of Information, and foreign journalists face visa obstacles and restrictions on their movement. The Ministry also controls the Saudi Journalists Association's governing board by allowing only approved candidates to run in its elections."[139] Despite the strict control over the press, Saudi Arabia has about a dozen daily papers.

The restrictions on the press are harsh, but there is a cyclical nature to its treatment. During the Gulf War of 2003, the Saudi papers were allowed to provide hard hitting articles on the war and critiques of American policy. The Saudi government also allowed the papers to publish articles about the terrorists' attacks on Saudi soil, which would generally have been blocked to shield the population from unrest in the Kingdom.[140] The local newspapers have recently been allowed to print articles criticizing government policies. The *Arab News* is the largest circulation English-language newspaper in the region. It has published articles such as "Lifting Ban on Women Driving Will Bring Economic Windfall: Experts," which argues against the ban on women drivers by pointing out advantages to economy if women drove,[141] and "Shattering Glass Ceilings at Lingerie Shops," which criticized a law to hire women in lingerie shops that was not being implemented.[142]

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[138] "Freedom of the Press 2008 – Saudi Arabia," Freedom House, April 29, 2008, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,FREEHOU,,SAU,4871f62dc,0.html (accessed November 29, 2008).

[139] "Freedom of the Press 2008 – Saudi Arabia," Freedom House, April 29, 2008, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,FREEHOU,,SAU,4871f62dc,0.html (accessed November 29, 2008).

[140] "The Press in Saudi Arabia," *BBC News*, December 13, 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6176791.stm (accessed November 30, 2008).

[141] Sarah Abdullah, "Lifting Ban on Women Driving Will Bring Economic Windfall: Experts," *Arab News*, March 29, 2008, http://www.arabnews.com/?page=1&section=0&article=108366&d=29&m=3&y=2008 (accessed November 30, 2008)

[142] Najah Alosaimi, "Shattering Glass Ceilings at Lingerie Shops," *Arab News*, October 15, 2008, http://www.arabnews.com/?page=1&section=0&article=115470&d=15&m=10&y=2008 (accessed November 30, 2008).

Even if the recent loosening of controls on the press is short lived, this demonstrates the willingness of the press to keep pushing the limits of censorship. The press as an institution is vying for the excellence in reporting that exists in Western media outlets, but are held back by government intervention. This in no way demonstrates the quality of the personnel working at newspapers. This bodes well for the press as an institution that can function in a democracy if the shackles of censorship are ever lifted. The concept of a free press will be an evolutionary change because the censored press is already an established institution. The evolutionary change will be a give and take process between reporters, editors, owners, and the government which will progress to meet market expectations. The evolution will lead to a press that will report the news as its primary function, while considering the regime rather than sustaining it.

E.   THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER

The international pressure is led by the US. US pressure is palpable in the kingdom, but the pressure is met with both concessions and resistance. Saudi Arabia is not a puppet of US interests, but they are a facilitator on most issues.[143] The Saudi King supported the 1991 and 2003 Gulf War. The 1991 war met a positive response in Saudi Arabia, but the mood changed for the 2003 invasion.[144] The public saw the US as the protector in 1991 and the aggressor in 2003. The Saudis were pressured to such an extent from radical elements in the Kingdom that their policy to support the American position had to be calculated to balance external security concerns with internal dissent.[145] Their position was further complicated following terrorist attacks on Saudi soil. The Saudis

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[143] Mai Yamani, "Reform in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," *Brookings*, December 6, 2008, http://www.brookings.edu/events/2008/0313_saudi_arabia.aspx (accessed November 29, 2008).

[144] Eric Schmitt, "Threats and Responses: Gulf Allies; Saudis are Said to Assure U.S. on Use of Bases," *New York Times*, December 29, 2002, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9501E2DE173FF93AA15751C1A9649C8B63 (accessed November 30, 2008); Marc Santora and Michael R. Gordon, "Threats and Responses: Allies; Persian Gulf Nations Send Troops to Protect Kuwait," *New York Times*, March 5, 2003, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E0CE5DF153FF936A35750C0A9659C8B63 (accessed November 30, 2008).

[145] "Saudis offer bases for Iraq Strike," *BBC News*, September 16, 2002, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2260437.stm (accessed November 29, 2008).

have since supported anti-terrorist policies and espoused peaceful rhetoric.[146] The Saudis have also supplied financial support to Iraq to help it rebuild in the wake of the American-led invasion.

Saudi Arabia is also part of a number of regional alliances. The Gulf Coast Council contains Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE and is a military and economic alliance. The smaller countries on the peninsula are implementing political and economic liberal reforms, which pressures Saudi Arabia to make similar changes. These countries are closely aligned with US foreign policy and most contain a US military base. Saudi Arabia is also a member country in the League of Arab States. This organization aligns Arab nations in the Middle East and North Africa and is political in nature.[147] Saudi Arabia is the dominant member in OPEC and joined the World Trade Organization in 2005.[148] These political and economic alliances exert pressure on Saudi Arabia to liberalize both its economic and governmental policies.

F.   SECURITY CONCERNS

The security concerns of Saudi Arabia have always been fueled by two main issues. First, Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the Middle East, which means that its borders are vast. The population of Saudi Arabia was too small to provide adequate protection without drawing adversely from the population and the treasury. The Gulf Cooperative Council was created in 1976 as an information resource to coordinate intelligence on "political dissidents."[149] The GCC was composed of Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and UAE and their prime purpose was a security shield in the gulf from hostile countries. The GCC were small and recognized their vulnerability to larger states such as Iraq and Iran. The GCC states believe that a large population will give them

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[146] "Dozens Arrested in Saudi Arabia," *AlJazeera.Net*, March 3, 2008, http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2008/03/2008525121033392905.html (accessed November 29, 2008).

[147] "League of Arab States," http://www.arableagueonline.org/las/index.jsp (accessed November 30, 2008).

[148] "Saudi Arabia," World Trade Organization, http://www.wto.org/english/theWTO_e/acc_e/a1_arabie_saoudite_e.htm (accessed November 30, 2008).

[149] Sandra Mackey, *The Saudis: Inside the Desert Kingdom* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 333.

prestige in the international community. A larger population would also allows them to provide better defenses and also replace expatriate workers who may be sources of internal subversion.[150]

Second, the military technological gap between Saudi Arabia and her regional threats have been large. Egypt, Iran, and Iraq were all regional threats to Saudi Arabia at particular periods in history and either bought their weapons from international suppliers or developed indigenous production capabilities to supply their military needs. Egypt was a threat in the 1960s because it espoused nationalism and promoted conflicts in Yemen that were evidence that they supported revolutionary coups.[151] The threat of Iran came with the 1979 Shia revolution that placed an Islamic republic where a monarchy once stood. This was another brand of revolutionary change that the Saudis saw as a threat because it was unfavorable to monarchical rule.[152] Iraq formed a threat in 1990 when it invaded Kuwait because it was in the vicinity of the Saudi oil fields.[153] Each threat could have caused major problems in Saudi Arabia by funding insurrectionist movements within their borders so the Saudis had to deal with them by brokering deals with outside governments for arms, political support, and protection.

The longest standing protection understanding is with the US. Since the discovery of oil on the Saudi Peninsula, it has been in the national interest of the US to have the Saudi monarchy in charge in Saudi Arabia because they provided a stable, dependable regime. They did not support all of America's foreign policies, but they did have the same overall interest in keeping Saudi oil in royal hands. One of the biggest areas of foreign policy disagreements has been the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The US has backed Israel, which is unpopular among most Muslim governments. To be seen as both the custodians of the two Holy Cities, and dependent on the US relationship, was a contradiction that weakened Saudi political capital in the region. Insurgencies conducted

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[150] Andrzej Kapiszewski, *Nationals and Expatriates: Population and Labor Dilemmas of the Gulf Cooperation Council States* (Lebanon: Garnet and Ithaca Press, 2001), 42.

[151] Joseph A. Kechichian, *Succession in Saudi Arabia* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 16-18; Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 94.

[152] Ibid., 120-121.

[153] Ibid., 115-119.

in the region, such as that conducted by Hezbollah-backed Iran in Lebanon, forced Saudi Arabia to remain vigilant against similar threats. These types of covert efforts, if allowed to take root inside Saudi Arabia's vast kingdom, would undermine public order and could cost the al-Saud their kingdom because their citizens, or subjects, would see them as incapable of protecting the country. For this reason, it was necessary for the Saudis to condone a political relationship with the US, despite the drawbacks. To allow more flexibility in foreign policy, the Saudis have sought other patrons, such as China, to supply them with weapons. Although regional threats exist, the al-Saud maintains diplomatic relationships with its enemies. Iran is the biggest threat to Saudi Arabia presently, but they hold periodic conferences with Tehran and participate in political and economic committees together.[154] The Saudis are firm believers in the adage "I against my brothers; I and my brothers against my cousins; I and my cousins against the world."[155]

G.   ISLAMIC EXTREMISM

Extremist groups have also pressed the royal family to be more in line with mainstream international politics because the regime is threatened by internal subversion and needs international support to combat the threat.[156] The Wahhabi form of Islam is stricter than most other Muslim sects and is thought to breed the jihadist doctrine of extremist groups. This is dangerous for Saudis for two reasons. First, Saudi Arabia prides itself on being the beacon for austere Islam around the world. To have this reputation questioned by other Islamic groups risk the Islamic world seeing Saudi Arabia as an Islamic country in need of regime change to return it to its Islamic traditions. The second threat has to do with security. Because Saudi Arabia has such a strong religious heritage, the large numbers of young men in the country that are disillusioned by the

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[154] Donna abu-Nasr, "Iran, Saudi Heads Vow to Work for Unity," *Washington Post.com,* March 3, 2007, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/03/AR2007030300298.html (accessed November 29, 2008).

[155] Sandra Mackey, *The Saudis: Inside the Desert Kingdom* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002), 318-319.

[156] Joseph A. Kechichian *Succession in Saudi Arabia* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 16-18; Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 107-115.

changing social and economic situations in the kingdom, make this combination a hotbed for extremist religious activity. This places Saudi in a dangerous internal security situation which makes it necessary to conduct oppressive tactics to ensure the survival of the kingdom. Because these measures have to be taken, this raises more human rights issues, which forces the king to push more and grant more political reforms to give, either genuinely or just for appearance, more political rights. This fuels the evolutionary rather than revolutionary political changes that are occurring, even though the revolutionary threat is the impetus.

H.   OIL

The most important thing that forms the impetus for Saudi Arabia's integration into the international community is its natural oil reserves:

> Saudi Arabia contains approximately 267 billion barrels of proven oil reserves amounting to around one-fifth of proven, conventional world oil reserves. Around two-thirds of Saudi reserves are considered "light," "extra light" or "super light" grades of oil, with the rest either "medium" or "heavy." Saudi Arabia maintains the world's largest crude oil production capacity, estimated to be around 10.5 - 11 million bbl/d, at mid-year 2008.[157]

All social, economic, and government advancements in the kingdom are due solely to the discovery of oil and it is the reason Saudi Arabia has matured into an economic power in the region. Saudi Arabia is integrated into the global energy market and their main power is associated with the amount of oil they produce. "The critical balancing act of Saudi foreign policy, therefore, is to maintain oil prices within a reasonable price band."[158] Saudi Arabia wants prosperous countries that import oil to remain addicted so they try to keep prices at a level that under prices the competition, while trying to maintain oil prices at a level that will maximize revenue generation. The 2008 economic downturn reversed

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[157] Energy Information Administration, "Oil," Department of Energy, http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Saudi_Arabia/Oil.html (accessed November 23, 2008).

[158] Edward Morse and James Richard, "The Battle for Energy Dominance," *Foreign Affairs*, ((March/April 2002), http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20020301faessay7969-p10/edward-l-morse-james-richard/the-battle-for-energy-dominance.html (accessed November 23, 2008).

oil prices from a record $147 high to below $50 and Saudi Arabia began trying to use its influence in OPEC to arrest the decreasing price.

There is a symbiotic relationship between oil exporters and importers. Saudi Arabia must deliver a reliable flow of oil and have the infrastructure to handle the financial transactions related to oil contracts. These two factors have vastly improved the financial system, ports, and oil infrastructure which have influenced the financial institutions to operate as western style banks that deal with interest and interest like methods to conduct financial transactions. The more liberal financial system introduces Saudis to Western style economics which leads to liberal political policies to support a healthy financial system.

I. ASSESSMENT

The oil boom in the early 1970s was both a blessing and a curse to Saudi Arabia. The blessing was the increased oil revenues that fueled the modernization projects in the state that improved the overall per capita income and living standards of the population. The curse was the rapid growth of the population. Saudi Arabia's infrastructure was not prepared for the increased numbers of citizens requiring education and jobs. The result was an ill-equipped educational system frantically pumping out graduates that were not trained to meet the demands of the Saudi economy. The 1970s generation did not have to worry about employment because the rapid growth of the government to meet the modernizing society supplied jobs while oil wealth supplied the revenues to pay for them. Once the "baby boom" generation reached the job market, however, modernization projects slowed, the population more than doubled, and the private sector of the economy could not supply enough jobs that suited the average Saudi citizen.

The Saudi population also entered an information age which ended the isolation of the society from the international community and revealed the lack of human freedoms and participation in government in comparison to those enjoyed by other countries in the modern world. Even other GCC states were more progressive and their citizens enjoyed greater liberties and less intrusive government. Islamic extremism invaded the kingdom and the press was allowed to report the unrest to the general population. The eased censorship started with the 9/11 attacks in America and the subsequent invasion of Iraq.

In sum, the society demanded better training to meet the demands of the Saudi economy and more overall job availability, while the information age was portraying the political and economic "gap" with their counterparts in the rest of the developed world.

The Saudi government became aware of the shortfalls in the educational system and the job market and took steps to improve training to meet the demands of the job market and promote growth in the private sector. The sixth development plan emphasized Saudization of jobs with more than 20 employees, which would decrease the expatriate population while increasing the number of Saudis in the job market. The private sector did not welcome the changes because Saudi citizens demanded more pay for less work, and Saudi citizens did not want manual labor jobs. Khaled al-Maeena, the *Arab News*' editor-in-chief, stated that "all of our young people would like to be managers, which is absolutely nonsense." This attitude reveals a need for a social evolution that young Saudis are slowly realizing. They are beginning to understand that the government will not be able to take care of them like their parents and grandparents and it is a necessity, not a luxury, to gain employment as the government executes policies that will reduce its footprint in the job market and let the private sector solve the problem. With the realization that the government will not be the same government as their parents knew, the Saudi citizens will realize that the bargain struck that left them out of the government as long as the government took care of them, no longer applies.

The educational gains in the country have caused an expectation "gap" in the job market that will transfer to the political arena. The government introduced elections on the municipality level for the first time in 2005, with discouraging turnout numbers, but elections on this level will continue and proceed to the national level. Outside observers have the expectation that women will participate in the 2009 elections. The low turnout reveals that Saudi citizens are not overly dissatisfied with the government's performance. The elections were an anticipatory move by the government to meet greater demands by the citizens for greater involvement. The elections are a tool to give Saudi citizens a greater voice in government so they will bear a portion of the country's burden and not completely blame the al-Saud for the emerging problems. Whether the liberal changes were genuine is not clear, but external pressure from security concerns, NGOs, and

mainstream international norms are positive pressures that will force the Saudi government to keep the meager liberal gains in place. There is a modern Saudi saying, "If you didn't become a Saudi in the days of King Abdulaziz, you will never be a Saudi. If you didn't become rich during the days of King Khalid, you will never be rich. If you didn't become poor during the days of King Fahd, you will never be poor."[159] The next stage in this saying may be if you did not participate in the job market or vote under Abdullah, you never will.

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[159] Peter Wilson and Douglas Graham, *Saudi Arabia: The Coming Storm* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), 171.

V.   CONCLUSION

The Basic Law was a major milestone in Saudi Arabian history. It is not called a constitution, but it functionally acts as one. The Basic Law establishes a contract between the King and the populace, but the document does not offer traditional freedoms such as freedom of the press or freedom of religion. The Majlis al-Shura was also created by the Basic Law and offers a real chance for Saudi Arabia to create a legislative body, but as presently defined, it is merely an advisement panel with no authority to challenge the King. The Basic Law also expanded the candidates eligible to become king and the Allegiance council created a body composed of the royal family to choose a king. These two developments solved the generational succession dilemma, but also opened an avenue to the throne for more princes. The expansion of the eligible princes means that political talent and skillful alliance building will play a formal part in choosing the Saudi monarch and, for the first time, the family can place competent kings on the throne, rather than settle for the next prince in line. These reforms, however, do not go into affect until Prince Sultan becomes king. This means that the reforms may not survive King Abdullah or King Sultan if they have a more conservative view of governing. The Majlis al-Shura, Allegiance Commission, and other reforms defined in the Basic Law are signs of democratic evolution because they are institutions created by the monarchy which codifies a process to solve challenges to the crown.

There are political groups in Saudi Arabia that are aligned with reform policies and those that are strongly resistant to such changes. Women, merchants, and technocrats support liberal reforms and act as conduits to international norms and liberal ideology. These groups have new avenues to congregate due to new technologies and they are using them to learn about international norms and disseminate liberal platforms in the kingdom. Their participation in the government will increase to a level that will challenge the dominance of the religious establishment and provide an alternative power base for the king to implement reforms in the face of strong opposition from the conservatives. The decline of tribal affiliations was the most important development toward cultivating individual identity rather than group identity. The expatriates have not

played a significant political role, but they will provide labor until the Saudi educational system is able to train citizens to meet the demands of the job market.

The royal family promotes policies that balance the needs of the religious conservative establishment with the needs of the reform minded political groups, while seeking to neutralize the more extreme elements of each. The Saudi government is aware of the shortfalls in the educational system and the job market and is taking steps to improve training to meet the demands of the job market and promote growth in the private sector. King Abdullah is labeled a reform minded king by harsh critics of the Saudi monarchy.[160] He is battling against the conservative *ulama* and members of the royal family. Although the gains have been small, he has brought elections to Saudi Arabia for the first time and generally looks to improve human rights. He views Saudi Arabia, "in a sense, as a democracy now,"[161] but many of the institutions that are hallmarks of a liberal society such as a free press, equality, and unmolested opposition to the government do not exist in the country. The institutions developed under the authoritarian regime, however, are stable enough to support a transition to democracy without revolutionary assistance. The economic institutions developed during the oil boom, the religious organization in the judicial system, and the civilian control of the military are a few of the institutions that already display some of the characteristics of liberal societies, but they need a governing body to hold them to a standard. The standard was established in the Basic Law and the Majlis al-Shura is the next institution that must develop to fulfill the promise of the liberal reform. In the words of King Abdullah:

> This government has shown versatility and permanence. We have faced many problems. When oil came in the 50s they said this country can not survive, because the wealth would change the underpinning of the economy. But it is still here. In the 60s when they were calling Nasser the wave of the future, Nasser went away and the government is still here. After the liberation of Kuwait and saying 100s of thousands of American troops existing in Saudi Arabia would surely mean the death nod of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is still here.[162]

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[160] Mai Yamani, "Saudi Arabia's Theatre of Reform," *Project Syndicate* (2007), http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/yamani16 (accessed November 30, 2008).

[161] "House of Saud," *Frontline*, DVD, directed by Jihan el-Tahri (Alexandria, VA: PBS Video, 2005).

[162] Ibid.

If not this generation, then the next will see Saudi Arabia transform into a Constitutional Monarchy driven by the internal and external forces the vast oil wealth has created. Saudi Arabian history will always remember Muhammad ibn Saud and Abd-al-Aziz al Saud for their contributions in creating Saudi Arabia. The next king that will be honored in the same vein as these historical figures is the King that gives Saudi Arabia to the Saudi citizens. Despite the critics that foretold that the House of Saud would crumble, Saudi Arabia is still here, and the House of Saud will be there to lead it to the next phase of its existence.

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