

**KEEPING THE KINGDOM:  
THE POLITICS OF HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM IN SAUDI ARABIA**

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty

Of

The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy

By

Leigh E. Nolan

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

June 2011

*Dissertation Committee*

Dr. Andrew C. Hess, Chair

Dr. Anna Seleny

Dr. Ibrahim Warde

## Education

---

**The Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy, Tufts University Medford, MA**  
*Ph.D. Candidate in International Relations, A.B.D.* Ph.D., August 2011

- Dissertation, *Keeping the Kingdom: The Politics of Education Reform in Saudi Arabia*
- Comprehensive exam fields: Southwest Asia, Security Studies, International Negotiation

**The Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy, Tufts University Medford, MA**  
*Master of Arts in Law & Diplomacy* May 2006

- Concentration: International Law, Southwest Asia, and Security Studies
- Master's Thesis: *Afghanistan, Education and the Formation of the Taliban*

**Yemen College for Middle Eastern Languages** Sana'a, Yemen  
*Boren National Security Graduate Fellow* Summer 2007

- Boren Fellowship for Arabic language training
- Doctoral dissertation preliminary research

**Fulbright Scholar** Seoul, South Korea  
*Awarded through the U.S. Fulbright Commission* 2000-2001

- Korean language training and cultural immersion
- Researched South Korean education reform

**Swarthmore College** Swarthmore, PA  
*Bachelor of Arts, graduated with Honors* 1996-2000

- Major English Literature; Minor Political Science

## Professional Experience

---

**Brookings Doha Center** Doha, Qatar  
*Visiting Fellow* January-March 2011

- Conducted research on Saudi Arabia's economic and social reforms
- Authored "*Managing Reform? Saudi Arabia and the King's Dilemma*", Brookings Institution
- Conducted research on education reform in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates for forthcoming policy analysis paper

**Center on International Cooperation, New York University New York, NY**  
*Research Associate* 2009-2010

- Conducted field research in Lebanon and Israel and authored chapter on UN special political missions in the Middle East for *Review of Political Missions 2010*, NYU Press, 2010

- Authored paper on emerging powers and multilateral institutions in the Middle East for CIC-Brookings Conference
- Coordinated outreach to high-level U.S. and international policy and academic participants for CIC-Brookings Conference in Abu Dhabi

**Fulbright – Hayes Public Diplomacy Fellowship** **Suleimaniyah, Iraq**

- Public Diplomacy outreach to universities in Kurdish region April 2009
- Lectured on International Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**Barack Obama National Security Presidential Campaign Team Washington, DC**  
*Research Assistant for Richard Danzig (volunteer)* 2008

- Researched policy developments in the Middle East for former Secretary of the Navy and Senior Campaign Policy Advisor to Barack Obama, Richard Danzig
- Wrote background memos on Afghanistan National Army and Afghanistan National Police

**Fletcher -Dar Al Hekma Program** **Boston/Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**  
*Program Manager* 2006-2008

- Designed and managed International Relations Training Program partnership between Dar Al Hekma College in Jeddah, KSA and Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy
- Liaised with Fletcher School, U.S. and KSA government officials
- Managed all program budgets and program personnel in Jeddah, KSA and Boston

**Alchemy Project/CORD/UNHCR**

**Adre, Chad** *Field Researcher*

- Developed a refugee needs assessment instrument for UNHCR partner NGO
- Conducted interviews and focus groups with Sudanese Refugees in Gaga refugee camp
- Presented findings to UNHCR, CORD and Professor Karen Jacobsen of the Feinstein Famine Center, Tufts University

**American Academy of Arts and Sciences** **Cambridge, MA**  
*Program Coordinator, Committee for International Security Studies* 2003-2004

- Managed publication and editing process of global security book series “*International Security in Post-Soviet States*” in both US and Russia

**The Atlantic Monthly Magazine** **Boston, MA**  
*Editorial Intern* 2003

- Reviewed and critiqued fiction submissions; Performed fact-checking and copyediting for non-fiction articles

**Wildcat Service Corporation** **New York, NY**

- Development Associate* 2001-2002
- Wrote several successful grant proposals (\$10 M as team, \$2 M individually) for education and workforce development non-profit with a particular focus on immigrant community

## Awards, Fellowships and Grants

- Southwest Asia and Islamic Civilization Doctoral Fellowship** Medford, MA
- Awarded to conduct doctoral dissertation research 2009-2010

- Boren National Security Graduate Fellowship** Sana'a, Yemen
- Arabic language training fellowship Summer 2007

- Fulbright – Hayes Public Diplomacy Fellowship** Suleimaniyah, Iraq
- Public Diplomacy outreach to universities in Kurdish region April 2009
  - Lecture series, “*International Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*” at Arab Human Development University

- H.B. Earhart Foundation Fellowship** Medford, MA
- Awarded to doctoral students of promise in International Security Studies 2006-2007

- Scaife International Security Studies Fellowship** Medford, MA
- Awarded to master degree students of promise in Security St. 2006-2008

- Fulbright Scholarship** Naju, South Korea
- Korean language training 2000-2001
  - Taught English at a Korean Boys Middle School and High School

## Teaching Experience

- Human Development University** Suleimaniyah, Iraq
- Lecturer, *International Relations and the Gulf* April, 2009
  - Fulbright-Hayes teaching fellowship

- Dar Al Hekma College** Jeddah, KSA
- Instructor, *Introduction to International Relations* May-June, 2009

- Tufts University** Medford, MA
- Teaching Assistant, *U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East* 2008
  - Teaching Assistant, *Political Psychology and Methods* 2007
  - Teaching Assistant, *Globalization and Social Change* 2007
  - Teaching Assistant, *Epidemics: Plagues, Peoples and Politics* 2006
  - Teaching Assistant, *Introduction to Peace and Justice Studies* 2006

- Teaching Assistant, *International Relations Theory*

2005

### **Publications and Select Presentations**

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- *Managing Reform? Saudi Arabia and the King's Dilemma*, Policy Brief, The Brookings Institution, May 2011
- “Emerging Powers, the U.S. and the Middle East”, Conference Paper presented at Center on International Cooperation – Brookings Conference on Emerging Powers, Emirates Center of Strategic Research, Abu Dhabi, (February 2010)
- Authored chapter on “Political Missions in the Middle East” for *Review of Political Missions 2010*, Center on International Cooperation, NYU available online at <http://www.cic.nyu.edu/politicalmissions/index.html>
- Guest Lecturer, United States Military Academy, West Point, NY “*Impact of Culture on Negotiation in the Arab Gulf*”, USMA (March, 2009)
- Fletcher Ph.D. Colloquium, Presenter, “*Keeping the Kingdom: The Politics of Reform in Saudi Arabia*”, Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy, Medford, MA (February, 2009)
- Fletcher Doctoral Conference Presenter, “*Training the Afghan National Security Forces: A Policy Perspective*”, Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy, Medford, MA (October, 2008)
- CESS International Conference Presenter: “*Education and State Building in Afghanistan*”, University of Washington, Seattle (October, 2007)
- Alchemy Project, “*Report on CORD Livelihood Programs in Eastern Chad*”, Feinstein Famine Center (January, 2006)
- MALD Thesis, “*Afghanistan, Education and the Formation of the Taliban*”, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy (February, 2006) included in UK Stabilization Unit resource library [http://www.stabilisationunit.gov.uk/stabilisation-and-conflict-resources/geographic/doc\\_details/208-afghanistan-education-and-the-formation-of-the-taliban.html](http://www.stabilisationunit.gov.uk/stabilisation-and-conflict-resources/geographic/doc_details/208-afghanistan-education-and-the-formation-of-the-taliban.html)

### **Additional**

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**Languages:** Intermediate **Arabic**; Basic **Korean**; Proficient **French**

**Interests:** Tae Kwon Do (1st Dan), Comedy improvisation

**Community Involvement:** T-Plus tutoring, Swarthmore College Class Fund Officer

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

As the forces of globalization accelerate, Saudi Arabia is entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century with immense pressure on its traditional ruling balance. Possessing a largely statist economy, a growing youth demographic and the societal pressures attendant with rapid social and technological change, it is crucial to understand the possibilities and limits of the Al Saud monarchy's ability to adapt to meet these challenges.

This dissertation focuses on the question of how institutional reform occurs in a monarchy. Is it possible for rigid systems to transition and transform themselves, short of political upheaval, to be more flexible and responsive? To do so, this dissertation will examine the trajectory of reform in a key soft institution of the state, the higher education sector, in Saudi Arabia. The process of Saudi Arabia's higher education reform and its negotiation of religious, political, and regional actors is perhaps the most fraught in the Gulf region due to its accelerated pace of development, deep religious traditions, and the complex political dynamics of the Kingdom. This dissertation examines Saudi Arabia's higher education reform model through process tracing and field work in the Kingdom to highlight the institutional and societal mechanisms that are essential to modernization in the region, the challenges such reform faces and ask how, in the face of significant political pressure against education reform, reform is initiated and implemented.

The majority of literature on liberalization in the Middle East has focused on formal political reform, yet Gulf Arab Oil Monarchies have been largely resistant to democratization, even as they embark on ambitious societal and bureaucratic reform. How they actually pursue institutional reform and to what degree is a largely unexplored terrain in political development literature on the Middle East. My research contributes to this literature by examining the actual bargaining process and political dialogue surrounding the institutional reform of the higher education sector in Saudi Arabia.

**TO GEOFFREY AND AUDREY**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation is the result of the support of many individuals and organizations over several years.

My interest in and access to Saudi Arabia was the direct result of the passion and dedication of my dissertation advisor, Professor Andrew C. Hess. It is rare that one encounters a professional, academic, and life mentor, and in Professor Hess, I have been fortunate to have found all three. I would also like to thank Bernadette Kelley-Lecesse for making the Southwest Asia office a home away from home throughout my Fletcher education.

My research in Saudi Arabia was made possible through the assistance of several institutions and individuals in the Kingdom who, although unnamed here, were essential to both this dissertation and to my experience of the Kingdom. In particular, I would like to thank my Saudi students for the opportunity to learn from their wealth of experience and their enthusiasm for their country.

Several organizations have provided funding support for this dissertation. First and foremost, I would like to thank the Southwest Asia and Islamic Civilization department at Fletcher for their generous support throughout all stages of this dissertation process. I would also like to thank the Earhart Foundation and the Security Studies Program at Fletcher, in particular Professor Richard Schultz, for their support in the formative stages of this dissertation. The Brookings Doha Center provided the invaluable opportunity to place my research into a comparative Gulf context. My dissertation committee members, Dr. Anna Seleny and Dr. Ibrahim Warde lent their crucial insight and advice throughout.

The support and guidance of my friends and family has made this process not only possible, but pleasurable. My parents, Beth and Tony Nolan, have always encouraged me to seek to understand the world a little more broadly, and this dissertation is a result of that guidance. My wonderful husband, Geoffrey Gresh, has been an inspiration and partner throughout this dissertation, and Audrey, our baby, provided the well needed kick in the pants to finish it.



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## Introduction

*“The state shall foster national unity and preclude all that may lead to disunity, mischief and division”* (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Basic Law of Government, 1992: Article 12)

*“Education aims at the inculcation of the Islamic creed in the young generation and the development of their society who love their homeland and take pride in its history”*  
(Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Basic Law of Government, 1992: Article 13)

*“Unemployment is the number one national security problem that Saudi Arabia face[s]”*<sup>1</sup>  
(Crown Prince Abdullah, to a group of US reporters, 1999)

Saudi Arabia stands out among Gulf Monarchies due to the size of its polity,<sup>2</sup> its strategic influence in and outside the Gulf,<sup>3</sup> and its unique influence in the Muslim world as the birthplace of Islam and the keeper of the two holiest sites in Islam: Mecca and Medina. There are also substantial pressures affecting the status quo relationship between the monarchy and the society. The burgeoning youth population is straining the capacity of the oil welfare state as it is becoming more urban and educated—all characteristics of other developing societies that have experienced political upheaval.<sup>4</sup>

Unemployment is estimated at anywhere from 10-20 percent for men with severely limited employment opportunities for women, and little private sector job creation.<sup>5</sup> According to official Saudi statistics, 27 percent of Saudis under the age of 30

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Rachel Bronson, “Could the Next MidEast Uprising Happen in Saudi Arabia?,” *Washington Post*, February 27, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Saudi Arabia's population has reached 27.137 million, with expatriates accounting for more than 30 per cent of this number, according to preliminary results of the kingdom's 2010 census.

<sup>3</sup> Saudi Arabia contains ¼ of the world's proven oil reserves (cia.gov).

<sup>4</sup> Patrick Clawson, Eleanor Abdella Doumato, F. Gregory Gause, David E. Long, and Kevin R. Taecker, "A Dialogue: Saudi Arabia." *SAIS Review* 22 no. 2 (2002): 199-228.

<sup>5</sup> Data on unemployment in Saudi Arabia vary; 2003 estimates for unemployment were 30 percent, while 2008 data from the Ministry of Economy and Planning estimated unemployment at 8.8 percent; see <http://www.susris.com/2010/06/17/saudi-arabia-economics-june-2010/>.

were unemployed in 2009,<sup>6</sup> a problem aggravated by a dependence on foreign labor<sup>7</sup> and declining government subsidies.<sup>8</sup> Even with significant rises in the price of oil, Saudi Arabia's average GDP of \$24,000 ranks second to last in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).<sup>9</sup> Contrary to received wisdom, oil does not render the Al Saud regime immune to popular discontent.

The Al Saud's claim to legitimacy rests on several pillars: tribal, historical, and religious – of which religious legitimacy is both most fundamental and most challenging. The Al Saud rule under the Islamic criteria of *Wali-al-Ahd* – or rightful leadership - and the support of the *ulema*, or religious scholars, is essential to maintaining its authority in this realm. However, this relationship between the regime and the *ulema* is a double edged sword, as a loss of legitimacy in one can shake the other, and has proved particularly problematic as the regime navigates explosive social and technological change.

The higher education sector is a crucial institution to the Saudi Arabian monarchy as it is situated between economic liberalization imperatives and the regime's religious legitimacy. Today, when unemployment is seen as one of the most significant problems for Saudi Arabia, and a growing youth population is adding to pressure on the

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Jasim Ali, "Saudi Arabia Needs to Tackle Unemployment Among youth," *Gulf News*, March 16, 2008; available from [http://www.gulfnews.com/business/Comment\\_and\\_Analysis/10197633.html](http://www.gulfnews.com/business/Comment_and_Analysis/10197633.html); "Saudi Arabia," CIA World Factbook; available from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/sa.html>.

<sup>6</sup> John Sfakianakis, "Banque Saudi Fransi: Saudi Arabia Economics - Employment quandary," *The Gulf Intelligence*, February 21, 2011; available from <http://www.thegulfintelligence.com/Docs.Viewer/8ad91021-1053-43d7-b8a8-d250151257ab/default.aspx>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Gause, et al.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Development Program. *Explanation note on 2010 Human Development Report Composite Indices: Saudi Arabia*, 2010. Accessed December 5, 2010. Available from <http://hdrstats.undp.org/images/explanations/SAU.pdf>.

government to create new jobs, the battle for control over the institutions of education has become ever more central to Saudi Arabia's national identity.

This dissertation will trace how higher education reform is initiated and implemented and how the Al Saud regime is managing this potentially destabilizing process. By placing recent higher education reform efforts in historical perspective, this dissertation will also examine if the current phase of reform is merely a replay of the ephemeral liberalization of the 1970's, the thwarted promises of the 1990s, or if it has enduring roots among both elites and society at large to withstand the inevitable challenges from the religious sphere as well as transitions in leadership post-King Abdullah.

### **Significance of Research**

All too often academics and policymakers alike have skimmed over the internal process of negotiation and reform in Saudi Arabia citing its status as a "black box" - an authoritarian regime supposedly impervious to close examination. As the forces of globalization accelerate, and the winds of revolution sweep the Middle East, Saudi Arabia is entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century with immense pressure on its traditional ruling balance. It is thus crucial to understand the possibilities and limits of the monarchy's ability to adapt to meet these challenges.

By examining the process of a specific institution's trajectory of change - that of higher education in Saudi Arabia - and the attendant state-societal processes of negotiation and bargaining for institutional reform: whether top-down autocratic modernization, bottom-up pressure or elite driven reform - I hope to shed light on the

inner-workings of reform within the Saudi Arabia and by doing so contribute to our understanding of the process and challenges of liberalization efforts in the Middle East.

This dissertation will speak to the essential (and growing) question of how authoritarian states reform. Is it possible for rigid systems to transition and transform themselves, short of political upheaval and regime change, to more flexible systems that allow for increased political space? The majority of literature on liberalization in the Middle East has focused on formal political reform, such as the introduction of a Majlis or Shura (parliament or consultative body), with democratization seen as the end game of liberalization. Yet Gulf Arab Oil Monarchies have been largely resistant to democratization, even as they embark on ambitious societal and bureaucratic reform. How they actually do reform and to what degree is a largely unexplored terrain in political development literature on the Middle East. My dissertation will contribute to this literature by examining the actual state-societal bargaining process and political dialogue surrounding the reform of higher education institutions in the crucial case of Saudi Arabia.

This dissertation will also contribute to the literature on institutional change by examining the role that new and “peripheral” institutions, such as international partnerships and Saudi Aramco’s management of higher education initiatives in the new economic cities, play in implementing education reform. I hypothesize that new and peripheral institutions play an especially significant role in initiating reform in the Saudi Arabia context where established institutions, such as the Ministry of Higher Education, reflect vested social and religious interests. Direct confrontation with these institutions and their interests via rapid reform can be extremely difficult, if not potentially

destabilizing. Steffen Hertog attributes this institutional inertia to “segmented clientelism” – which is when the regime becomes enmeshed in the politics of previous patron/client relationships and is unable to escape from the informal network it has funded to support its stability.<sup>10</sup> It is in these new and peripheral institutions that I believe the most dynamic change in political space will be evident.

### **Research Question**

How did higher education reform occur in the authoritarian context of the Saudi Arabian state?

- How did an institutional shift in higher education policy occur in the face of powerful interests against higher education reform, such as the *ulema*?
- How is the Monarchy managing the process of reform without compromising its legitimacy?
- Are these institutional reforms in higher education substantive or cosmetic?

### **Hypothesis**

The monarchy is not the sole or indeed primary driver of higher education reform. Shifts in higher education institutions are a result of multi-actor driven liberalization, not autocratic modernization.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Steffen Hertog, “Segmented Clientelism: The Political Economy of Saudi Economic Reform Efforts,” in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society, Foreign Affairs*, ed. Paul Aarts & Gerd Nonneman, (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 111-144.

<sup>11</sup> Iris Wurm, “In Doubt for the Monarchy: Autocratic Modernization in Saudi Arabia”, PRIF Reports #81, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, 2008; available from

- Contrary to what rentier theory predicts, the Al Saud regime, under King Abdullah, is responding to societal pressure from emerging business and technocratic elites to embark on higher education reform to meet the challenges of neo-liberal forces of globalization.
- 9/11 created an opening for these “liberal elites”<sup>12</sup> to cohesively press for education reform as a result of the regime’s renegotiation of its internal balance of power away from the *ulema* and the religious sphere. This shift is reflected in the *ulema*’s diminished control over institutions of higher education.
- The Al Saud regime is trying to manage the potentially destabilizing effect of this shift, and maintain its legitimacy, by allowing gradual privatization of higher education and by ceding reform initiatives to business and technocratic elites.

## Rationale

Economic pressures on the regime, such as high unemployment and a youth bulge, in combination with the growing power of the emerging business and technocratic elites,<sup>13</sup> created a lobby for higher education reform. Increased internal and international

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<http://se1.isn.ch/serviceengine/FileContent?serviceID=47&fileid=7E027932-5E74-7FA1-9876-D44200FF4567&lng=en>

<sup>12</sup> This term is subject to considerable debate about its use in a Saudi context. I use the terms Islamist and Liberal with hesitation as both use Islam as a starting point in the justification for their demands and many would not self-identify with the term liberal and its western connotations. As discussed in Lacroix, many business elites are very religious and fall into the category that he terms “Islamoliberals”. However, the term liberal elite in this dissertation is used to capture the growing entrepreneurial/technocratic elite that has emerged whose capitalist and social interests often conflict with the entrenched religious bureaucracy. See Stephane Lacroix, “Islamoliberal Politics in Saudi Arabia” in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance*, 35-56.

<sup>13</sup> Giacomo Luciani’s term for the expanding non-rentier business class in Saudi Arabia see Giacomo Luciani, “From Private Sector to National Bourgeoisie: Saudi Business,” in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance*.

attention on radicalization in Saudi society after 9/11 diminished the *ulema*'s cohesiveness and power vis-à-vis the regime and increased the political space for liberal elites to press the regime more forcefully and cohesively for education reform. To do so, they have pushed for privatization and international partnerships to diminish the control of both the *ulema* and the regime in the sphere of education so as to enhance technical skills and linkages with the job market.

The Al Saud regime is trying to manage the potentially destabilizing process of education reform, but they face significant constraints in doing so. One such constraint is a vast and unwieldy bureaucratic sector. Oil wealth has allowed the monarchy to employ a large percentage of its citizens in the public sector. This has unsurprisingly led to decreased dynamism of public sector institutions over time. To rapidly transform sectors such as higher education often requires the regime to navigate around entrenched bureaucratic and social interests. Reform then becomes a politically charged endeavour with potential winners and losers among various co-opted groups.

How then does a regime undertake institutional reform without inciting a backlash and challenge to its legitimacy? This dissertation argues that the Al Saud monarchy is managing the politically and culturally sensitive area of higher education reform through a slow devolution of authority to the private sector, through the opening of political space for pioneer reformers to initiate pilot projects and by creating parallel institutions to initiate controversial reforms. These new or peripheral institutions allow the regime to circumvent its own bureaucracy to rapidly implement reform. This is evident in the establishment of such new bodies as SAGIA, and the use of institutions such as Saudi



Aramco to manage King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in lieu of the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE).

### **Falsification**

If I am correct, we would expect to see privatization of higher education; the use of new or peripheral institutions to initiate reforms; and a decrease in formal *ulema* control over university curriculums. My hypothesis will be disconfirmed in the event that higher education reform is being implemented through top-down “autocratic modernization”, not through the emergence of new stakeholders and pressure from business elites; and if *ulema* control over universities, both new and old, has not substantially decreased.

The reform initiatives in higher education are real, not cosmetic, and difficult to reverse. If I am correct, we would expect to see significant change in the *ulema*’s control over higher education, i.e. a shift in ideology. If I am incorrect, while the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia may be spending billions on higher education, the reforms will be quickly overturned or only partially implemented.

### **Methodology**

An in-depth case-study of the higher education system in Saudi Arabia is the main methodological framework for this dissertation. By using the crucial case of Saudi Arabia,<sup>14</sup> I will draw on the heuristic case study method, which enables in-depth

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<sup>14</sup>Harry Eckstein, “Case Study and Theory in Political Science,” in *Handbook of Political Science*, Vol. 7 eds. Greenstein and Polsby (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 118.

exploration of one case to contribute to the creation or evolution of theory.<sup>15</sup> While comparisons will be drawn to education initiatives in neighboring oil monarchies, namely Qatar and the UAE, to test the generalizability of my hypothesis,<sup>16</sup> the Saudi Arabian system of higher education, and its respective tensions between centralized versus localized education control and secular versus religious education will be the primary focus.

Through the use of process-tracing, this dissertation will trace higher education laws, regulations and enforcement through three distinct sets of actors: from the central government, where they are first formulated, through the ministries where they are administered, to the universities where they are put into practice.

The genesis and development of Dar Al Hekma College as one of the first private colleges in the Kingdom is used as a within-case study of the political process of establishing new private and “modern” higher education institutions. The establishment of the high-profile secular King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) is also used as a within case study of how education reform is implemented.

As Charles Tilly stated, “In a world governed by multi-causality and complexity; reciprocal causation, temporality and context matter.”<sup>17</sup> In other words – historical analysis, or process-tracing, is essential to the endeavor of understanding why and how significant shifts in society occur. I am further cautioned by Tilly’s admonition,

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 104-8.; See also Dietrich Rueschemeyer, “Can One or a Few Cases Yield Theoretical Gains?,” in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, eds. James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), 305-336.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> Charles Tilly, “Why and How History Matters,” in *Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, eds. Robert Goodin and Charles Tilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 417-437.

Not only do all political processes occur in history and therefore call for knowledge of their historical contexts, but also where and when political processes occur influence how they occur. History thus becomes an essential element of sound explanations for political processes.<sup>18</sup>

I will examine the process of institutional change in higher education through the lens of historical institutionalism, which is discussed at length in the literature review. In brief, historical institutionalists examine change over time, critical junctures and complex causality as opposed to rational choice theorists who focus on events that occur over brief periods of time and have linear chains of causality. As Theda Skocpol explains,

Taken together, these three features – substantive agendas; temporal arguments; and attention to contexts and configurations -- add up to a recognizable historical institutional approach that makes powerful contributions to our discipline’s understandings of government, politics, and public policies.<sup>19</sup>

How the complex interplay of historical variables and societal-regime relationships interacted within the authoritarian context of Saudi Arabia to produce higher education reform will be examined in the bargaining process between the regime, religious interests and business and technocratic elites.

## **Data Gathering**

My research is based on both primary and secondary sources. As official statistical data on education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is often unreliable,

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Theda Skocpol and Paul Pierson, “Historical Institutionalism in Contemporary Political Science,” in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*, eds. Helen Milner and Ira Katznelson (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002).

particularly prior to 2003, I rely largely on qualitative methods rather than on quantitative analysis.<sup>20</sup>

As a participant-observer in higher education reform through my work with Dar Al Hekma College, I have had the opportunity to meet and interview key players in Saudi Arabia's higher education establishment as well as advocates for its reform. In four trips to Saudi Arabia from 2008 to 2010, I conducted over 40 interviews with education policy makers, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education officials, public and private university officials, education reform advocates, and journalists based in Saudi Arabia as well as dozens of informal conversations. Interviews were "semi-structured" focusing on the motivations for higher education change, the process and strategies for implementation of higher education reform, and the challenges such reform faces. I also interviewed representatives of the business and technocratic elite through such organizations as the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce, Saudi Aramco, Kingdom Holding Company and SAGIA. In accordance with Tufts University IRB approval, where appropriate many of the interviewees are identified through organization or general position, rather than by name. A list of all interviewees has been supplied to my dissertation committee. As my access to the religious sector was severely constrained, I have instead relied on published fatwas and media statements, in addition to secondary sources, to document attitudes of the *ulema* and religious dissidents to education reform. To extend my analysis through secondary case studies, I also conducted field research

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<sup>20</sup> For example, UNESCO statistical year books published in the 1970's and 1980's have been useful for providing some historical data, but information prior to 2003 has largely been removed from the UNESCO internet database as the information was reliant on Saudi CDSI, which is seen as unreliable.

and interviews with education policy officials in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar in the spring of 2011 through a grant from the Brookings Doha Center in Qatar.

Saudi Arabia is currently structuring a massive public relations overhaul with a focus on education reform (i.e. the 2008 Jeddah Economic Forum focused on the transformation of human capital to meet the needs of a knowledge economy) and the local English-language newspapers such as the *Saudi Gazette* and *Arab News* have covered the process extensively, in addition to Arabic language dailies such as *Al-Watan*, *ASharq Al Awsat* and *Al Hiyat*, all of which are accessible online. While the press in Saudi Arabia remains largely government controlled, media censorship has been eased in recent years, especially on controversial social issues such as gender segregation; it also provides a useful window into current regime policy attitudes. As Saudi Arabia's ministries are staffed by a large percentage of foreign workers, government documents are almost always issued in English, which removed significant language concerns from primary data analysis of government documents. I also used curriculum data collected by the Saudi Arabia General Investment Authority (SAGIA) in its recent survey of education in the Kingdom, as well as the Saudi government's 5-year development plans (DVPs) and budgets, as well as NGO reports, and data collected through such international organizations as the UNDP, the World Bank and Freedom House to triangulate sources.

For the historical narrative, in addition to international media articles and secondary sources, I used the archival resources of the Mulligan Papers at Georgetown University (an extensive collection of Aramco documents), as well as US government documents published in the National Security Archive and the JFK presidential archive. I

have also drawn on several Ph.D. dissertations of Saudi Arabian students in the US writing on education and development issues.

## **Conclusion**

This dissertation will show that higher education reform at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Saudi Arabia represents a break from the inherited political alignment between the *ulema*, the monarchy, the tribes, the regime's bureaucracy and the private sector. The reshaping of these hierarchies can be observed in the institutional shifts in the education system, and implies dramatic historical change in the Kingdom.

Through process-tracing of institutional reform in the higher education sector in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, I hope to illuminate the constituencies, strategies, and potential of enduring institutional modernization in the context of this complex Islamic monarchy. To do so, this dissertation is structured in seven chapters:

Chapter One provides a review of several literatures that touch on the challenges of education reform in Saudi Arabia. Institutionalists such as Helmke and Levitsky inform my theory of how rigid regimes, such as Saudi Arabia, negotiate institutional reform among state and societal actors while maintaining power. The democratization and liberalization literature provides a basis for examining motivations and strategies for reform in authoritarian states. The political dynamics of oil monarchies and sources of regime legitimacy in Saudi Arabia grounds my dissertation in the historical context of the Middle East. Finally, the literature on how education relates to development foregrounds my examination of higher education in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter Two provides the historical context of the evolution of the interest groups and actors that have shaped the Al Saud regime's internal policy making in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The evolution from customary institutions to an administrative state has been partial – tribal elites maintain influence over and around bureaucratic structures and the religious establishment, while it has historically exercised control over the education system through the Al-Sheikh family, is not limited by these institutions. Education institutions in Saudi Arabia thus must be viewed as recent developments, rather than static entities; they are in flux, and grounded in a communal network. It is through a history of the development of the institutions of the Saudi state and their relationship to society that a baseline is provided for understanding when a significant institutional shift has occurred.

Chapter Three explores the tension between the modernization imperative of the Saudi state, illustrated most clearly in King Faisal's 10 pt. plan, and the regime's religious legitimacy. This dynamic is evident through the institutional evolution of the higher education sector in Saudi Arabia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the expansion of technocratic and "Western" education during the oil-boom of the 1970's, to the re-entrenchment of the *ulema*'s control over the education ministries in the wake of the Mecca Crisis.

Chapter Four examines the interplay of various factors that influenced a dramatic renegotiation of the Al Saud's ruling balance with the *ulema* at the beginning of the 21st century. Namely, it explores the affect of the first Gulf War, the oil bust, and 9/11 and its aftermath on coalitions of support for higher education reform.

Chapter Five moves from a bird's eye view of the complex interplay of various regime elites to instigate change to specific case studies of institutional reform in higher education to allow a detailed analysis of how reform was implemented amidst the backdrop of a resistant bureaucracy. The regime's shift towards liberalization is demonstrated through a series of extraordinary institutional manoeuvres regarding higher education reform. Through mini case studies of higher education reform, the chapter outlines strategies that education reformers employed; analyzes why the state allowed some forms of reform as opposed to others; and finally evaluates whether these institutional changes can qualify as real or meaningful reform or simply act as a cosmetic steam-valve without substantial roots of reform.

Chapter Six examines whether the reform pressures shaping the education system in Saudi Arabia are apparent in other gulf oil monarchies. By placing Saudi Arabia's higher education reform in a larger regional context through comparative secondary case studies with education reform in Qatar and the UAE, this chapter will highlight the various reform models employed in the Gulf and their rationale.



## Chapter One

### Literature Review

Gulf Oil Monarchies, such as Qatar, the U.A.E., and Saudi Arabia have not only sustained their ruling families into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but have indeed thrived.<sup>21</sup> While there have been limited gestures towards increased political representation – as seen in the establishment of the Majlis’ in Qatar and the Shura in Saudi Arabia, what is particularly notable is that despite these changes, they remain potent monarchies without electoral mechanisms capable of directly challenging the existing regimes.<sup>22</sup> Yet they are not static entities; the Gulf States have undergone some of the most radical changes in development of any state in the past 80 years.<sup>23</sup>

Institutions of higher education are situated at the crossroads between economic and political liberalization efforts. This dissertation argues that changes in the institutions comprising the higher education system are key to understanding how the Saudi Arabian monarchy is attempting to manage an educational revolution and what impact such dramatic change has on the stability and maintenance of the monarchy. To do so, this chapter will review several bodies of literature to foreground how global, regional, and domestic forces are shaping current education reform efforts in the Kingdom.

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<sup>21</sup>Russell Lucas, “Monarchical Authoritarianism: Survival and Political Liberalization in a Middle Eastern Regime Type,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35, no. 4 (2004): 103-119.

<sup>22</sup> For more on the establishment of consultative Majlis’ or Shuras see Amr Hamzawy, “The Saudi Labyrinth: Evaluating the Current Political Opening”, *Carnegie Paper* No. 68, (March 2006) Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; and Hassanain Tawfiq Ibrahim, “Internal Political Developments in the GCC States: An Overview” in *Gulf Yearbook 2005-2006* (Dubai: Gulf Research Center, 2006), 15-69.

<sup>23</sup> Manuel Castells, “The Informational Economy and the New International Division of Labor,” in *The New Global Economy of the Information Age*, ed. Martin Carnoy (University Park, PA: State Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1996), 15-43.

1. Institutional theory; how institutions change
2. Reform in authoritarian and communal states
3. Saudi Arabia and modern development
4. The role of education in a globalizing Saudi Arabia

Before addressing the specifics of the narrative of education reform and its place in Saudi Arabia's history and current political dynamics, it is useful to first define what is meant by "institutional reform" in the context of the Saudi Arabian State.

### **Institutional Theory**

The foundation for examining change through process in political science is laid in historical institutionalism. Douglass North argues "institutional changes shapes the way societies endure...and is the key to understanding historical change."<sup>24</sup> However, while institutional theory provides a valuable perspective when analyzing social and political change, it is grounded in the unique environment of the Weberian nation-state which is problematic when discussing the communal nature of the Saudi Arabian state and society.

The Saudi Arabian state itself is a recent construction. Saudi Arabian society is fundamentally communal and based on tribal alliances; where family name signals social position and "wasta" (personal connections) often determines social mobility.<sup>25</sup> The evolution from a Kingdom held together by tribal alliances and customary institutions to an expansive administrative bureaucracy built to manage a massive oil wealth, a rapidly

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<sup>24</sup> Douglass North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>25</sup> For more on the nature of a communal society see Germaine Tillion, *The Republic Of Cousins: Women's Oppression in the Mediterranean* (London: Al Saqi Books, 2000).

expanding population, and interact with an increasingly globalized economy is only partial and has occurred not in a matter of centuries, but rather decades.

The emergence of the oil industry and its attendant effects of rentierism, rapid urbanization and accelerated technical and infrastructure development have all shaped the formation of the modern Saudi state. However, it is essential to ground this picture of accelerated development in the context of a communal society operating within a modern state; resulting in weak formal institutional development and a continued legacy of segmentation within its social structures.<sup>26</sup>

In this context, I have found the work of new institutionalists such as Kathleen Thelen helpful in providing a theoretical framework in which to examine the rapid change of the institutional framework of the Saudi state.<sup>27</sup> New institutionalists view institutions as dynamically reflective of the social and political context they operate in rather than merely coordinating and holding together a political process.<sup>28</sup> They focus on the rationale for and justification of a policy rather than solely on the impact of that policy, which is especially valuable when trying to discover the causal narrative of reform.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Steffen Hertog, *Princes, Bureaucrats and Power Brokers: Oil and the State in Saudi Arabia* (Ithaca New York: Cornell University Press, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> Sven Steinmo and Kathleen Thelen, *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 604.

<sup>28</sup> Kathleen Thelen, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics," *Annual Reviews in Political Science* 2, no.1 (1999): 369-404.

<sup>29</sup> Kathleen Thelen, "How Institutions Evolve: Insights from Comparative-Historical Analysis," in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, eds. James Mahoney and Dietrick Rueschemeyer (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), 208-240.; Paul Pierson and Theda Skocpol eds., *Historical Institutionalism in Political Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).; see also Avner Greif and David Laitin, "A Theory of Endogenous Institutional Change," Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law, Stanford Institute for International Studies, Working Paper no. 15, August 19, 2004. Available from [http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/20684/Greif\\_and\\_Laitin\\_2004.pdf](http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/20684/Greif_and_Laitin_2004.pdf).

New institutionalists provide a suggestive framework for analyzing the social forces at play in the Saudi Arabia as new educational institutions are created and old ones are modified or eliminated. Higher Education in Saudi Arabia has played an important role in maintaining the monarchy's governing partnership with the *ulema*, and a shift in this relationship has implications for the monarchy's political stability. The creation of new institutions that challenge the bureaucratic sphere of older entities captured by religious interests in Saudi Arabia suggest a fundamental renegotiation of stakeholders and objectives in the education system, and indeed in the regime's pillars of support.

### **What is an Institution?**

March and Olsen define an institution as, "not necessarily formal structure but rather is better understood as a collection of norms, rules, understanding and most importantly, routines."<sup>30</sup> Institutions, both formal and informal, are rules and procedures that structure social interaction by constraining and enabling actors' behavior.<sup>31</sup> As Albrecht and Schlumberger state, "It is therefore not enough to look at a given formal institutional framework; rather, we have to examine the functions they fulfill in an authoritarian polity."<sup>32</sup>

In Saudi Arabia, institutions such as the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) are recent introductions into a society that has long operated on clientistic networks of

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<sup>30</sup> James March and Johan Olsen, "Elaborating the 'New' Institutionalism," *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*, eds. RAW Rhodes, SA Binder, & BA Rockman (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3-122.

<sup>31</sup> North, *Institutions*.

<sup>32</sup> Holgar Albrecht and Oliver Schlumberger, "Waiting for Godot: Regime Change without Democratization in the Middle East," *International Political Science Review* 25 no. 4 (October 2004): 371-392.

clan and tribe.<sup>33</sup> Often such institutions reflect these client networks and ruling compromises with a variety of state actors. Indeed, some political scientists have characterized the Saudi state as a “hollow state” due to the superficial permeation of its bureaucratic structures and its ultimate vertical segmentation.<sup>34</sup> However, to dismiss these bureaucratic institutions as hollow misses the complex underlying relationships between various elites and the regime that have shaped these institutions formation and indeed their evolution. It is therefore not enough to examine bureaucratic and/or regulatory changes in formal institutions in Saudi Arabia to understand the forces shaping reform efforts, but rather the social interactions surrounding such institutions.

Helmke and Levitsky try to capture this dynamic of complex change occurring around/outside/and beside state institutions by characterizing “formal” versus “informal” institutions. As Helmke and Levitsky point out, a focus on formal institutions risks missing many of the “real” incentives and constraints that underlie political behavior.<sup>35</sup> Helmke and Levitsky define informal institutions as “socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels”,<sup>36</sup> whereas formal institutions are “rules and procedures that are created, communicated, and enforced through channels widely accepted as official....i.e. courts, legislatures, regulations.”<sup>37</sup> Helmke and Levitsky characterize the interaction between formal and informal institutions into four types:

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<sup>33</sup> As Chapter Two of this dissertation will detail, most government ministries in Saudi Arabia were only introduced in the 1960’s and 1970’s.

<sup>34</sup> Kirin Chaudhry, *The Price of Wealth: Economies and Institutions in the Middle East* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, “Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda,” *Perspectives on Politics*, 2, no. 4 (December 2004): 734.

<sup>36</sup> Helmke and Levitsky: 727.

<sup>37</sup> Helmke and Levitsky: 727.

**Table 1: Typology of Informal Institutions**<sup>38</sup>

<i>Outcomes</i>	Effective Formal Institutions	Ineffective Formal Institutions
Convergent	Complimentary	Substitutive
Divergent	Accommodating	Compelling

This typology suggests that informal institutions exist around and often because of the weakness and/or inefficiency of formal institutions. Helmke and Levitsky suggest that,

Informal institutional change may also be a product of changes in formal institutional strength or effectiveness. In such cases, changes in the level of enforcement of formal rules alter the costs and benefits adhering to informal institutions that compete with or substitute for those rules.<sup>39</sup>

However, the literature on informal institutions falls short when it comes to the complex societal interactions of communal monarchies. The typology of interaction between formal and informal institutions that Helmke and Levitsky employ fails to account for institutions created through the monarch to circumvent the monarch’s own bureaucracy – as I argue is the case with several types of new educational institutions in Saudi Arabia.

In the case of 21<sup>st</sup> century higher education reform in Saudi Arabia, in many ways Helmke and Levitsky’s definition of formal and informal institutions seem to overlap – an example of this would be the creation of new universities in the economic cities, which though done by government edict, were placed outside of the Ministry of Higher Education’s authority under the management of Saudi Aramco.<sup>40</sup> Instead of using “informal” to characterize these institutions, this dissertation will classify them as

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<sup>38</sup> *Source:* Helmke and Levitsky, 728.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 732: “At a minimum, efforts to identify informal institutions should answer three basic questions. First what are the actors’ shared expectations about the actual constraints they face ... Second, what is the community to which the informal rules apply ... Third, how are the informal rules enforced?”

<sup>40</sup> Saudi Aramco’s role in the establishment of universities in the new economic cities will be researched further in my dissertation. I use the term ‘peripheral institution’ to refer to Saudi Aramco as it is a nationally owned company, but yet its management is viewed as largely outside the bureaucracy of the regime.

“peripheral institutions” as they operate outside of the typical bureaucratic framework, and thus client networks, and yet in many cases are officially sanctioned by the monarchy. These peripheral institutions include both new institutions such as SAGIA and the new economic cities, as well as institutions such as Saudi Aramco that while older, were established to be insulated from the wider bureaucracy.

This dissertation argues that peripheral institutions interact with established institutions of education in manners characteristic of informal institutions – be it substitutive, compelling or competing. They function, to use Hertog’s term, as “Islands of Efficiency”, in the vast and segmented bureaucracy of the state and are used as incubators of reform that might otherwise be stymied if implemented through older or established bureaucratic channels.<sup>41</sup>

### **What constitutes reform?**

Some observers of the recent social and institutional reforms in Saudi Arabia – such as the national dialogue forums, municipal elections, economic and educational reforms – dismiss such reforms as cosmetic.<sup>42</sup> They characterize these reform initiatives as “steam-valve” liberalization intended to appease both international critics of the Saudi regime and internal advocates for reform without substantially altering the regime’s power base. This view is best encapsulated by Hassan al-Husseini, a former administrator at the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, who stated, “when something is established by royal edict, then that same thing can be reversed by another royal edict.

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<sup>41</sup> Steffen Hertog, *Princes, Brokers and Bureaucrats*.

<sup>42</sup> Edward Burke and Ana Echagüe, ““Strong Foundations”?: The Imperative for Reform in Saudi Arabia,” Working Paper 84, FRIDE, June 2009.

it's not like you have legal protection for such things in Saudi Arabia.”<sup>43</sup> This brings us to the question of what constitutes reform in the Saudi Arabian context.<sup>44</sup>

A useful starting point for wrestling with the question of real vs. rhetorical reform is Janos Kornai. Kornai emphasized that for a change of system to be considered substantive it must establish roots and become irreversible. Kornai gives the following example to highlight the difference between systemic and non-systemic reform, “A reduction in the number of hospital beds, ordered from above, is not systemic change; privatization of the family-doctor service is a systemic change.”<sup>45</sup> Kornai, examining socialist states in transition, defined reform as significant and potentially transformative, only if it altered at least one of the Socialist system's defining attributes: ideology, property rights, or bureaucratic coordination.<sup>46</sup> While Kornai was working within the context of the transformation of a communist state, and Saudi Arabia's regime operates as a communal Islamic monarchy, Kornai nonetheless provides a useful starting point in examining what constitutes real reform.

First, transformative reform must alter one of the defining attributes of the regime. In the case of Saudi Arabia, one of the defining attributes of the regime is the relationship between the regime and the *ulema*.<sup>47</sup> This relationship is complex, but it provides the Al Saud regime with religious legitimacy (or in the terms of Niblock, ideological legitimacy), as will be discussed at length in chapters 3 and 4. The language that the

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<sup>43</sup> Edward Burke and Ana Echagüe, “‘Strong Foundations’?: The Imperative for Reform in Saudi Arabia,” Working Paper 84, FRIDE, June 2009.

<sup>44</sup> Janos Kornai, *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992): Kornai defined reform in a socialist context as, “in brief, a reform in a state-socialist system is significant, or even ‘radical’ and potentially transformative, only if it alters at least one of the system's defining attributes: ideology, property rights, or bureaucratic coordination.”

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> David Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006).



regime uses to frame higher education reform indicates the parameters, both religious and economic, it is working within. One such example is the role gender education plays in framing religious legitimacy debates within the current regime.<sup>48</sup> Changes to the discourse surrounding education in this autocratic Islamic monarchy thus might reveal shifts in relative power among various elite interest groups vis-a-vis the regime. Another key characteristic of the regime's maintenance of power is its centralization of control over key sectors such as education. Privatization and a devolution of centralized authority in higher education would thus also represent a significant reform.

Secondly, the reform must be difficult to reverse. The liberalization of higher education may represent substantive reform in the Saudi context if it is not easily repealed or enacted without significant costs to the regime. These costs can come through the creation of new stakeholders in the reformed system (business elites invested in private colleges). According to Ehteshami, "regimes when liberalizing do not usually intend to allow more than 'decompression' while retaining ultimate control, but may not be able to stop further development once the process has achieved a certain momentum and sufficient pressure is exerted by groups in society."<sup>49</sup> This is an extremely important proposition, as it speaks to whether reforms may be "real" or substantive regardless of the original intent behind initiating such reform. Reforms that might be initiated as a "steam-valve" by the regime, such as ministerial level changes or administrative adjustments, might indeed gain a momentum of their own and approach a tipping point beyond which they prove difficult and politically costly to reverse.

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<sup>48</sup> See Chapter Five of this dissertation for a discussion of the discourse surrounding co-education at KAUST or *Ikhtilat* versus *khulwa* and its implications for the regime's religious legitimacy.

<sup>49</sup> Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "Reform from Above: The Politics of Participation in the Oil Monarchies," *International Affairs, Royal Institute of International Affairs*, 79, no. 1 (January, 2003): 14.

## **Reform in Authoritarian Regimes**

The question of the reform pathways in authoritarian states and communal societies such as Saudi Arabia touches on the question of whether it is indeed possible to have liberalization of social institutions without democratization – or to put it another way, can monarchies liberalize? This section will provide a brief definition of the terms liberalization and democratization as they are all too often used interchangeably in literature examining reform initiatives in the Middle East, and a working definition of authoritarianism.

### **Authoritarianism**

What is an authoritarian regime? For the purposes of this dissertation I look to Juan Linz's definition of an authoritarian regime as "a political system with limited, non-responsible political pluralism; without an elaborated and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities; without either extensive or intense political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader, or occasionally, a small group, exercise power from within formally ill-defined, but actually quite predictable limits."<sup>50</sup> This definition of an authoritarian regime highlights that while an authoritarian regime's power is extensive, it is not unlimited. An authoritarian regime stands in contrast to a sultanistic regime which is characterized by personal rule unchecked by restraints, norms, or ideology.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Juan Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Spain," in *Cleavages, Ideologies and Party Systems*, ed. Erik Allardt and Yrjö Littunen (Helsinki: Westermarck Society, 1964), 255.

<sup>51</sup> Houchang Chehabi and Juan Linz, *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998).

The Saudi Arabian monarchy can be viewed as an authoritarian regime as opposed to a sultanistic regime as it does have tacit limits in its application of power and relies to a great extent on coalitions of informal support- such as from the *ulema* and various tribes.<sup>52</sup> Mary Ann Tetreault's work on Kuwait in which she defines present day Gulf Monarchies as a subtype of authoritarian rule rather than an example of a sultanistic regimes, as well as Russell Lucas' analysis of the Saudi Arabian monarchy, support this classification of Saudi Arabia as an authoritarian regime.<sup>53</sup>

As authoritarian and non-democratic regimes in the Middle East persisted into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, scholars and policy makers attributed the region's supposed "exceptionalism" to democratization to reasons as diverse as external support for authoritarian regimes<sup>54</sup>, the influence of Islam,<sup>55</sup> the legacy of colonialism,<sup>56</sup> the abundance of oil,<sup>57</sup> tribal factionalism<sup>58</sup> and cultural constraints.<sup>59</sup> While each of these

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<sup>52</sup> Joseph Kostiner, "Transforming Dualities: Tribes and State Formation in Saudi Arabia", in *Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East*, eds. P.S. Khoury and J. Kostiner (University of California Press, 1991).; Alexander Bligh, "The Saudi Religious Elite (*ulema*) as Participant in the Political System of the Kingdom," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 17, no. 1 (Feb., 1985): 37-50.

<sup>53</sup> Mary Ann Tetreault, *Stories of Democracy: Politics and Society in Contemporary Kuwait* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).; and Lucas, 103-119.

<sup>54</sup> Gregory Gause, *Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1994), 175-199. Gause argues that the survival and continued authoritarian control of gulf monarchies and by implication their ability to resist pressures for political liberalization is due to extreme protection by external actors such as the United States and various western interests. Yet this is not sufficient because even in many of these western allied regimes – such as Saudi Arabia - reforms are taking place.

<sup>55</sup> Timur Kuran, *The Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010): Kuran argues that Islamic Law, particularly how the law treated ownership of a business and dictated business transference upon the death of a partner stymied the creation of large and complex corporations ala the European model until the late 19th century.; In *Democracy Without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World* ed. Ghassan Salamé. (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), John Waterbury attributed the lack of democratization in the Gulf to the unique nature of political Islam as a significant intervening variable that may delay progress along this curve out of authoritarianism to democratic consolidation.

<sup>56</sup> Malcolm Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East* (London and New York: Longman Inc., 1987).; and William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 2nd Edition (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000).; and Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq* (New York, NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 2003).

<sup>57</sup> Rentierism will be discussed further in section 5, but the key authors are Beblawi, Chaudry, Gause and Luciani.

theories of continued authoritarianism in the Middle East has ample literature behind it, which will be noted in subsequent sections, it is the dramatic change in the social bargain, the opening up of political space below the level of democratization, such as the liberalization of higher education, for which none of these explanatory theories sufficiently account.

### **Liberalizing Monarchies?**

In many ways Gulf Monarchies are the inverse of what Larry Diamond referred to as “twilight zone” states – instead of seemingly democratic states with little to no liberalization, they are non-democratic states engaged in significant institutional reform.<sup>60</sup>

Korany attempted to tease out the difference between democratization and liberalization through the following definition:

Political liberalization involves expansion of public space through the recognition and protection of civil and political liberties, particularly those bearing upon the ability of citizens to engage in free political discourse and to freely organize in pursuit of common interests. Political democratization entails an expansion of political participation in such a way as to provide citizens with a degree of real and meaningful collective control over public policy.<sup>61</sup>

Where do liberalizing monarchies fit in on the spectrum of liberalization to democratization?

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<sup>58</sup> Joseph Kostiner, “Transforming Dualities”, 226-51.; see also Madawi Al-Rasheed, “The Politics of Encapsulation: Saudi Policy towards Tribal and Religious Opposition”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 1 (January 1996): 96-119.

<sup>59</sup> Samuel Huntington, “Clash of Civilizations?,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993).

<sup>60</sup> Larry Diamond uses the term “twilight zone” to refer to electoral democracies that are in a zone of “persistence without legitimation or institutionalization,” Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

<sup>61</sup> Bahgat Korany, “Introduction,” *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World: Theoretical Perspectives, Vol. 1*, eds. Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany, and Paul Noble (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1995), 3.

Samuel Huntington hypothesized a curvilinear relationship between economic growth and political instability in authoritarian states. This ‘U-shaped curve’ predicted that as economic growth accelerated, political instability would increase in a curvilinear manner. This relationship between development and stability he termed “the King’s Dilemma” - as growth increased, an authoritarian government would likewise increase its repression to avoid instability. In particular, the authoritarian government should control access to both education and the media to limit social mobilization.<sup>62</sup>

However, according to Gerd Nonneman, a monarchy may be able survive liberalization and the opening of political space if it is seen as the driver of change and thus claim legitimacy even in the face of significant reform.<sup>63</sup> Nonneman claims, “when... it *does* become judged necessary to adjust the system, these regimes have the flexibility to adapt without risking either chaos or the overthrow of the monarchy. They are less brittle, in other words, than regimes such as Saddam Hussein’s (and several other Arab republican systems).”<sup>64</sup>

Lisa Anderson argues that monarchy has survived in the Middle East precisely because it is a regime type that is well suited to the demands of state and nation building.<sup>65</sup> Albrecht and Schlumberger note the resilience of autocracies in the Middle East even as political liberalization is afoot. They also conclude these autocracies have survived because the state has successfully co-opted liberalization. They posit five main

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<sup>62</sup> Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (Yale, CT: Yale University Press, 1968).

<sup>63</sup> Gerd Nonneman, “Political Reform in the Gulf Monarchies: From Liberalization to Democratization? A Comparative Perspective,” Sir William Luce Fellowship Paper # 6, Durham Middle East Papers, no. 80, June 2006. Available from <http://eprints.dur.ac.uk/archive/00000222/01/NonnemanV3.pdf>; see also Lucas, 103-119.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>65</sup> Lisa Anderson, “Dynasts and Nationalists: Why Monarchies Survive,” in *Middle East Monarchies: The Challenge of Modernity*, ed. Joseph Kostiner (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 53-70.

variables affecting the type and degree of political change – or as they put it “strategies for adaptation”:

*Variables affecting adaptation of a regime to change:*<sup>66</sup>

1. Structures of legitimacy and strategies of legitimation: an overarching variable.
2. Elite change: adapting elites to a changed political and economic environment.
3. "Imitative" institution building: establishing Western-style institutions.
4. Co-optation: restricting populism and widening the regime's power base.
5. External influences: transforming constraints into opportunities.

Liberalization thus has the potential to promote the inclusion of contested sectors and stabilize monarchies' control over society.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, Iris Wurm argues that by pursuing strategic liberalization of various institutions, as opposed to democratization, the Al Saud regime has actually strengthened the monarchy in Saudi Arabia.

The [reforms] neither weakened nor destabilized the Saudi state. On the contrary, as demonstrated by the severity of the reform “triggers”, the regime had been significantly weaker before the reforms than afterwards.<sup>68</sup>

Wurm goes on to characterize this reform project in Saudi Arabia as “autocratic modernization”, implying a strictly top-down led reform process that does not imply greater political liberalization.

However, while it is true that Saudi reforms to the education system are not intended to lead to greater democratization, it does not mean these institutional reforms are not significant to the balance of power in the Kingdom or that the state has made no compromise with social actors.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, while these theories suggest that a monarchy

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<sup>66</sup> Albrecht and Schlumberger, “Waiting for Godot”, 371.

<sup>67</sup> Lucas.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Joseph Kostiner, ed., *Middle East Monarchies: the Challenge of Modernity* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000), see especially Anderson, “Dynasts and Nationalists: Why Middle Eastern Monarchies survive”, 53-69.

may indeed be able to guide a liberalization process and retain power, they do not capture the complexity of negotiations between the regime and various groups in a communal society; where shifts in the relative power of stakeholders in a given institution can have implications for the regime's legitimacy balance. Indeed, reforms to the education sphere, as they directly relate to dominance of the religious sphere have repercussions throughout the Islamic world.<sup>70</sup>

### **Legitimacy**

Maintaining the regime's legitimacy in the face of transformation, be social, economic or political, is key to its survival. Which begs the question, what is legitimacy? Seymour Lipset defined legitimacy as "the capacity of the system to engender and maintain belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society."<sup>71</sup> The Al Saud family's claim to legitimacy rests on a complex mix of tribal, historical, and religious legitimacy – of which religious legitimacy is both the most fundamental and the most challenging aspect of its authority. The Al Saud rule under the Islamic criteria of *wali-al-ahd* (rightful leadership) and the support of the *ulema* (religious scholars), is essential to maintaining its authority in this realm.<sup>72</sup>

While multiple actors have contributed to the process of change in Saudi Arabia – few have held so dominant a role as that of the Wahhabi movement of scholars or *ulema*.

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<sup>70</sup> Several authors such as Ahmed Rashid and Frank Vogel have pointed to the cultural and religious influence that Saudi Arabia has on the rest of the Islamic world, in particular Sunni majority states.

<sup>71</sup> Seymour Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, updated edition. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 77.

<sup>72</sup> Tim Niblock, *Saudi Arabia: Power, Legitimacy and Survival* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 11-13. In his examination of the Saudi state Niblock further detailed several sub-types of legitimacy that have been essential for the regime's survival: ideological, traditional, personal, structural and eudemonic.; see also John S. Habib, "Wahhabi Origins of the Contemporary Saudi State," in *Religion and Politics in Saudi Arabia*, eds. Mohammed Ayoob and Hasan Kosebalaban (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2009), 57-74.

Wahhabism, the 18<sup>th</sup> century religious reform movement in Saudi Arabia, has been central to the formation of the Saudi Arabian State and the maintenance of the Al Saud regime. According Joseph Kechichian, “In keeping with a traditional monarchy—in which the ruler remains supreme religious leader—the custodianship of the holy mosques at Mecca and Medina confer on the Saudi ruler an unparalleled degree of legitimacy”.<sup>73</sup>

The relationship between the ruling Al Sauds and religious actors however has been far from static over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup>. Indeed, the Wahhabiyya themselves are not uniform and have been splintered by opposition to the Al Saud regime on several occasion – notably during the 1979 Utaibi siege of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, in the wake of the first Gulf War, and most recently in its vociferous 2004 protests against education reform and 2009 protests against gender mixing.<sup>74</sup>

Scholars, such as Lacroix, Steinberg, and Champion have put forward the aftermath as 9/11 as a defining moment in the religio-political sphere of the Kingdom, galvanizing both hard-line conservative clerics, anti-regime dissidents (the *sahwa*) as well as what Lacroix refers to as the “Islamoliberals” who have begun to more vociferously agitate for democratic and liberal reform.<sup>75</sup>

This relationship between the state sponsored or so called “official” *ulema* and dissident religious voices, most often against the Al Saud regime through radical clerics

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<sup>73</sup> Joseph Kechichian, "Democratization in Gulf Monarchies: A New Challenge to the GCC," *Middle East Policy* 11 no. 4 (2004): 37-57.

<sup>74</sup> Guido Steinberg, "The Wahhabi Ulema and the Saudi State," in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance*; and Madawi Al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State: Islamic Voices from a New Generation* (Cambridge University Press, 2007),130.

<sup>75</sup> Stephane Lacroix, "Between Islamists and Liberals: Saudi Arabia's New 'Islamoliberal' Reformists," *Middle East Journal* 58 no. 3 (2004): 345-64.; See also Stephane Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).; see also *Saudi Arabia Backgrounder: Who are the Islamists?*, International Crisis Group, Middle East Report no. 31, September 21, 2004. Available from <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iran-gulf/saudi-arabia/031-saudi-arabia-backgrounder-who-are-the-islamists.aspx>.



supporting groups like Al-Qaeda, is a complex one and an important factor in the push-pull dynamic between many liberal reform efforts and the state, especially in the sphere of education.<sup>76</sup> The relationship between the regime and the *ulema* is thus a double-edged sword, as a loss of legitimacy in one can shake the other, and has proved particularly problematic as the regime increasingly faces the forces of globalization and rapid economic development.

Muhammad Qasim Zaman argues in *The ulema in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*, that the *ulema* have been a powerful and persistent advocate for change in many monarchial Gulf States including Saudi Arabia. Zaman further challenges the characterization of the Saudi *ulema* as ‘anti-modern’ and instead argues that they are the products of a ‘globalizing modernity’ whose impact on Islam and Saudi Arabia has directed their activity.<sup>77</sup>

The ability for the monarchy to transform key public sectors to meet the rapid social and technological challenges of a globalized economy in the information age is a new and increasingly urgent legitimacy challenge. The regime must balance how to reform its social and economic institutions while maintaining the support of the *ulema* and thus its religious legitimacy.

## **Rentierism**

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<sup>76</sup> Nawaf Obaid, “The Power of Saudi Arabia’s Islamic Leaders,” *Middle East Forum* (September 1999), available from <http://www.meforum.org/meq/sept99/saudipower.html>.; Stephane Lacroix, “Between Islamists and Liberals,” 363.

<sup>77</sup> Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 159.

Most discussions of the political balance between the monarchy and various societal interest groups in Saudi Arabia have focused on the distorting effects of rentierism. Rentier theories predict that oil income allows the state to act independently of demands in society- but that this also leads to a vicious cycle in which the regime's institutions are weakened due to rent seeking.<sup>78</sup> And yet, since the late 1990's there has been a dramatic expansion of the higher education sector, a proliferation of international partnerships, an increased in the share of the education sector from 8 % to 25% of the GDP.<sup>79</sup>

Gregory Gause has argued that rentierism creates a unique interdependence of the state with external actors, which allows for Gulf oil monarchies to resist pressure for political liberalization.<sup>80</sup> However, as Lucas noted, many resource rich monarchies have been overthrown, even those with external interests in the ruling regimes stability.<sup>81</sup> David Herb likewise critiques the rentier-state argument stating that it explains only that oil monarchies will not democratize, not that they will be resilient.<sup>82</sup> As opposed to some scholars who suggest oil monarchies are able to act independently of their populace due to their oil wealth and independence from their population's wealth generation, this dissertation will argue that liberalization in the education sector tends to be driven by a combination of top-down responses, pre-emptive moves, and bottom-up pressure.

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ministry of Planning, *7<sup>th</sup> Development Plan*, (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1999).; Ministry of Planning, *9<sup>th</sup> Development Plan*, (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 2010).

<sup>80</sup> Gregory Gause, "The Persistence of Monarchy in the Arabian Peninsula," in *Middle East Monarchies: The Challenge of Modernity* ed. Joseph Kostiner (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 167-186.

<sup>81</sup> Lucas.

<sup>82</sup> Michael Herb, *All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 257.

As such it is necessary to address the classic rentier argument and then move beyond it to more recent formulations of the political economy of Saudi Arabia. A rentier state as classically defined by Giacomo Luciani is a state:

That economically supports society and is the main source of private revenues through government expenditure, while in turn supported by revenue accruing from abroad, does not need to respond to society. On the contrary, a state that is supported by society, through taxes levied in one form or another, will in the final analysis be obliged to respond to societal pressure.<sup>83</sup>

As applied to Gulf States, the rentier effects of the oil economy are too often seen as possessing catch-all explanatory power over the societal-state bargaining relationship and insulating the government from pressure for internal reform.<sup>84</sup> Kirin Chaudhry theorized that the oil boom “created new channels through which resources circulated within the bureaucracy, rendering extractive and regulatory agencies obsolete and reorienting bureaucracy towards distributive branches of government.”<sup>85</sup> Jill Crystal in “Oil and Politics in the Gulf” teases apart the effect of the oil economy on the ruling balance between merchants and the monarchy in Kuwait and Qatar.<sup>86</sup> Steffen Hertog coined the term “segmented clientism” to address what he saw as deep horizontal cleavages between institutions in Saudi Arabia. He hypothesized that the distribution of wealth generated by externally provided state resources, namely oil, is mediated socially, and over time creates a heterogeneous system of distribution-based clientelism in which vertical links with the royal family dominate.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Giacomo Luciani, “Resources, Revenues, and authoritarianism in the Arab World: Beyond the Rentier State?” in *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World.*; Hazem Beblawi, “The Rentier State in the Arab World,” in *The Arab State*, ed. Giacomo Luciani (London, Routledge, 1988), 85-98.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Chaudhry, *The Price of Wealth*, 141.

<sup>86</sup> Jill Crystal, *Oil and politics in the Gulf : Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (Cambridge, UK; New York, Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>87</sup> Hertog, *Princes, Brokers and Bureaucrats*

No doubt, the distorting affects on the oil economy on the monarchy's responsiveness to societal demands is immense, but rather than insulating the regime from social pressures, it gives it a variety of mechanisms to respond and accommodate various actors. With the influx of oil wealth, institutional patronage of various potentially challenging social groups has increased as the Saudi state's economy and bureaucratic structure has expanded.<sup>88</sup> The *ulema* is one such social group that has historically benefited from institutional patronage through defacto control over various social and religious ministries, especially the ministries of education and higher education, as well as guaranteed public sector jobs for religious graduates in the 1990's.<sup>89</sup>

However, traditional rentier-state models do not satisfactorily explain the political bargaining that the Al Saud regime has engaged in with business and familial elites, as well as with the conservative religious establishment to meet changing societal requirements. Perhaps Ehteshami put it best in "Reform from Above: The Politics of Participation in the Oil Monarchies":

The focus of much discussion about these states since the oil boom of the 1970s has been that oil income has provided their tribal elites with an economic boom and an ability to use 'rent' as their primary tool for the pacification of their citizens and for resisting demands for reform. In the light of significant political changes and reforms introduced in the oil monarchies since the late 1990s, it is time to reevaluate our assessment of the oil monarchies' ability to change, to adapt.<sup>90</sup>

Ehteshami goes on to say that empirical data not only supports the view that the oil monarchies are introducing reforms, but that it is the elites themselves who are emerging

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<sup>88</sup> Steffen Hertog, "Saudi Arabia's Political Demobilization in Regional Comparison: Monarchical Tortoise and Republican Hares," in *The Arab State and Neo-Liberal Globalization: The Restructuring of State Power in the Middle East*, eds. Guazzone and Pioppi (Ithaca, NY: Ithaca Press, 2009), 76.

<sup>89</sup> See Michaela Prokop, "The War of Ideas: Education in Saudi Arabia," in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society, Foreign Affairs*, eds. Paul Aarts & Gerd Nonneman (New York: New York University Press, 2005).; This relationship will be discussed at length in Chapters Three, Four and Five of this dissertation.

<sup>90</sup> Ehteshami.

as the greatest agents for change.<sup>91</sup> This theory of elite driven change is a provocative challenge to rentier theory and will be explored in my dissertation through interviews with business and technocratic elites who have sponsored private colleges as well as prominent non-royal members of the Majlis al-Shura.

## **Reform Pathways**

How then to explain institutional change in sensitive social sectors in Saudi Arabia? If Gulf Arab Monarchies, and Saudi Arabia in particular, are neo-patrimonialist, as Bill and Springborg argue<sup>92</sup> - that is they maintain power through co-optation – what drives a regime to embark on significant, and often politically risky, reform? The process of reform – the actors involved in the bargaining process, how they pursue reform and the pace of compromise – becomes essential to understanding the type of reform that emerges.<sup>93</sup>

The classic theory of radical change in Middle Eastern tribal societies is that of Ibn Khaldun's frontier thesis. Ibn Khaldun hypothesized that revolutionary changes emerge from the tribal periphery as tribal leaders use the unity, or *asabiyyah*, of their tribes to take over the center. This process is cyclical as the tribes eventually lose their connection to the periphery, and thus render themselves vulnerable to another such peripheral revolt.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Bill James and Robert Springborg, eds., *Politics in the Middle East* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994).

<sup>93</sup> *Can Saudi Arabia Reform Itself?* International Crisis Group, Middle East Report no. 28, July 14, 2004. Available from <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iran-gulf/saudi-arabia/028-can-saudi-arabia-reform-itself.aspx>.

<sup>94</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

In contrast to Ibn Khaldun, this dissertation will argue that the impetus for reform is springing not from the marginalized periphery, but rather from globalized liberal elites who have emerged as a result of an expanding entrepreneurial class. Saudi Arabia's rentier structure is not static. Giacomo Luciani has shown that Saudi Arabia has been witnessing the emergence of a genuine bourgeoisie of about half a million people that is no longer quite so dependent on the state and that is involved in the production of value added – not merely accessing and circulating rent.<sup>95</sup> This bourgeoisie encompasses business elites, many of whom were dependent on the regime for business contracts but have begun to expand beyond the regime's patronage, and technocrats, such as engineers and doctors, who are paid for their expertise.<sup>96</sup> This group, who may be termed "liberal elites", also includes members of the royal family who by virtue of their secure position are able to push for reform.<sup>97</sup>

While the role of elites has been highlighted in the research on transitions from authoritarian systems in Latin America and Socialist systems in Eastern Europe, there has

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<sup>95</sup> Giacomo Luciani, "From Private Sector to National Bourgeoisie: Saudi Business" in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance*, 144-181.; See also Heller and Safran.

<sup>96</sup> I use the term "technocrat" to refer to administrative and technical elites who have acquired specialized scientific and management expertise through rigorous high-level training. Yasmine Saad Salaam argues in her dissertation, "American Educated Saudi Technocrats: Agents of Social Change" (Ph.D. diss., Fletcher School, Tufts University, 2000), 18; that the term technocrat in Saudi Society is a largely accepted one with self-identification based on the acquisition of "western" higher education.

<sup>97</sup> As mentioned in my introduction, I use the terms "Islamist" and "liberal" with hesitation as both use Islam as a starting point in the justification for their demands and many would not self-identify with the term liberal in its western secular sense. I use "liberal" to capture the elites whose capitalist and social interests are in conflict with the religious bureaucracy. See also William Rugh, "Emergence of a New Middle Class in Saudi Arabia," *Middle East Journal* 27, no.1 (Winter 1973); An example would be Walid Bin Taleel, owner of Kingdom Holding Company. While Prince Walid has benefited immensely from his royal connections, he has now diversified interests which allow a substantial independence from the regime. He has used his platform of KHC to push for a variety of liberal reforms including in the education system. Muna Abu Sulayman, Secretary General and Executive Director of the Alwaleed Bin Talal Foundation, phone interview by author, Riyadh, April 2008.

only been a recent reemergence of research on elites in the Middle East.<sup>98</sup> Charles Tripp defines elites as “the individuals and groups which in fact hold the power of decision”<sup>99</sup> in the framework of Middle Eastern states or, as Volker Perthes refers to them, the Politically Relevant Elite (PRE).<sup>100</sup> PREs include not only the political elite, but those groups that contribute and/or influence political processes without formal powers. As Perthes explained, “Full-pledged parliamentary democracy is not required for political forces that oppose a given government or differ with its agenda to gain a voice or some measure of influence on political processes.”<sup>101</sup> In Saudi Arabia’s case PREs include both members of the *ulema* and high-profile leaders of the emerging business class and technocratic elite which manage the oil economy.

Iris Glosemeyer dubs non-royal elites in Saudi Arabia the ‘third circle elite’, which includes the religious elite, the tribal elite, the business elite, professionals and challenging *ulema*.<sup>102</sup> Glosemeyer argues,

Saudi Arabia’s political system is an absolute monarchy only at first glance; in fact, the prime decision maker cannot make decisions without the approval of other members of the core elite and tolerance of those decisions by the second circle. In reaction to demands from the third circle some steps toward reform of the political system were taken in the early 1990s, but their scope was limited. However, subsequent changes in the balance of power within the politically relevant elite are likely to be reflected in future institutional changes, for instance, in increased functions of the CC [consultative council ed. Majlis al Shura].<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> See Guillermo O’Donnell, Phillippe Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule, Vol. 2: Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).; and John Higley and Michael Burton, “The Elite Variable in Democratic Transitions and Breakdowns,” *The American Sociological Review*, 54, no. 1 (1989).

<sup>99</sup> Charles Tripp, “States, Elites and the ‘Management of Change’,” in *The State and Global Change: The Political Economy of Transition in the Middle East and North Africa*, eds. Hassan Hakimian and Ziba Moshaver (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2001), 211-231.

<sup>100</sup> Volker Perthes, ed., “Politics and Elite Change in the Arab World,” in *Arab Elites: Negotiating the Politics of Change* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 3-31.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Iris Glosemeyer, “Checks, Balances and Transformation in the Saudi Political System,” in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance*.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 156.

However, it is essential to keep in mind that Saudi Arabia is a communal society and sharp state/societal divisions are too rigid to encompass the fluidity of networks that work within the regime. As Stephen Lacroix states,

[in] Saudi Arabia, the classic divisions of the social arena – state/civil society, government/opposition – are of little relevance. A member of the royal family, for example, who occupies no official function within the state apparatus is endowed merely by his lineage with definite influence on decision making that sometimes exceeds that of a high official who is a commoner...similarly where should the religious scholars, the *ulema*, be situated? They are both state agents and representatives of society and may, depending on the circumstances, be spokesman for the rulers or for the opposition.<sup>104</sup>

### **Strategies for Reform**

Hamzawy argues that institutional reform in Saudi Arabia post 9/11 has been possible through the calculated gradualism of elites, “Apart from a few confrontation moments, the newcomers have avoided direct clashes with the two giants of Saudi politics. Instead, they have pushed for gradual government concessions in key spheres and tried to sustain the momentum of political opening.”<sup>105</sup> As Ghassan Salame states in *Democracy without Democrats*, “The development of civil society is itself shaped ...in particular by socio economic development, existing political culture and crucially by the willingness of the existing regime to tolerate it.”<sup>106</sup> Hertog shows that with economic liberalization initiatives, such as Saudi Arabia’s ascension to the WTO in 2005, previously established institutions of the state are being repurposed and/or circumvented to create new channels for reform.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Lacroix, *Awakening Islam*, 7.

<sup>105</sup> Amr Hamzawy, “The Saudi Labyrinth: Evaluating the Current Political Opening,” Carnegie Endowment, Middle East Series, no. 68, April 2006.

<sup>106</sup> Brynen et. al., “Introduction,” in *Theoretical Perspectives on Arab Liberalization and Democratization*.

<sup>107</sup> Hertog, “Saudi Arabia’s Political Demobilization in Regional Comparison”



This dissertation will build on these theories to argue that a greater regime receptivity to business and technocratic elites following 9/11 has led to greater privatization of the education sector and a diminished role for the *ulema* in institutions of higher education.

### **Globalization, education and shifting social hierarchies**

The Saudi state, understood as a system of power, is undergoing a profound shift in state-societal relations as it deals with the impact of what Guazzone and Pioppi term “neo-liberal globalization”. Guazzone and Pioppi use the term neo-liberal globalization to encompass the “specific forms that globalization has taken since the early 1980s when its dynamics have been intertwined with the spread of neo-liberal policies of privatization, liberalization and deregulation.”<sup>108</sup> Globalization refers to the “acceleration of interconnection between places and people” or what Rosenau refers to as “distant proximities”<sup>109</sup> through the information and technological revolution of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.<sup>110</sup>

However, as opposed to those who argue that globalization has eroded the state, Guazzone and Pioppa argue that it is actually shaping “neo-authoritarian” Arab states – states that follow international neo-liberal economic models without adopting decentralizing democratic institutional structures. Instead the state remains the mediating structure between the global and local. Hakimian et al likewise contend that neo-liberal

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<sup>108</sup> Laura Guazzone and Daniela Pioppi, eds. *The Arab State and Neo-liberal Globalization*, 4

<sup>109</sup> James Rosenau, *Distant Proximities: Dynamics Beyond Globalization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003)

<sup>110</sup> See [imuslims.net](http://imuslims.net) for examples of how internet technology is challenging local *ulema* dominance through “fatwa shopping”. For a Saudi specific discussion of the impact of the internet on society see Mai Yamani, *Changed Identities: Challenge of a New Generation in Saudi Arabia* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2000), 15.

political and economic reforms do not equate with the loosening of the state's control over society.<sup>111</sup> Indeed in many instances though the state may increasingly rely on more informal/indirect modes of government it still functions as the main source of authority and control.<sup>112</sup>

Thus we enter the paradox of globalization in the Saudi state. On one hand, the Al Saud regime is attempting to position itself as the necessary and legitimate manager of economic and social reform – the mediator between globalization and Saudi cultural coherence.<sup>113</sup> On the other, the information revolution acts as a flattener of social, political and religious hierarchies through allowing individual agency on the internet which can result in a rupture with traditional institutions and formulations of culture and identity.<sup>114</sup>

Nils Gilman in his excellent study of the emergence and use of modernization theory from and following the Cold War delineates the cultural complexities inherent in delineating what is “modern”.<sup>115</sup> As Bassam Tibi points out, contemporary Muslim fundamentalists contest the share secular knowledge has in the cultural project of modernity, as well as the worldview related to it.<sup>116</sup> ‘Modernity’ and objective ‘knowledge’ become contentious terms in this debate as demonstrated by Marty and

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<sup>111</sup> Hassan Hakimian and Ziba Moshaver, eds., *The State and Global Change: The Political Economy of Transition in the Middle East and North Africa* (Routledge, 2000).

<sup>112</sup> Guazzone and Pioppa, eds., 5.; See also Beatrice Hibou, *Privatizing the State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

<sup>113</sup> Toby Craig Jones, *Desert Kingdom: How Oil and Water Forged Modern Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>114</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

<sup>115</sup> Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

<sup>116</sup> Bassam Tibi, “Culture and Knowledge: The Politics of Islamization of Knowledge as a Postmodern Project?,” *Theory Culture & Society* 12 no. 1 (1995): 1-24.

Appleby.<sup>117</sup> However, for the purposes of this dissertation, I use “modern development” to equate to aspects of neo-liberal globalization.<sup>118</sup>

In terms of the education sector, “modernization” is reflected by a shift from traditional institutions of learning such as the *kuttab* or *madrassa*, to an education system that encompasses global standards of learning in non-religious subjects such as mathematics and science, as it aspires to prepare graduates for a globally competitive labor market. In the case of Saudi Arabia, the shorthand for this development process has become ‘transformation to a “knowledge society”’.<sup>119</sup> This transformation to a ‘knowledge economy’ is a politically and religiously loaded initiative.

Education is rarely a hermetically sealed endeavor; rather it influences and is influenced by other state institutions in a complex social web. As the forces of globalization put pressure on the Saudi monarchy to adjust its labor sector to employ its expanding youth population, the education sector becomes a prime area of contestation between different social elites: from conservative *ulema*, dissident *Sahwa* youth, and “liberal” elites. As the global economy transforms to the information age the concomitant “skill revolution” as termed by James Rosenau, is requiring ever higher degrees of technological prowess, interaction with a global scientific and technological community with standards independent from any national bureaucracy, and widespread communication of innovative ideas and technologies.<sup>120</sup> This heightened tension in face

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<sup>117</sup> Martin E. Marty, R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>118</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neo-liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>119</sup> Martin Carnoy and Manuel Castells, “Globalization, the Knowledge Society and the Network State: Poulantzas at the Millennium,” *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs* 1, no. 1 (January 2001): 1-18.

<sup>120</sup> James Rosenau, *Distant Proximities*.

of globalization has been studied on the macro-level by such authors Manuel Castells, David Held and Anthony Giddens.

The Al Saud regime must manage the process of meeting the challenges of a globalized economy due to its expanding youth population and changes in the information environment. Yet doing so is potentially destabilizing for the regime's traditional pillars of legitimacy, namely the endorsement of the conservative, and often reactionary, *ulema*. As Castells and Carnoy state,

The centrality of knowledge in the new economy enhances the role of schools as productive forces. Consequently, the role of the school as a national ideological and domination apparatus recedes, undermining one of the key elements of social control and ideological reproduction on the part of the state.<sup>121</sup>

Andre Elias Mazawi contends that the impact of the push for "knowledge economies" on Middle Eastern states and their education systems is not culturally neutral.<sup>122</sup>

Indeed, the need for the state to engage in neo-liberal globalization can have a homogenizing effect on local culture: from the push for English language classes to the assumption of a westernized "secular" education paradigm as being culturally neutral. Appadurai also notes the disruptive effects of neo-liberalism on traditional societies, and the implications that it has for traditional elites.<sup>123</sup> This push to respond to global pressures on the education system is summed up by Castells and Carnoy:

In sum, knowledge formation and power over knowledge in the global economy is moving out of the control of the nation state, because innovation is globalized, because the discourse on knowledge is outside the state's control, and because information is much more accessible than it was before thanks to technology and communications...The nation state is also losing control over the educational

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<sup>121</sup> Carnoy and Castells.

<sup>122</sup> Osama Abi-Mershed, ed., *Trajectories of Education in the Arab World: Legacies and Challenges* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>123</sup> Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*.

system, as education decentralizes and privatizes in response to pressures by parents to get the kind of education for their children that is needed to acquire globally-valued skills.<sup>124</sup>

In Saudi Arabia, the regime thus faces the dual challenge of transforming an education system that has been largely ceded to the religious sector and containing the backlash from those conservative forces while not allowing the forces of liberalization to devolve beyond its ultimate control or present a threat to the monarchical system itself.

For a regional perspective of the intersection of traditional education with the demands of a modern education system, Mandana Limbert's sociological study of women's perspectives towards education in Oman is helpful as it shows how state schools are often linked to colonial heritage and the dangers of westernization in the eyes of many citizens.<sup>125</sup> While the Saudi Arabian monarchy does not suffer from the same colonial heritage of many other Gulf monarchies, it is susceptible to charges of secularization and westernization lobbed from the *ulema*.

The role of language in the transformation the education system in Saudi Arabia is a key area of contention. As will be discussed in Chapter six, English is increasingly viewed as the language of a globalized world with the bulk of scientific and technical literature produced in English. Saudi Arabia's desired transformation to a knowledge society has led to the rapid embrace of English as the language of the modern university – raising the spectre of the Westernization and secularization of knowledge among the *ulema* and widely conservative society.

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.; and Carnoy and Castells.

<sup>125</sup> Mandana Limbert, "Gender, Religious Knowledge, and Education in Oman," in *Monarchies and Nations: Globalization and Identity in Arab States in the Gulf* eds. James Piscatori and Paul Dresch (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 184.; and Dale Eickelman, "Kings and people: information and authority in Oman, Qatar and the Persian Gulf," in *Iran, Iraq and the Arab Gulf States*, ed. Joseph Kechician (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 193-209.

## Education in Saudi Arabia

I am not the first scholar to view education as an essential political institution worthy of examination in connection to the transformation of a state. Merilee Grindle of Harvard University's Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies saw education reform in Latin America as an important entrance into the question "how can we account for successful reform initiatives when the political cards are stacked against change?"<sup>126</sup> Like Grindle, my project is not to focus on the normative value of the education reform itself, but rather the political and social bargaining process that resulted in the introduction of educational reform in Saudi Arabia.

Education and literacy at all levels have been recognized as highly significant in the general literature on democratization<sup>127</sup> and both have increased exponentially in the Gulf States in the past 30 years.<sup>128</sup> In 2003, the UN Arab Human Development Report directly linked the quality of higher education to rates of employment and technological innovation in Gulf countries.<sup>129</sup> There is also a small but growing body of literature on women's education in the Islamic world, in particular in Saudi Arabia which links economic development to women's education and subsequent participation in the workforce.

Human capital theories of education maintain that a rising tide floats all boats, that is, the more highly educated a populace the stronger and more dynamic the

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<sup>126</sup> Merilee Grindle, *Despite the Odds: The Contentious Politics of Education Reform* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1-10.

<sup>127</sup> Nonneman, *Saudi Arabia in the Balance*, 25.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>129</sup> United Nations Development Program, *Arab Human Development Report: Building a Knowledge Society* (New York, NY: United Nations Development Program, 2003).

economy.<sup>130</sup> Two recent studies of the region, “Building the Global Information Economy”<sup>131</sup> and UNESCO’s “Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise”<sup>132</sup> argue that productivity and knowledge are linked in the private sector and that higher education increases income growth and productivity. In recent years the phrase “knowledge economy” has gained tremendous traction in the Gulf as rulers look towards such dynamic economies as South Korea and Singapore for guidance on how to structure economic reform.<sup>133</sup> The term “Knowledge cities” which is frequently used in government media springs directly from this human capital formulation of education.<sup>134</sup> In Gulf monarchies however, education is rarely seen solely as the province of theories of economic growth – education remains very much a sector of political and cultural contention. As such, reform efforts touch on some of the most sensitive pillars of the regimes’ ruling balance.

Higher Education is a crucial institution, containing both formal and informal elements, for examining the complex bargaining process of state and society in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, education has been at the center of the modernization versus traditional interpretation of Islam debate in Saudi Arabia, and for that matter in the greater Middle East for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In terms of framing education reform in Islamic terms,

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<sup>130</sup> World Bank Group, *Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2002).; World Economic Forum, *World Competitiveness Report* (Geneva, Switzerland: Center for International Development, 2000).

<sup>131</sup> Global Information Infrastructure Commission, *Building the Global Information Economy*, (Washington DC, CSIS, 1998), 41-42.

<sup>132</sup> Rajani Naidoo, *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise*, (Paris: UNESCO, February 2007), 37-92. Available from [http://www.une.edu.au/chemp/projects/monitor/resources/he\\_global\\_commodity\\_observatory.pdf](http://www.une.edu.au/chemp/projects/monitor/resources/he_global_commodity_observatory.pdf).

<sup>133</sup> I personally attended three workshops and conferences sponsored by the government and Jeddah Chamber of Commerce on Saudi Arabia’s ‘knowledge economy’ while I was in Jeddah from January-May 2008.

<sup>134</sup> World Bank Group, *Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2002).

scholars such as Fatima Mernissi<sup>135</sup> have explored the tensions and possibilities in framing social and rights discourse in Islamic law. Bassam Tibi addressed the potentially conflicting constructs of ‘globalized knowledge’ and the revival of fundamentalist interpretations of knowledge in the Islamic world in several volumes of his work, the most notable of which is his extensive study on the revival of fundamentalist interpretations of Islam.<sup>136</sup> Historical scholars of the impact of scientific education on technological innovation in the Islamic world, such as Toby Huff, have pointed to the role of cultural and religious framings of science and institutional incorporation of scientific inquiry as a key factor in innovation.<sup>137</sup>

As Ambassador William Rugh outlined in “Education in Saudi Arabia: Choices and Constraints” the question of higher education’s function and place in an Islamic state is still very much at the forefront of the modernization debate in Saudi Arabia.<sup>138</sup> Rugh summarizes the three main challenges facing Saudi Arabian Higher Education as: Government regulation, the emphasis on rote memorization, and the proportion of the curriculum allocated for the study of religion.<sup>139</sup> In Saudi Arabia, higher education has reflected the political compromises of the Saudi state throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ellen

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<sup>135</sup> Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

<sup>136</sup> Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and then New World Disorder* (Berkeley: University of California Berkeley, 2002).; and Bassam Tibi. "The Worldview of Sunni Arab Fundamentalists: Attitudes toward Modern Science and Technology." In *Fundamentalisms and Society: Reclaiming the Sciences, the Family, and Education*, ed. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 73-102.

<sup>137</sup> Toby Huff, *The Rise of Early Modern Science: Islam, China, and the West* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003).; See also Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, “Changes in Ottoman Educational Life and Efforts Towards Modernization in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” in *The Introduction of Modern Science and Technology to Turkey and Japan*, ed. Feza Guner Gun (Kyoto: International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 1998), 119-36.; and Geneive Abdo, *No God but God: Egypt and the Triumph of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), Chapter Three.

<sup>138</sup> William Rugh, “Education in Saudi Arabia: Choices and Constraints,” *Middle East Policy* 9, no. 2 (June 2002): 40-55.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.



Doumato has stressed the central importance of education to the formation of a national, as opposed to tribal or regional identity:

Public education has been systemically enlisted in Saudi Arabia's nation-building project at least since 1970, when a national education policy was instituted putting Islam at the center of the curriculum, with a mandatory, uniform course of religious studies put to work in the country's growing number of classrooms. The success of that project is apparent everywhere, as young people today view Islam, not tribe or region, as the primary component of their identity.<sup>140</sup>

Today, when unemployment is seen as one of the most significant problems for the Saudi state, and a growing youth population is adding to pressure on the government to create new jobs,<sup>141</sup> the battle for control over the institutions of education has become ever more central to the national identity. And it is not just in Saudi Arabia, scholars such as Leveau have pointed to control over education as a contestation for political space in several Islamic republics, such as Egypt under Mohammed Abduh and in Algeria. In his examination of the Algerian civil war in the 1990s, Leveau argued that the Algerian government saw that education system as a fundamental fight over who controlled the government.<sup>142</sup> Indeed, education is increasingly serving as a touchstone for religious and national identity throughout the Middle East.

There is also a small but growing body of literature on women's education in the Islamic world, in particular in Saudi Arabia which links economic development to women's education and subsequent participation in the workforce. Scholars such as Mai

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<sup>140</sup> Patrick Clawson, Eleanor Abdella Doumato, F. Gregory Gause, David E. Long, and Kevin R. Taecker, "A Dialogue: Saudi Arabia." *SAIS Review* 22 no. 2 (2002): 199-228; See also Mai Yamani, *Changed Identities: The Challenge of the New Generation in Saudi Arabia* (London: Royal Institute for International Affairs, 2000), 63-66.

<sup>141</sup> Recent estimates suggest that over half of the Saudi population is between the ages of 15 and 64, and 38.2 percent is under the age of 15: United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report*, Saudi Arabia Country Fact Sheet, 2008, accessed December 20, 2009. Available from [http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data\\_sheets/cty\\_ds\\_SAU.html](http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_SAU.html).

<sup>142</sup> Remy Leveau, *Algeria: Adversaries in Search of Uncertain Compromises*, Chaillot Paper no. 4, September 1992.

Yamani<sup>143</sup> and Sarah Yamani<sup>144</sup> have focused on the role of higher education in women's participation in the workforce and in "Women, Education and Development in the Arab Gulf Countries" the Dubai Research Center credits the transition of solely religious education for women to a modern education system with the development of higher living standards in the Middle East.<sup>145</sup>

As Dale Eickeman suggests, mass education, even with a religious curriculum, can contribute to a forward-looking agenda by opening up debate over meaning. By teaching students to read, distributing scripture in written texts as opposed to using rote memorization, and introducing students to the sources of classical interpretation, the prerogative of interpretation has been transferred from the exclusive domain of religion specialists on the payroll of the states to the potential purview of the general public.<sup>146</sup> My third dissertation chapter will provide the historical context of this debate in Saudi Arabia to foreground the current institutional reform in higher education and its political nature.

### **Dissertations on Education Reform in Saudi Arabia**

There are unfortunately a dearth of dissertations that address political and social reforms in Saudi Arabia in the past decade – likely a result of the difficulty of conducting primary research in the Kingdom. However, there were several dissertations that closely

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<sup>143</sup> Yamani, *Changed Identities*.

<sup>144</sup> Sarah Yamani, "Toward a National Development Paradigm in the Arab World, A Comparative Study of Saudi Arabia and Qatar," *Al Nakhlah* (Spring 2006). Accessed December 2008; Available from [http://fletcher.tufts.edu/al\\_nakhlah/archives/spring2006/yamani.pdf](http://fletcher.tufts.edu/al_nakhlah/archives/spring2006/yamani.pdf).

<sup>145</sup> "Women, Education and Development in the Arab Gulf Countries," *The Emirates Occasional Papers*, (2004).

<sup>146</sup> Dale Eickelman, "Mass Higher Education and the Religious Imagination in Contemporary Arab Societies," *American Ethnologist* 19, no. 4 (1992): 643-635.

examined the early modernization projects of the states in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Two that I found particularly helpful in framing the political shifts in Saudi Arabia post WWII included Abdel-Fattah Mady, “Islam and Democracy: Elite Political Attitudes and the Democratization Process in the Arab Region” and, most crucially, Toby Craig Jones excellent dissertation “The Dogma of Development: Technopolitics and the Making of Saudi Arabia, 1950-1980s”.<sup>147</sup> Toby Jones’ in-depth examination of the development discourse in Saudi Arabia, particularly as it evolved in relationship to the oil boom era was particularly helpful in elucidating the early relationship between Saudi Aramco and the state. While Toby Craig Jones’ dissertation was particularly helpful as it included documents just made available by the Faisal Foundation in Riyadh, it unfortunately did not extend its analysis beyond 1979. Chad Parker’s “Transports of Progress: Saudi Aramco and American Modernization in Saudi Arabia 1945-1973” likewise focused on Saudi Aramco’s “modernization” imperative and how it reflected U.S. foreign policy of the day.

Surprisingly, I did find two dissertations examining the historical evolution of higher education in Saudi Arabia and its political impact. Both of these dissertations, “Higher education, political development and stability in Saudi Arabia”<sup>148</sup> by Abdullah Al-Lheedan and Maher Abouhaseira’s “Education, Political Development and Stability in Saudi Arabia”<sup>149</sup> were from the University of Southern California and were extremely

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<sup>147</sup> Toby Craig Jones, “The Dogma of Development: Techno-politics and the Making of Saudi Arabia, 1950-1980” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2006).

<sup>148</sup> Abdullah F. Al-Lheedan, “Higher Education, Political Development and Stability in Saudi Arabia” (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1994).

<sup>149</sup> Maher Abouhaseira, “Political Development, and Stability in Saudi Arabia” (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1998).

similar.<sup>150</sup> Due to the quality of its analysis Al-Lheedan's is the most relevant dissertation to my research as it connects educational change to the broader context of political reform, while Abouhaseira's is focused exclusively on the field of education. While Al-Lheedan places education reform in KSA in a useful and robust historic context, he does not extend his analysis beyond 1993 and thus does not analyze the emergence of privatization in higher education, the transformational effects of the new economic cities, the pressure of rising unemployment or indeed the effects of 9/11 on higher education.

Several other dissertations such as Faheem Mohammad Eisa's "Higher Education and Nation Building: A Case Study of King Abdulaziz University"<sup>151</sup> and Andre Elias Mazawi's article "The Academic Profession in a Rentier State: The Professoriate in Saudi Arabia"<sup>152</sup> offer a background history to the establishment of different public universities in Saudi Arabia but do not connect their individual cases to a broader social and political context in Saudi Arabia. The dissertation of Sarah Abdullah Mengash, "An Exploration of the Consequences of Two Alternatives on Women's Needs for Higher Education in Saudi Arabia: A Women's Independent University and a Women's Open University"<sup>153</sup> and Abdulaziz Alshahwan's "Establishing Private Universities in Saudi Arabia: A Descriptive Study of Public University Faculty Members' Perceptions"<sup>154</sup> were

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<sup>150</sup> Some of the passages are copied verbatim

<sup>151</sup> Mohammed Eisa Faheem, "Higher Education and Nation Building: A Case Study of King Abdul Aziz University" (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1982).

<sup>152</sup> Andre Elias Mazawi, "The Academic Profession in a Rentier State: The Professoriate in Saudi Arabia," *Minerva* 43 (2005): 221-224.

<sup>153</sup> Hamad Al Ali Al-Ajroush, "A Historical Development of the Public Secondary School Curriculum in Saudi Arabia from 1930 to the Present" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Oklahoma, 1981).

<sup>154</sup> Abdulaziz Shahwan Alshahwan, "Establishing Private Universities in Saudi Arabia: A Descriptive Study of Public University Faculty Members' Perceptions" (Ed.D. diss., Washington State University, 2002).

both useful for raw data, but have more of an educationalist focus on class structure, learning dynamics, and normative questions of educational methodology. I have instead purposely chosen to focus on the question of the process of institutional change in higher education, as opposed to its normative effects due to its tie in to the greater political context.

## Chapter Two

### The Establishment of the Saudi Arabian State

The institutional history of education in Saudi Arabia is deeply interwoven with the development trends and ideological struggles that have challenged the Al Saud regime throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Unlike the autocratic modernization in Turkey under Atatürk and Iran under the Shah, which led to largely secular education systems<sup>155</sup>, Saudi Arabia's education system has remained largely reflective of conservative Wahhabism, despite a massive state expansion and modernization push. To properly understand why, it is first necessary to understand the political and religious pillars of the Al Saud's rule in the modern Saudi state and trace the arc of its consolidation of various political and social rivals.

#### Religion and Nation Building (1744-1932)

What is now considered the modern Saudi state, formally established in 1932, is actually a third version of Al Saud rule in the territory now known as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. While this chapter will only briefly touch on the first and second 'Saudi' regimes, it is worth noting that the current regime's strength and ability to consolidate

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<sup>155</sup> Touraj Atabaki and Erik J. Zürcher, eds., *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Atatürk and Reza Shah* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004). Atatürk abolished the caliphate, latinized the alphabet and secularized the education system. Reza Shah settled nomadic tribes and established secular education and judicial systems.

power relied on traditional merger of religious backing and tribal conquest that characterized state formation on the tribal frontier of Islamic civilization.<sup>156</sup>

The traditional narrative of the modern Saudi Arabian State places the symbiotic pact struck by Muhammad Abd al-Aziz and his son Abd al-Aziz Al Saud (ruled 1765-1803) and the founder of Wahhabism, the religious scholar Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, in 1744 at the heart of the political compromise between the Al Sauds and the *ulema*. As part of this ruling pact, the *ulema* have been viewed as the traditional participants in religion, education and the administration of justice in Saudi Arabia. On their part the Al Sauds presided over the management of political and military affairs with the *ulema* providing the religious legitimacy for their rule.<sup>157</sup> Indeed, no member of the *ulema* has ever served as prime minister, or as minister for the key ministries of Foreign Affairs, Economy, Defense, Health, Interior, or Petroleum. Saudi *ulema* have however served prominently as ministers of Education, Higher Education, Girls Education and Justice.<sup>158</sup>

### **“Wahhabism” and the Saudi State**

The first ‘Saudi’ Kingdom originated in the central Najd region of the Arabian Peninsula. At that time, Saudi Arabia was largely composed of nomadic tribal peoples and scattered settled oases. The population was largely illiterate with the exception of a

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<sup>156</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).; see also “Ibn Khaldun and Frederick Jackson Turner: Islam and the Frontier Experience,” *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 18, (July, 1983): 274-285.

<sup>157</sup> Natana DeLong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam from Revival to Global Jihad* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), 3-40. ; Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Al Saqi Books, 2000), 287-311, 452-482.

<sup>158</sup> Alexander Bligh, “The Saudi Religious Elite (*ulema*) as Participant in the Political System of the Kingdom,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17, no. 1 (Feb., 1985): 37-50.

few elite Hijazi families and religious scholars.<sup>159</sup> In 1744 Muhammad Abd al-Aziz, a leader in the Najd regions of the country, and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the founder of what is now known as “Wahhabism” entered into a religio-political pact to govern. Upon the death of Muhammad Abd al-Aziz in 1788, his son, Saud, was designated as *Wali al-ahd*, rightful leader, and loyalty by Najd tribes was sworn to him through the traditional Islamic *bai’ah*, or oath of allegiance.<sup>160</sup>

The relationship of the Al Saud dynasty to the “Wahhabi” strand of Sunni Islam has been a fundamental pillar of the regime’s claim to legitimacy, both within Saudi Arabia and on the global level of the Umma. While the term “Wahhabism” has at times been viewed as a controversial label, it provides a widely recognized short-hand for the particular variant of Sunni Islam practiced and promoted both within and outside the Kingdom.<sup>161</sup> The founder of Wahhabism, Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, promoted the doctrine of *tawhid* (the one-ness of God) and the absolute rejection of *shirk* or idolatry.<sup>162</sup> While there has been an active debate about the nature of the Saudi population’s religious beliefs prior to the active promotion of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s strict interpretation of Sunni Islam – the popular narrative of the state, promoted in textbooks and official publications, maintains that the peninsula was awash in polytheistic beliefs

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<sup>159</sup> Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Saqi Books, 1998), 29-63.

<sup>160</sup> The practice of *Bai’ah* remains a symbolic ritual observed by the Al Saud family to this day upon the succession of a monarch.

<sup>161</sup> Tim Niblock, *Saudi Arabia: Power, Legitimacy and Survival* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 23. Wahhabism is more correctly referred to as Salafism as Saudi clerics refer to themselves as Salafists or Ahl al-*Tawhid*. However, the term Wahhabism has become popularized in both political science and policy circles and thus will be used here in reference to signal the Saudi religious establishment’s strand of Islam; Guido Steinberg, “The Wahhabi Ulema and the Saudi State,” in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society, Foreign Affairs*, ed. Paul Aarts & Gerd Nonneman, (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

<sup>162</sup> DeLong-Bas, 24, 56-60.



that had deviated from the true meaning of Islam and that Ibn Wahhab was a purifying force for a society that had embraced a corrupt interpretation of Islam.<sup>163</sup>

Muhammad Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab preached a return to first principles, namely that of the Quran and the Sunna (the reported sayings and deeds of the Prophet) to inform the practice of Shari'a. *Bida'ah*, defined as innovation not expressly endorsed in the Quran or Sunna, was forbidden. This rejection of *Bida'ah* is one of the most striking characteristics of the Hanbali School of Islamic thought which shaped Abd Al-Wahhab's thought. Combined with the rejection of *Bida'ah* was the rejection of Taqlid – which is defined as the reliance on traditions of past scholars rather than the direct study of the Quran and hadith.<sup>164</sup>

One of the most significant Hanbali precursors to Ibn Wahhab was the 14<sup>th</sup> century alim, Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya (henceforth referred to as Ibn Taymiyya). Ibn Taymiyya adamantly opposed all innovations that deviated from the original texts of Islam in theory or practice. In practice this meant actively opposing Sufis and the cult of saints and even the pilgrimage to the Prophet Mohammed's mausoleum in Medina as it was seen as deviating from *tawhid*.<sup>165</sup> The Wahhabis recognized the four imams, the founders of the four orthodox schools of Islam as well as the Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayim, but rejected almost all subsequent interpretations and scholars.<sup>166</sup>

An important unifying aspect of these scholars was the belief in the importance of obeying the *Wali al-ahd* or rightful temporal authority. Revolts against righteous leaders

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<sup>163</sup> *Excerpts from Saudi Ministry of Education Textbooks for Islamic Studies* (accessed September 2009); available from [http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/special\\_report/ArabicExcerpts.pdf](http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/special_report/ArabicExcerpts.pdf).

<sup>164</sup> DeLong-Bas, 13

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 25

<sup>166</sup> Steinberg.

were expressly forbidden. Ibn Taymiyya taught that if religion and power were separated, disorder would result in the state.<sup>167</sup> This injunction was particularly powerful in the atmosphere of the early Saudi state which was exceedingly vulnerable to tribal instability. The political unity of the Islamic community was only preserved by the *mubai'ah* -“a double oath of allegiance joining the Imam and his subjects, which guarantees effective power to the former and social peace and prosperity to the latter.”<sup>168</sup>

What was important about this religious vision as it was translated into the political sphere was that the political leader must to proclaim and adhere to the principle of *tawhid*. All earthly power had to necessarily to grow out of recognition of the unique and all-powerful role of God. The legitimacy of the political leader, and society's obligation to give him allegiance, is dependent on his religious “righteousness”. This principle of *Wali al-ahd* served as the theological underpinning for Sheikh Muhammad abd al-Wahhab and his successors' support of the Al Saud regime.<sup>169</sup>

Muhammad Abd al-Aziz gave Ibn Abd al-Wahhab his protection and accepted his doctrine of *tawhid*. Thus, the first Saudi state was formed through the oath of alliance (*bai'ah*) between Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad Abd al-Aziz. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was responsible for the religious sphere of authority and Muhammad Abd al-Azizi had authority over the political and military spheres. As Natana DeLong-Bas describes the delineation of roles, “Ibn Abd al-Wahhab promised not to interfere with Muhammad Abd

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<sup>167</sup> Joseph Kechichian, “The Role of the *ulema* in the Politics of an Islamic State: The Case of Saudi Arabia,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 18, no. 1 (Feb. 1986): 54

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> DeLong-Bas, 9

al-Aziz's state consolidation, and Muhammad Abd al-Aziz promised to uphold Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's religious teachings."<sup>170</sup>

This alliance would be challenged during the formation of the third, and what constitutes the modern Saudi state as the Al Saud regime had to struggle with what to do when the principles of state maintenance and stability challenged the religious foundations upon which it is based. In practice, the maintenance of a modern state – its military, economic and indeed social might - requires an adaptation of Islam to technological advances. Thus, despite its strict rejection of *bida'ah*, the Wahhabi religious establishment, or *ulema*, have often acquiesced to technological development at the insistence of the Al Saud regime after initial rejection of such developments as radio, television, telephones, and insurance.<sup>171</sup> This particular push-pull dynamic between the technical and developmental needs of the state and its ideological underpinnings is a reoccurring theme throughout the establishment of the modern Saudi state in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and will be dealt with in greater detail throughout this dissertation.

### **The Modern Saudi State**

The third and present Saudi Arabian kingdom was established through the conquest of the Hijaz in 1925 by Abd al-Aziz ibn Abd Al Rahman Al Faisal Al Saud, also known as "Ibn Saud" and henceforth referred to here as Abd al-Aziz.<sup>172</sup> Abd al-Aziz established his control over disparate regions of Saudi Arabia through both conquest and

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<sup>170</sup> Delong-Bas, 35

<sup>171</sup> David Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 110-112

<sup>172</sup> Frequently referred to as Ibn Saud, but so as not to confuse with his son, King Saud, this dissertation will refer to him as Abd Al-Aziz

alliance making among tribes and oasis dwellers. The borders that King Abd al-Aziz established largely remain to this day.

The birthplace of Abd al-Aziz, the Najd region, is located in the center of the Kingdom, a region surrounded by desert. As such, it was never an object of permanent conquest and unlike the surrounding emirates remained reasonably free from foreign domination.<sup>173</sup> Even when other portions of Arabia, such as the Hijaz, were under Ottoman jurisdiction, the Najd remained independent. However, while it never served as a colonial outpost for the Ottoman Empire, the Najd region's history is rife with tribal warfare and feuds between settled areas and nomadic peoples.<sup>174</sup> The fertile Hijaz region in the west on the other hand has a long history of being at the crossroads of international commerce through caravan routes, education, and the proximity of the two holy places of Mecca and Medina, through which millions of pilgrims have traveled through to perform the Hajj and which, until the discovery of oil, was the main revenue stream of the Saudi state.<sup>175</sup>

As Abd al-Aziz sought to expand from the Najd westward to the Hijaz, he sought the support and military prowess of various nomadic tribes. In order to control the tribes, starting in 1916, Abd al-Aziz began to assist settling various nomadic tribes on the Arabian Peninsula into various areas known as Hujar.<sup>176</sup> By leading these tribes to adopt

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<sup>173</sup> An important exception; Egyptian forces did invade the Saudi fort at Diri'ya. See Vassiliev, 140-143.

<sup>174</sup> John S. Habib, *Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam: The Ikhwan of Najd and Their Role in the Creation of the Saudi Kingdom, 1910-1930* (Leiden, The Netherlands, Brill, 1978).

<sup>175</sup> Joseph Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia: 1916-1936* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>176</sup> Habib.

agriculture and embrace the revivalist Wahhabi creed, Abd al-Aziz sought to gain their support and benefit from their military skills by creating them into a standing army.<sup>177</sup>

This was an alliance that rested on traditional notions of “chieftaincy” as opposed to nation-building or political creed. These tribal groups affiliated with Abd al-Aziz began to call themselves “Ikhwan” or brothers<sup>178</sup> were instrumental to Abd al-Aziz’s expansion of power into the Hijaz. By channeling the Ikhwan’s strict devotion to Hanbali rites, Abd al-Aziz enabled the suppression of the strongest Bedouin tribes, and militarily conquered the Hijaz region. However, as Kostiner aptly states, “a superstructure of sedentarization, religious revivalism and army duties imposed on a tribal structure generated unpredictable results.”<sup>179</sup> The Ikhwan’s growing power began to present both a domestic and international obstacle to Abd Al-Aziz’s vision of a united Saudi Kingdom.

Abd al-Aziz’s authority was directly connected to his ability to control the tribes and unit disparate elements of his widespread Kingdom. To do so, Abd al-Aziz aimed at turning the Saudi state into a center of pilgrimage and trade facilitated by the comparatively well-educated Hijazi urban elite. This required adopting new means of communication and technology such as the radio and telegraph. He also employed educated foreign advisers mainly from Egypt and Syria and looked toward stabilizing his rule internationally through negotiations with the British. This reliance on foreign elites

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<sup>177</sup> Joseph Kostiner, “On Instruments and their Designers: The Ikhwan of Najd and the Formation of the Saudi State,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 21 (1985): 298-323. See also Joseph Kostiner, “Transforming Dualities: Tribe and State Formation in Saudi Arabia” in *Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East*, eds. P.S. Khoury and J. Kostiner (University of California Press, 1991), 226

<sup>178</sup> For more on the dynamics of the Ikhwan, see Vassiliev, 227-234.; and Kostiner, *Dualities of State Formation*, 232.; See also L.P. Goldrup, “Saudi Arabia, 1902-1932: The Development of a Wahhabi Society” (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 1971).

<sup>179</sup> Kostiner, *Dualities of State Formation*, 232. See also L.P. Goldrup “Saudi Arabia, 1902-1932: The Development of a Wahhabi Society” (Ph.D. diss, UCLA, 1971).

infuriated the more fanatical Ikhwan who saw Abd Al-Aziz as abandoning their religious creed.<sup>180</sup>

On the domestic level, the unchecked power of the Ikhwan in the Hijaz threatened the underpinnings of the nascent state. Given free rein to raid the Hijaz, the Ikhwan motivated by moral and religious fervor destroyed what they saw as idolatrous innovations, such as the tomb of Abu Bakr, and smashed mirrors and symbols of modernity in both Taif and Mecca. In 1926, a group of Ikhwan attacked Egyptian pilgrims on their way to Mecca, for not acting according to the Wahhabi way.<sup>181</sup> The Ikhwan did not limit their criticism to the the Hijaz. One Ikhwan leader, Al-Darwish, demanded that Abd Al-Aziz open new schools in the Najd with Ikhwan to supervise the curriculum, close down the coffee-houses and ban the traditional gossip in them.<sup>182</sup> Technological advances such as telephone and radio were deemed devil's inventions by the Ikhwan and the first truck that appeared in Al Hasa was burnt.<sup>183</sup> The Ikhwan also vociferously opposed Abd Al-Aziz's sending his sons to visit London and Cairo, the lands of the infidel in their eyes. In response to the Ikhwan's intrusion Hijazi elites and indeed local *ulema* began to protest to Abd al-Aziz about the Ikhwan's growing zealotry.<sup>184</sup>

Abd al-Aziz, though conscious of the Ikhwan's and *ulema*'s disapproval, saw the usefulness of modern communications in the maintenance of law and order in his growing Kingdom. In 1927, as relations between Abd Al-Aziz and the Ikhwan worsened,

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<sup>180</sup> Joseph Kostiner, "On Instruments and Their Designers: The Ikhwan of Najd and the Formation of the Saudi State," *Middle Eastern Studies* 21 (1985): 298-323.

<sup>181</sup> Vassiliev, 269-270.

<sup>182</sup> Joseph Kostiner, "On Instruments and Their Designers," 308.

<sup>183</sup> Vassiliev, 268-269.

<sup>184</sup> Joseph Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia: 1916-1936* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 131-132.

the King called for a meeting attended by religious leaders, heads of tribes, princes, and military. The objective of the meeting was to convince the leaders in a public debate that the use of the telegraph did not contradict Islamic principles. Abd al-Aziz gradually co-opted the resistance of these conservative elements by demonstrating the usefulness of the reading of the Quran by telephone and the broadcast of *ulema* sermons and teachings on the radio. The final step was that he had their leaders issue a religious decree (Fatwa) that the king's decision to install the telegraph system had no contradiction with Islam.<sup>185</sup>

In addition Abd al-Aziz declared that only "official" or state approved religious scholars were entitled to issue fatwas - scholars who were not approved by the *ulema* council – controlled by the state - were not allowed to preach or interpret texts.<sup>186</sup> However, in turn, Abd al-Aziz founded the League of Public Morality, the predecessor for the contemporary committee for the Encouragement of virtue and the prevention of vice and placed it under the authority of *ulema* from the Al-Shaikh family – direct descendants of Ibn Wahhab.<sup>187</sup>

On the international front, In 1927 Abd al-Aziz reached a compromise with Britain, the dominant power in the region, over borders for his Kingdom which maintained the British client Hashemite Kingdoms in Transjordan and Iraq. This pact included circumscribing Ikhwan raids into Transjordan and Iraq. The Ikhwan chafed at these newly delineated borders with the British colonial kingdoms and continued to raid

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<sup>185</sup> Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission*, 88.

<sup>186</sup> Madawi Al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State: Islamic Voices from a New Generation* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 28.

<sup>187</sup> Joseph Kostiner, "On Instruments and their Designers; the Ikhwan of Najd and the Emergence of the Saudi State", *Middle Eastern Studies* 21 (1985) 298-323

beyond the borders that Abd al-Aziz had agreed to with the British.<sup>188</sup> The Ikhwan leaders of the rebellion claimed to be genuine defenders of Islam and accused Abd Al-Aziz of turning his back on the faith and collaborating with the infidel British for the sake of material gain.<sup>189</sup>

Scholars such as John S. Habib and Kechichian have cited the Ikhwan's objections to Abd al-Aziz's relations with infidel Britain as an extension of their religious world view, Kostiner on the other hand maintains that it is essential to understand the Ikhwan's rebellion against Abd al-Aziz in the context of a tribal revolt due to deteriorating power of chieftaincy and the limits Abd al-Aziz began to put on tribal autonomy and the freedom to raid.<sup>190</sup> Each of these interpretations of the Ikhwan's motives indicates the strain put on holding together a fragile alliance and volatile alliance while attempting to consolidate and create a modern state. As Abd al-Aziz began to expand his rule from chieftaincy to national ruler, the tribal force that he helped to build and channel into his private army, became an increasing liability.

### **Battle of Sabila**

The defining moment of the creation of the modern Saudi state came with the Battle of Sabila when Abd Al-Aziz quashed the Ikhwan insurgency using all the military power, diplomatic support and technological means at his disposal. Abd Al-Aziz turned to the British to help fight the Ikhwan with modern military power. He requested weapons and ammunition in addition to a troop ship to transport 1000 men from Jidda to

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Habib, 136.

<sup>190</sup> Joseph Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia: 1916-1936* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1993), 6-10



‘Uqayr, the heart of the insurgency. British aircraft dealt the final blow, chasing the Ikhwan out of Kuwait as they sought protection. In January 1930 the leaders of the rebellion surrendered to the British and were then transferred to Abd Al-Aziz.<sup>191</sup>

While they were defeated militarily, the Ikhwan did not disappear from Abd Al-Aziz’s political calculus. The tribes were co-opted and given positions of importance in the new and expanding government.<sup>192</sup> In a similar manner, the Najd *ulema* who had been threatened by the over reach of the Ikhwan into their sphere of traditional religious authority were likewise given positions of responsibility. Thus power in the nascent Saudi state was divided between members of the Al Saud family, the *ulema*, led by the al-Shaykh family who were descendants of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, and co-opted tribal leaders.<sup>193</sup>

### **Co-optation**

Despite objections from both the *ulema* and the Ikhwan, King Abd Al-Aziz fully embraced the usefulness of technology in maintaining and expanding his Kingdom. The state’s practical needs proved stronger than the resistance of the Ikhwan and *ulema* as radio, telephone and cars were increasingly introduced to the Kingdom.

During Abd al-Aziz’s rule schools for radio operators were opened in Mecca, Jeddah, Medina and Riyadh and over sixty radio stations were established in the

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<sup>191</sup> Habib, 144-150

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Kostiner, “On Instruments and Their Designers”.

Kingdom.<sup>194</sup> By 1933 there were 28-telegraph stations in the Kingdom and a growing network of roads.

In 1931 ten young Saudis were sent to Italy to study aeronautics and form the basis of the first Saudi air force.<sup>195</sup> This embrace of modern technology extended beyond the royal family in the 1930's as record players and film projectors started to appear in private houses in the Hijaz, even though the state still officially banned them.<sup>196</sup> Thus, technology and the Wahhabi code became uneasy partners in the creation King Abd Al-Aziz's new state.

### **Oil and the advent of the Rentier State**

Abd al-Aziz maintained authority over his fledgling kingdom through personal charisma and informal alliances with tribal leaders, the merchants, and the religious establishment.<sup>197</sup> This model served the early demographic structure of the Saudi state well as in the Najd region between 1930-1950 no more than a third of the population lived in towns. However, the global forces associated with the oil industry would dramatically increase the push for centralization and urbanization.<sup>198</sup>

The discovery of oil led the Saudi State to transition from the tribal chieftaincy of Abd Al-Aziz, to a powerful state capable of influencing the global economy within the

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<sup>194</sup> Vassiliev, 308-309.

<sup>195</sup> Vassiliev, 308-309.

<sup>196</sup> Joseph Kostiner, "Transforming Dualities: Tribes and State Formation in Saudi Arabia", in *Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East*, eds. P.S.Khoury and J.Kostiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

<sup>197</sup> Sarah Yizraeli, *The Remaking of Saudi Arabia: The Struggle Between King Sa'Ud and Crown Prince Faysal, 1953-1962* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 188.; The monarchy's relationship with the business community will be explored further in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

<sup>198</sup> Christine Moss Helms, *The Cohesion of Saudi Arabia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 31-37.

span of a few decades. While in the early years of Abd al-Aziz's rule, his consolidation of the kingdom and subsequent centralization of rule contended with tribal authority, as seen with the Ikhwan revolt, the post-oil modernization push pitted centralizing development policies against a weakened, but still pervasive tribal infrastructure.

The transition from informal ruling coalition to the beginnings of a modern administrative state can be traced to 1933 and the first oil concession to Standard Oil of California (SoCal), a U.S. firm which would form the basis of Aramco. In 1950 King Abd Al-Aziz threatened to nationalize the oil facilities unless Aramco increased the original concessionary agreement terms to a 50/50 share of the profits.<sup>199</sup> The eventual acceptance of these terms by Aramco led to an exponential rate of economic growth in Saudi Arabia.

The oil revenues that began to flood into the Kingdom, along with foreign capital and companies, dramatically shaped the evolution of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy and internal politics.<sup>200</sup> While the Kingdom was officially decreed sovereign in 1932, it was not until 1953 that the government's formal bureaucratic administrative arms were established.<sup>201</sup> The post-WWII global demand for oil led to an unprecedented increase in revenues for the fledgling Saudi state. Oil revenues rose from 4.82 million in 1945 to 260 million in 1954, an increase of 5400%.<sup>202</sup> This sudden flood of wealth would lead to the increase of western influence through FDI, training, and staffing of the nascent

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<sup>199</sup> Original Source: J.C. Hurewitz, ed., *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record*, vol. 2: 1914-1956 (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand, 1956), 314-21;(accessed November 12, 2009); available from

[http://wps.pearsoncustom.com/wps/media/objects/2426/2484749/chap\\_assets/documents/doc34\\_3.html](http://wps.pearsoncustom.com/wps/media/objects/2426/2484749/chap_assets/documents/doc34_3.html)

<sup>200</sup> Rachel Bronson, *Thicker than Oil: America's Uneasy Partnership with Saudi Arabia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); See also Anthony Cave Brown, *Oil, God, and Gold: The Story of Aramco and the Saudi Kings* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1999).

<sup>201</sup> Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia 1916-1936*.

<sup>202</sup> Yizraeli, 103

ministries.<sup>203</sup>

In 1951 King Abd al-Aziz instructed Crown Prince Saud to investigate the administrative machinery of the Hijaz and to submit proposals for its reform with a view to unifying the administration of the country as a whole.<sup>204</sup> An advisory council was set up to create some hundreds of *nizmas* (codes) and orders to deal with various situations, defined the status of state and public services and organize courts, a health system and a post and telegraph service.<sup>205</sup> In 1953, the final year of Abd al-Aziz's reign, the first formal government cabinet was created.<sup>206</sup> As Summer Huyette details, the statute issued when the cabinet was first formed explained the need for a ministerial system by reference to "the increase in the number of obligations and the diversification of the tasks imposed on the government."<sup>207</sup>

However, the most effective administrative apparatus in the new Saudi state was not a part of the government at all. Aramco shaped the modernization drive and structure of the administrative arms of government in ways that reverberate until the present day.

<sup>208</sup> The next section will detail Aramco's relationship with the development of the Saudi

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<sup>203</sup> See Toby Craig Jones, "The Dogma of Development: Techno-politics and the Making of Saudi Arabia, 1950-1980" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2006), for more on the staffing of ministries by Americans in the 1950s.

<sup>204</sup> See Raymond Hare's Report of November 16, 1952 in I. al-Rashid, ed., *Documents of the History of Saudi Arabia; The Struggle between Two Princes: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the Final Days of Ibn Saud* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Documentary Publications, 1985), 10-14.

<sup>205</sup> Vassiliev, 296.

<sup>206</sup> Yizraeli, 101.; See also Ghassan Salame, "Political Power and the Saudi State," in *The Modern Middle East*, eds. A. Hourani, PS Khoury (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), 579-600

<sup>207</sup> Yizraeli, 103.; and Summer Huyette, *Political adaptation in Sa'udi Arabia: A Study of the Council of Ministers* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985).

<sup>208</sup> Brown, *Oil, God and Gold.*; See also Chad Parker, "Transports of Progress: The Arabian American Oil Company and American Modernization in Saudi Arabia, 1945-1973" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2009).; A dissenting view to this narrative of Aramco as modernizing entity is Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), Vitalis argues that Aramco's hiring and labor practices largely reflected those of the US in the 1950's with

Arabian Government (SAG) through its key role in the establishment of the education sector in Saudi Arabia.

### **The Establishment of Education**

Prior to the influx of oil revenues education in Saudi Arabia was largely informal and traditional. Most students were educated at Kuttab (Quranic) schools, which functioned at the elementary level and were attached to the mosque or religious scholars. In these schools the curriculum focused on the aural memorization of the Quran, with basic literacy taught through Quranic reading.<sup>209</sup> As one educational expert described, “traditional Islamic instruction rested firmly on memorization rather than intellectual inquiry, respect for the past rather than a search for the new.”<sup>210</sup>

Education beyond Quranic schools was viewed as an elite endeavor sponsored by wealthy families. These ‘private’ schools were not integrated into a national system, and were seen as separate from the rest of the emerging Saudi state. At the time of the modern Saudi state’s foundation, several secondary schools existed in the Hijaz as part of the mercantilist class, supported by the local Ottoman magistrates.<sup>211</sup> The wealthy also employed private tutors, often Egyptian or Syrian, who instructed their children in

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widespread racial discrimination. A key moment that he uses to illustrate this is the labor riots of the 1950’s against Aramco by Arab employees.

<sup>209</sup> George T. Trial and R. Bayly Winder, “Modern Education in Saudi Arabia,” *History of Education Journal* 1, no. 3 (Spring, 1950): 121-133. Accessed March 2, 2010. Available from Google Scholar.; and Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission*, 123-125.

<sup>210</sup> John M. Munro, “On Campus in Saudi Arabia,” *Saudi Aramco World* (July/August 1974); available from <http://www.saudiAramcoworld.com/issue/197404/on.campus.in.saudi.arabia.htm>.

<sup>211</sup> Although the Ottomans established a system of schools throughout Yemen and the Hijaz, these schools were built for the children of Turkish officials and soldiers, the medium of instruction was Turkish, and they were not used by the Arabs in the Hijaz. See Jamal Alami, “Education in the Hijaz under Turkish and Sharifian Rule,” *The Islamic Quarterly*, vol. XIX (January- June 1975): 42-47

religion and literature.<sup>212</sup> In 1937, the first secondary school to teach a primarily secular curriculum was founded in the Hijaz to prepare students for higher education in Egypt.<sup>213</sup> In short, formal education, where available, was an urban elite pursuit, seen as entirely separate from the state.

The low literacy rates among the Saudi population well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century reflect this situation. Indeed, UNESCO estimated that in 1960 only 5% of Saudis were literate.<sup>214</sup> The mainly traditional educational environment that dominated the early Saudi Arabian state clearly did not correspond with the needs of the rapidly expanding and technologically advanced oil sector upon which all of the Saudi Arabian state's wealth would soon rest.

### **Enter Aramco**

Aramco was designed to function as an island – cordoned off behind compound walls to efficiently extract oil without meddling in the internal affairs of the Saudi government. Article 36 of the oil concession agreement of 1933, stated that “it is distinctly understood that the company or anyone connected with it shall have no right to interfere with the administrative, political or religious affairs within Saudi Arabia.”<sup>215</sup> As a 1952 Time magazine article describe the arrangement, “U.S. technicians headed for duty in Saudi Arabia were assiduously schooled in Arab courtesy. No Christian chapel was built on the Aramco concession for fear of offending Ibn Saud's hard-shell Moslem

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<sup>212</sup> Vassiliev, 268.

<sup>213</sup> Richard Nyrop and Norman C. Walpole, *Area Handbook for Saudi Arabia* (Washington: Supt. of Docs., U.S. Govt. Print. Off, 1977)

<sup>214</sup> UNESCO statistical yearbook, 1960.

<sup>215</sup> Ismail I. Nawwab, Peter C. Speers, and Paul F. Hoye, eds. *Aramco and Its World: Arabia and the Middle East* (Dhahran, Saudi Arabia: Aramco, 1980), 235

subjects. The company wanted no trouble; it wanted to be allowed to stay around and get out the oil.”<sup>216</sup> However, the symbiotic relationship between Aramco and the Saudi government often led to Aramco being asked to take the lead in implementing development initiatives in the Eastern Province. While Aramco remained separated from Saudi society at large behind compound walls, its cultural impact, in combination with the effects of sudden massive oil wealth and the technological apparatus needed to sustain the oil industry, was undeniable.

In both the establishment and expansion of formal education, especially in the Eastern Province where Aramco based its operations, Aramco was asked by the SAG to play a substantial role. The concession agreement of 1933 stipulated that Aramco had to employ Saudi Arab nationals as far as it was practical. However, in 1933 almost none of the population of the region had any experience of working in modern industry or with modern technologies. As described above, formal education was virtually nonexistent, and literacy outside of the Hijaz region was rare. Aramco would have to facilitate the establishment of an independent training and education system for its own operations and to meet the Saudi Arabian Government’s (SAG) terms of the concession agreement.<sup>217</sup>

By 1940 there were 22 Saudi employees receiving special training in Dhahran, while another 26 had been sent to Bahrain for training. Training expanded after the end of WWII and by 1950 over 4000 Saudi employees (about 40% of the Saudi workforce) were receiving instruction in some 144 different crafts, trades, and skills from a staff of about

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<sup>216</sup> “Trouble for Aramco”, *Time Magazine*, Jan. 28, 1952. Accessed September 8, 2010. Available at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,806272,00.html>

<sup>217</sup> Nawwab et al., 277.

250 full-time and part-time teachers.<sup>218</sup> Aramco also sponsored a local day school to prepare Arabs to enter the training school at Ra's Tannrah. Its curriculum was limited to courses relevant to vocational training, such as English, typing, and book-keeping. In addition to vocational and day schools, Aramco offered on-the-job training. By August of 1948, over eleven hundred of Aramco's eight thousand Arab employees were receiving some form of on-the-job training.<sup>219</sup>

The period 1951-52 was marked by considerable pressure from Aramco's Saudi employees for the Company to grant them increased benefits. This pressure took the form of complaints and petitions directed to both Aramco and the SAG. One major complaint was that foreigners were being trained for better jobs than Saudis and that advanced training for Saudis was being neglected.<sup>220</sup> The SAG began to take notice and pressure Aramco to expand its training and education programs beyond employees to the local community. One such letter from the SAG to Aramco concluded:

The Labor & Workmen Regulations require the Company to open schools for the education of the workmen's children, and education cannot be limited to some workmen learning trades only. Also the Company has taken this step transferring their schools to trade schools before receiving the Government's final approval and so contradicted the aim sought in establishing the schools. The Company has therefore to open promptly an elementary school in Dhahran managed by the Education Directorate due to Dhahran's need of this school, with advice to us.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Trial and Winder, 121-133

<sup>220</sup> Vitalis, *America's Kingdom*, 145-153.; See also "Company Built SAG School Program," Letter from Mr. Harry McDonald, General Manager, Government Relations, October 10, 1967, William E. Mulligan Papers, Box 5 Folder 14, which cites Letter No. 4964/481/1 from Minister of Finance to Company Representative, Jiddah, dated 16 July 1951.

<sup>221</sup> "Company Built SAG School Program," Letter from Mr. Harry McDonald, General Manager, Government Relations, October 10, 1967, William E. Mulligan Papers, Georgetown University Special Collections, Box 5 Folder 14.



In addition to government pressure to establish schools for sons of Saudi Aramco employees, there was considerable pressure from the employees themselves due, in large measure, to inadequacies of the existing school system in the Eastern Province.<sup>222</sup> At that time, the estimated population of the Eastern Province where Aramco's operations were centered was 200,000. There were only 18 schools in the area (between Jubail and Hofuf) having a total enrollment of less than 5,000. The Director of Education for the Eastern Province estimated the demand for enrollment to be over 10,000.<sup>223</sup>

According to an Aramco report, in January 1953 Crown Prince Sa'ud and his advisers arrived in Dhahran for an official three week visit to the Eastern Province to resolve employee grievances and issues of Government jurisdiction. The resulting agreement stipulated that schools built by Aramco would become an integral part of the school systems of the Al Hasa province. The SAG would be responsible for operating the schools, determining the curriculum, the hiring and control of teachers, while Aramco would provide technical assistance and aid in locating teachers and administrators to staff the schools.<sup>224</sup> In practice however, Aramco and the SAG would become partners in education in the communities surrounding Aramco's operations.

## **The Expansion of a National Education System**

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<sup>222</sup> Most of Saudi Arabia's Shia population, estimated to be around 15% of the total population, live in the Eastern Province. The Shias have rioted on several occasions claiming persistent SAG government discrimination and regional underdevelopment. For more on the Shias in Saudi Arabia see Toby Craig Jones, "Rebellion on the Saudi Periphery: Modernity, Marginalization and the Shi'a Uprising of 1979," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38 no. 2 (May, 2006): 213-233.; See also Chapter Three of this dissertation.

<sup>223</sup> "Company Built SAG School Program," Letter from Mr. Harry McDonald, General Manager, Government Relations, October 10, 1967, William E. Mulligan Papers, Georgetown University Special Collections, Box 5 Folder 14.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

The Saudi Directorate of Education was established on March 15, 1926. However, it was not until it was raised to the ministerial level in December, 1953 that a push towards a national education system was begun.<sup>225</sup>

Public schools, financed by the state for the first time, were opened exclusively for male students and a concerted focus on expanding education began as the revenues from oil increased along with the need for a professional bureaucracy to manage it. As the table below shows, the Ministry of Education’s budget approximately doubled from 87 million riyals to over 160 million riyals in a matter of four years (1957-1961). By 1959 the Ministry of Education was the highest funded social ministry, attesting to its centrality in the government’s development priorities.

**Table 1: Budgetary Allocations for Saudi Social Welfare Ministries, 1958-1962**<sup>226</sup>

Ministry	July, 1957-July 1958	Dec. 1961- Dec. 1962
Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs	2,000,000	21,480,000
Ministry of Education	87,000,000	160,570,000
Schools	7,330,000	10,601,400
Ministry of Communications	115,600,000	93,226,500
Ministry of Agriculture	21,000,000	33,840,000
Ministry of Health	44,700,000	68,447,000
Religious Institutes & Colleges	10,500,000	11,921,800
Public Allocations & Subsidies	-	52,000,000
Government Contributions to Pensions	2,000,000	15,000,000
Subsidies for Essential Materials	-	25,000,000
Total of Above	290,130,000	492,086,700
Total as % of annual government expenditures	21%	23%

<sup>225</sup> “Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,” IIN/F, Dhahran, May 6, 1972, William E. Mulligan Papers, Georgetown University Special Collections, Box 3, Folder 41.

<sup>226</sup> *Source:* National Security File, Robert W. Komer, Saudi Arabia, John F. Kennedy Library, “Faisal Visit”, Folder 2 of 3.

Total Budgeted Amounts	1,375,000,000	2,166,000,000
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Quantity was not indicative of the quality of education, however. Public education for males in the 1950's consisted of a six year course. Over eighty-two per cent of the total class hours were spent on religious disciplines and the Arabic language. The other eighteen percent was divided between history, geography, arithmetic, and geometry. More time was spent on the study of religion than on all of the natural sciences.<sup>227</sup> However, by 1960 the curricular emphasis of these schools was slowly shifting to take into account a greater emphasis on math and science.<sup>228</sup> As an Aramco researcher reported at the time,

The boys' examination...provides a good example of the conflict of values in this traditional society. The section dealing with religion has questions bordering on the archaic...at the same time, the geometry and arithmetic question, which reflect later intrusions into the elementary school curriculum, are relatively difficult. Arithmetic questions involving profit and loss, conversion of currency and the purchase of radios on the installment plan, would seem to reflect a mercantile mentality and the imposition of certain Western practices on Saudi society.<sup>229</sup>

The push to increase the state's role in education was not without detractors. A 1950 article on education in Saudi Arabia recounts that King Abd-Al-Aziz himself was called upon to mediate a dispute between the director of the bureau for education (the pre-cursor to the Ministry of Education) and religious scholars over proposed curricular changes.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Trial and Winder: 125.; Hamad Al-Ali Al-Ajroush, "A Historical Development of the Public Secondary School Curriculum in Saudi Arabia from 1930 to the Present" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Oklahoma, 1981).

<sup>228</sup> "Girls Schools – Year –End Summary," F.S. Vidal, September 18, 1961, William E. Mulligan Papers, Georgetown University Special Collections, Box 3, Folder 9: "Reflected in the Ministry of Education's examination for students in 1961: out of 17 ½ hours. 4 ½ hours were devoted to religion (25.7 %); 41/2 hours to Arabic language and composition (25.7%), 3 ½ to arithmetic and geometry (20%); 3/12 to geography and history (20%) and 1 ½ to science and health (8.6 %)."

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Trial and Winder, *Modern Education in Saudi Arabia*; see also David Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission*, 96-97

The Royal School itself exhibited these tensions between a modern curriculum and the traditional religious one. The director of the school, Uthman Al-Salah noted to an Aramco government affairs official that there was pressure from the conservative religious establishment to constrain the school's western style curriculum.<sup>231</sup> Another example involves Aramco's early education training efforts in Al-Hasa. Aramco initially proposed accepting students as young as eight years old into the trade school at Ra's Tannrah which taught English, mathematics and other basic vocational courses. However, following objections from various religious leaders the government directed that the minimum age for entry into the school was fifteen.<sup>232</sup> While this regulation was later relaxed, it demonstrates the sensitive nature of secular education to the conservative religious establishment in Saudi Arabia.

### **Schools for Girls**

The number of Saudis for whom education was made available for did not just increase in magnitude, but in scope.<sup>233</sup> In 1958, the Director of Education for the Eastern Province estimated that more than 3,000 girls were attending "informal school classes in homes scattered throughout the Eastern Province."<sup>234</sup> But with boys' education having become a state-operated and financed institution, public pressure for girls' education

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<sup>231</sup> "Personalities etc. of Royal School," R.S. Mathews, memo, January 17, 1954, William E. Mulligan Papers, Georgetown University Special Collections, Box 2, Folder 36.

<sup>232</sup> Trial and Winder.

<sup>233</sup> The first school for girls, Dar al Hanan, was opened by King Faisal's wife Queen Effat in Jeddah in 1956. See Catherine Parssinen, "The Changing Role of Women," in *King Faisal and the Modernization of Saudi Arabia* ed. William Beling (Westview Press, 1980), 155-159.

<sup>234</sup> "Girls Schools – Year –End Summary," F.S. Vidal, September 18, 1961, William E. Mulligan Papers, Georgetown University Special Collections, Box 3, Folder 9.

started to mount. Much of the stimulus came from Eastern Province where Aramco operated.<sup>235</sup>

In October 1959, King Saud issued a pronouncement carried over Radio Mecca in which he stated his resolve,

To carry out the wish of the *ulema* of the Kingdom to open schools for the purpose of instructing girls in religious disciplines, such as (the study of) the Quran, the doctrines and jurisprudence, and in any such other disciplines as are consistent with our religious doctrines, such as home economics, child upbringing and training, and as are not feared to bring about, sooner or later, any change in our beliefs.<sup>236</sup>

In 1960, the Office of the Grand Mufti opened a Directorate General of Girls' Schools headed by Shaykh Nasir ibn Hamad ar-Rashid al-Mubarak, a prominent member of the religious establishment.<sup>237</sup> In September 1960, 15 elementary schools were opened with an enrollment of 5,180 girls.<sup>238</sup>

This expansion of girls' education was not without opposition. Religious leaders in Buraida closed down the public girls' school in 1962 amidst mass demonstrations which were only quelled by the use of the National Guard.<sup>239</sup> However, by 1970 there were 377 elementary, 31 intermediate and 5 secondary school with a total enrollment of 126, 230 girls.<sup>240</sup> In a sharp distinction from male education, all female education

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> "Company Built SAG School Program," Letter from Mr. Harry McDonald, General Manager, Government Relations, October 10, 1967, William E. Mulligan Papers, Georgetown University Special Collections, Box 5 Folder 14.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> "Girls Schools – Year –End Summary," F.S. Vidal, September 18, 1961, William E. Mulligan Papers, Georgetown University Special Collections, Box 3, Folder 9.

<sup>239</sup> Parssinen, "The Changing Role of Women", 159.; See also "Girls Schools – Year –End Summary," F.S. Vidal, September 18, 1961, William E. Mulligan Papers, Georgetown University Special Collections, Box 3, Folder 9.

<sup>240</sup> "Girls Schools – Year –End Summary," F.S. Vidal, September 18, 1961, William E. Mulligan Papers, Georgetown University Special Collections, Box 3, Folder 9.

remained governed by a Directorate for Girls Education firmly placed under religious authority, rather than the Ministry of Education which solely oversaw male education.

As an internal Aramco memorandum recounts, in October 1960 Shaykh ‘Ali as-Suqair, Director of Girls’ Education for the Eastern Province wrote to the Company stating that the Directorate General of Girls’ Schools had authorized him to discuss with the Company the subject of girls’ schools in the Eastern Province. In his letter he commented,

Since the majority of the population of the Province is (composed) of Company employees and workers, for whom the Company built towns and offered loans to construct homes, and since the Company has built boys’ schools for the sons of its workers and employees, (a thing) which had a gratifying effect on everybody and for which it is to be thanked, we should like to see the Company adopt a similar project for girls’ schools.<sup>241</sup>

On 2 September 1961 the Directory of Education for the Eastern Province wrote to the Company,

By order of the Minister of Education...I hereby request the Company to expand its present program for schools for sons of Arab and Muslim employees...to include schools for daughters of such employees.<sup>242</sup>

A 1961 Aramco survey of Saudi Arab employees indicated that the number of dependent sons eligible for schools built by Aramco had reached 5,519 with eligible daughters a little less than this figure.<sup>243</sup>

## **Saud vs. Faisal and the Expansion of the Oil State**

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<sup>241</sup> “Company Built SAG School Program,” Letter from Mr. Harry McDonald, General Manager, Government Relations, October 10, 1967, William E. Mulligan Papers, Georgetown University Special Collections, Box 5 Folder 14.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

As Saudi Arabia began to reap the rewards of the post WWII demand for oil and establish itself as a unified state, the survival of a monarchy was not a foregone conclusion. Changes within the administrative structure of government, and rapid development did not sit easily with the conservative elements that had initially brought Abd al-Aziz to power. Tensions between tribal and urban society increased as the spectre of Arab Nationalism began to rise elsewhere in the Arab world.

The threat that Arab nationalism posed to the Al Saud was evident in the intrusion of political imperatives into the education system. In 1955 studies abroad were prohibited and students studying in western nations were recalled.<sup>244</sup> This pendulum swing from promoting elite study abroad, especially in the sciences and other technocratic endeavors, to an abrupt reversal and very public recall of advanced students from western institutions seems to be based on the strong disapproval of the *ulema* and early signs of internal strife within the King Saud regime. Tellingly, at the same time as the recall of Saudi students studying abroad the study of political science and other “dangerous” fields of study in the Kingdom were banned.<sup>245</sup> Shortly thereafter, the Ministry of Education and the Supreme Council of Education were both placed under the supervision of the loyal members of the Al-Shaikh religious family.<sup>246</sup> This episode began to establish a

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<sup>244</sup> Michaela Prokop, “Saudi Arabia: The Politics of Education,” *International Affairs* 79, no. 1 (2003): 77-89.

<sup>245</sup> Alexander Bligh, *The Saudi Religious Elite (ulema) as Participant in the Political System of the Kingdom*, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Feb., 1985): 37-50.; and Daryl Champion, *The Paradoxical Kingdom: Saudi Arabia and the Momentum of Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 120.

<sup>246</sup> National Security File, Robert W. Komer. John F. Kennedy Library, Saudi Arabia, “Faisal Visit: Summary of the heads of ministries in 1962” Date Span: 10/4/62-10/8/2, Folder 2 of 3. Hasan Ibn Abdallah Ibn Hasan Al-Shaikh is listed as the Minister of Education as well as President of the Supreme Council of Education. The Al-Shaikh (which means the House of the Holy Shaikh) are direct descendants of Shaikh Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab and thus considered his spiritual heirs. They are widely spread throughout the official *ulema* establishment.

pattern that would be repeated throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when internal regime stability is threatened, education becomes an institutional scapegoat and bargaining chip with the conservative elements.

In addition to the threat from Arab Nationalism, King Saud opposed setting up a professional bureaucratic state as he saw it as an attempt by rivals to circumscribe his personal authority. In 1957, Aramco, which had been paying Saudi Arabia advances against future income from royalties, refused to continue to do so unless the kingdom's finances were put under tighter control. This refusal, as well as the regime's failed efforts to secure an IMF loan, forced Saud to call in IMF experts.<sup>247</sup> Poor financial management, culminating in Aramco's sanctions, cut off Saudi Arabia's major line of credit and led to internal division within the Al Saud family undermining a crucial base of support for King Saud and led to a groundswell of support for Crown Prince Faisal.<sup>248</sup>

The Saud vs. Faisal rivalry threatened to tear apart the entire regime just as Arab nationalism was on the rise throughout the Arab world. Recognizing the untenable position of the regime, a plurality of princes in 1958 granted Prince Faisal substantial political power over day-to-day government functions as Prime Minister. Using his new administrative powers, Prince Faisal moved to reign in royal stipends and reorganize the finances of the Kingdom. This generated considerable opposition from various members of the family, and he was dismissed as Prime Minister in 1960. However, in 1962 following the revolution in Yemen, King Saud, under pressure from the other members of

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<sup>247</sup> Yizraeli, 64.

<sup>248</sup> Yizraeli, 122-124.



the Al Saud family and the *ulema*, re-appointed Faisal as Prime Minister.<sup>249</sup> As a result, Faisal, now backed by the majority of princes, became a government in waiting.

Faisal administered the Hijaz, was on friendly terms with Western powers and was viewed as a ‘reformer’ in the sense that he saw the need for the expansion of the administrative capabilities of the state beyond the family’s fortunes. Faisal was also more attuned to the international stage. Faisal who became minister of foreign affairs in 1930, had traveled extensively in Europe, including the Soviet Union in 1934 and the Middle East as well as representing Saudi Arabia at the inaugural UN conference of 1945.<sup>250</sup> In addition, Faisal enjoyed substantial religious legitimacy and the support of a longtime regime stalwart –the Al-Shaikh family. Faisal’s mother was a member of the Al-Shaikh family, and thus a descendant of Muhammad bin Abdul-Wahhab, and her father was one of Abd Al-Aziz’s principal religious teachers and advisers.<sup>251</sup> King Saud on the other hand was characterized as closer to the tribes, but also dismissed as bureaucratically inept and wasteful.<sup>252</sup>

The internal pressures on the Saud regime from internal Al Saud strife, namely the reformist factions of the family, as well as the conservative factions, led to a sense of insecurity among those closest to Saud. Despite the exponential increase in oil revenues as late as 1958, the government was heavily in debt to foreign lenders.<sup>253</sup> As the influx of oil revenues continued, there was a growing entrance of princes into the bureaucratic

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<sup>249</sup> Mordechai Abir, *Saudi Arabia in the Oil Era: Regime Elites, Conflict and Collaboration* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988), 12.; See also George Rentz, “The Saudi Monarchy,” in *King Faisal and the Modernization of Saudi Arabia*.

<sup>250</sup> William Beling ed., *King Faisal and the Modernization of Saudi Arabia*, 10.

<sup>251</sup> Joseph Kechichian, *Faysal: Saudi Arabia’s King for All Seasons* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2008), 27-28.

<sup>252</sup> Yizraeli, 51-60.

<sup>253</sup> Kechichian, *Faysal: Saudi Arabia’s King for All Seasons*, 74-76.

mechanisms of the state – leading to a bureaucracy of hired technocrats, mainly from Egypt, managed by royals who more often than not lacked experience in the area they were supervising.<sup>254</sup>

The rapid growth of the oil economy, the demands of senior princes for greater share of power, and the centralized and personalized nature of King Saud's regime was driving the regime to a breaking point. During the late 1950's and early 1960's a third faction began to coalesce around Prince Talal whose support came from the younger princes and some technocratic elites. This third faction became known as the "free princes". They looked to the example of Egypt and their nickname was meant to evoke that of the free officers who had deposed King Faruq in 1952.<sup>255</sup> This group claimed to represent the liberal elite and middle-class traders who were frustrated by the inefficiency of the government's administrative capacities. They advocated for the creation of a constitutional monarchy and the liberalization of the regime in a manifesto published in Egypt.<sup>256</sup>

After defections by several air force pilots to Egypt in 1962 and in combination with Egypt's involvement in Yemen, Faisal finally gained a critical mass of internal family support and Saud was formally deposed as King in 1964.<sup>257</sup> However, Faisal insisted that the transfer of power be approved by the family as a whole to avoid internal division and continued coup attempts (a la the free princes) as well as the approval of the *ulema* to legitimize his transfer of power. In March 1964 the *ulema*, led by the grand

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<sup>254</sup> Mark Heller and Nadav Safran, *The New Middle Class and Regime Stability in Saudi Arabia*, *Harvard Middle East Papers*, Modern Series, no. 3 (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University, 1985), 8-12.

<sup>255</sup> Yizraeli, 87-91.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> Kechichian, *Faysal*, 74-77.; see also Nadav Safran, *Saudi Arabia and the Ceaseless Quest for Security*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 99-102.

mufti Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Al al-Sahikh issued a fatwa on the transfer of power to Faisal, leaving Saud with the title of king. In October princes, tribal sheikhs and senior *ulema* assembled in Riyadh at the house of the grand mufti to discuss the dethronement of King Saud.<sup>258</sup> Over 100 princes and 65 *ulema* took part in the negotiations for the abdication of King Saud. On November 2, the majlis al-wukala approved two decisions – the *ulema*'s fatwa declaring Faisal to be king, and a letter signed by all members of the royal family pledging *ba'iah* to Faisal.<sup>259</sup>

The deposition of King Saud in favor of King Faisal was a turning point in the regime's maintenance of power. Instead of relying solely on a tribal monarchy to govern a traditional society, the Al Saud family had signaled that it was necessary to transform into a modern administrative state to survive.

## **Conclusion**

As this chapter has shown, oil revenues alone have not been able to buy the Al Saud regime free rein over government policy – rather a careful dance with the religious interests and the modernization imperative have characterized the regime's strategy for maintaining power in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As Abd Al-Aziz encountered with the Ikhwan, religious zeal has been a powerful tool for expansion and consolidation of power and legitimacy. However, in its seeds lies the inherent conflict with the state – eventually the religious legitimacy that movements such as the Ikhwan and Wahhabism provide to the regime, come in direct conflict with modernizing elements. It is in these moments that

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<sup>258</sup> Vassiliev, 367.; see also Ibrahim al-Rashid, ed., *Documents on the History of Saudi Arabia; The Struggle between the Two Princes: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the Final Days of Ibn Saud* (Chapel Hill, NC: Documentary Publications, 1985), 2.

<sup>259</sup> Vassiliev, 367-368.

the tensions between the modernization project of the state versus the legitimacy imperative of the regime are laid bare.

As the Saudi state began to expand in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the regime had to contend with dual challenges from business elites and Arab nationalism as well as with conservative *ulema*. The regime's complex negotiation of its relationship with these disparate interests is most apparent in moments of acute challenge to the regime's legitimacy – such as the deposition of King Saud. The outcome of the Saud vs. Faisal power struggle is crucial to understanding how major decisions have historically been made by the Al Saud regime when its power base is under threat. This episode showed that while the Al Saud family is capable of taking drastic action when existentially threatened (i.e. the dethronement of King Saud), the process of decision making itself is fundamentally gradualist in nature. Likewise, this episode illustrates the importance of the *ulema* in legitimizing the regime. While the *ulema* might have supported Faisal against the Free Princes without external inducements, it was only by giving them a voice and seeking their explicit approval that Faisal secured their support against Saud, and cleared the way for his swift ascension to the throne.

## Chapter Three

### Education and the Dilemma of Development

This chapter will build on the previous chapter's political history to examine the role that education, and in particular higher education, played in the maintenance and consolidation of Al Saud rule in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and how it intertwined with the role of religious legitimacy and the struggle for rapid development.

Education is a critical institution in Saudi Arabia; located at a perpetual cross-road between religious legitimization for the Al Saud regime and modernizing imperatives for the maintenance of the state. As oil production came to dominate the Saudi economy, the Saudi state required a modern bureaucracy and educated technocrats to navigate the complex technologies of the global oil industry and the massive influx of wealth involved. This oil effect demanded a modern infrastructure and administration – the roots of which were reliant on an educated elite.

Following the death of King Faisal, the higher education system would become contested space for both the modernizing liberals who championed western-style liberalization and conservative religious elements who viewed the reforms of the 1960s and 1970s as responsible for social, moral and political decay of the Kingdom.<sup>260</sup> This clash would shake the very foundations of the Al Saud regime.

#### The Faisal era and the Modernization Imperative

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<sup>260</sup> Jill Crystal, "Saudi Arabia in the Oil Era: Regime and Elites; Conflict and Collaboration," *Political Science Quarterly*, (Spring 1989): 187.

When Faisal ascended the throne, Saudi Arabia's finances were in shambles. Despite exponential increases in oil income, Saudi Arabia was still a relatively poor country with annual government revenues barely exceeding \$500 million.<sup>261</sup> However, the rise in oil income in the late 1960s almost doubled government revenues by the end of the decade and permitted the sustained development drive that began under Faisal and lasted for almost three decades.<sup>262</sup>

As Arab nationalism spread in Egypt and Syria, and the *ulema* at home criticized King Saud's rule, Faisal was presented with a reoccurring development dilemma: how far and how fast could he push for the economic reforms necessary for the strength and health of the Saudi state, without inciting a popular backlash? While the regime under Faisal strove to modernize without mobilizing reactionary *ulema*, it also had to anticipate internal unrest from the other end of the societal spectrum as people looked to the revolutionary movements elsewhere in the Arab world and in particular to Nasser's regime in Egypt.<sup>263</sup>

### **Faisal's Ten Point Plan**

This development dilemma was reflected in then Crown Prince Faisal's conversation with US ambassador Heath in 1959, when Faisal explained his rejection of a

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<sup>261</sup> Sarah Yizraeli, *The Remaking of Saudi Arabia: The Struggle Between King Sa'Ud and Crown Prince Faysal, 1953-1962* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998)

<sup>262</sup> Ramon Knauerhase, *The Saudi Arabian Economy* (New York: Praeger, 1975), 287.

<sup>263</sup> The so-called 'liberal' opposition in Saudi Arabia was comprised of primarily two groups: oil-industry workers in al-Hasa who were largely Shia, and graduates of Western educated technocrats. One of the most prominent examples of the latter group was the easily quashed attempted coup led by air force pilots in 1962 and small scale coup attempts in 1966 led by military personnel as well as an aborted coup attempt in 1977. Yizraeli, 44.; Mark Heller and Nadav Safran, *The New Middle Class and Regime Stability in Saudi Arabia, Harvard Middle East Papers*, Modern Series, no. 3 (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University, 1985), 13-15.

U.S. offer of development aid by saying that he was not sure “in which direction to move.” It was necessary to first determine what type of development would be suitable for the country.<sup>264</sup>

Faisal, wary of the reactionary force that might be mobilized by rapid development, embraced gradualist change of institutions so as to never threaten the family’s power monopoly.<sup>265</sup> To do so, Faisal positioned himself as against the “secular” agenda of the free-princes, and thus a representative of the *ulema*, but also for reforms in the areas of economics and governance, thus co-opting liberal elites who might have thrown additional support behind Prince Talal.<sup>266</sup>

In November of 1962 Faisal publicly outlined a “ten point” program to guide the nation towards political and economic development. The plan established regulations for economic, commercial and social development, promoting economic upsurge and the abolition of slavery. Faisal’s stated development priorities were education, healthcare and the expansion of a national road network.<sup>267</sup> Faisal’s public declaration of his development agenda was a first for the Kingdom. It signaled to both the Saudi public, and the fractious royal family, that development would be a unifying imperative for the state.<sup>268</sup>

As Faisal promoted the Kingdom’s need for reform, he carefully compartmentalized social and economic issues in order to prevent shock to traditional

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<sup>264</sup> Yizaeli, 139.

<sup>265</sup> Yizraeli, 142.

<sup>266</sup> “Supplement to the Report ‘Faysal’s Policy Statement: An Eight Month Review,’” William E. Mulligan Papers, Georgetown University Special Collections, Box 5, Folder 11.

<sup>267</sup> See “Ten Point Plan” in appendix J in Gerald De Gaury, *Faisal, King of Saudi Arabia* (London: Barker, 1966); See also “Supplement to the Report ‘Faysal’s Policy Statement: An Eight Month Review,’” William E. Mulligan Papers, Georgetown University Special Collections, Box 5, Folder 11.

<sup>268</sup> Toby Craig Jones, “The Dogma of Development: Techno-politics and the Making of Saudi Arabia, 1950-1980” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2006), 100-105.

Saudi society. This balancing act was apparent in Faisal's 10 pt speech in which he asserted that Saudi Arabia could modernize within an Islamic framework.<sup>269</sup> As Toby Craig Jones puts it,

Development did not replace or subordinate Islam as the ideological rule that bound ruler and ruled, state and society in Saudi Arabia...The state's claims that it was an Islamic power were also not effective in ameliorating the social ill that were giving rise to dissent. Faisal outlined a more complex political contract in which the government would undermine hostility by prioritizing the provision of services and social welfare.<sup>270</sup>

However, as indicated by several of his quotes on the topic, Faisal was well aware from his own experience with the deposition of King Saud, how tenuous the reins of power were:

Revolutions can come from thrones as well as from conspirator's cellars. We need everything in this country, but stability is the first priority. We are starting from the bottom and we have to build slowly. We cannot make miracles overnight.<sup>271</sup>

Faisal recognized the pressing need and simultaneous discontent of traditional society with the push towards development, when he noted, "like it or not, we must join the modern world and find an honorable place in it."<sup>272</sup> Abd al-Aziz al-Qusaybi, a former minister and a driving force behind Faisal's reform agenda put it more bluntly, "Adopting of some aspects of Western civilization is unavoidable if we wish to be delivered from our present backwardness. These include technology, the physical and social sciences,

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<sup>269</sup> Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 121-126.

<sup>270</sup> Toby Craig Jones, "The Dogma of Development: Technopolitics and the Making of Saudi Arabia" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2006), 95.

<sup>271</sup> Fouad Abdul-Sala Al Farsy, "King Faisal and the First Five Year Development Plan," in *King Faisal and the Modernization of Saudi Arabia* ed. William Beling (Westview Press, 1980), 62.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 58



management procedures and the principles of scientific planning.”<sup>273</sup> While the embrace of new technologies in the service of the state was first embarked upon by Abd al-Aziz, the extent of the techno-social revolution that would be inaugurated under Faisal was unimagined.

### **Development of the State Bureaucracy**

Faisal’s main administrative focus was to modernize the structure of government through administrative reforms and shape the new institutions of the emerging bureaucracy to resemble that of a modern administrative state. Until the 1950’s there were only three ministries: Foreign Affairs (1930), Finance (1932) and Defense (1944).<sup>274</sup> Despite massive increases in oil revenues, there was no systematic budgetary planning process. In 1960 the Saudi government invited a team of experts from the World Bank to conduct an assessment of the Kingdom’s requirements for social and economic development. One of the foremost recommendations put forward by the World Bank team was the need for modernized administrative apparatus for effective development.<sup>275</sup> In 1965, the Central Planning Organization (renamed the Ministry of Planning in 1975) with the responsibility of proposing annual budgets and development plans was founded.<sup>276</sup> Faisal would establish new government bodies and a new administrative apparatus to integrate Saudi Arabia into the global oil market as well as consolidate the

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<sup>273</sup> Joseph Kostiner, "Transforming Dualities: Tribes and State Formation in Saudi Arabia", in *Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East*, eds. P.S. Khoury and J. Kostiner (University of California Press, 1991), 241.

<sup>274</sup> Abdul Rahman M. Al-Sadhan, "The Modernization of the Saudi Bureaucracy," in *King Faisal and the Modernization of Saudi Arabia* ed. William Beling (Westview Press, 1980), 82.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Ramon Knauerhase, "Saudi Arabia: Fifty Years of Economic Change," *Current History*, 82, no. 480 (January 1983): 19-23.

Al Saud's monopoly of power as the regime expanded to begin to resemble a modern bureaucratic state.

By 1965, the government was single largest employer in the country.<sup>277</sup> However, as rentier theory predicts, when the construction of basic state institutions coincides with large inflows of external capital, "the resulting bureaucracies develop uneven and lopsided extractive, administrative, productive, and distributive capacities."<sup>278</sup> Faisal's modernization initiative went hand in hand with the rapid expansion of the public sector, and the growing expectation of public sector jobs by Saudis entering the workforce.<sup>279</sup>

Following the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war, the global price of oil quadrupled.<sup>280</sup> With the massive influx of oil revenues development planning under King Faisal accelerated. In 1970 King Faisal introduced the first five-year development plans to expand the national technological infrastructure.<sup>281</sup> The first 5-year plan's (1970-1975) ambitious development goals demanded a cadre of highly trained engineering, finance, and development experts.<sup>282</sup> While the Kingdom continued to rely on foreign companies, both American and European, to do much of the work involved in development, there was a growing awareness of the potential for conservative backlash at the rapid expansion of the foreign and mainly western educated labor force.

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<sup>277</sup> Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Al Saqi Books, 2000), 426.

<sup>278</sup> Kirin Chaudhry, "Economic Liberalization and the Lineages of the Rentier State," *Comparative Politics* (October, 1994).

<sup>279</sup> *First Development Plan, 1970-1975* (Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Planning, 1970).; See also Michel Nehme, "Saudi Development Plans between Capitalist and Islamic Values," *Middle Eastern Studies* 30, no. 3 (July, 1994) :632-645.

<sup>280</sup> Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money & Power*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Free Press, 2003), 615-617.

<sup>281</sup> Donald A. Wells, *Saudi Arabian Development Strategy* (American Enterprise Institute, National Energy Project, 1976).

<sup>282</sup> *Intelligence Report: The Saudi Development Program: Half the Plan by 1980*, September 1976, Approved for release 2005/09/05: NLC-31-47-2-6-8; *First Development Plan:1970-75*.

In a Ministry of Information press release, regarding the massive technology transfer that his development plans demanded, King Faisal is quoted as saying:

It is within our power, for example, to erect an enormous plant – but can we run the plant properly or get the desired results from it? In my opinion, it is far better to equip ourselves with the ability to do things on our own without relying on foreigners or on anyone else.<sup>283</sup>

To attempt to counteract the influx of expatriate technocrats that such an ambitious development agenda would require, the first 5-year plan a strong emphasis was placed on the improvement of educational facilities and technical training opportunities (17.8% of the projected expenditures).<sup>284</sup> The state determined that a need existed and then set in motion the training and equipping of a class of experts to assist it.

### **The Establishment of Higher Education in the Kingdom**

While the transformation of education from the largely religious informal sphere, to a formalized state sector began under King Saud, it was not until the development and modernization push of Faisal that higher education became viewed as a state responsibility and development priority.

Prior to 1957, there were only three colleges in the Kingdom, all of which were religiously oriented.<sup>285</sup> The oil boom and the state's attendant administrative modernization needs led to several state commissioned studies which squarely focused on

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<sup>283</sup> Ministry of Information, Saudi Arabia, "Prince Faisal Speaks", 1963 (Pamphlet no. 98, Box 9, McKillop Library Special Collection, Salve Regina University, Rhode Island), 23; and Fouad Abdul-Sala Al Farsy, "King Faisal and the First Five Year Development Plan," in *King Faisal and the Modernization of Saudi Arabia* ed. William Beling (Westview Press, 1980), 58-71.

<sup>284</sup> First Development Plan: 1970-75.; and Nehme: 632-64.

<sup>285</sup> Mecca College of Sharia Law was founded in 1949; Riyadh college of Sharia Law was founded in 1953 and the Arabic Language College in Riyadh was founded in 1954. From "Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia", IIN/F, Dhahran, May 6, 1972, William E. Mulligan Papers, Georgetown University Special Collections, Box 3, Folder 41.

the expansion and improvement of the education sector as a primary factor in the trajectory of Saudi Arabia’s future development.<sup>286</sup> Indeed, King Faisal’s 10 pt. plan, the first public proclamation of development goals by any Saudi King, listed the improvement and expansion of modern education as a primary objective.<sup>287</sup>

The economic modernization push went hand in hand with institution building. An array of educational institutions and programs to promote technocratic education in non-religious domestic and foreign institutions emerged in the 1960s and proliferated in the 1970s. Within the span of ten years, Saudi Arabia went from having one university that taught “modern” or non-religious subjects, to five universities.

**Table1: Saudi Arabian Universities 1957-1979<sup>288</sup>**

University	Location	Year of Founding
University of Riyadh (later renamed King Sa’ud)	Riyadh	1957
King Abd Al-Aziz	Jeddah	1967
Umm Al-Qura	Mecca	1979
(King Fahd) University of Petroleum & Minerals*	Dhahran	1963
King Faisal	Dammam	1969

During the Faisal modernization push, the number of students enrolled in so-called “secular” universities, or universities who did not produce religious degrees increased

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<sup>286</sup> Wells: 41.

<sup>287</sup> For the entire Ten point plan, see Gerald De Gaury, “Faisal: King of Saudi Arabia”, Appendix J.

<sup>288</sup> Source: *Ministry of Higher Education Public Universities in Saudi Arabia* (accessed January 3, 2010); available from <http://www.mohe.gov.sa/en/studyinside/Government-Universities/Pages/default.aspx>.

dramatically.<sup>289</sup>

**Table 2: Student Enrollment in Non-religious or “Secular” Universities 1969-1980<sup>290</sup>**

University/Date	1969	1971	1973	1975	1977	1979/80
University of Riyadh	2,899	3,782	5,567	7,807	10,500	13,214
King Abd al-Aziz University	265	1,976	3,939	9,986	19,949	19,287
University of Petroleum and Minerals	450	723	1,240	1,716	1,616	2,794
Total	3,614	6,481	10,746	19,509	32,065	35,205

The Ministry of Higher Education was not established until 1979; prior to that time all higher education was under the supervision of the ministry of education.

### **The Rise of Technocratic Education**

As Faisal moved to expand the bureaucratic capacity of the Saudi state, the reality was that most non-religious tertiary technical education was attained abroad or via specialized programs run outside of the government sphere, such as Aramco’s University of Petroleum and Minerals.

As detailed in the previous chapter, with the influx of foreign investment into the oil sector, Aramco began to set up special schools and courses to train technical specialists among Saudi employees.<sup>291</sup> An indicator of the fruits of Aramco’s training

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<sup>289</sup> I use the term ‘secular’ here with hesitation. While many Saudis themselves used the term in the 1970’s to apply to universities that did not offer religious decrees, the majority of these institutions nonetheless included Islamic education as a mandatory part of the curriculum. However, they were indeed qualitatively different than ‘religious’ universities and their curriculums were more likely to be modeled off of western universities. Abdullah Omar Nassief, former President, King Abdulaziz University, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>290</sup> Source: Mark Heller and Nadav Safran, *The New Middle Class and Regime Stability in Saudi Arabia*, *Harvard Middle East Papers*, Modern Series, no. 3 (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University, 1985), 19.

<sup>291</sup> Vassiliev, 425.

efforts is that by 1980 over 45% of the company's management and supervisory positions were held by Saudi Arab employees.<sup>292</sup> The flagship of these training efforts was the establishment of the elite College of Petroleum and Minerals under the aegis of Aramco.

### **College of Petroleum and Minerals (CPM)**

The College of Petroleum and Minerals (CPM)<sup>293</sup> was founded by Royal Decree in September 1963 to offer programs in Science, Engineering Science and Applied Engineering – the most essential areas for the oil economy. The university's governing structure from its inception was distinct from other universities established in the Kingdom, as it was designed to minimize state intrusion into the curriculum through a unique partnership between Aramco and the Ministry of Petroleum.

CPM was built on lands originally leased to Aramco, and Aramco contributed financially to the college as well as cooperated in the design and management of several aspects of its curriculum and development.<sup>294</sup> The governing board included both government officials, with heavy representation from technocratic ministries such as the Ministry of Petroleum and the Ministry of finance, in addition to three “outside” representatives from international academic institutions such as MIT.<sup>295</sup> The CPM was thus considered autonomous from the government in its day to day operations, albeit placed administratively under the influential Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals. This relationship between the Ministry of Petroleum and CPM was highlighted by the fact that

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<sup>292</sup> Ismail I. Nawwab, Peter C. Speers, and Paul F. Hoye, eds. *Aramco and Its World: Arabia and the Middle East* (Dhahran, Saudi Arabia: Aramco, 1980), 235.

<sup>293</sup> CPM was renamed the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals in 1983.

<sup>294</sup> “University of Petroleum and Minerals,” Undated Memorandum, William E. Mulligan Papers, Box 9, Folder 13, Date Span: 01/01/1970 - 09/29/1976.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*; See also Nasser Ibrahim Rashid, *King Fahd and Saudi Arabia's Great Evolution* (Joplin, MO: International Institute of Technology, 1987), 114-120.

in the 1970's Shaikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani, the Minister of Petroleum also chaired CPM's Board of Trustees.<sup>296</sup>

CPM initially enrolled less than 100 students and had increased to 600 students by the 1970's.<sup>297</sup> Unlike all other higher education in the Kingdom at the time, the language of instruction was English and the faculty was drawn from all over the world. CPM was also notable for its early involvement with international education experts, particularly scientific bodies from the West. The use of an external, and indeed western, referent for educational accreditation was a first – and until the late 1990's unique – facet of CPM. The signature programs of CPM were accredited under the US Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology (ABET). The university was also advised by a consortium of American Universities, including MIT, Princeton, University of Michigan, CIT, Colorado School of Mines. This consortium acted a “visiting accreditation committee which evaluates achievement and academic performance...and gives specific recommendations concerning curriculum, research and laboratory work.”<sup>298</sup>

Technocratic endeavors that supported the oil economy, such as Aramco and its corollary institutions such as CPM, were viewed as beyond the sphere of *ulema* influence. Such separation from the *ulema* dominated educational bureaucracy continues to be preserved to this day. As a former Aramco executive stated, “CPM excels because it is protected from the MoHE by the higher ups in the Saudi Government.”<sup>299</sup> Indeed, even at the height of the *ulema*'s control over the higher education sector in the 1980's-early

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<sup>296</sup> John M. Munro, “On Campus in Saudi Arabia,” *Saudi Aramco World* (July/August, 1974); available from <http://www.saudiAramcoworld.com/issue/197404/on.campus.in.saudi.arabia.htm>

<sup>297</sup> “University of Petroleum and Minerals,” Undated Memorandum, William E. Mulligan Papers, Box 9, Folder 13, Date Span: 01/01/1970 - 09/29/1976.; See also Nasser Ibrahim Rashid, 114-120.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Former Aramco executive, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008.

1990's, as will be discussed in later sections, CPM was insulated against curricular intrusion by the MoHE.<sup>300</sup>

Aramco, which was set apart both physically and administratively from the political winds of the day, came to function as a protector of institutions deemed crucial to the maintenance of the state economy. CPM, under Aramco, functioned as such an “island of efficiency” producing qualified technocratic experts to run the essential elements of the oil economy; set apart from a growing and often fractious higher education bureaucracy.<sup>301</sup> The Saudi government clearly approved of this development as several of its most essential ministries – namely the Ministry of Petroleum and Ministry of Finance were staffed with graduates of CPM. Indeed, King Faisal heralded CPM and the Aramco training institutes as “a model” for future national education development.<sup>302</sup>

A 1968 Aramco PR report positioned the company as the harbinger of rapid technological and economic – and thus social – change:

Widespread and accelerating social change has been taking place in Saudi Arabia ever since the early 1940's with the advent of wealth from the discovery of oil and the presence of a large modern industrial concern employing Americans and other foreigners alongside Saudis. Aramco, to some extent, has acted as a catalyst in this process, speeding up changes that undoubtedly would have occurred in any event. Aramco, by encouraging the development of local service and processing industries, by taking the lead in improving transportation and communication facilities, by developing a stable and well-paid work force, by strengthening local entrepreneurs through its local purchase program, and by fostering education, training, health, home ownership, and other programs, has contributed to the most basic of all social changes in the Kingdom: the development of an emerging middle class. This middle class is one of the most potent factors for further social change. As a modern, technologically-oriented, and increasingly large and articulate group, this middle class is taking the lead in demanding social,

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<sup>300</sup> Faculty member University of Petroleum and Minerals, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008.

<sup>301</sup> To use Steffen Hertog's terminology - See Steffen Hertog, *Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats: Oil and the State in Saudi Arabia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 5, 28-29.

<sup>302</sup> Toby Craig Jones, “The Dogma of Development: Techno-politics and the Making of Saudi Arabia, 1950-1980” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2006).



religious, and political reforms. Many of these reforms, such as television, movies, out-of-Kingdom education, employment of women, and so forth have been pioneered by Aramco. As Aramco has been successful, these innovations have been adopted in other areas. **Thus, in one sense, the Aramco area of operations may be considered a laboratory where ideas and innovations are tested before being put on the general market.**<sup>303</sup>

This partnership between Aramco and the Saudi Arabian Government to promote development, often as a condition of continued good relations, was most notable in the Eastern Provinces. In time however, the advanced training and educational opportunities that Aramco provided for both its employees and in the Al-Hasa region would result in a small, but growing class of Saudi technocrats.

### **Study Abroad and the Influence of Technocrats**

“In my mind the lack of enough skilled manpower is still the number one problem in this country. Our problem numbers one, two and three. We have Saudi Arabs who are highly qualified, but not yet in sufficient numbers. We need quantity as well as quality. To build a port, for example, it takes maybe a year or two. To begin to develop a nation, with a pool of technocrats, you need a minimum of 30.”

-Abdulaziz al-Khuraishi, Governor of the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency, *M.B.A., USC, 1960*<sup>304</sup>

King Faisal’s modernization push helped to expand a small, but nonetheless significant technocratic elite.<sup>305</sup> These were western-trained scientists and engineers – either educated through the Aramco system or sent abroad to study for specialties that would be applicable to development. In 1972 approximately 1,400 Saudi students were

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<sup>303</sup> “Prepared for PR in response to a questionnaire from SONJ for a one paragraph description of the sociological impact of Aramco in Saudi Arabia,” William E. Mulligan Papers, Box 3, Folder 30, May 11, 1968.

<sup>304</sup> Katrina Thomas, “America as Alma Mater,” *Saudi Aramco World* (May/June 1979); available from <http://www.saudiAramcoworld.com/issue/197903/america.as.alma.mater.htm>.

<sup>305</sup> William Rugh, “Emergence of a New Middle Class in Saudi Arabia,” *Middle East Journal* 27, no.1 (Winter 1973).

studying at universities abroad with funding from the Saudi government.<sup>306</sup> According to the Saudi Educational Mission, by 1978 there were over 11,000 Saudi students studying in the U.S.- a ten-fold increase.<sup>307</sup> King Faisal himself sent seven of his eight sons to the United States for preparatory school and all seven then went on to attend university in the United States or England.

As the Minister of Commerce stated in 1978, "Saudi Arabia has two big problems, manpower and infrastructure. We are trying to solve the first by training and education, the second simply by building. There is a great role for America here."<sup>308</sup> These students would receive government sponsorship as long as the student was qualified and did not study something that is "in conflict with tradition."<sup>309</sup> One third of the Saudi students studying abroad were enrolled in engineering courses and one sixth were studying business and management. The impact of new technocratic elite was felt at the highest levels of power. In 1975 more than a third of the King's cabinet had studied at American universities. Their portfolios include petroleum, industry, agriculture and water, commerce, information, labor and foreign affairs.<sup>310</sup>

### **King Abdul Aziz University**

Another pioneer in the higher education sector in the 1970's was King Abdul Aziz University (KAU) in Jeddah. KAU was established in 1967 by a group of Saudi businessmen (mainly Hijazi) who wanted to create a university that would address the

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<sup>306</sup> "Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," IIN/F, Dhahran, May 6, 1972, William E. Mulligan Papers, Georgetown University Special Collections, Box 3, Folder 41.

<sup>307</sup> Katrina Thomas, "America as Alma Mater," *Saudi Aramco World Magazine* 30, no. 3 (1979); available from <http://www.saudiAramcoworld.com/issue/197903/america.as.alma.mater.htm>.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

skilled labor needs of the developing industrial economy.<sup>311</sup> For a brief period, (1967-1971) KAU would serve as the first and only private university in the Kingdom.

In 1971 King Abdul Aziz University was nationalized by the government via a decree of the Council of Ministers, thus losing its status as a private institution, albeit still oriented in a technocratic direction.<sup>312</sup> Based on interviews with high-level administrative officials and faculty who worked at KAAU during the transition, the change from a private university with a board of overseers to a public university was mainly based on financial requirements for expansion.<sup>313</sup> In 1967 the budget for the university was less than 1 million dollars, and by 1983 it was in excess of 373 million dollars with a student body of 14,403 students.<sup>314</sup> This change in status meant that the SAG would provide KAU with its annual budget and members of the MoE would sit on its board and determine the budget allocations for the different departments.

Though KAU's nationalization in the early 1970's was not initially indicative of state disapproval over the curriculum, by the late 1970's the university was headed down a slippery slope of state control. By the late 1970's the College of Sharia and the College of Higher Education that were already established in Mecca were incorporated into KAU's faculties.<sup>315</sup> Once KAU it incorporated the two Mecca theological colleges its orientation became increasingly Islamic in terms of its curriculum, as will be discussed in

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<sup>311</sup> Abdullah Omar Nassief, former President, King Abdulaziz University, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.; Former faculty, King Abdulaziz University, interviews by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008.; Mohammed Eisa Faheem, "Higher Education and Nation Building: A Case Study of King Abdul Aziz University" (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1982).

<sup>312</sup> Faheem.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Nasser Ibrahim Rashid, 117.

<sup>315</sup> *History of King Abdul Aziz University* (accessed December 14, 2009); available from [http://www.kau.edu.sa/content.aspx?Site\\_ID=0&lng=EN&cid=2384&URL=www.kau.edu.sa](http://www.kau.edu.sa/content.aspx?Site_ID=0&lng=EN&cid=2384&URL=www.kau.edu.sa).; King Abdul Aziz faculty (various), interviews by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008.

a subsequent section. Several administrators with experience working at KAU in the 1970's characterized the decline in quality of scientific education and research as dramatic throughout the 1980's.<sup>316</sup> It is fair to say that by the late 1970's, the state's focus on expanding science and technical education was reaching its decade long apex.

### Expansion of Enrollment

King Faisal's policy of free tuition for Saudi nationals at all government universities emphasized the desire to expand higher education from a purely elite endeavor to mass accessibility funded by the influx of oil revenues.<sup>317</sup> Indeed, Saudi Arabia had the largest relative university enrollment expansion of any major Arab state during this time period as student enrollment increased from 8,000 in 1970 to over 43,000 in 1977.<sup>318</sup>

**Table 3: Total Students Enrolled in Universities in Seven Arab Countries:1965-80<sup>319</sup>**

Year/Country	Egypt	Syria	Iraq	Jordan	Saudi Arabia	Kuwait	UAE
1965	175,254	32,653	28,377	4,049	3,625	418	-
1970	218,278	40,896	48,994	4,518	8,492	2,686	-
1977	462,328	83,260	91,358	17,219	43,897	12,391	519
1980	528,751	140,180	103,176	36,549	62,074	13,630	2,734

Saudi Arabia's 450% expansion of student enrollment in little over a decade was remarkable by any measure. Corresponding to the increase in student enrollment, the

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<sup>316</sup> Abdullah Omar Nassief, former President, King Abdulaziz University, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>317</sup> Member of Majlis, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>318</sup> Gad G. Gilbar, *The Middle East Oil Decade and Beyond* (London, Portland OR: Frank Cass, 1997), 77-80.

<sup>319</sup> Sources: Gilbar, 79.; UNESCO, Statistical Yearbook, vols. 1967-91.

recipients of academic degrees from Saudi universities increased from 697 in 1970 to 9,297 in 1985.<sup>320</sup>

As the first and second 5-year plans emphasized, the expansion of secondary and higher education was seen as an essential pillar of economic modernization in Saudi Arabia.<sup>321</sup> According to a 1976 study commissioned by the Saudi government,

A maximum effort is to be directed at upgrading the skills and educational level of the Saudis. Within the government, various training programs, primarily under the direction of the Institute of Public Administration, are planned as an attempt to improve the skills of government employees. Elementary-school enrollment of boys is expected to increase from 401,000 in 1975 to about 677,000 in 1980 and of girls from 215,000 in 1975 to 353,000 in 1980. Similar increases are anticipated at the secondary and higher educational levels. Continuing education and vocational training programs are also to be expanded. Implementation of the plan will require 13,000 additional elementary teachers and 1,500 secondary-school teachers; the teaching staffs of all primary and secondary schools are expected to increase from 20,000 in 1975 to 51,000 in 1980.<sup>322</sup>

Nevertheless, the high-skilled labor shortage could not be overcome in the short term through long-term investments in the education sector. The rapid influx of foreign labor continued despite stated government objectives.<sup>323</sup>

### **Religious Universities**

As oil revenues increased in the 1960's and 1970's, the Al Saud regime increasingly funded religious study centers as they simultaneously promoted technocratic education.<sup>324</sup> The first Islamic university (as opposed to college) was established in

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<sup>320</sup> Gilbar, 80.

<sup>321</sup> Second Development Plan: 1975-80, (Riyadh, KSA, Ministry of Planning), "Goals".

<sup>322</sup> Wells: Saudi Arabian Development Strategy, September 1976, AEI National Energy Project, p. 41

<sup>323</sup> Michel Nehme, "Saudi Development Plans between Capitalist and Islamic Values," *Middle Eastern Studies* 30, no. 3 (July, 1994): 636-638.

<sup>324</sup> Al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State*, 62.

Medina in 1961 and in Riyadh, Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University was granted university status in 1974 to cater for a local rather than an international student population. Various religious colleges in Qasim were consolidated under the umbrella of Imam Saud Islamic Institution creating a new religious intellectual center based not in the Hijaz, but the Najd.<sup>325</sup>

As a higher education system was established throughout the country, many of the staff arrived from other countries in the Arab world, especially those that produced an excess of religious educators who could not be absorbed locally or were expelled from their countries by revolutionary Arab secular regimes such as Nasser's in Egypt and Syria. David Commins explains,

At that time, the Kingdom was taking its first steps to create a national education system, but few Saudis had the training to staff the new schools. Members of the Muslim brotherhood stepped in to become teachers at all levels of education and seized the opportunity to spread their views in schools and universities. Muslim brotherhood teachers and professors introduced their Saudi pupils to the writings of the movements leading thinkers, including Egyptian writer Sayyid Qutb.<sup>326</sup>

Saudi Arabia essentially adopted an open-door policy as it recruited teachers for its expanding religious and education bureaucracy.<sup>327</sup>

Even as the second development plan set its sights on an ambitious program of social and economic development reliant on a technocratic class, the Ministry of Education declared that education should “promote a spirit of loyalty to Islamic law by denouncing any system or theory that conflicts with it and by behaving with honesty and

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<sup>325</sup> Hamad Al-Salloum, *Education in Saudi Arabia*, (Washington: Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, 1995), 70.

<sup>326</sup> David Commins, “Contestation and Authority in Wahhabi Polemics,” in *Religion and Politics in Saudi Arabia*, eds. Ayoob and Kosebalaban (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2009), 45.

<sup>327</sup> Holden and Johns, *The House of Saud*, p. 516 “[Medina University] had been founded in the early 1960s by Muslim Brothers, who had been driven into exile by Nasser’s secular policies. They had persuaded the Al al Shaykh and the King, who needed little convincing, that Nasser was tampering with the sacred curriculum of Cairo’s Azhar University, the fount of Muslim learning since the tenth century.”

in conformity with Islamic tenets...[it should] awaken the spirit of Islamic struggle, fight our enemies, restore our rights, resume our glory and fulfill the mission of Islam...and project the unity of the Muslim nation.”<sup>328</sup> This careful calibration of the need to ground the rapid economic and institutional modernization in Islamic values was reflected in the words of King Faisal,

Our religion...requires us to progress and advance and to bear the burden of the highest tradition and best manners. What is called progressiveness in the world today, and what reformers are calling for, be it social, human or economic progress is all embodied in the Islamic religion and laws.<sup>329</sup>

Nonetheless, the dramatic increase in ‘secular’ institutions and the promotion of western style development through the reshaping of the educational landscape of the Kingdom was met with growing unease among the *ulema*.

One prominent example was Sheikh Muhammad Ibn Ibrais who served as an “official *ulema*” between 1932 and 1969. In his sermons and publications the Sheikh vociferously argued that the Saudi people were “abandon[ing] religious knowledge in favor of foreign languages, and natural sciences.”<sup>330</sup> The sheikh warned against this sudden change, charging that it was a direct result of the rapid modernization agenda in Saudi Arabia. King Faisal soon after appointed the Sheikh President of the colleges that teach Arabic and shari’a,<sup>331</sup> reflecting a growing trend of co-optation of dissonant religious elements via bureaucratic positions within the “official” ulemic establishment.

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<sup>328</sup> Michaela Prokop, “The War of Ideas: Education in Saudi Arabia” in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society, Foreign Affairs*, ed. Paul Aarts & Gerd Nonneman, (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 57-84.; See also “Educational policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia”, (Riyadh, KSA: Ministry of Education, 1978), 5-9.

<sup>329</sup> Ministry of Information, “Prince Faisal Speaks”, 1963 p. 38 (Pamphlet no. 98, Box 9, McKillop Library Special Collection, Salve Regina University, Rhode Island)

<sup>330</sup> Madawi Al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State: Islamic Voices from a New Generation* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 30.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

As government scholarships to fund study abroad in the West increased, so did growing discontent among the more conservative *ulema*. Ibn Baz, the head of the Council of Islamic Scholars in the Kingdom, recorded the following dialogue with a religious student in his collection of fatwas:

Q: In recent years young men travel to the land of blasphemy to study, do you think they need a special committee to instruct them in good behavior?

Ibn Baz: No doubt traveling to the land of blasphemy is a very dangerous matter. Its negative consequences are enormous. I have issued opinions warning against this danger. If there is no way of avoiding this travel, it is better to send old men who have in-depth knowledge of their religion. Also it is important to send with them pious people to watch them abroad.<sup>332</sup>

Religious universities based in Mecca, Medina and Riyadh increasingly disseminated religious knowledge to a wide audience through lectures and printed and recorded fatwas issued by distinguished faculty. The conflict between traditional values and the modernizing drive by the Al Saud regime was a popular focus. In 1978, students and faculty of Riyadh's Islamic University, including Abd al-Aziz bin Baz (rector of Al Medina Islamic University and president of the Administration of Scientific Study, Legal Opinions, Islamic Propagation and Guidance) authored a petition complaining that state television programs were anti-Islamic and subversive.<sup>333</sup>

### **The *ulema* under Faisal**

While the Wahhabi *ulema* featured prominently in the discourse of the state and were touted as a pillar of legitimacy for the Al Saud regime, the extent of their influence fluctuated greatly with the influx of the modern technocratic class and the pragmatic

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<sup>332</sup> Sheikh Ibn Baz, *Majmu Fatawi*, Vol. V, 390, quoted in Madawi Al-Rasheed, *Contesting Saudi State*, 35.

<sup>333</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society and the Gulf Crisis*, 79-80.



demands of the state maintenance of its oil economy. From the discovery of oil and the entrance of foreign workers with firms such as Aramco, and the influx of technocrats from Egypt and Syria to staff the growing administrative apparatus of the Saudi state, the state began to circumscribe the actual sphere of the *ulema*'s authority.<sup>334</sup> In many scholars' work this has been referred to as the "grand bargain" with the Al Saud regime; the *ulema* would be granted control over social mores and institutions and the religious sphere in exchange for their quiescence and submission to the state the political and economic sphere – especially the military/security and the oil ministries.<sup>335</sup>

Under Faisal, the state exertion of authority over the *ulema* increased. As Joseph Kechichian stated in his article on the relationship between the Al Saud regime and *ulema* in the 1970's,

There is little doubt however that the influence of the *ulema* declined considerably under the rule of King Faisal, who was embarked on a semi-revolutionary program of modernization. In particular, the *ulema* viewed the establishment of modern education centers...as an attempt by the government to weaken their power base.<sup>336</sup>

While the *ulema*'s consent was crucial for the Al Saud regime's legitimacy, this arrangement was a double edged sword. Only the Saudi religious elite who followed Wahhabi orthodoxy were rewarded with institutional and bureaucratic positions of authority. After the death of the Grand Mufti, Ibn Ibrahim in 1971, King Faisal established a 17 member council of senior *ulema* by royal decree and stipulated that the power to appoint its members (and thus also dismiss them) would rest with the King

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<sup>334</sup> Alexander Bligh, The Saudi Religious Elite (*ulema*) as Participant in the Political System of the Kingdom, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Feb., 1985): 37-50.

<sup>335</sup> Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission*.

<sup>336</sup> Joseph Kechichian, "The Role of the *ulema* in the Politics of an Islamic State: The Case of Saudi Arabia," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 18, no. 1 (Feb. 1986): 53-71.

alone.<sup>337</sup> This formal institutionalization of the Wahhabi *ulema* both gave the regime the power of appointment, and thus a modicum of control, but also co-opted the most powerful non-royal leaders in society.

The formal institutional structures of the “official *ulema*” centered around the Council of Higher *ulema* which issued fatwas and produced sermons. Other official religious agencies include the Committee for the promotion of Virtue and the Suppression of Vice, the religious supervision of the Holy Mosque; the Ministry of Pilgrimage; The Directorate of Religious Research, Religious Decrees and the Promotion of Islam; and until 2003, the General Presidency of Girls Education.<sup>338</sup>

### **Tradition and Modernity on a Crash Course: King Faisal and the *ulema***

One of the greatest dilemmas for traditional regimes is the containment of the political consequences of social and economic modernization. Modern economic activities and changing relations with the outside world create new modes of interaction and increase the demand for technologically advanced skills.<sup>339</sup> As Saudi Arabia opened itself up to globalizing influences through development financed by oil revenues, and the media revolution through television and radio, the *ulema* remained a force to be reckoned with.

Faisal, as Abd Al-Aziz before him, opted to persuade dissenting *ulema* about the

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<sup>337</sup> Bligh, 39.; See also Joshua Teitelbaum, *Holier than Thou: Saudi Arabia's Islamic Opposition*, (Washington, DC: Wahington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), 18.

<sup>338</sup> Bligh, 42.; On GPGE transfer in 2003, see Michaela Prokop, “The War of Ideas: Education in Saudi Arabia” in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society, Foreign Affairs*, ed. Paul Aarts & Gerd Nonneman, (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 63-65.

<sup>339</sup> Martin Carnoy and Manuel Castells, “Globalization, the Knowledge Society and the Network State: Poulantzas at the Millennium” in *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs*, 1, no. 1 (January 2001): 1-18.

benefits of technological advancement by demonstrating that it was compatible, and indeed useful in service of the promulgation of Islam. Just as King Abdul-Aziz had demonstrated how the telephone could be used to transmit the Holy Quran, prominent *ulema* were given a significant portion of television broadcast time for religious sermons and lectures to gain their support. However all compromises with the *ulema* had their breaking point. As William Rugh chronicled in his history of communications in Saudi Arabia, when a Riyadh television station began to broadcast a children's program narrated by a Saudi woman in 1967 conservatives vociferously protested to Faisal. By 1968 females were banned from appearing on TV.<sup>340</sup>

The pressures of Arab nationalism, combined with the establishment of the oil industry and the rapid modernization of the economy and society through technological advances such as radio and television brought the relationship with the *ulema* to the fore. In January 1964 Faisal signed an agreement with NBC of New York to build a national television network, with the first transmissions broadcast in July 1965 in Jeddah and Riyadh.<sup>341</sup> However, just as the conservative tribal leaders and *ulema* had initially opposed the introduction of the telegraph and telephone under Abd Al-Aziz into the Kingdom as 'anti-Islamic', conservative leaders likewise opposed Faisal's introduction of television networks into the Kingdom. When the Riyadh television station opened in 1965, a riot broke out led by Prince Khalid bin Musaid bin Abd al-Aziz, a grandson of Abd al-Aziz, who had led prior protests against Faisal's modernization programs. During

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<sup>340</sup> William Rugh, "Saudi Mass Media and Society," in *King Faisal and the Modernization of Saudi Arabia*, ed. William Beling (Westview Press, 1980), 130.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

the ensuing struggle, the prince was killed.<sup>342</sup>

Government planners recognized that the Saudi labor force would be insufficient to meet the technical and labor demands of the economy and estimated that the number of foreign western expatriates would more than double.<sup>343</sup> In the words of one labor economist, the second development plan exacerbated the inherent tension such an expansion of the foreign labor force would bring into the society, stating “The policy option of rapid progress under-pinned by foreign labor poses the threat of undermining religious values, undermining the social structure and turning the Saudis into second class citizens in their own land.”<sup>344</sup> However, the second development plan, while paying lip service to rapid development within the framework of Islamic values, did not shy away from the necessity of an expanded western workforce, at least as a stop gap measure until the Saudi workforce could be adequately trained. As one Saudi minister noted,

The oil revenues have been a mixed blessing. On the one hand, they have provided the Kingdom with a steady large source of income which has been used to further economic development; on the other hand, it has fostered a feeling of euphoria which has made many Saudis unwilling to work on anything but government or a few selected service jobs....the best example one can give is the use of foreign technical advisors. Ideally, he should be hired for a specific job, do his duties and encourage his native counterparts to learn from him. Then, after a year or two, the advisor should be out of a job; several Saudis are available to take over and carry on themselves. This rarely happens; instead, the Saudis use their advisors as a crutch and once they are used to them they cannot (or will not) rid themselves of their support.<sup>345</sup>

The 5-year plan's focus on technology transfer and infrastructure development,

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<sup>342</sup> Daryl Champion, *The Paradoxical Kingdom: Saudi Arabia and the Momentum of Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 126-127.

<sup>343</sup> Second Development Plan: 1975-1980; Michel Nehme, “Saudi Development Plans between Capitalist and Islamic Values,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 30, no. 3 (July, 1994): 632-64.

<sup>344</sup> Michel Nehme, “Saudi Development Plans between Capitalist and Islamic Values,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 30, no. 3 (July, 1994): 644.

<sup>345</sup> Ramon Knauerhause, “Saudi Arabia's Economy at the Beginning of the 1970's,” *The Middle East Journal*, 28, no. 2 (Spring 1976): 139

particularly in the cities also led to a massive increase in urbanization.<sup>346</sup> A 1976 U.S. intelligence report noted a growing unease even among regime elites with the break neck pace of economic reform under the first and second development plans stating that, “others, including some of the older princes, believe that the increased wealth, the influx of foreign workers, and rural-urban migration is already burning a hole in the country’s social fabric.”<sup>347</sup> A subsequent U.S. National Security Council Report in 1977 also emphasized the potentially destabilizing affects of rapid modernization, the introduction of advanced technology, extensive reliance on foreign manpower and rapid urbanization in the Gulf.<sup>348</sup> The regime’s stated goal of ‘modernization’ and its rapid implementation were on a collision course with the pillars of the regime’s legitimacy and thus stability.

## **Post – Faisal**

In 1975, a month before the 2<sup>nd</sup> 5-year development plan was publicly released, the brother of the prince killed in the 1965 riots assassinated King Faisal during a family meeting.<sup>349</sup> After Faisal’s assassination, many looked past the ill King Khalid to then Crown Prince Fahd as the heir to Faisal’s reformist mantle.<sup>350</sup>

A 1978 profile of then Crown Prince Fahd in the Chicago tribune magazine framed him as a cautious modernizer:

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<sup>346</sup> First Development Plan: 1970-75.; see also Nehme: 632-64.

<sup>347</sup> Intelligence Report: The Saudi Development Program: Half the Plan by 1980, September 1976, Approved for release 2005/09/05: NLC-31-47-2-6-8, 17.

<sup>348</sup> Robert B. Oakley, National Security Council Report approved by General Scowcroft: “NSSM 238: US Policy Toward the Persian Gulf,” January 12, 1977, Jimmy Carter Library, NLC-25-72-7-3-5

<sup>349</sup> Joseph Kechichian, *Faysal: Saudi Arabia’s King for All Seasons* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2008).

<sup>350</sup> Fahd was the de facto prime minister during King Khalid's reign in part due to the King’s ill health. King Khalid died in 1982, upon which King Fahd ascended to the throne

In the Kingdom's day to day affairs Fahd energetically preaches a policy of moderation aimed at preserving the ruling house of Saudi while nudging the nation along a path of cautious social progress and explosive economic and educational progress.<sup>351</sup>

Keeping in view local problems in the development and progress of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the late 1970's, Crown Prince Fahd initially did seem to embody the image of a 'modern' reformer expanding the technological frontiers of Saudi society in the name of Islam.

One prominent example of this was Fahd's drive to establish a national scientific organization to be an incubator for scientific advancement. King Abdul-Aziz City for Science and Technology (KACST), located in Riyadh, was established by royal decree in 1977, an early pre-cursor to later "knowledge city" efforts under King Abdullah.<sup>352</sup> KACST charged with the responsibility of promoting and encouraging applied scientific research and coordinating the activities of scientific research organizations and centers in accordance with the Kingdom's development requirements.<sup>353</sup> It was established to play in the words of its inauguration "a leading role in the field of science and a lending source of science and technology for National Societal Mission that combines technology with human resources." The founding principles of KACST list improving education standards and linking with the international scientific community to provide the nation with a technologically sophisticated workforce as the main drivers behind Fahd's

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<sup>351</sup> "Prince Fahd", The Chicago Tribune, October 8, 1978. Accessed February, 2009. Available from LexisNexis.

<sup>352</sup> See Chapter five of this dissertation for more on economic and knowledge cities in Saudi Arabia.

<sup>353</sup> Ragaei El Mallakh and Dorothea H. El Mallakh, *Saudi Arabia: Energy, Developmental Planning and Industrialization* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1982).; It was established with the approval of the government of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia under the name of Saudi Arabian National Center for Science and Technology (SANCST) and later in 1985 was renamed as King Abdulaziz City for Science & Technology (KACST).

vision.<sup>354</sup>

In an unusual development, KACST was established as an independent legal entity administratively attached to then Prime Minister Fahd.<sup>355</sup> This direct authority provided a huge degree of administrative latitude to sign international contracts, such as ones with China and NASA. However, in a move emblematic of the Kingdom's struggle with liberalization, KACST became synonymous not with innovation, but with censorship in the late 1990's as the center of the Kingdom's internet censorship apparatus.<sup>356</sup>

### **Mecca Uprising: Globalization and Grievance**

On November 20, 1979 a group of 300 heavily armed insurgents, composed mostly of young religious scholars from religious colleges in Mecca and Medina seized control of the Grand Mosque of Mecca as more than 50,000 worshippers were celebrating the Islamic New Year and the conclusion of the Hajj. Led by Juhayman Utaiybi, who proclaimed his cousin Muhammad ibn cAbd Allah al-Qahtani the *Mahdi*<sup>357</sup>, the insurgents demanded that the *ulema* withdraw their support from the Al Saud royal family.<sup>358</sup> The two week siege of the Grand Mosque was the first violation of the Grand Mosque's sanctity since the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D., creating a potentially serious challenge to

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<sup>354</sup> For more information please visit KACST web site: <http://www.kacst.edu.sa/>.

<sup>355</sup> El Mallakh, 87-89.

<sup>356</sup> All international www traffic must go through proxy servers in KACST. In addition, all newsfeeds to ISP must come through the central news servers at KACST as well. See Khalid M. Al-Tawil, "The Internet in Saudi Arabia," King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, unpublished paper (accessed March 2, 2009); available from [faculty.kfupm.edu.sa/coe/sadiq/.../rich/.../Internet%20in%20SA-update1.doc](http://faculty.kfupm.edu.sa/coe/sadiq/.../rich/.../Internet%20in%20SA-update1.doc).

<sup>357</sup> The Mahdi is an apocalyptic figure in Islam. See Joseph Kechichian, "The Role of the *ulema* in the Politics of an Islamic State: The Case of Saudi Arabia," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 18, no. 1 (Feb. 1986).

<sup>358</sup> Daryl Champion, *The Paradoxical Kingdom: Saudi Arabia and the Momentum of Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 132.

the Al Saud's credentials as 'keeper/protector of the holy places'. This incident which became known as the Mecca Mosque uprising would reverberate through the political alliances of the Al Saud regime at the deepest level, setting a course of the consolidation of the *ulema* over social institutions for the next two decades.

Utaybi's seizure of the grand mosque was shocking for the regime on several levels. It directly challenged the regime on the religious criteria of *Wali al-ahd*, or rightful leadership, as Utaybi's petition charge that Al Saud regime was illegitimate, citing widespread corruption and its association with infidels. Among the charges of the regime's corruption, Utaybi claimed that "The Ikhwan could not find religious education in the schools and thus had to educate themselves."<sup>359</sup> These "neo-Ikhwan" sprang from the heart of the *ulema* backed religious education establishment. Many were students at Al Medina University as well as the Imam Muhammad Ibn Saudi Islamic University in Riyadh.<sup>360</sup> Frustration with the Al Saud regime and calls for a return to first principles resonated beyond Utaybi's followers as many faculty and students at Mecca Theological College and even the "secular" King Saud University criticized the western influences spreading in the Kingdom.<sup>361</sup> Many of Utaybi's followers and empathizers were disillusioned with modernization, and the supposedly subservient role that the official *ulema*, such as Ibn Baz, had taken to the Al Saud regime.<sup>362</sup> One pamphlet circulated in 1978 charged that the Nejd *ulema* had been bought questioning, "Where is it that the

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<sup>359</sup> Joseph Kechichian, "The Role of the *ulema* in the Politics of an Islamic State: The Case of Saudi Arabia," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 18, no. 1 (Feb. 1986), Quote is from Utaybi's pamphlet "Call of the Brethern".

<sup>360</sup> Mordechai Abir, *Saudi Arabia in the Oil Era*, 149-151.; Holden and Johns, House of Saud: The prayer leader of a Riyadh mosque stated that "an atmosphere favorable to Islamic heresy sprang up at Medina because of the presence of large numbers of foreign students." P. 517

<sup>361</sup> *ibid*

<sup>362</sup> James Buchan, "The Return of the Ikhwan", in Holden and Johns, House of Saud



*ulema* and sheikhs find their money, except through corruption?"<sup>363</sup> In an even more inflammatory pamphlet Utaiybi charged that Ibn Baz the chairman of the Supreme Religious Council, was "in the pay of the Al Sauds, little better than a tool for the family's manipulation of the people . . . Ibn Baz may know his Sunna well enough, but he uses it to bolster corrupt rulers."<sup>364</sup>

The regime, cognizant of the deep theological implications of a continued siege of Mecca, was forced to act but lacked the requisite military expertise. To crush the insurrection, the Al Saud regime requested a fatwa from the official *ulema* to enter the grounds of the Mecca Mosque, and use force to dislodge the rebels.<sup>365</sup> On November 24, 1979 thirty *ulema*, led by Ibn Baz, issued a fatwa denounced the rebels for using weapons in the holy Ka'ba and, most importantly, provided religious justification for the regime to use force inside the grand Mosque.<sup>366</sup> Casualty figures published on January 9, 1980, indicated that 26 pilgrims and 127 members of the security forces were killed in the action in addition to 177 rebels. Utaiybi and 62 of his followers were eventually beheaded in the public squares of eight cities throughout the Kingdom: Mecca, Medina, Riyadh, Damman, al-Burayda, Hail, Abha, and Tabouk.<sup>367</sup>

The 1979 takeover of the grand mosque was a significant turning point for the Al Saud and conservative *ulema* compromise. With the real threat of delegitimization of the Saudi monarchy by religious critics, Crown Prince Fahd would move swiftly to accommodate the *ulema's* demands for more authority.

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<sup>363</sup> Ibid. Holden and Johns, House of Saud, p. 515

<sup>364</sup> Ibid p. 515

<sup>365</sup> Joseph Kechichian, "The Role of the *ulema* in the Politics of an Islamic State: The Case of Saudi Arabia," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 18, no. 1 (Feb. 1986).

<sup>366</sup> Ibid., Kechichian cites text of communiqué from Foreign Broadcast Information Service – Middle East and North Africa, November 26, 1979.

<sup>367</sup> Kechichian, "The Role of the *ulema*," Footnote 21.

### **Religious consolidation of social institutions: 1980's**

As 1979 drew to a close, the regime struggled with both domestic unrest and an acute external threat. Iran's Islamic revolution loomed large during this period, underlining what happens when a monarchical regime loses its legitimacy. Internally, the regime faced destabilizing elements on two fronts: from the ultra-conservative and anti-modernization elements represented by the neo-Ikhwan, and from the Shi'is in the Eastern Provinces working for Aramco. The regime would have to respond to these dual threats to maintain its legitimacy.<sup>368</sup>

The Shi'a minority – estimated between 5 -15% of Saudi Arabia – was, and continues to be, both geographically and socially isolated in the broader Sunni Wahhabi society.<sup>369</sup> Located primarily in the Eastern Provinces, the center of all Saudi oil production, the Shia population's main grievances against the regime were regional underdevelopment and institutional discrimination. In 1979, unrest among the Shia intensified, leading to a series of riots in Qatif and al-Hasa.<sup>370</sup> These riots, combined with the regime's fears of the Iranian revolution spreading among the Shias, as had been the case in neighboring Bahrain, led to a violent crackdown by the regime.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> "US Aides say Corruption is Threat to Saudi Stability," *New York Times*, April 16, 1980. Accessed July 2010. Available from LexisNexis.

<sup>369</sup> Estimates vary. "Saudi Arabia Risks Shiite Unrest in Wake of Bahrain Turmoil," *Business Week*, February 20, 2011. Available from <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-02-20/saudi-arabia-risks-shiite-unrest-in-wake-of-bahrain-turmoil.html>.

<sup>370</sup> See Toby Craig Jones, "Embattled in Arabia: Shi'as and the Politics of Confrontation in Saudi Arabia," (Occasional Paper Series, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, June 2009) for a detailed account of the multiple Shia reform movement strains in Saudi Arabia.

<sup>371</sup> Nadav Safran, *Saudi Arabia: The Ceaseless Quest for Security*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 357-8.; Toby Craig Jones, "Rebellion on the Saudi Periphery: Modernity, Marginalization and the Shi'a Uprising of 1979," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 38, no. 2 (May 2006): 213-233.

The Al Saud regime also began to tighten relations with Zia Al-Haq's regime in Pakistan as they shared a mutual enmity of the Marxist regime in Afghanistan and the Iranian revolution.<sup>372</sup> To counter both the Marxist and Iranian threat, as well as the growing threat presented by internally radicalized youth, the Saudi regime began to expand Islamic Wahhabi missionary schools abroad. Young Saudi men were encouraged to fight for jihadist causes in Afghanistan and Pakistan – turning their attention to the infidel far afield, rather than focusing on purifying the Kingdom from within.<sup>373</sup>

In this landscape of revolutionary tumult, the regime reified the power of the *ulema*, even as it sought to control it. To close observers of the internal dynamics of the Kingdom after the Mecca crisis, it was clear that a recalibration of the relationship with the *ulema* was occurring, but just how far it would go was unknown. A MEED Economic Review in 1979 stated that:

While it is argued below that the pace and direction of economic development are unlikely to alter greatly as a result of the recent signs of domestic unrest, it is clear that some of the more obvious abuses of the religious code that have been infiltrating the Kingdom in recent years will be more strictly controlled. Already in the wake of Iran<sup>374</sup> practices such as mixed bathing, the hangings of mirrors in ladies' clothing stores, and others have been stopped. Enforcement of these bans has also been vested in the secular police rather than in the less authoritative Committee of Virtue and Discouragement of vice. More recently there have been calls from several leading officials, including the minister of public works and housing, for the preservation of Islamic architecture throughout Saudi Arabia, and muted criticism of some Western architects and consultants for not respecting the traditions of the Kingdom.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Michael Griffith, *Reaping the Whirlwind: Afghanistan, Al-Qa'ida and the Holy War*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (UK: Pluto Press, 2003); see also Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Al Saqi Books, 2000), 399.

<sup>373</sup> See Ahmed Al Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008).; and Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Pan-Islamism since 1979* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and Madawi Al-Rasheed, "The Minaret and the Palace: Obedience at Home and Rebellion Abroad," in *Kingdom without Borders*, ed. Madawi Al-Rasheed (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 199-220.

<sup>374</sup> Referring to the Iranian Revolution leading to the deposing of the Shah – an event that had particularly troubling resonance for the Al Saud regime.

<sup>375</sup> *Middle East Economic Digest* (London, 1979), 11.

In order to placate liberal elites in the midst of these crises, Crown Prince Fahd announced that a National Consultative Council (*majlis al-shura*) would be established. This council was supposed to be comprised of professionals, technocrats, bureaucratic elites, and prominent non-royal business elites. A MEED report from 1980 mentions the various gestures towards reform that the regime was floating in the wake of both the Iranian Revolution and the Mecca crisis:

The shi'a riots and the siege of the Grand Mosque have forced the Saudi leadership to think seriously in terms of active reform, and some movement has been seen on Crown Prince Fahd's promise to introduce a Consultative council and constitution. A committee under the chairmanship of the interior minister, Prince Naif, has been meeting regularly since March 23 to finalize the drafting of the 200 article basic constitution for rule, the consultative council regulations, and the District Governorates bylaws. The actual nature of the reforms is hardly likely to change the system of government, and besides, the committee has been given no time limit for its deliberations. The consultative council in particular will only institutionalize the present system of consensus politics, which means steering a thin line between the Islamic fundamentalists in the country, represented by the *ulemas*, and the businessmen. Both sides are demanding more say in charting the Kingdom's course through these troubled times; already the government has given tacit approval for Wahib BinZagar, chairman of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce, to put forward business opinion on matters of public concern as part of an experiment in liberalization to be launched this summer."<sup>376</sup>

However, more than a year after the Mecca uprising there was still no consultative council. Once Fahd had secured his base of support within the regime, the creation of a council composed of middle-class elites was conveniently shelved.<sup>377</sup> Liberalization of political institutions and the social sphere remained at a standstill at best or sharply regressed.

Instead, the regime institutionalized the most conservative elements of the *ulema*

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<sup>376</sup> MEED Economic Review Saudi Arabia 1978-80 (1979), 11.

<sup>377</sup> William Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980's: Foreign Policy, Security and Oil* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1981), 96.

by giving them the bureaucratic and public space in which to operate, namely the education and social sphere in the 80's, at the expense of the business and technocratic elite's liberalization plans.<sup>378</sup> According to Summer Huyette who observed the changes on the ground in Saudi Arabia from 1976-1982, "They [the graduates of the religious universities] remain the mainstay of the legitimacy of the Al Saud and they do not hesitate to make their presence felt, enjoining the king to adhere to the tenets of ibn abd Al-Wahhab, but their impact is felt more in the social than in the political realm."<sup>379</sup> Even the Aramco enclaves in the East such as Al-Hasa that had always been viewed as separate and immune to Shari'a law were now subject to Wahhabi codes enforced by the newly empowered morality police.<sup>380</sup> The conservative *ulema* sensing their ascendancy also pushed for Sharia law courts to replace commercial law courts and for non-Islamic banks to be closed.<sup>381</sup> In a move emblematic of the tilting of the balance of power from business and liberal elites to the conservative *ulema*, King Fahd in 1986 officially changed his title from "his Majesty" to "Servant of the Holy Places".<sup>382</sup> As Abdullah Masry, the director of Saudi antiquities and museums, commented in 1982, "Religion is stabilizing here while it was destabilizing in Iran, there, there was a fundamental antagonism. Here, the political power is continually appeasing the religious

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<sup>378</sup> Gwenn Okruhlik, "State Power, Religious Privilege, and Myths about Political Reform," in *Religion and Politics in Saudi Arabia*, eds. Ayoob and Kosebalaban (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2009), 94.

<sup>379</sup> Summer Huyette, *Political adaptation in Sa'udi Arabia: A Study of the Council of Ministers* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 117.

<sup>380</sup> Mordechai Abir, *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society and the Gulf Crisis* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 110.; see also Michael Field, "Weathering the Storm," *Financial Times*, April 21, 1986, Supplement, VIII. Accessed November 19, 2009. Available from LexisNexis.

<sup>381</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society and the Gulf Crisis*, 180.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

constituency."<sup>383</sup>

## The Stagnation of Higher Education

Crown Prince Fahd was forced to do an about face on his initial prioritization of the liberalization policies. As Toby Craig Jones notes,

Throughout the 1980s the government stopped promoting itself as the steward of modernity. The symbolic power that the state had previously placed on modernization, development and progress was stripped away from public discourse. Government leaders backed away from emphasizing the values that they had previously argued were bound up with being modern, as these had become a political liability.<sup>384</sup>

By the mid-1980s, the state had moved significantly to shore up its religious legitimacy by systematically co-opting and consolidating the *ulema* by newly emphasizing the Wahhabi character of the state. This included giving religious leaders more authority in the “soft” institutional sphere – that of education and social codes of conduct.

This renewed accommodation with the *ulema* was evident in the sharp departure of the higher education system from King Faisal’s previous liberal reforms. Religious curricula were highlighted, funding for religious universities was dramatically increased,<sup>385</sup> and universities were placed under the strict control of the new ministry of higher education (MoHE) which had been founded in 1975.<sup>386</sup> Hasan bin 'Abd Allah bin

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<sup>383</sup> Quoted in David Ottaway, “How Stable is the ‘Secret Kingdom’ of Saudi Arabia?” *Washington Post*, January 3, 1982. Accessed April 2, 2009. Available from LexisNexis.

<sup>384</sup> Toby Craig Jones, “The Dogma of Development: Techno-politics and the Making of Saudi Arabia, 1950-1980” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2006), 278.

<sup>385</sup> Michaela Prokop, “The War of Ideas: Education in Saudi Arabia” in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society, Foreign Affairs*, ed. Paul Aarts & Gerd Nonneman, (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 61.

<sup>386</sup> Mohammed Eisa Faheem, “Higher Education and Nation Building: A Case Study of King Abdul Aziz University” (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1982), 79 : “The Minister of Higher Education...is the supreme authority of the universities....In these universities, the rector is appointed on the recommendation of the Minister of Higher Education....has overall charge of the management of financial, educational and administrative matters.”

Hasan Al al-Shaykh, son of a former chief qadi of Saudi Arabia, who possessed a solely religious educational background was appointed as the Minister of Higher Education.<sup>387</sup>

Study abroad programs with the west were temporarily de-authorized and Saudi students abroad were recalled in the middle of the academic year.<sup>388</sup> New regulations prohibited female students from studying abroad.<sup>389</sup> Universities ran summer centers to further the Islamic education of the students, and funding for existing religious colleges and universities was increased to both expand faculties and absorb more students.<sup>390</sup>

While overall student enrollment increased throughout the 1980's, resources were disproportionately allocated to religious universities and programs.<sup>391</sup> Existing "secular" universities' enrollments were expanded, with increases in government funds going primarily to the establishment and expansion of colleges focusing on Arabic and religious studies within universities to absorb additional students.<sup>392</sup> Indeed, the only new university to be established in the 20 year period between 1979 to 1998 was the religious university Umm Al-Qura, established in Mecca in 1981.<sup>393</sup>

The experience at King Abd al-Aziz University, the first private university in Saudi Arabia, was indicative of the transformation of the higher education system as a whole. At KAU a curriculum committee was established to "supervise and administer the

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<sup>387</sup> Alexander Bligh, The Saudi Religious Elite (*ulema*) as Participant in the Political System of the Kingdom, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Feb., 1985): 37-50.

<sup>388</sup> Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Al Saqi Books, 2000), 397.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid.

<sup>390</sup> Abdullah F. Al-Lheedan, "Higher Education, Political Development and Stability in Saudi Arabia" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1994), 210.

<sup>391</sup> Gad G. Gilbar, *The Middle East Oil Decade and Beyond* (London, Portland OR: Frank Cass, 1997), 77-101.; and Nasser Ibrahim Rashid, *King Fahd and Saudi Arabia's Great Evolution* (Joplin, MO: International Institute of Technology, 1987), 123

<sup>392</sup> Al-Lheedan, 200-211.

<sup>393</sup> See Appendix IV for public universities and founding dates.

ongoing reform of the total curriculum along the Islamic line.”<sup>394</sup> As one Saudi education expert noted in 1982,

The most important change in the general curricula since 1975 is the effort to integrate Islamic ideology with the social, humanistic and scientific disciplines...In each faculty or field of study Islamic courses are to constitute the center or the core around which the whole curriculum has to revolve. No student will graduate without taking courses in Islamic culture and civilization.<sup>395</sup>

Even in the traditionally “secular” faculties of medicine and engineering were required to introduce Islamic studies into their curricula “in order to reinforce awareness of the basic Islamic nature of their studies.”<sup>396</sup> To place this shift in the Saudi government’s funding strategy for education in perspective; King Abd al –Aziz University (KAU), which was considered ‘secular’ had an enrollment over 30% larger than the newly established Umm Al-Qura in Mecca but Umm Al Qura maintained an academic staff larger than that of KAU.<sup>397</sup> This policy continued even during the mid-1980s, when oil revenues fell dramatically.<sup>398</sup> Both the Islamic University in Mecca and Imam Mohammed Bin Saud Islamic University in Riyadh were placed under the exclusive control of the Council of Ministers, underlining the new state importance placed on religious education and the government’s desire to keep a closer eye on it.<sup>399</sup>

By 1986, over 16,000 of the Kingdom’s 100,000 students were pursuing Islamic Studies. By the early 1990s, one-fourth of all university students were enrolled in

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<sup>394</sup> Faheem, 188.; See also *Okaz*, October 25, 1981, 34.

<sup>395</sup> Faheem, 187.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*; See also P. Moorman, “Medical Center will Provide Care for All”, *Middle East Education*, 2, no. 3. (May 1980): 36.

<sup>397</sup> Gilbar, 74-80.

<sup>398</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society and the Gulf Crisis*, 99.

<sup>399</sup> Nasser Ibrahim Rashid, 93.



religious institutions.<sup>400</sup> Upon graduation these religious and humanities majors would seek employment in the public sector as ministry bureaucrats, elementary and secondary school teachers, policemen and mutawwa' (religious police) as well as as shari'a judges and preachers in some twenty thousand mosques throughout the Kingdom.<sup>401</sup>

## **Female Education**

Female education sat at the crossroads of conservative cultural traditions and the argument over the purpose and function of the education sector in an ever more conservative Islamic state. As one observer in the 1980's noted, "The influence of the *ulema* in the educational and social sphere is felt particularly strongly in respect of women's education and the role of women in public life."<sup>402</sup>

While female enrollment in colleges and universities increased throughout the 1980's, leaping from only 8 percent of university enrollees in 1970 to 39% of total university enrollees by 1986,<sup>403</sup> the content and supervision of the curriculum was placed under the strict supervision of the *ulema* via the General Presidency for Girls Education (GPGE). The GPGE was managed by senior *ulema*, generally from the Al-Shaikh family, and administratively functioned in isolation from both the Ministry of Education and the

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<sup>400</sup> Gwenn Okruhlik, "Empowering Civility through Nationalism: Reformist Islam and Belonging in Saudi Arabia," In *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 195.

<sup>401</sup> Gwenn Okruhlik, "Islamism and Reform in Saudi Arabia," *Current History* 101, no. 651 (January 2002): 22-8; see also Khalid Karimi, "A Case Study of Umm al-Qura University, Mecca, Saudi Arabia" (Ed.D. diss., Indiana University, 1983).

<sup>402</sup> Eleanor Doumato, "Women and the Stability of Saudi Arabia," *Middle East Report* (July-August 1991): 36.; and Haya al Rawaf and Cyril Simmons, "Religion, Tradition and the Education of Women in Saudi Arabia," *Muslim Educational Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (Autumn 1991).

<sup>403</sup> Gilbar, 78.; see also UNESCO statistical yearbooks various years.

Ministry of Higher Education.<sup>404</sup> Under the GPGE colleges for education for girls were established in both Riyadh and Jeddah in the 1970's followed by three education colleges opened in 1981 in Medina, Buraida and Abha.<sup>405</sup> National universities such as King Abdul Aziz also had separate colleges for women, although they were likewise supervised by the GPGE rather than the MoHE that their male counterparts fell under.<sup>406</sup> The *ulema* would support female higher education, as long as they could control it.

As the regime reduced the number of foreign scholarships offered to Saudis it specifically discouraged Saudi women from studying abroad unless accompanied by their guardians.<sup>407</sup> Furthermore, the *ulema* began to dictate what subjects were deemed appropriate to women in higher education; for example, subjects such as Law, Politics, and Economics were forbidden<sup>408</sup> and strict gender segregation was maintained in all educational spheres.<sup>409</sup> This tightening of control over female activities extended to the public sphere as well. Women's beauty salons and social clubs were ordered closed. The few remaining female TV announcers were fired.<sup>410</sup> And, in 1985, a royal decree was issued prohibiting women from employment in all fields of work apart from female

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<sup>404</sup> Nesta Ramazani, "Arab women in the Gulf," *Middle East Journal* 30, no. 2 (Spring 1985).

<sup>405</sup> Nasser Ibrahim Rashid, 93.; See also "King Abdul Aziz university Developing a Separate Women's University" *Saudi Gazette*, July 24 1986. Accessed February 2, 2009. Available from LexisNexis.

<sup>406</sup> Mulligan Papers, Box 3 Folder 41

<sup>407</sup> Mai Yamani, *Changed Identities: The Challenge of the New Generation in Saudi Arabia*, (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2000), 53.

<sup>408</sup> Female professor who worked at King Abdul Aziz University in the 1980's, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2008. These subjects were not formally forbidden (there was no royal decree), but clearly understood by administrators and professors alike to be unwise to pursue. Requests to open new majors in controversial subjects such as political science were summarily denied by the MoHE.

<sup>409</sup> Mai Yamani, 53.; Ibtissam A. Al-Bassam, "Institutions of Higher Education for Women in Saudi Arabia," *International Journal of Educational Development* 4, no. 3 (1984): 255-258.

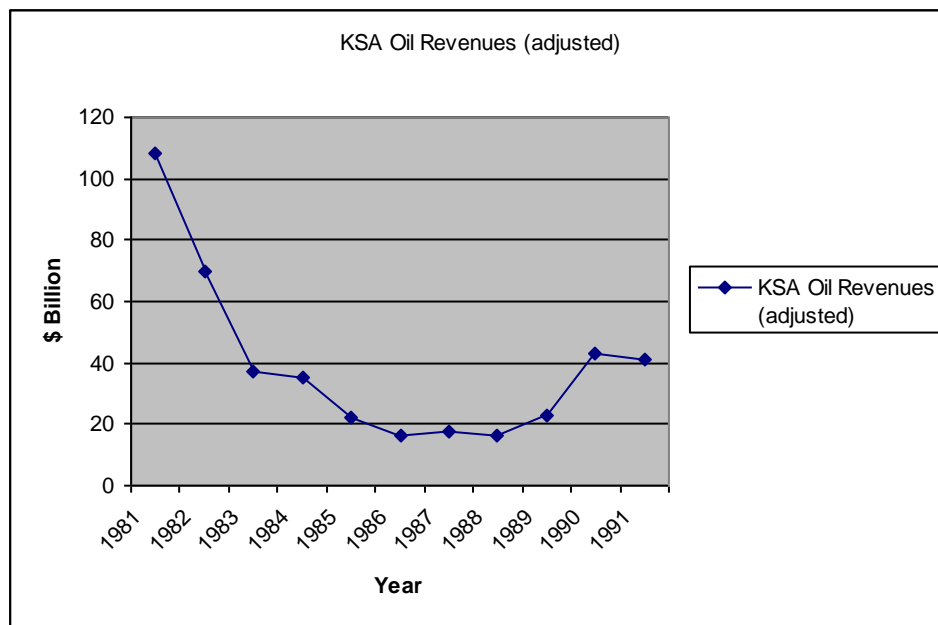
<sup>410</sup> Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Al Saqi Books, 2000), 397.

education and nursing. It also prohibited women from associating with men in the workplace, which further constrained their employment opportunities.<sup>411</sup>

### University Output and Labor Market Discrepancies

The huge power of the oil industry and its rentier character in Saudi Arabia allowed the state to temporarily displace the long term impact of disemboweling the secular higher education system. However, as the oil boom of the late 70's subsided, oil went from a high of \$40 pbl in 1980 to \$14 pbl in 1985.<sup>412</sup>

**Chart 1: Saudi Arabia's Oil Revenues 1981-1992<sup>413</sup>**



<sup>411</sup> United Nations Development Program, *Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Millennium Development Goals: 2005* (New York: UNDP, 2005), 30-38.

<sup>412</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *OECD Factbook, Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics: Oil Prices*, 2010 (accessed February 2, 2010); available from <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/factbook-2010-en/05/02/03/index.html?contentType=&itemId=/content/chapter/factbook-2010-44-en&containerItemId=/content/serial/18147364&accessItemIds=&mimeType=text/html>.

<sup>413</sup> Source: Based on data from OECD, Saudi Arabia, oil revenues, 1981-1992

Saudi oil production, which had increased to almost 10 million barrels per day (b/d) during 1980-81, dropped to about 2 million b/d in 1985. Budgetary deficits developed, and the government drew down its foreign assets.<sup>414</sup>

As Saudi Arabia's oil revenue dropped, a severe strain was placed on maintaining the country's infrastructure. Over a million foreign, including tens of thousands of western experts left Saudi Arabia between 1982 and 1987. However, the Kingdom still employed over 2 million foreign workers even as unemployment among Saudis skyrocketed.<sup>415</sup> The employment of Saudis in the private sector was particularly dismal. The per capita income declined from \$11,000 dollars in 1980 to approximately \$7,000 dollars by 1989.<sup>416</sup>

In terms of the impact of the oil bust on the education sector, religious colleges and universities maintained their funding levels while other faculties were slowly defunded by the MoHE.<sup>417</sup> As a former president of King Abd'Al-Aziz University noted, the quality of universities declined in the 1980's from both the financial strain of the oil bust, and from the increasing constrictive oversight of the MoHE.<sup>418</sup> Although the 1980's witnessed a huge expansion of higher education intended to meet the demand for skilled manpower,<sup>419</sup> the declining quality of the education and mismatch between degree specialization and the needs of the private sector led to an increasing number of university graduates unable to be fully absorbed into the struggling economy. This

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<sup>414</sup> Department of State, *Background Note: Saudi Arabia*, May 6, 2011. Accessed May 12, 2011. Available from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3584.htm>.

<sup>415</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society and the Gulf Crisis*, 100.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>417</sup> *Third Development Plan: 1980-1985*.

<sup>418</sup> Abdullah Nassief, former King Abdul Aziz University President, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>419</sup> *Second Development Plan: 1975-1980*, 213-356.

mismatch between education outputs and the job market created a new generation of young students with a socio-economic grievance.<sup>420</sup>

With static wages and little to no money to fund research, faculties of science and technology at the expanding state universities experienced sharp declines in quality.<sup>421</sup> While the government continued to provide stipends to all university students, the universities, once seen as being the engine of economic and technological change in the Kingdom under King Faisal, became expensive warehouses for Saudi Arabia's expanding and increasingly disaffected youth population.

Reflecting the regime's awareness of the potentially destabilizing impact of the economic crisis and an unemployed youth bulge, in 1988, King Fahd urged students at Umm al-Qura University in Mecca, seventy percent of whom held degrees in Islamic studies and liberal arts, to join the armed forces and security services to pursue technical training after graduation.<sup>422</sup> The special development plan for 1989-93 also placed a particular emphasis on combating national unemployment, listing as its main goals:

- To continue to develop the Kingdom's defense forces and to strengthen loyalty of citizens
- To increase the activity of the private sector in the national economy
- To achieve a balanced development among the various regions of the Kingdom
- To encourage the private sector to provide job opportunities for citizens.
- To replace non-Saudi manpower with Saudi manpower.<sup>423</sup>

The process of Saudization had begun, but the university system was not up to the task.

By the mid to late 1980's the incompatibility of the regime's policy of funding mass

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<sup>420</sup> Tim Niblock, *Saudi Arabia: Power, Legitimacy and Survival* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 84-85.

<sup>421</sup> Abdullah Nassief, former King Abdul Aziz University President, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>422</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society and the Gulf Crisis*, 148.

<sup>423</sup> Ministry of Planning, *Special Development Plan: 1989-1993*, (Riyadh: MOP, 1989), Introduction.

enrollment, with a particular emphasis placed on religious universities and subjects, without a match to the needs of the labor market was becoming obvious. However, while the 5-year development plans began to make rhetorical gestures towards the unemployment plight of university graduates, any substantive plans to reform the education system were quickly stifled by the political turmoil following the Gulf War as will be discussed in chapter four.

## **Conclusion**

The higher education sector in Saudi Arabia throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been a political football for vying interest groups. From King Saud's elimination of study abroad programs, through King Faisal's emphasis on technocratic education – control over education has often been a barometer indicating which interest groups are perceived as most vital for the regime's continued stability.

Successive Saudi rulers have had to manage the requirements of economic development and the pace of technological modernization while seeking to maintain legitimacy from the traditional conservative elements of society, namely the *ulema*. This chapter charted the emergence and control of higher education institutions to reflect the political compromises the monarchy has made with both technocrats and conservative *ulema* to maintain a governing balance.

In the subsequent chapters, I will explore how this pattern of institutional consolidation in return for quiescence has been upended post 9/11 and whether indeed an era of 'real' reform is emerging in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



## Chapter 4

### **Crises to the Regime and Cautious Openings: The First Gulf War and 9/11**

Prior chapters have detailed the political history involved in establishing the Saudi Arabian state's bureaucracy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in particular the institutions and that comprised the education sector. This chapter will look at how the Al Saud regime managed increasing education reform pressures throughout the 1990's, through the lens of two separate crises: the Gulf War and 9/11 and subsequent QAP terror attacks in Saudi Arabia. This chapter will proceed in three sections:

1. Gulf War reform pressures and coalitions
2. A case study of the establishment of the first private college in 1998
3. The impact of 9/11 and QAP terror attacks on the wider reform landscape

Through detailing different reform coalitions and interest groups, as well as how they pursued reform, particularly to the education sector, a more complex regime-societal relationship picture emerges than traditional formulations of rentier theory would suggest. Demographic and economic pressures, advances in communications technology, in combination with domestic opposition and international attention following 9/11, created a clear the incentive for the regime to re-evaluate its relationship with the conservative *ulema* and, in turn, to diminish their capture of the education system. These later crises lead to the regime's renegotiation of its pillars of support created the political space necessary for reformers to push liberalization of higher education where previous efforts following the Gulf War had largely faltered.



## 1990's and Gulf War I

On August 2, 1990, Iraqi troops entered and occupied Kuwait catching the Saudi government by surprise. Despite defense expenditures in excess of 200 billion dollars in the 1980's, the Saudi regime faced serious doubts about the combat readiness of its forces and its ability to repel or deter a swift Iraqi advance.<sup>424</sup> On August 13, the Council of Senior *ulema*, controlled by the regime, issued a fatwa declaring that the stationing of foreign troops in the Kingdom was “dictated by necessity”.<sup>425</sup> Grand Mufti Ibn Baz also issued a supplemental fatwa stating that by inviting in US forces to defend the Kingdom, King Fahd was in essence defending Islam itself.<sup>426</sup> On August 7, 1990 King Fahd formally requested military assistance from the U.S. government to protect the Kingdom.<sup>427</sup>

At the height of the Gulf war over 500,000 American troops were based in Saudi Arabia.<sup>428</sup> The regime's need for protection from Iraqi troops by foreign U.S. troops, and the official *ulema*'s role in justifying the request, would prove to be a watershed moment for both Islamist and liberal elites in their ability and strategies to contest the regime's policies.

In the crisis environment following the Gulf War, the Al Saud regime felt acutely vulnerable to charges that it was illegitimate. In what had previously been a tightly controlled media environment, public dissatisfaction with the U.S. troops and the regime

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<sup>424</sup> Tim Niblock, *Saudi Arabia: Power, Legitimacy and Survival* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 87-90.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid.

<sup>426</sup> “Ulema Council Supports Actions of King Fahd,” *Riyadh Domestic Service*, August 13, 1990. Available from Foreign Broadcast Information Service, FBIS-NES-90-157. See also the online collection of Ibn Baz's fatawa available (in Arabic) from <http://www.binbaz.org.sa/>. Accessed February 13, 2010.

<sup>427</sup> Nasser Ibrahim Rashid and Esber Shaheen, *Saudi Arabia and the Gulf War* (Joplin, MO: International Institute of Technology, April 1992).

<sup>428</sup> Rachel Bronson, *Thicker than Oil: America's Uneasy Partnership with Saudi Arabia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 195.

started to seep into the public discourse – both in the mosques and in the streets.<sup>429</sup> The official *ulema*'s fatwas supporting the basing of foreign troops in Saudi Arabia underlined for many its role as a subservient 'clergy' to the state and paradoxically created the space and internal discontent within the younger clergy to challenge the state's religious credentials.<sup>430</sup>

Despite fatwas from the clerical establishment, many younger religious scholars, became increasingly vocal in their disavowal of official *ulema*'s stated support for the U.S. basing. "Unofficial" or dissident *ulema* arose in reaction to disagreements with the "official" *ulema*'s support of the Al Saud regime's legitimacy at the cost of widespread religious consensus. This cleavage presented echoes of the neo-Ikhwan movement in 1979, but this time the dissatisfaction reverberated more widely and seemed to take deeper root both among unofficial *ulema*, Islamists and paradoxically elements of the liberal elite.

### **The *Sahwa al-Islamiyya***

In the aftermath of the Gulf War politically vocal anti-establishment clerics and their young followers became known as the *Sahwa* (awakening) movement. These unofficial or dissident *ulema* generally were educated in the religious institutions of Saudi Arabia in the 1980's, during the height of calls to jihad in Afghanistan. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Syria, many members of which become instructors in Saudi

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<sup>429</sup> Mamoun Fandy, *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001).; and Daryl Champion, *The Paradoxical Kingdom: Saudi Arabia and the Momentum of Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 217-225.

<sup>430</sup> Nawaf E. Obaid, "The Power of Saudi Arabia's Islamic Leaders," *Middle East Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (September 1999): 51-58.

Arabia's universities, served as an additional inspiration.<sup>431</sup> The regime's efforts to co-opt organized religious opposition by strengthening religious institutions throughout the 1980's led to the creation of the very thing it had sought to avoid.<sup>432</sup>

These *Sahwa* inspired clerics and youths viewed the relationship of the formal *ulema* with the regime as corrupt and questioned the regime's religious values and conduct – the central pillar of its legitimacy.<sup>433</sup> Leading figures in the 'Sahwa' or awakening movement such as Salman Al-Auda and Sheikh Safar Al-Hawali repeatedly cited the corruption of the regime's religious values as responsible for the moral deterioration of the society.

Al-Auda in particular focused on 'secular education' in the Kingdom as a source of the Kingdom's ills. In taped sermons, Al-Auda frequently pointed to the decline of religiosity in Saudi society as the single most grievous danger facing the state, and highlighted the need for an increase of religious material in school curriculums, and indeed the increase of religiously trained graduates in government.<sup>434</sup> Al-Auda pointed to spread of secularism via the education system in other Muslim countries, warning that in Tunisia and Algeria, "The government takes every religious element out of the school books and propagates vice instead of a virtue."<sup>435</sup>

Hawali also highlighted how the process of globalization was radically altering the moral fiber of Saudi society – in his view leading to a dangerous rise of 'Western

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<sup>431</sup> Hrair Dekmejian, "The Rise of Political Islamism in Saudi Arabia," *Middle East Journal* 48, no. 4 (Autumn 1994): 627-644.

<sup>432</sup> Toby Craig Jones, "Religious Revivalism and its Challenge to the Saudi Regime," *Religion and Politics in Saudi Arabia*, eds. Ayoob and Kosebalaban (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2009), 109.

<sup>433</sup> Sherifa Zuhur, *Saudi Arabia: Islamic Threat, Political Reform and the Global War on Terror* (U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, March 2005), 25-27.

<sup>434</sup> Fandy, 99.

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*, Quotes Salman al-Auda in "We are Advocates of Peace and Unity," taped sermon, distributed throughout the Kingdom in 1991.

secularism'. Hawali warns against the influence of westernized Saudi intellectuals stating, "The first war should be against the infidels inside, and then we will be strong enough to face our external enemy."<sup>436</sup> On the domestic front Hawali also attacked liberal trends in female education stating that, "To serve the nation, women must stay at home. They should not go to Jeddah in search of a university. The dormitories are full of corruption and mixing."<sup>437</sup>

Mamoun Fandy argues in his examination of the *Sahwa* movement that, "Saudi opposition [movements] cannot be understood without looking at the linkages between the global and the local factors."<sup>438</sup> Sermons from dissident *ulema* attacking the regime, and the *ulema* who justified its position in allowing US troops on the 'holy land', circulated widely throughout the Kingdom during the Gulf War. More than 100,000 copies of Sheikh al-Auda's anti-American book published at the beginning of 1991 sold within a month.<sup>439</sup> Anti-regime cassette tapes found a particularly receptive audience among the hundreds of thousands of unemployed liberal arts and religion graduates. Ironically, while Sheikh Hawali's message gained widespread audience through taped recordings and cassettes, he labeled the spread of new communication technologies, such as the satellite dish and the internet, "to be part of a Western conspiracy to subvert the

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<sup>436</sup> Fandy, 65. Quotes and translates Hawali, "Satathkroun ma Aqul Lakum (You will remember what I say to you), taped sermon, 1991.

<sup>437</sup> Safar al-Hawali quoted in Madawi Al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State: Islamic Voices from a New Generation* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 89. See also alhawali.com for additional fatwas and sermons.

<sup>438</sup> Fandy, 7.

<sup>439</sup> Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Saudi Rulers are Confronting Challenge by Islamic Radicals," *New York Times*, July 6, 1991. Available from LexisNexis.; See also Youssef M. Ibrahim, Special to *The New York Times*, March 9, 1992 which details contents of the "supergun" cassette that charges "Royal family princes are not owed allegiance except if they follow the rules of Islam".

Islamic faith”.<sup>440</sup> In 1994, Saudi authorities detained Sheikh al-Auda, and many of his followers were placed under house arrest. While his followers were released after several weeks al-Auda remained under house arrest until June 1999, highlighting the regime’s perception of the potential threat he posed.<sup>441</sup>

### **“Liberal” Elite Opposition**

In addition to the theological challenges involved with the stationing of foreign troops in Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom also faced a precipitous financial crisis following the Gulf War.<sup>442</sup> The politically quiescent business elites of the 1980’s, who had been severely affected by the long recession following the oil bust in the mid-80’s, began to express their discontent with the economic management of the state, and in particular the *ulema*’s influence in the private sector.

Unlike traditional merchants, many of the business elite in Saudi Arabia benefited from a symbiotic relationship with the regime. As Steffen Hertog chronicles, both princes and well connected leaders were able to make millions through taking advantage of foreign investment loopholes requiring a Saudi partner.<sup>443</sup> Many of these elites however gradually expanded beyond pure patronage arrangements and acquired significant business enterprises.<sup>444</sup> In turn, these enterprises required technocratic

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<sup>440</sup> Joshua Teitelbaum, *Holier than Thou: Saudi Arabia’s Islamic Opposition*, (Washington, DC: Wahington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), 17.

<sup>441</sup> Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Pan-Islamism since 1979*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>442</sup> Some estimates have placed the cost of the Gulf War on Saudi Arabia at over 60 Billion. See Niblock, *Saudi Arabia*, 89.

<sup>443</sup> Steffen Hertog, *Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats: Oil and the State in Saudi Arabia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid*; Tim Niblock with Monica Malik, *The Political Economy of Saudi Arabia* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007).

expertise. Many wealthier Saudis who had studied abroad in the 1970's, or less wealthy Saudis who had risen through the Aramco system, began to find opportunities to work in the private sector.<sup>445</sup> One of Nadav Safran's definitional characteristics of a new middle class elite is their "possession of a modern secular education – knowledge, skills, techniques and training in sciences or technologies imported from the Western world...This new type of education is their unique asset and the basis for their claim to status, income and sometimes power."<sup>446</sup>

Concomitant with the decline in oil prices throughout the 1980's and the fiscal crisis engendered by the financial debt of the early 1990's<sup>447</sup>, dissatisfaction among what Safran termed "middle class new elites" and Giacomo Luciani refers to as a "national bourgeoisie"<sup>448</sup> and what I refer to as "business elites" and technocrats (or "liberal" elites), increased as they were increasingly squeezed out of government contracts and

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<sup>445</sup> Giacomo Luciani, "From Private Sector to National Bourgeoisie: Saudi Business" in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance*, 144-181.

<sup>446</sup> Mark Heller and Nadav Safran, *The New Middle Class and Regime Stability in Saudi Arabia*, *Harvard Middle East Papers*, Modern Series, no. 3 (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University, 1985), 3.

<sup>447</sup> Philip Robins "Can Gulf Monarchies Survive the Oil Bust?" *Middle East Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (1994): "The advent of financial crisis in the early 1990s and the need radically to curb state spending has again changed politics in Saudi Arabia. The authorities in Riyadh are unlikely ever again to supply benefits as they did in the 1970s, and so the old contract between ruler and ruled is defunct. Saudi Arabia is on the edge of a new internal political transformation, one that is bringing politics back in with a vengeance. Its rulers will have to contend with a more sophisticated political process and will face many more challenges than in the past two decades. The country will again face the stresses and tensions that accompany difficult allocative decisions. Constituencies will organize and lobby for state benefits. Those who lose out will be disgruntled."; See also Jeff Gerth, "Saudi Stability Hit by Heavy Spending Over Last Decade," *New York Times* August 22, 1993. Available from LexisNexis.

<sup>448</sup> Luciani, 146: "[the national bourgeoisie] is largely autonomous from the state, increasingly class conscious, and ready to play a political role."; *Ibid.*, 181: "There is no opposition between the state and ruling family...and, on the other, the bourgeoisie. The two are intertwined in a variety of ways, and tied in a continuum of interests; yet they are distinct and engaged in a dialectical relationship. The state must take into account other corporate in the Saudi society, and sometimes resist the demands of the bourgeoisie; nevertheless the bourgeoisie is needed to deliver economic diversification, growth and quality jobs, all of which are essential to the legitimacy of the system."

circles of political influence in favor of the *ulema* and well connected royal princes.<sup>449</sup> Western educated technocrats, who dominated the key positions in government agencies, as well as professions, began to press to modernize the Kingdom and specifically its traditional institutions which had remained stagnant throughout the 1980's oil decline. Institutions which directly impacted the activities of the private sector, such as the Ministry of Commerce, Labor and Education became central foci for pressing for liberalization.<sup>450</sup>

Indeed, in the aftermath of the Gulf War (1990-1991) many of these tensions rose to the forefront through a group of mainly western educated businessmen challenging the educational and cultural landscape in which the regime operated. A Time Magazine article in 1990 cited "a growing concern by religious conservatives that modern foreign educated technocrats will try to use the Gulf Crisis to push ahead social reforms."<sup>451</sup> Indeed, in a 1990 petition to King Fahd, a group of prominent businessmen and academics demanded educational reform stating:

We believe that our country's educational system is in need of comprehensive and fundamental reform to enable it to graduate faithful generations that are qualified to contribute positively and effectively in building the present and the future of the country, and to face the challenges of the age, enabling us to catch up with the caravan of nations that have vastly surpassed us in every field.<sup>452</sup>

This belief in the necessity of liberalizing the education system to address economic and social challenges was shared by some members of the western educated royal family. For

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<sup>449</sup> Tim Niblock terms this 'asabiyah capitalism' where the Al Saud family plays a significant role in the private sector – many times interfering/exacerbating tensions with non-royal merchant and technocratic elites. See Tim Niblock, *Saudi Arabia: Power, Legitimacy and Survival* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 76-77. See also Champion, 10-12.

<sup>450</sup> Steffen Hertog, "Segmented Clientelism: The Political Economy of Saudi Economic Reform Efforts", in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance*, 139.

<sup>451</sup> William Dowell, "Life in the Slow Lane," *Time* 136, no. 23 (November 26, 1990), 46. Available from LexisNexis.

<sup>452</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Empty Reforms – Saudi Arabia's New Basic Laws," May, 1992.

example, in 1998 Prince Talal gave an interview to the *MidEast Mirror* in which he highlighted the inadequacy of the education system to meet the challenges of economic and social development stating, “Our school syllabi, the way we train our teachers, even the buildings we construct as schools, all reflect our backwardness.”<sup>453</sup>

In interviews with business elites who self-identified as higher education reformers, a number of respondents stressed that the idea of private colleges had begun to circulate immediately following the Gulf War.<sup>454</sup> The first formal and official debate on the need to establish private universities in Saudi Arabia took place in 1994 and was organized by the Riyadh Chamber of Commerce – a forum for entrepreneurial business elites.<sup>455</sup> The conference entitled “The Private University in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and Inspirations,” included business elites, representatives from the private sector and several education officials. The forum focused on the following questions:<sup>456</sup>

1. Why is there a delay in establishing Saudi private universities?
2. What is the best groundwork for establishing private universities?
3. How will private universities differ from Saudi public universities?
4. What are the economic and social returns from such an investment?

However, despite a growing movement among liberal elites, the first tentative steps towards private higher education would not occur until the end of the 1990’s.

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<sup>453</sup> “Change is Inevitably Coming to Saudi Arabia says Outspoken Prince,” *MidEast Mirror* 12, no. 73 (April 17, 1998): 20.

<sup>454</sup> Jeddah businessman #1, interview by author, May 2009.; and Jeddah Business Man #2, interview by author, April 2008.

<sup>455</sup> See Summer Huyette, *Political adaptation in Sa’udi Arabia: A Study of the Council of Ministers* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985) for more on chambers of commerce as innovative forums.; Also my interview with a high-level manager at the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce in April 2008 supported this characterization of chambers of commerce as more innovative because they are led by educated business elites.

<sup>456</sup> Quoted in Abdulaziz Shahwan Alshahwan, “Establishing Private Universities in Saudi Arabia: A Descriptive Study of Public University Faculty Members' Perceptions,” (Ed.D. diss., Washington State University, 2002), 8.



In discussions with influential members of the regime, it was communicated to these liberalizing reformers that efforts to open private colleges after the Gulf War would be met with bureaucratic and widespread social resistance and fail.<sup>457</sup> Thus, despite the potential political opening that the tumult of the Gulf War provided, many liberal elites who petitioned King Fahd for education reform were initially dissuaded by the firm lack of regime receptivity to large scale change of social institutions.<sup>458</sup>

As Nadav Safran and Mark Heller postulated, “At some point in the process...the modernizing endeavor of the new middle class begins to encroach upon the most sensitive areas of the regime, such as the privileges of the ruler, the basis of the political order and the religious and cultural underpinnings of the regime.”<sup>459</sup> Such a moment came on November 6, 1990 when 47 women protested the female driving ban in the Kingdom by driving through the center of Riyadh. These women were largely from the educated elite, and included several women’s university Deans. This provoked an intense and immediate reactionary response from the official *ulema* as well as the regime.<sup>460</sup> The women were denounced in Mosques and many were imprisoned and forbidden from

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<sup>457</sup> Members of private college board of advisors, interviews by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>458</sup> David Ottaway, “Saudi Liberals See Reforms Unlikely; War Leaves King Strong; Religious Police Unbowed,” *Washington Post*, April 15, 1991: “Many of the liberals who were so outspoken last fall now fear they will be castigated like the 47 women who outraged the religious establishment in November by challenging the unwritten ban on automobile driving by women and staged a drive-in through downtown Riyadh. The women, from the Westernized upper class of commoners, have lost jobs and passports, and been pilloried by name in the kingdom’s mosques and socially isolated.”

<sup>459</sup> Heller and Safran, 4.

<sup>460</sup> James LeMoyne, “Saudi Interior Minister, in Backlash, Bans All Forms of Protest for Change by Women,” *New York Times*, November 18, 1990.; See also Judith Miller, “The Struggle Within,” *New York Times*, March 10, 1991 in which Turki al-Sedairi, the chief editor of *Al Riyadh*, one of the Kingdom’s largest Arabic daily newspapers is quoted. Neither his paper nor the other Saudi dailies covered the women’s driving protest in his words because: “We feel it is our duty to lessen the gap between opposing trends in this society,” Sedairi said, “not to aggravate it through our coverage.” Saudi Arabia, he stressed, wanted to avoid the clashes between modernizers and fundamentalists that have gripped Tunisia and other countries in North Africa. “We don’t treat news just as news, but in a social context.”

travel for several years.<sup>461</sup> Their names were published in a list entitled “Know your Enemy” which stated that “these are the names of the dishonorable women and the communists and secularists who support them.”<sup>462</sup> As one interviewee commented about more recent efforts (post-2003) to reform women’s rights, particularly in the spheres of education and employment, “No one wants a repeat of the driving protest, which essentially blocked all chance for reform for at least two decades.”<sup>463</sup>

### **Petitions and a fragmented reform movement**

The conjunction of the Gulf War with modern communications technology, and with it accelerated globalization processes, drastically collapsed the societal space in which the *ulema*, regime, business elites and the average Saudi worked within. The potential for encounter and reaction between these disparate societal elements intensified and led to particular focus on the means of which to contain such rapid change by more conservative and indeed moderate elements alike.<sup>464</sup>

In the strained financial and political climate following the first Gulf War and the basing of US troops in Saudi Arabia, young Islamist scholars and liberal elites alike saw an opportunity to press the regime for radical changes. While they shared a desire to transform the governing system, each faction had a radically different conception of what

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<sup>461</sup> Caryle Murphy, “Saudi Women Reunite to Remember Driving Protest,” *National Public Radio*, December 16, 2008. Transcript available from <http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=97541372>

<sup>462</sup> Quoted in Shaker Nabulsi, “Modernity vies with tradition as Saudis debate the future,” *The Kingdom: Saudi Arabia and the Challenge of the Twenty-first Century*, eds. Joshua Craze and Mark Huband (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 26.

<sup>463</sup> Dar Al Hekma College Board Member, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>464</sup> This heightened tension in face of globalization has been studied on the macro-level by such authors Manuel Castells, David Held and Anthony Giddens.; See also Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

constituted reform. From 1990-1994 a series of petitions were submitted to King Fahd pressing for political, social and economic reforms.<sup>465</sup> Islamists as well as Liberal petitioners called an end to corruption but sharply divided on the establishment of a constitutional monarchy versus a return to a purer form of Sharia government, and on issues such as expanded rights for women and the Shia minority.<sup>466</sup>

The table below chronicles the bevy of petitions to the regime that emerged during the onset and in the wake of the Gulf War from all sides of the political spectrum.

**Table of Petitions 1990's**<sup>467</sup>

Name	Date	# of signatories	Political Affiliation of Signatories	Social background of Signatories	Demands
Reform Petition	1990	42	Liberals	Academics	Comprehensive Political Reforms
Moderates petition	1991	40	Moderate Islamists	Intellectuals	-Judicial and administrative reforms -Transparency and accountability -Eradication of Corruption
Memorandum of Advice	May 1992	107	Salafists	Religious scholars, <i>ulemas</i> , some religious university professors	-Eradication of corruption -Application of Shari'a law -Reduction of expatriate labor force

<sup>465</sup> Abdul-Aziz O. Sager, "Political Opposition in Saudi Arabia," in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance*, 234-270.

<sup>466</sup> Gwenn Okruhlik, *Networks of Dissent, Islamism and Reform in Saudi Arabia*, <http://essays.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/okruhlik.htm>

<sup>467</sup> Abdulaziz O.Sager Appendix, Table 6, Aarts & Nonneman

Fatwa by the 'International Islamic Front against Jews and Crusaders'	February 1998	Statement	'hard-core fundamentalists'	Osama bin Laden	Expel American and their allies from the Arabian Peninsula
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The Gulf War particularly galvanized the opposition and dissent among Saudi Islamists, as reflected the petitions listed above. The most strident of which, "The Memorandum of Advice" in 1992, was signed by 107 religious scholars. It criticized several key elements of the Saudi system, including the role of the official *ulema*, the distribution of wealth in society, the reform of social institutions, in particular education and foreign policy. It called for the establishment of an independent judiciary and consultative council, as well as a more extensive application of Islamic law.<sup>468</sup> Regarding the *ulema*, the MOA states "that the various ministries do not consult the *ulema* in conducting their policy could eventually lead to separation between politics and religion, which defeats the very purpose of the establishment of the Islamic state."<sup>469</sup> In particular, the MOA advised that the role of religious leaders in education institutions should be expanded and recommended that academic institutions focus on the study of Islamic teachings and teach Western traditions only to graduate students with the sole purpose of understanding the "limits and failings of western traditions".<sup>470</sup>

The regime, functioning in a familiar pattern of co-optation and repression, responded to the calls of both the formidable *Sahwa* movement and the liberal elites by

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<sup>468</sup> Gwenn Okruhlik, "Networks of Dissent, Islamism and Reform in Saudi Arabia," in *Current History*, 101 no. 651 (January 2002). Available from <http://essays.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/okruhlik.htm>.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid.

<sup>470</sup> Fandy, 54.

establishing the long promised Majlis Al-Shura and a set of basic laws<sup>471</sup>, while stifling further dissent via a severe crack down on media outlets and the imprisonment of several opposition leaders.<sup>472</sup> The basic law fell far short of a constitution and did not guarantee freedom of association, expression or assembly – let alone political participation.<sup>473</sup> The Majlis Ash-Shura was established by royal decree under King Fahd in 1993 as a purely advisory body. Its capacity to call ministers and conduct investigations into administrative irregularities was limited and it had no access to concrete budget information.<sup>474</sup> As the crisis dissipated and leaders of the opposition were repressed, it became clear that the promise of institutional reform was more rhetorical than actual.

### **Retrenchment of the *ulema* in Soft Institutions**

As with the regime's maneuvering post-Mecca crisis, the business elite's demand for the liberalization of social institutions largely lost out to the more vocal and politically influential religious interests. On March 5<sup>th</sup> 1991, King Fahd in a public address specifically slowed the expectations for wide scale political and social reform saying "some Saudis expectations of liberalization in domestic policies may be premature."<sup>475</sup> Instead of broadening its power base to take into account growing liberal elite dissatisfaction, the regime moved to consolidate the *ulema* behind its rule in the hopes of undercutting the growing *Sahwa* movement.

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<sup>471</sup> Youssef Ibrahim, "King Fahd Pledges Changes in Saudi Government," *New York Times*, January 1, 1992. Available from LexisNexis.

<sup>472</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Empty Reforms – Saudi Arabia's New Basic Laws", May, 1992.

<sup>473</sup> *Saudi Arabia, Basic Law of Government* (accessed October 2009); available from [http://www.mideastinfo.com/documents/Saudi\\_Arabia\\_Basic\\_Law.htm](http://www.mideastinfo.com/documents/Saudi_Arabia_Basic_Law.htm). See in particular article 39.

<sup>474</sup> Edward Burke and Ana Echagüe, "'Strong Foundations'?: The Imperative for Reform in Saudi Arabia," Working Paper 84, FRIDE (June 2009).

<sup>475</sup> Judith Caesar, "Liberals and Conservatives Press Riyadh," *The New York Times*, July 5, 1991.

This was demonstrated by a clamping down on the press and resurgence of morality police activity in Jeddah and the Eastern Provinces and the ceding of increased oversight of education and the judiciary over to the *ulema*.<sup>476</sup> As the Al Saud regime sought to maintain religious legitimacy throughout the turbulent 1990's, education was increasingly put under the purview of the *ulema*- fortifying the ruling bargain between the Al Saud and Wahhabi clerics. For example, the budget for 1992 allocated over a billion dollars for the construction of mosques and provided for the Ministry of Pilgrimage and Endowments to hire an additional 7,300 graduates of Islamic universities (in addition to the 54,000 already employed by the Ministry).<sup>477</sup> The Saudi Arabian secondary curriculum was further revised to emphasize the importance of Islamic unity and the divisive influence of westernization.<sup>478</sup> Despite the deep recession in Saudi Arabia, religious faculties were increased in areas such as Islamic literature, Islamic jurisprudence, Shari'a Hadith Da'was and other branches of religious studies.<sup>479</sup> The regime also curtailed scholarships for graduate students wishing to study political science abroad "on the grounds such studies could fuel subversion"<sup>480</sup> and ceased to issue passports to youths under the age of 21.<sup>481</sup> In addition, senior editors of three leading newspapers, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, *Al-Majalla* and *Sayyidati* were accused of

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<sup>476</sup> Ibid., See also Tony Horwitz, "With Gulf War Over, Saudi Fundamentalists Reassert Themselves", *Wall Street Journal*, May 2, 1991. Accessed May 2, 2009. Available from LexisNexis.

<sup>477</sup> Gwenn Okruhlik, "State Power, Religious Privilege, and Myths about Political Reform," in *Religion and Politics in Saudi Arabia*, eds. Ayoob and Kosebalaban (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2009).

<sup>478</sup> Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 183-190.

<sup>479</sup> Hamad Al-Salloum, *Education in Saudi Arabia* (Washington DC: Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, 1995), 70.

<sup>480</sup> Nawaf E. Obaid, "Saudi Arabia: How to Improve US Intelligence," *Intelligence Newsletter*, 338, July 2, 1998.

<sup>481</sup> Department of State, "Saudi Arabia Country Report," no. 3, 1990, 7.

promoting anti-Islamic stances in the newspapers and were dismissed from their positions.<sup>482</sup>

The radical apex of the Islamist opposition movement following the Gulf war was Osama Bin Laden's unequivocal calls for rebellion against the Al Saud regime. In "An open letter to King Fahd" issued on August 3, 1995 Osama bin Laden specifically attacked official *ulema* who issue "fatwas to justify the royal family's hold on power and give Islamic legitimacy to the state's reliance on non-Muslims for protection."<sup>483</sup> The letter concluded, "We have proven that your regime is un-Islamic. It is mired in corruption and applies non-Islamic laws to certain aspects of the human dealings such as commercial law. It also has failed in the areas on the economy and defense. Thus, you should resign."<sup>484</sup> The growing hard-core Islamist dissent broke out of the realm of petitions into violence with the bombings that took place in Riyadh on November 13, 1995, at the Saudi National Guard communications complex, killing five American military trainers and two Indians; and in Dhahran on June 25, 1996, at the Khobar Towers, a U.S. military housing compound, killing nineteen American servicemen.<sup>485</sup>

By the end of the 1990s the Al Saud regime, faced with the rise of violent jihadist groups, resorted to outright repressive instruments to deal with dissenting views in general and further leaned on the religious establishment to reify its religious legitimacy among the population. This pattern of concessions underlines that the Al Saud regime continuously viewed the greatest challenge to its legitimacy as emerging from the

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<sup>482</sup> Abir, *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society and the Gulf Crisis*, 192.

<sup>483</sup> Osama Bin Laden, Communiqué no. 17, August 3, 1995 quoted in Roland Jacquard, *In the Name of Osama Bin Laden: Global Terrorism and the Bin Laden Brotherhood* (NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 174.; See also Bruce Lawrence, ed., *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (London: Verso, 2005), 4-14.

<sup>484</sup> Fandy, 187.; Osama Bin Laden, Communiqué no. 17 quoted in Jacquard.

<sup>485</sup> Obaid, "The Power of Saudi Arabia's Islamic Leaders".

religious sphere as opposed to the technocratic modernizers throughout the 1980's and 1990's.

### **Underlying Factors Remain**

The educational policies of the 1980's and 90's bore bitter fruit with a dramatic disconnect between university graduates' skill sets and the labor market. By the late 1990's the dual pressures of the demographic youth bulge<sup>486</sup> and the disconnect between university graduates skills and the needs of the labor market was undeniable. Indeed, by 1995, over 25 % of the university students were enrolled in religious universities, and over 75% percent of graduates who were seeking jobs labeled humanities/religious studies as their major.<sup>487</sup>

Tension between business and technocratic elites and the graduates of religious universities steadily mounted as unemployed religious graduates resented the employment opportunities in both the public and private sector of their secular-educated counterparts and accused technocrats of "introducing into the Kingdom western influences which corrupted the principles of the Wahhabi state".<sup>488</sup> Although official statistics on unemployment in Saudi Arabia are unreliable, unofficial estimates placed youth unemployment in the late 90's at upwards of 45%.<sup>489</sup> Several consultant reports commissioned by the Saudi Arabian government cited the increasing youth

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<sup>486</sup> According to the UNDP More than fifty percent of the population was below age of 18 in 1995. United Nations Development Program, population database. Accessed November 14, 2011.

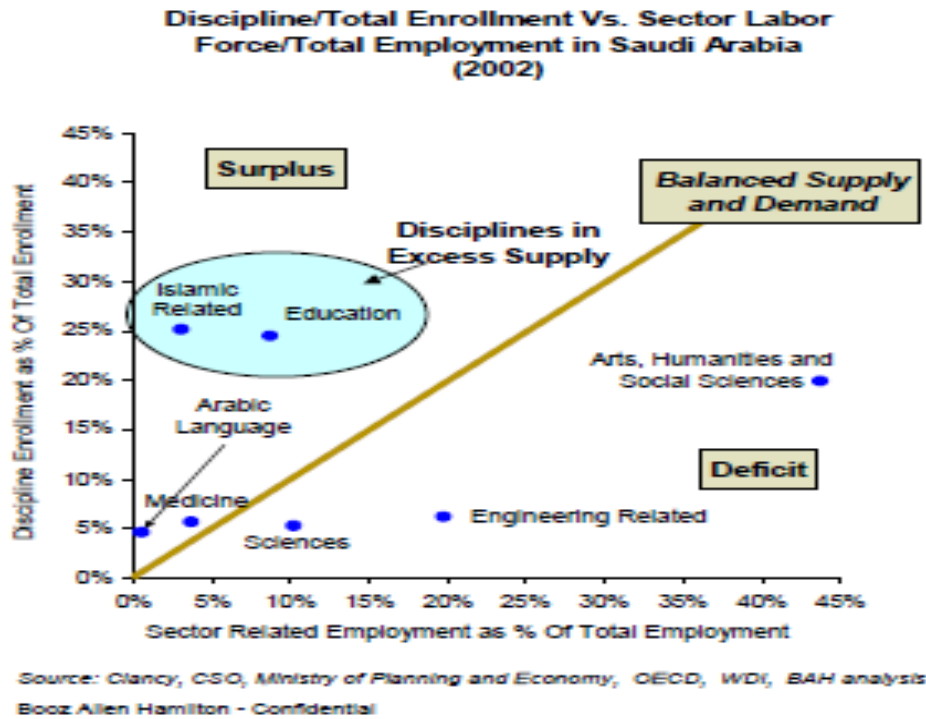
<sup>487</sup> Gwenn Okruhlik, "Networks of Dissent".

<sup>488</sup> The Economist, Feb. 13, 1982

<sup>489</sup> Kito de Boer and John M. Turner, "Beyond Oil: Reappraising the Gulf States," *McKinsey Quarterly* (2007).



unemployment pressure on the Saudi economy and the failure of the education system to connect graduates with the labor market.<sup>490</sup>

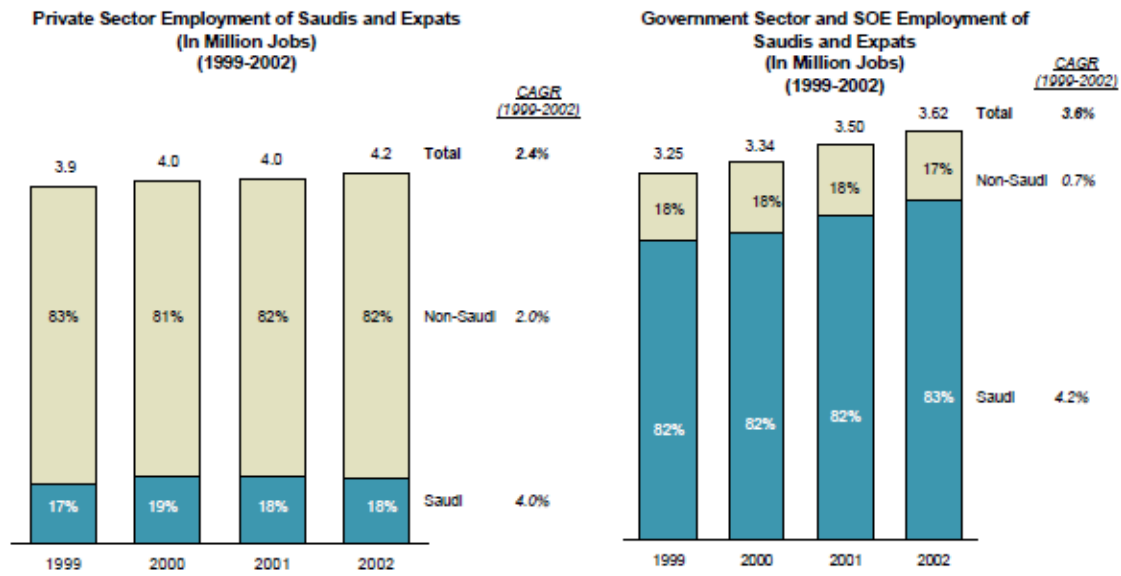


In terms of connection to the labor sector, by 2001 there were only 50,000 private sector jobs for every 100,000 university graduates – regardless of skill match. At the same time, the high-skilled foreign national workforce had increased to over two million.<sup>491</sup> Indeed, in 2003 as a share of total employment in the private sector, Saudi citizens made up about 38.9 percent, compared to about 83.3 percent in the oil and gas

<sup>490</sup> Booz Allen Hamilton, *Final Report: Strategy to Crystallize SAGIA's Role and Effectively Deliver on its Established Objectives*, (Riyadh, KSA: Booz Allen Hamilton, August 26, 2004): This report was provided to the author by officials at SAGIA to use for this dissertation.

<sup>491</sup> For a particularly prescient analysis of the tensions involved in youth unemployment and stagnant social institutions see Neil MacFarquhar, "Leisure Class to Working Class in Saudi Arabia," *New York Times*, August 26, 2001.

sector and 79.8 percent in the government sector.<sup>492</sup>



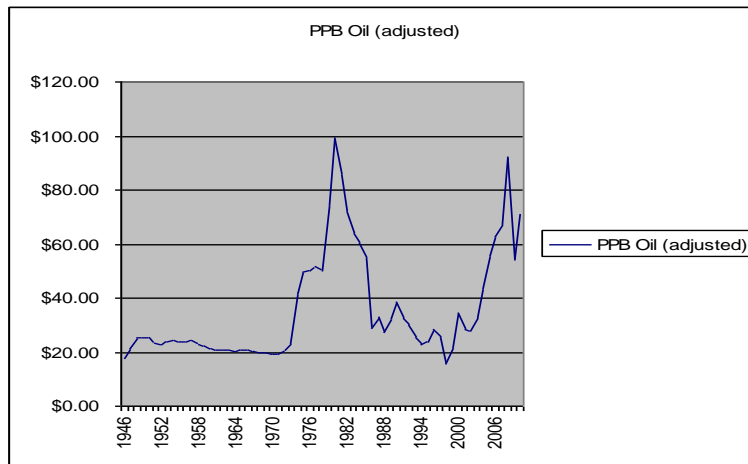
Source: Ministry of Economy and Planning, SAMA, BAH analysis  
Booz Allen Hamilton - Confidential

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This demographic bulge was undergirded with a weak oil economy rendering the public sector increasingly unable to absorb new graduates. In 1997-1998 oil prices took a dip to the lowest levels in history.

<sup>492</sup> United Nations Development Program, “Kingdom of Saudi Arabia – Human Development Report 2003,” (accessed January 4, 2008); available from [http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/national/arabstates/saudi/Saudi%20Arabia\\_2003\\_en.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/national/arabstates/saudi/Saudi%20Arabia_2003_en.pdf).

**Chart 4: Oil Economy<sup>493</sup>**



By the end of the turbulent 1990's two things had become exceedingly clear: total reliance on the oil economy was creating extreme social volatility and there simply were not enough jobs to employ the graduates of the expanded university system given the dual pressures of demographics and weak job creation.

### **Initial Reforms: The Case of Pioneer Private Colleges**

Though the initial press for private higher education by business elites in the early 1990's subsequent to the Gulf war failed, by the late 1990's members of the regime began to signal that new approaches might be tolerated, while distancing themselves from formal pronouncements. Policy makers and education activists involved in higher education reform throughout the 1990's and 2000's, cited the regime's increasing

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<sup>493</sup> Booz Allen Hamilton, *Final Report: Strategy to Crystallize SAGIA's Role and Effectively Deliver on its Established Objectives*, (Riyadh, KSA: Booz Allen Hamilton, August 26, 2004), 22.

awareness economic and demographic pressures as a main factor in determining that the time was ripe for once again pressing the case for private colleges.<sup>494</sup>

In 1998 the Council of ministers authorized the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) to explore the possibility of establishing private colleges and within a year approved the licensing of private colleges as long as they were funded under the auspices of regulated a charity organization which significantly limited the pool of potential backers.<sup>495</sup>

In 1999, the first private college in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Dar Al Hekma College for Women, was established in Jeddah under the auspices of the Al ‘Ilm foundation.<sup>496</sup> It was followed shortly thereafter by the establishment of Effat College for Women and Prince Sultan College.

Dar Al Hekma was founded through the financial backing and leadership of a group of Jeddah business men. The composition of this group is notable in that the board of directors was entirely composed of what might be considered technocrats and business elites: mainly western educated engineers, architects, and CEOs. These individuals were not royal, but well-established and connected to so-called “first circle elites”.<sup>497</sup> The informal ties to government through both social class and family relations contributed to

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<sup>494</sup> Individuals involved in pushing for a private college were asked about what lead them to launch the college in 1998. This question attempted to address the timing of the reform model and to determine whether it was signaled by the government itself, or if initiative was taken by business elites in response to a societal shift.

<sup>495</sup> *Ministry of Higher Education Private Universities in Saudi Arabia* (accessed January 3, 2010); available from <http://www.mohe.gov.sa/en/studyinside/privateedu/Pages/Overview.aspx>; Private education officials, interviews by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008; Council of Ministers Resolution 212 of 2000 approved the private colleges bylaw. Royal Decree 7/B/6024 of 2003 approved the private universities bylaw under which Prince Sultan Private University and Al-Faisal Private University were established. See section 20.2.2.6 of 8<sup>th</sup> Development Plan.

<sup>496</sup> *Ministry of Higher Education Private Universities in Saudi Arabia* (accessed January 3, 2010); available from <http://www.mohe.gov.sa/en/studyinside/privateedu/Pages/Overview.aspx>.

<sup>497</sup> Private education officials, interviews by author, Jeddah, KSA, February-May 2008.; Iris Glosemeyer, “Checks, Balances and Transformation in the Saudi Political System,” in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance*.

the degree of leniency allowed to the college's founders in exploring a new model for education. As one founding member explained,

At the beginning, there was a lot of confusion in the Ministry of Higher Education, because even for them the picture was unclear which way the government would take [referring to supporting/rejecting private education]. But I think that good personal relations with the minister helped....The business men in this group were elite business men. They were respected in society, and even on the government side they had respect. That helped tremendously....so, even though we were not really following the system, this level of acceptance helped us to initiate it [the college].<sup>498</sup>

The importance of informal ties to members of the regime in pressing the case for private education was repeated in interviews with several board members and academic officials at various other private education institutions.

However, it is important to note that the perception within the college's board itself was that this model was a pilot program that could easily be quashed if it ran into significant social and political opposition. Several founding members of the initial private colleges' boards underlined that while they were not expressly forbidden or dissuaded to proceed, it was clearly understood that their efforts would not be officially sanctioned by the regime if the college proved to galvanize reactionary elements.<sup>499</sup> This level of deniability and distance allowed the regime to quickly denounce or separate itself from such efforts if the college failed or if the public reaction, especially among the *ulema*, was too severe.

In terms of the perception of the tenuous beginnings of privatization, one founding member commented:

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<sup>498</sup> Founding member, private college, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008.

<sup>499</sup> Academic administrators, private college, interviews by author, Jeddah, KSA, 2008-2009.

The idea here is to make a model. And we want this model to succeed. Then, when we succeed, it is much easier to add to it. The model starts spreading and getting things done and then you can add slowly slowly things which are a little bit – that some people feel are not correct- you can add slowly slowly. This debate is alive, we shouldn't go to extremes at the moment until we get a strong base of education and so on. And yet, we made a change, we made a lot of changes.....I think we were pioneers in that.....if it was done before it was done with a lot of shyness and hesitation, and now it is in the system...Saudi Arabia is the holiest place in the Muslim world and there is a lot of sensitivity as you know because we have Mecca and Medina and and and...many other things. If we move on the wrong path, we might have problems which we don't need. So we are trying to making something and push ahead even though we are cautious. There's the challenge - how to change slowly slowly.<sup>500</sup>

These initial private colleges existed in a liminal space where the role of MoHE authority over the colleges was ambiguous. Political elites within the regime privately signaled to business elites that an experiment might be tolerated, but not protected.<sup>501</sup> The strategy of establishing and maintaining the college in the midst of vociferous bureaucratic disapproval through the Al-Shaikh controlled MoHE was left entirely to the board. The college would have to navigate its own way within the official bureaucracy to create a private sector space. Indeed, the MoHE continued to express opposition to the project and present formidable bureaucratic obstacles.<sup>502</sup>

The establishment of Dar Al Hekma sheds light on how reform in a tight political space occurs. This dynamic of working within the “unofficial” parameters of the regime to initiate change outside of the current ideological framework of the state is similar in approach to Douglass North's process of building on prior “mental models”. North

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<sup>500</sup> Founding member, private college, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid.

<sup>502</sup> Various interviews by author with academic administrators in Jeddah, KSA 2008-2009: such obstacles included frequent visits by MoHE, struggles over oversight of curriculum, calls from interior ministry etc.; See also Abdulaziz Shahwan Alshahwan, “Establishing Private Universities in Saudi Arabia: A Descriptive Study of Public University Faculty Members' Perceptions” (Ed.D. diss., Washington State University, 2002).

posited that any attempt at systemic reform must build incrementally on the “mental models” already embedded in the organizations comprising that system’s broader institutional framework.

At the same time, agents of innovation must also exploit windows of opportunity that can close as swiftly as they open. If innovators move too quickly or brazenly, they are likely to provoke countermoves that block or even reverse their agendas. If they move too slowly or timidly, they risk wasting advantageous circumstances that might never again present themselves. A political-discursive strategy that gives reformers a hold on both the scope and pace of change is an essential part of success.<sup>503</sup>

In the case of DAH, founding board members were careful to “walk the line” of pursuing privatization while trying to avoid creating too many waves in sensitive areas, such as controversial subjects or declaring full curricular independence. They built on personal ties within the regime to circumvent bureaucratic obstacles, pointing to formal pronouncements supporting privatization, while trying to avoid direct confrontation with the MoHE.

## **Financing**

Dar Al Hekma’s financial structure insulated it to a certain degree from overt interference from the MoHE. In its early years of operation, the college refused several government funded initiatives/projects to maintain a financial separation from the state, and thus preserve budgetary independence – instead the college relied on private

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<sup>503</sup> Douglass North quoted in Anna Seleny, *The Political Economy of State-Societal Relations in Hungary and Poland: From Communism to the European Union* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 132. Anna Seleny in her comparative study of the political economies of Poland and Hungary emerging from communism noted that reformers, “By drawing on the legacies of prior reform experiments, they set out to reinterpret the official ideology’s building blocks, thus taking a seemingly “incremental’ approach to the transformation of the dominant “mental model.””

benefactors (largely Jeddah business elite) and tuition revenue. This contrasted with public universities, which relied on annual appropriations distributed through the MoHE. The universities were not level funded, MoHE intermediaries would work with a group of regents, also appointed by the MoHE to determine yearly department funding levels.

### **Accreditation**

Another reform tool embraced by the founders of early private colleges was the use of external/international standards. Several initial backers of DAH emphasized the essential role that international accreditation played in navigating pressure from the MoHE to conform to current public university curricular guidelines. By linking their colleges' academic standards to international accreditation bodies – such as the Texas Education Consortium (TEC) - private colleges were able to advocate for their own curriculum and thus countermand previous MoHE directives, without confronting the system as a whole.<sup>504</sup> For instance, by specifically soliciting an American accreditation body to approve the curriculum design and provide standards for staff, credit hours, and syllabi that deviated from the MoHE approved public university curriculums, the college was able to create a non-confrontational buffer from MoHE regulations. The external/international accreditation body allowed the college to resist MoHE regulations by pointing to the consortiums standards and saying that it was the consortium's requirements, not their own that they were trying to follow in such subjects as history and business. This placed the MoHE in a clear bind as it wanted to avoid directly stating that American accreditation was forbidden but at the same time was not prepared to widely

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<sup>504</sup> President of private college, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2009.



authorize such curricular innovation. It provided both parties with a unique, and limited external excuse for reaching a delicate compromise.

Thus, in its early stages, private higher education was a precarious and peripheral endeavor that could have been easily reversed or closed. It was established as a direct result of liberal elite backing, with an entering class of less than 100, and for women, thus avoiding challenging the public education system as a whole. One board member who supported opening a private college for men dropped the idea based on the closer scrutiny it would incur from the bureaucracy as men's education is considered more central, and thus significant, to the stability of the state and a privatization in this realm would have ripple effects across the national university structure.<sup>505</sup>

However, the seeds of an educational model that seceded the educational sphere to technocrats and business elite were planted. Privatization had the potential remove institutions of higher education from the ingrained bureaucratic and ideological biases of the MoHE. As Ibn Khaldun posited, small events on the frontier can have big consequences for the center.<sup>506</sup>

The official discourse of the regime was also slowly shifting towards the private sector and technocratic elites' demands. The seventh development plan, in contrast to the fifth and sixth development plans, placed a more concrete emphasis on the education sector and the need to increase private sector growth.<sup>507</sup> While there had yet to be a whole scale embrace of private education in the official discourse, cracks were beginning to appear in the hitherto unified façade.

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<sup>505</sup> Ibid.

<sup>506</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

<sup>507</sup> See 5th, 6th, and 7th Development plans, education section and goals

Unlike the regime's initial support for the re-entrenchment of the *ulema* in social institutions following the Gulf War crisis in 1990-1991 at the expense of proposed liberalization of the education and private sector, by the late 1990's the regime was cautiously reconsidering the *ulema*'s chokehold over the education sector. However, while early reformers planted the seeds for private higher education with the opening of a few small colleges in 1998, it was not until 2003 that the regime formally placed its support behind privatization of the higher education sector in a meaningful and public manner. It would take a catalyzing event to expand on the early seeds of reform.

### **Recalibrating Relationships: 9/11 and Domestic Instability**

“9/11 has made everybody awake, whether from a nightmare or a sweet dream, it doesn't matter, it was an awakening of one kind or another. 9/11 has made everybody everywhere aware that you can't just want progress, it needs good planning. This also [however] makes the conservative religious sector of society even more sensitive.”<sup>508</sup>

9/11 created several ripple effects among the Saudi regime. The first was a significant strain in its alliance with U.S. as 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudi nationals. The second, and most significant in terms of a direct threat to the Al Saud regime, was the emergence of domestic terrorism on a large scale – led by various extremist factions, the most prominent of which was Al Qaeda. The US led invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan also served as a focal point of extremist opposition. In a time span of a year and a half, there were over five separate terrorist incidents in Saudi Arabia, shaking the appearance

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<sup>508</sup>Interview, Business Man #1, ties to ministries of oil and education, Jeddah 2009

of domestic stability.<sup>509</sup> The rising threat of domestic extremism, combined with focused international attention, created the political space for liberal elites to press the case for reform more forcefully with a newly receptive regime.<sup>510</sup>

On May 12, 2003 twelve suicide bombers attacked three foreign compounds killing over 34 people and wounding in excess of 200. In November of 2003, two truck bombs exploded in Riyadh, killing 17 and injuring 122 people.<sup>511</sup> On April 21, 2004 Saudi government security forces were directly targeted for the first time when a car bomb exploded in security force headquarters in Riyadh, killing 4, wounding 148. The Al Saud regime, shaken by the rise in internal unrest, moved with haste for a regime known for pragmatic gradualism to address the internal terrorist threat. Immediate regime responses included a purging of Sahwa *ulema* and dissident *ulema* from the public sphere through the removal of 343 religious officials from their positions in mosques around the country and requiring 1,347 *ulema* to undergo retraining.<sup>512</sup>

In addition, in what seemed at first to be déjà-va of the short-lived activism following the Gulf War, between 2000-2004 more than a dozen petitions were submitted to senior members of the royal family. On January 20, 2003 then Crown Prince Abdullah received a petition entitled “A vision for the Present and the Future of the Nation” signed by 104 prominent intellectuals and liberal Islamists. The petition demanded elections to the consultative council, separation of powers, judiciary reform and enshrinement of civil

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<sup>509</sup> See Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan Islamism since 1979* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>510</sup> Richard Dekmejian, “The Liberal Impulse in Saudi Arabia,” *Middle East Journal*, 57, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 400-414.

<sup>511</sup> Thomas Hegghammer, “Islamist Violence and Regime Stability in Saudi Arabia,” *International Affairs* 84 no. 4 (2008).

<sup>512</sup> Gregory Gause, “Official Wahhabism and the Sanctioning of Saudi-US Relations,” in *Religion and Politics in Saudi Arabia*, eds. Ayoob and Kosebalaban (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2009), 142.

and human rights as well as expanded rights for women.<sup>513</sup> This change in the monarchy's seeming receptivity to reformers led to a further deluge in petitions. In April 2003, 450 Saudi Shiites signed and submitted "Partners in One Nation", demanding equal treatment under the law. In September 2003 more than 306 Saudi men and women signed a petition "In Defense of the Nation" giving their support to the January petition while explicitly rejecting violence and all forms of terrorism.<sup>514</sup> In December over 300 Saudi women submitted a petition demanding increased rights under Saudi law. In February of 2004, 880 intellectuals demanded accountability for previously announced reforms, a schedule for implementing political reforms and the reform of the Saudi basic law.<sup>515</sup>

Unlike King Fahd's response to the petitions following the first Gulf war, Crown Prince Abdullah formally met with several of the petitioners to discuss their demands.<sup>516</sup> This new receptivity to reformers' petitions was not uniformly endorsed throughout the regime. The Ministry of the Interior, led by Prince Nayef, stated that reform advocates would be arrested for statements "that do not serve the unity of the homeland or the

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<sup>513</sup> See Abdul-Aziz O.Sager's, "Political Opposition in Saudi Arabia," in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society Foreign Affairs*, ed. Gerd Nonneman and Paul Aarts (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 234-270.; Iris Wurm, "In Doubt for the Monarchy: Autocratic Modernization in Saudi Arabia", PRIF Reports #81, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, 2008; available from <http://se1.isn.ch/serviceengine/FileContent?serviceID=47&fileid=7E027932-5E74-7FA1-9876-D44200FF4567&lng=en>.

<sup>514</sup> Petition submitted to Crown Prince Abdullah, "In Defense of the Nation," January 24, 2003 [translated to English] (accessed October 2009); available from <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/pdf/files/SaudiPetitionTranslation.pdf>.

<sup>515</sup> Andrzej Kapiszewski, "Saudi Arabia: Steps Towards Democratization or Reconfiguration of Authoritarianism?" *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 41, No. 5-6: 459-482.; see also *Can Saudi Arabia Reform Itself?* International Crisis Group, Middle East Report no. 28, July 14, 2004. Available from <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iran-gulf/saudi-arabia/028-can-saudi-arabia-reform-itself.aspx>.; The letter can be found at [www.arabrenewal.com](http://www.arabrenewal.com); a summary of the current (as of 2010) legal system in Saudi Arabia (accessed June 2009) available from [http://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/saudi\\_arabia.htm](http://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/saudi_arabia.htm).

<sup>516</sup> Stephane Lacroix, "Liberal Politics in Saudi Arabia", in Aarts & Nonneman p. 49-52; see also Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*, Harvard University Press, 2011

integrity of the society.”<sup>517</sup> Needless to say, the line between advocacy and incitement was often blurred in the eyes of the more security focused state apparatuses.

Nonetheless, hints of a rebalancing of interests away from co—opting Sahwa dissidents via shoring up the *ulema* at the expense of liberal reform began to percolate through various regime channels.<sup>518</sup> In a front page editorial in Sharq Al-Awsat entitled “Walis are the rulers who must be obeyed and religious scholars are the advisors”<sup>519</sup> then Saudi Ambassador to U.S., Prince Turki Al-Faisal, reiterated in no uncertain terms the Al Saud’s primacy in the political realm over that of the *ulema*. The governor of Asir Province, Prince Khalid al Faisal, directly accused members of the Sahwa movement and their supporters for being responsible for the “new religious trend” of extremism. In several newspaper articles and television interviews Prince Khalid stated that “the extremist ideology is alien to us. It is spread in schools and mosques and everywhere. In our schools and mosques there are young men who deliver sermons as though they are senior clerics.”<sup>520</sup> It was becoming clear to members of the regime that the tenuous compromise with the official *ulema* and while attempting to appease the Sahwa movement’s supporters throughout the 1990’s had not been the bulwark against instability that they had hoped.

While ill King Fahd was still technically in charge of the country, then Crown Prince Abdullah had begun to consolidate power behind the scenes, signaling a willingness to embrace economic liberalization, accompanied by changes to the labor-

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<sup>517</sup> Wilson, Washington Post, “Saudi Trial Could Alter the Pace of Reform”, 2004

<sup>518</sup> Peter Finn, Washington Post Foreign Service “Saudi Blast Bares a Nation on Edge”, Washington Post, November 22, 2003

<sup>519</sup> Al Sharq Al Awsat, October 10, 2002

<sup>520</sup> Prince Khalid al-Faisal, al-Watan, 7 July 2004, also on idhaat, al arabiyya television channel 15 July 2004 as noted in Stephane Lacroix, “Islam Liberal Politics in Saudi Arabia”

education market, to stem the mounting economic pressures.<sup>521</sup> Crown Prince Abdullah publicly addressed the rising concerns over factionalization in a 2005 speech:

I have said, and will repeat here before you, that there are two things on which leniency would not be acceptable: Islamic Sharia and our national unity. I would say to you quite frankly that it is not in tune with either the principles of the benevolent Sharia, nor the requirements of national unity that some should – out of ignorance or in bad faith – divide our citizens into categories that have no authority whatsoever, saying this person is a secularist, this one is a liberal, this one is a hypocrite and this one is an Islamic extremist and so on.<sup>522</sup>

The Crown Prince cited Islamic law as the framework in which reform is developed, but then moved to specifically address the conservative *ulema*'s charges of secularism for liberalizing reforms. By stating that false distinctions were being made, Abdullah signaled an increased space for liberal reformers to be listened to by the regime and that their initiatives would not automatically be quashed by the *ulema*'s saber rattling.

### **International Attention**

In terms of higher education reform, 9/11 had not only allowed a political space to open – the first significant one since the Gulf war- for business elites to once again press the regime on the untenable demographic and labor market situation – but it occurred in tandem with a dramatic shift of international attention to the internal dynamics of the Kingdom and what forces lay behind the creation of Islamic extremists affiliated with Al-Qaeda. International attention to the education system, which though not in and of itself a

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<sup>521</sup> Tim Niblock, *Saudi Arabia: Power, Legitimacy and Survival* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 110-13, 124-142.

<sup>522</sup> King Abdullah's speech to the people of Buraida; translated by Khalid Al-Dakhil, sourced in Craze and Hubbard "The Kingdom: Saudi Arabia and the Challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", 2009, p. 163

sufficient catalyst for change, provided reform advocates a convenient external referent to make their case for reform for them.

Following 9/11 several high-profile international reports focused international attention on the education systems of the MENA region at large, with particular focus on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's education system as a possible contributor to violent extremism. The first Arab Human Development Report released by the UNDP in 2002 provided a broad picture of the development challenges in the MENA region. The second AHDR released in 2003 focused in-depth on the education and "knowledge" gap in the MENA region, underlining this gap as one of the most crucial contributors to instability in the region.<sup>523</sup> The 2003 report generated considerable consternation in the international press, and was cited frequently both in the Western and Middle Eastern media. In the Saudi media<sup>524</sup> following the 2003 AHDR report, several op-ed letters and articles pressed the case for education reform citing the international report's data and conclusions. Starting in 2003, the phrase "knowledge economy" gained tremendous traction in the plethora of consulting reports, newspaper coverage and PR efforts of the state.<sup>525</sup> Several interviews with advocates for private higher education in Saudi Arabia also mentioned increased international attention to the education system as a potential embarrassment to the regime which created the political space for the circulation of reform alternatives.<sup>526</sup>

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<sup>523</sup> See UNDP Arab Human Development Report 2002; The AHDR 2003 defines a "knowledge-society" as one where: "knowledge diffusion, production and application become the organizing principle in all aspects of human activity: culture, society, the economy, politics, and private life.", p. 3

<sup>524</sup> Reference Arab News' coverage of 2003 AHDR etc.

<sup>525</sup> i.e. Jeddah economic forum 2008 "Knowledge Societies and Economies"

<sup>526</sup> Interviews 2008-2010, several public and private university educators

The U.S. Senate's 9/11 report also focused on the possible link between failing education systems in the Islamic world and radicalization.<sup>527</sup> The US based non-profit Freedom House released a report on Saudi Arabia's general and religious curriculum fostering intolerance towards non-Muslims and non-Sunni Muslim sects.<sup>528</sup> The list goes on.<sup>529</sup>

Faced with the Al Saud regime's apparent receptivity to the business elite's advocacy for liberalization of state institutions, in combination with sensing a growing pressure on the regime from the international community, the *ulema* struck back. In 2002, Sheihk Saud al-Shreim, a prominent Imam in Mecca issued a fatwa that declared changing the content of religious education would be equivalent to "high treason".<sup>530</sup> Sheikh al-Shreim's clear line in the sand regarding education was followed by other ulemic pronouncements.<sup>531</sup> The heightened international attention to the content of Saudi Arabia's education system post 9/11, and in particular the focus on the state's religious

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<sup>527</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United State*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, p. 372. ; Cordesman, Anthony. "Saudi Arabia: Opposition, Islamic Extremism, and Terrorism," 27 November 2002. Available at: [http://www.saudi-american-forum.org/Library/2002\\_11\\_27\\_Cordesman.pdf](http://www.saudi-american-forum.org/Library/2002_11_27_Cordesman.pdf); also see Cordesman, Anthony. *Saudi Arabia: Friend or Foe in the War on Terror?* 109<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d Sess. 8 November 2005. Available at: [http://judiciary.senate.gov/testimony.cfm?id=1669&wit\\_id=4790](http://judiciary.senate.gov/testimony.cfm?id=1669&wit_id=4790); "Saudi Arabia's Progress on Economic, Educational, and Political Reforms," April 2005. Available at: <http://www.saudiembassy.net/Conferences-Press-Kit-Visits/CP-Visit-April-2005/Reform%20Fact%20Sheet%20April%202005%20PDF.pdf> ; "Summary of Saudi Arabia's Comprehensive Program to Revise the National Educational Curriculums," Washington, DC: Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, March 2006. ;

<sup>528</sup> [http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/special\\_report/48.pdf](http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/special_report/48.pdf); "Saudi Arabia's Curriculum of Intolerance", 2006 "This study does not purport to be a general survey of all aspects of the Saudi curriculum. We have not tried to address whether the Saudi curriculum has modernized in other subject areas, such as math and science, to better prepare students for employment upon graduation. Nor is it a comprehensive review of the entire contents of the available textbooks. Our focus is primarily on their treatment of religious groups and believers, including other Muslims, although we have also included some historical excerpts dealing with the issues of Israel and Palestine. The texts were not studied for their content on other important issues, such as women, democracy, and trade and business practices." p. 15

<sup>529</sup> A small sample: Neil MacFarquhar, "Anti-Western and Extremist Views Pervade Saudi Schools", October 19, 2001, New York Times; Thomas Friedman, "The ABC's of Hatred", June 3, 2004, New York Times;

<sup>530</sup> Ali Sa'ad al-Musa in al-Watan, Mideast Mirror, February 7, 2002, p. 16

<sup>531</sup> See al Shithri and Ibn Baz's statements, World News Connect (in translation)



curriculum and colleges, threatened the *ulema*'s previously secure hold over the education sector. Members of the *ulema* issued swift and unequivocal statements accusing the regime of buckling to foreign meddling in the education system.

In response to the charges of U.S. and international influence on the regime by members of the *ulema*, the regime quickly disavowed that any changes to the national education system were a result of U.S. scrutiny. The Saudi Minister of Education in 2002 refuted the link between the Saudi curriculum and terrorism stating that such a claim "is unfair, as it has been promoted by enemies' poisonous propaganda...Saudi Arabia will never allow anyone to impose changes in its national educational curricula."<sup>532</sup> Prince Sultan bin Abd al-Aziz, the Saudi Arabia defense minister and head of the committee for revising the national curriculum, directly responded to the charge that the Al Saud regime was bowing to international pressure in an interview with *Okaz* in December 2003, stating that the regime was responding, "to the requirements of the age and not as a reaction [to pressures from abroad]".<sup>533</sup>

Nonetheless, the regime moved to publicly address what many, both inside and outside the Kingdom said were fundamental flaws with its schooling ideology. In 2003, Prince Sultan, the Minister of Defense, launched a curriculum review panel to "to strengthen the concepts of flexibility, openness to dialogue and respect of others, while maintaining religious subjects, as they are considered the bases of our educational

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<sup>532</sup> Gulf News, "Saudis will not allow changes imposed on national curricula", March 7, 2002

<sup>533</sup> Prince Sultan bin Abd al-Aziz the defense minister and head of the committee charged with revising and amending curricula quoted in *Okaz*, 5 December 2003. Translated in *Can Saudi Arabia Reform Itself?* International Crisis Group, Middle East Report no. 28, July 14, 2004. Available from <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iran-gulf/saudi-arabia/028-can-saudi-arabia-reform-itself.aspx>.

system.”<sup>534</sup> He also pointed to the needs of the labor market in particular the need for modern scientific qualifications as a driving factor. He also emphasized that the reforms were carried out on the initiative of the Saudi government, not in response to international pressure. This early review panel demonstrated the different factions of power in the Kingdom as it was comprised by members of the Shura council, several academics and the head of the affairs of the two grand mosques in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.”<sup>535</sup>

The regime’s official narrative continued to place the need for gradual reform within an Islamic and nationalist, as opposed to globalized, read western, framework as exemplified in a 2006 speech by Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf, then Ambassador to the United Kingdom and the son of the Minister of the Interior, Prince Nayef:

Dear brothers and sisters

You know that your country has passed since its establishment, and continues to pass through various stages of reform and development. These stages have gained speed lately during the reign of King Abdullah. All of you may have noticed the great developments already attained during this period, represented in new laws, regulations, new institutions and services aimed at raising the standard of Saudi citizens and at protecting their rights. These initiatives have resulted in more openness and transparency in the media and throughout all society. We are now witnessing wider national participation and the opening of doors to women to share in the development of their country within the boundaries of custom, tradition and Islamic values. Here, I would like to assure you that the march of reform and national development will never come to an end, but it will continue forward. *Fundamentally, it is important to point out that these reforms are necessitated by the evolving needs of our society and have not been imposed on us from abroad.*<sup>536</sup>

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<sup>534</sup> See list of members of review committee in “Saudi Education Reforms aim to promote “moderation”, enhance Islamic values,” *SPA News Agency Riyadh* available from BBC summary of World Broadcasts, December 4, 2003.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid.

<sup>536</sup> Italics are author’s. HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf, “Speech for National Day by the Saudi Ambassador to the United Kingdom and Ireland,” April 10 2006. (accessed July 2009) English translation available from <http://www.mofa.gov.sa/Detail.asp?InSectionID=571&InNewsItemID=55280>.

Thus the international attention on the Saudi education system presented a double-edged sword for liberal reformers: on the one hand it generated political space for debate over higher education within the regime while allowing the international community to make the most strident charges; on the other, it forced the regime and reformers alike to demonstrate that they were not merely responding to “western” pressure by pursuing education reform.<sup>537</sup>

### **King Abdullah and the promise of reform**

With the ascent of King Abdullah to the throne in 2005, the cautious recalibration of the regimes interests with liberal elites accelerated. In the past 10 years the regime has pursued both a carrot and stick approach to economic and social reform – allowing selective privatization of the economic sector through such mechanisms as membership in the WTO, opening the co-educational King Abdullah University for Science and Technology,<sup>538</sup> and pushing for gradual reform of the social sector through a series of a national dialogues on such topics as women’s rights and religious tolerance, all while coming down hard on Islamists and formal opposition.<sup>539</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Khalid Al-Ujaymi, Professor at Imam Saud Univeristy in Riyadh quoted in “Saudi Professor Views Rallies, Rejects Reform Calls from Abroad,” *Al-Jazeera* December 16, 2004. Available from BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, December 17, 2004: “We do not want reforms imposed from abroad, as the USA is trying to do. ....that would lead our country towards unrest, disturbances, demagoguery and corruption, not reform. ... We tell all our brothers and sons that the reform issue is being taken care of by preachers, thinkers and reformists. ... there are no differences between the reformists and the government. No matter what they the rulers do to reformists, we remain preachers, calling for virtue, advising against vice, and always demanding that our country rise to the levels of pride and perfection that we always seek.”

<sup>538</sup> KAUST has been heralded as a beacon for future higher education reform initiatives, however its secular curriculum and co-educational mandate has been the subject of substantive religious opposition. See “Al Barak’s ‘Death Fatwa’,” *Saudi Gazette*, February 27, 2010; available from <http://www.saudi gazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=2010022764731>.

<sup>539</sup> Notably the arrest of Fouad Al Farhan in 2007. See Faiza Saleh Ambah, “Dissident Saudi Blogger Is Arrested,” *The Washington Post*, January 1 2008; and “Saudi Arabia: Charges against Rights Activist

Reform began to happen, albeit in a gradualist and limited manner. The most dramatic of these initiatives was the 2003 announcement by the regime of a reorganization of the Council of Ministers to be followed by plans to create municipal councils and to hold democratic elections at the municipal level.<sup>540</sup> However, in a classic case of two steps forward one step back, the impact of these initiatives was mixed at best. The municipal elections were marked by low voter turnout, the exclusion of female candidates, and subsequent scheduled elections have been cancelled and there seems to be no immediate plans to resurrect them.<sup>541</sup>

While the Kingdom experienced a budget surplus in 2003 and 2004 due to high oil prices,<sup>542</sup> the regime's 7<sup>th</sup> five year development report, official speeches, and shifts in budget prioritization to the higher education, signaled a new seriousness to the regime's focus on economic diversification.<sup>543</sup> The next chapter will detail how this shift in reform priorities and relationship was reflected in the institutions that comprise the education sector.

## **Conclusion**

A combination of factors led to an acceleration of the seeds of higher education reform, planted in the late 1990's, that could have been easily reversed. Individuals involved in the push for private higher education in the 1990's were by and large well connected business elites who had learned the lessons of pushing too far too fast from the

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Frivolous," *Human Rights Watch* July 14 2010; available from

<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/07/14/saudi-arabia-charges-against-rights-activist-frivolous>.

<sup>540</sup> Andrzej Kapiszewski, "Saudi Arabia: Steps Towards Democratization or Reconfiguration of Authoritarianism?" *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 41, No. 5-6: 459-482.

<sup>541</sup> Edward Burke and Ana Echagüe, "'Strong Foundations?': The Imperative for Reform in Saudi Arabia," Working Paper 84, FRIDE, June 2009.

<sup>542</sup> Eighth Development Plan: 2005-2009.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid.

early 1990's. Indeed, early reform efforts in the private institutional sphere were fragile, limited, and subject to sudden reversal.

The crisis that 9/11 posed to the legitimacy of the regime, in combination with growing economic and demographic pressure, created the conditions necessary for the Al Saud regime's reassessment of its ruling balance with the *ulema*. While 9/11 was not the sole catalyst for higher education reform in the Kingdom, it was significant contributing variable as it allowed domestic reformers an external referent for reform (the international attention/pressure for reform of the education system), created the political space necessary for business elites to advocate for reform without being labeled as anti-Al Saud, as well as a clear incentive for the regime to re-evaluate its relationship to the *ulema*.

As discussed in my research questions and literature review, classic rentier economic literature suggests that the state only moves to seek new accommodation with actors when the distributive economy is in peril.<sup>544</sup> In the Saudi Arabian context, this would suggest that substantive institutional reform is only, or most likely, embarked upon when the distributive oil rent system is compromised – such as when oil prices fall, the oil market is uncertain, or the productive capacity is predicted to deteriorate. However, between 1981 and 1987 Saudi Arabia's GDP was more than halved by the decline in oil prices<sup>545</sup> the regime failed to take on the project of liberalizing its education system, and indeed moved to negate the technocratic focus of the 1970's.

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<sup>544</sup> See Hazem Beblawi, "The Rentier State in the Arab World," in *The Arab State*, ed. Giacomo Luciani (London, Routledge, 1990), 87-88.

<sup>545</sup> United Nations Development Program, *Arab Human Development Report 2009*, 11. Calculations based on 2009 prices.

Instead, the regime shored up its support from the *ulema* by increasing the control of religious interests over institutions such as the MoE, MoHE, and national universities. Based on a comparison of the regime's reaction to the economic pressures of the 1980's and 90's versus its reaction post 9/11, it appears that economic and demographic pressure on the monarchy was a necessary, but not sufficient variable to overcome the *ulema* interest groups and institutional inertia. Indeed, the shift of the monarchy's attention away from co-optation of the Sahwa movement following the Gulf War, to a public embrace of liberalizing reforms takes place in earnest only after 9/11. The rising threat of domestic extremism, combined with focused international attention on the education system post 9/11, enabled liberal reformers to press the case for education reform more forcefully with a newly receptive regime.

However, if institutional reform is indeed occurring in the higher education sector, how did it occur in face of tremendous oppositional coalitions – such as entrenched bureaucratic interests in the Ministry of Higher Education and vociferous opposition among conservative clerical elite? How is the regime managing this reform?

## Chapter Five

### Institutional Reform of Higher Education 2000-2010

“Raising the quality of education is the most important and most challenging issue for the 9<sup>th</sup> Development Plan. Quality is the essential element in ensuring that graduates of the educational system contribute actively to development, rather than being a burden on it.” – 9<sup>th</sup> DVP<sup>546</sup>

“We lived with 6 universities for 40 years, and then, in the last 6 years, we have gone from 6 universities to 21. This is a big change.” –Member of the Majlis Al-Shura, Jeddah, 2009<sup>547</sup>

By 2010 the Ministry of Higher Education had opened more than 100 new universities and colleges in four years, and the national education budget had tripled since 2004.<sup>548</sup> Education reform was cited as a pillar of the efforts to diversify the Saudi economy, ‘Saudize’ the Kingdom’s companies, and to address the labor market inefficiencies and the growing youth unemployment rate of 30 percent.<sup>549</sup> The ban on private colleges and universities was reversed and the private higher education sector had expanded dramatically.<sup>550</sup> The political discourse on education had opened to the point where government run newspapers frequently debated the merits of private vs.

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<sup>546</sup> *Ninth Development Plan: 2010-2015*, 394.

<sup>547</sup> Member of the Majlis Al-Shura, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>548</sup> Zvika Krieger, “Saudi Arabia: Reforms in Higher Education Raise Questions,” *Arab Reform Bulletin* 5, no. 10 (2007): 10.

<sup>549</sup> John Sfakianakis, “Banque Saudi Fransi: Saudi Arabia Economics - Employment quandary,” *The Gulf Intelligence*, February 21, 2011. Accessed March 1, 2011. Available from <http://www.thegulfintelligence.com/Docs.Viewer/8ad91021-1053-43d7-b8a8-d250151257ab/default.aspx>.

<sup>550</sup> “Higher Education in Saudi Arabia,” Summary Report 1428 AH, Ministry of Higher Education, KSA. Available from <http://www.mohe.gov.sa/en/aboutus/Pages/Achievements-and-aspirations.aspx>.

public education, and religious vs. scientific education.<sup>551</sup> KAUST, the most well endowed university in the world, had been opened with a reported 15 billion dollar endowment,<sup>552</sup> managed by Aramco, insulated from the Ministry of Higher Education, with an independent curriculum, international board of advisors, and co-education written into its founding document.<sup>553</sup> The first female had been appointed to a cabinet level position, in this case as deputy minister of education, both for-profit and non-profit colleges were allowed to operate in the Kingdom and enrollment and budgets for public universities had tripled. Education occupied 25% of the national budget and was frequently mentioned as the most important institution to the economic success of the state.

What happened? How did education reformers, both inside and outside the regime navigate reform challenges that had largely kept education sector under developed for over 20 years and under the control of religious interests? And, most importantly, are these reforms enduring?

To answer these questions, this chapter will proceed in four sections:

- I. The expansion of private higher education
- II. The regime's use of peripheral institutions
  - King Abdullah University for Science and Technology and Aramco
  - The Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA)
  - King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC)

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<sup>551</sup> One such example: Mina al-Uraybi, "Seminar on Extremism, Terrorism in London Looks Into Issues of Education, Citizenship, Social Traditions; Participants Say Combating Terrorism Requires Reform, Curricula Review", *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, December 3, 2005. Available in translation from World News Connection.

<sup>552</sup> The exact amount of the waqf is not public; Vice President for Development, KAUST, phone interview by author, Dammam, KSA, March 2011.

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*; Co-education is by Royal Decree, however the content of the royal decree is not public



- King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP)
- III. Reform of State Institutions of Higher Education
  - IV. Analysis of higher education reforms

### **The Expansion of Private Higher Education**

As a member of the Majlis Al Shura stated in 2009:

We have 29 universities and colleges, maybe a total of 60 both private and governmental. So the changes happened in the last five years it is huge. And it needs a lot of governing. Why? Because there was a very clear demand [for higher education] in the whole region, and the neighboring countries they also started moving fast. Everybody was competing in the region.<sup>554</sup>

Due to the rapid expansion of the public sector in the 1970's and 80's, the vast majority Saudi students seek public employment upon graduation.<sup>555</sup> The public sector in Saudi Arabia offers higher wages, benefits, job security and social allowances than the private sector.<sup>556</sup> Promotion is seniority rather than performance based, and working hours are short.<sup>557</sup> Flexibility to move between jobs is low and incentives for skill enhancement are minimal. Public sector employment in Saudi Arabia emphasizes accessibility and administrative work rather than skill building linked to labor market needs.<sup>558</sup> As a result, in 2004, approximately two thirds of Saudi students majored in

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<sup>554</sup> Interview, member of the Majlis Al-Shura, Jeddah, 2009

<sup>555</sup> John Sfakianakis, "Banque Saudi Fransi: Saudi Arabia Economics - Employment quandary," *The Gulf Intelligence*, February 21, 2011; available from <http://www.thegulfintelligence.com/Docs.Viewer/8ad91021-1053-43d7-b8a8-d250151257ab/default.aspx>.

<sup>556</sup> World Bank, *Unlocking the Employment Potential in the Middle East and North Africa: Toward a New Social Contract* (Washington DC: World Bank, September 2003). Available from <http://go.worldbank.org/WT5HGDCBJ0>.

<sup>557</sup> Ugo Fasano and Rishi Goyal, "Emerging Strains in GCC Labor Markets," International Monetary Fund Working Paper 4, no. 71 (2004).

<sup>558</sup> Sharon Shochat, "The Gulf Cooperation Council Economies: Diversification and Reform", Paper of the Kuwait Research Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States at the London School of Economics and Political Science, February 2008.

humanities or religion.<sup>559</sup> In order to better link graduates or “human capital” with the private sector drastic changes in the content of the higher education system and its relationship with the labor market needed to occur.

Personnel changes and even to some extent administrative structural changes in institutions of the state can often be cosmetic and ephemeral. They are subject to changes in regime leadership and to even to internal squabbles. However, privatization is an area where reform may be difficult to reverse and indeed can be transformative to the education system as a whole.

States can shape policy environments by selecting policy roles that balance deference to professional values and the use of market forces. The role of the market has become increasingly important. In almost every nation state governments seek, through more targeted regulation or through systematic deregulation, to harness the market as a means of higher education reform.<sup>560</sup>

However, in the authoritarian context of Saudi Arabia, the regime acts as the mediator between market forces and social interest groups, such as the *ulema*. Thus, one way to lessen the *ulema*'s influence over higher education, and decrease the reliance on a highly centralized bureaucracy, was to devolve the regime's role in education through privatization.

As discussed in chapter four, the first private colleges, Dar al Hekma, Effat College for Women (now Effat University) and Sultan College in Riyadh (now Prince

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<sup>559</sup> United Nations Development Program, *Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Human Development Report, 2003*, (accessed June 13, 2008); available from [http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/national/arabstates/saudi/saudi%20Arabia\\_2003\\_en.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/national/arabstates/saudi/saudi%20Arabia_2003_en.pdf).

<sup>560</sup> Callan, P. M., Richardson, R. C., Reeves Bracco, K., & Finney, J. E. *Designing state higher education systems for a new century*. American Council on Education, 1999.

Sultan University) all started in 1999.<sup>561</sup> To separate themselves from the centralized MoHE system they pursued several strategies: independent financing, affiliations with international bodies such as accreditation organizations; international metrics such as the Shanghai Classification<sup>562</sup>; and royal patronage.<sup>563</sup>

These colleges were pioneer or experimental initiatives, because the rules of the game were unwritten. It was unclear if private financing would allow private colleges to maintain their distance from MoHE oversight. They relied on mainly on informal relationships and tacit support from members of the Al Saud regime to maintain their status as separate and distinct from public institutions and the MoHE regulations that applied to them. Each college had a different level of access to the regime: Effat had closer ties to the Al-Faisal branch of the royal family and was named after King Faisal's wife, Prince Sultan College was inaugurated by HRH Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud under the Al-Riyadh Philanthropic Society for Science, and Dar Al Hekma was founded by a group of non-royal business and technocratic elites in Jeddah. Of these three, only DAH was established without direct royal sponsorship.

Subsequent to 9/11, private higher education moved from the experimental periphery driven by a few “innovators” among the liberal elite, to a government sanctioned activity, affecting the behavior and discourse of state higher education institutions and ministries. This section will detail the gradual expansion of private

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<sup>561</sup> Effat College was initially established as a finishing school for elites by Queen Effat in 1956 see Catherine Parssinen, “The Changing Role of Women” in Beling. It was not recognized as a ‘private college’ until 1999, Interview, Effat administrator, 2009.

<sup>562</sup> The Shanghai Classification of Universities, also known as the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) is regarded to be one of the three most influential and widely observed international university rankings, along with the QS World University Rankings and the Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

<sup>563</sup> Academic administrators, private colleges, interviews by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008.

education and the political process that such a transformation required. Through interviews with private university administrators, members of the Majlis Al-Shura, and education policy watchers in the Kingdom, it will detail how strategies used by pioneering reformers were incorporated into the regime's higher education policy as a whole.

## **Regulations**

When the first three private colleges opened in 1999, the Council of Ministers stipulated post-facto that they would have to be non-profits operated by charity organizations approved by the MoHE.<sup>564</sup> This stipulation served a dual purpose, charity organizations could be closely monitored, and unlike in the case of the free academic zones Dubai<sup>565</sup> the quality would not be subject to for-profit foreign education companies.<sup>566</sup> However, after four years of strict regulation of the establishment of private colleges by the MoHE, the private higher education sector had not expanded beyond the pioneer private colleges due to the high start up costs and the bureaucratic red tape involved in establishing a charity.<sup>567</sup> By 2002, the sum total of private colleges was three with a total enrollment of less than 2000.<sup>568</sup>

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<sup>564</sup> For a chronology of MoHE regulations for private universities/colleges, see Appendix II.

<sup>565</sup> MOHESR UAE official, interview by author, Abu Dhabi, UAE, February 2011. Dubai has three "academic free zones" where for profit educational institutions can operate essentially free from government oversight – the MOHESR does not regulate them.

<sup>566</sup> For example, to establish Dar Al Hekma College, the college founders first had to establish the Al 'Ilm charity with the appropriate authorities and then officially place DAH under the supervision of Al 'Ilm. The Council of Ministers Decree No. 33, issued in 1418H, stated the approval to enable the private sector to establish non-profit educational institutions on sound administrative, scientific, economic and financial principles, in order to participate in fulfilling the development requirements, to complement the role of the governmental universities.

<sup>567</sup> President Al-Yamama University, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>568</sup> Eighth Development Plan: 2005-2009.

In 2002, a ministerial decree was issued sanctioning for-profit higher educational institutions to open; allowing the private sector to more easily invest in private education. The Council of Ministers stipulated that for private institutions to be licensed they must: create a company and stakeholder of the company; demonstrate adequate facilities; detail the curriculum and faculty; and provide a financial guarantee that the institution will operate sustainably. The Council of Ministers also approved the leasing of government lands at below market rate prices and the provision of soft loans for the construction of additional private colleges and universities.<sup>569</sup> For example, both Al Yamama University in Riyadh and the College of Business Administration in Jeddah were established under these new regulations as for-profit limited corporations and required a minimum amount of capital to license, and funded the rest of operating expenses in the short term through private loans with the plan to expand enrollment, and thus tuition fees, gradually. (For a timeline further detailing MoHE regulatory changes regarding private higher education, please see Appendix 6-1.)<sup>570</sup>

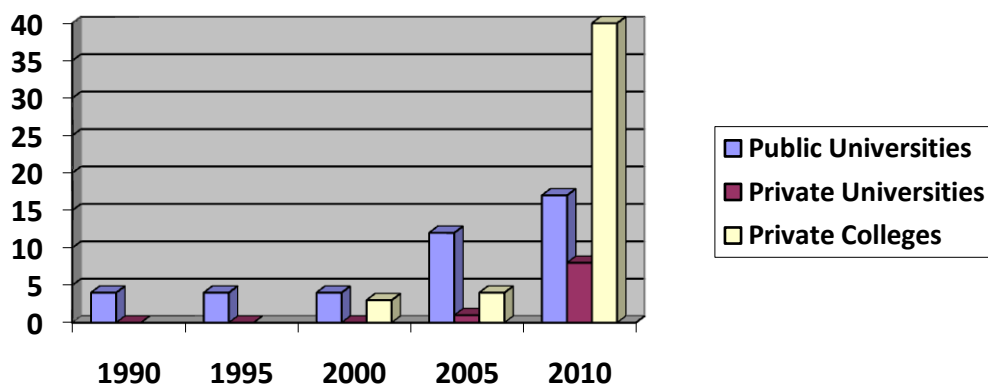
As a result, by 2008 private education had expanded beyond the purview of a handful of small institutions to a proliferation of private colleges and universities. The figure below illustrates this growth.

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<sup>569</sup> Council of Ministers Resolution 87, 2002, cited in 8<sup>th</sup> Development Plan.

<sup>570</sup> See Appendix II for timeline of ministry regulatory reform pertaining to private education.

**Chart 1: Public and Private Universities and Colleges 1998-2010<sup>571</sup>**



It should be noted that while the number of private colleges increased exponentially, the establishment of a few private universities is perhaps even more significant due to their greater enrollment capacity, as illustrated in the table below

**Table 1: Expansion of Public and Private Higher Education 2005-2009<sup>572</sup>**

Year	Registered Students	Newly Enrolled	Public Universities	University Colleges	Private Universities	Private Colleges	Medical Colleges
2005	67855	136723	8	199	1	4	16
2009	201053	205123	24	440	8	40	133
Growth Rate	169%	51%	300%	126%	500%	900%	731%

The majority of the dramatic expansion in private higher education in the Kingdom after 2004 was through the establishment of for-profit private institutions.

<sup>571</sup> Source: Compiled from MoHE statistical database.

<sup>572</sup> Eighth Development Plan; MoHE statistical database.

Critics of the expansion of private higher education noted that if it became a commercialized sector, with little government oversight, the quality of the education would be subject to profit motives.<sup>573</sup> Officials from the MoHE stressed that government oversight was needed to regulate the balance between academic standing and profit.<sup>574</sup> In contrast, proponents of expanding private higher education, both for-profit and non-profit, cited government regulation and unwieldy bureaucracies as the main obstacle to improving the higher education system in Saudi Arabia.<sup>575</sup>

However, unlike the boards of the pioneer private colleges, the MoHE stipulated that subsequent private college and university boards must include both members of the MoHE and high ranking officials from the established public universities.<sup>576</sup> This served a two-fold purpose: it allowed for a bureaucratic buy-in from the MoHE for private education, and it ensured continued government oversight.

The significance of private higher education lies in the realm of curriculum reform. Private universities in 2003-2008 were able to initiate programs such as international law, international business and use English as the medium of instruction, while reducing and combining Arabic and Islamic course requirements, all curricular innovations that had not been approved by the MoHE for implementation in public

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<sup>573</sup> MoHE official, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>574</sup> Ibid.

<sup>575</sup> Vice Dean, College of Business Administration (CBA), interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.; MoHE official, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>576</sup> Ibid.; Council of Trustees in the college must consist of : Five members of the owners of private college, or those nominated by them; An academic representative nominated by the Ministry of Higher Education; Two professors from Saudi public universities, nominated by the Minister of Higher Education. According to the MoHE, the purpose of forming the council of trustees is “to form a teamwork with mixed members, from the investors and academic experts, so the college educational level is continuously developed, and the investors participate in the strategic decisions related to the college, such as the expansion of the number of students, specialties, the scientific research, in selecting the teaching staff, and, finally, in the method of funding this expansion.; *Ministry of Higher Education Private Universities in Saudi Arabia* (accessed January 3, 2010); available from <http://www.mohe.gov.sa/en/studyinside/privateedu/Pages/Overview.aspx>.

universities.<sup>577</sup> As a member of the Majlis Al-Shura's Education Committee noted in 2008, "It is not yet easier for the government to change the curriculum than the private universities."<sup>578</sup> Private universities and colleges frequently sought international accreditation for new programs, both to ensure quality and attract students.<sup>579</sup> Private institutions were also able to conduct international hiring searches for faculty and able to select students based on their own admissions criteria.<sup>580</sup>

### **Challenges to Privatization of Higher Education**

In a November 2006 meeting of the Majlis Al Shura, members of the Shura council strongly criticized the pace and scope of higher education reform, particularly the continued centralization of bureaucratic and financial control under the MoHE.<sup>581</sup> Dr. Saud Al-Shammari, a member of the council's Education and Scientific Committee stated that "the current system does not serve the needs of the economy and society. It is the old system with only a few changes to the administration and finance segments. The educational content remains unchanged...[higher education] should be freed from bureaucracy and financial restrictions." Dr. Muhammad Al-Zulfa, another Shura Council member, likewise called for the universities to operate independently of the MoHE in terms of finance and administration and that the current system of unifying procedures and laws for the Kingdom's universities was delaying meaningful reform.<sup>582</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> President of Al-Yamama University, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>578</sup> Member of the Majlis Al-Shura's Education Committee, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>579</sup> Academic Deans private colleges, interviews by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>580</sup> Ibid.

<sup>581</sup> "Saudi Shura Council members 'Strongly Criticize' Kingdom Higher Education System," *Arab News*, November 6, 2006.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid.



By far the most challenging aspect of privatization of higher education in Saudi Arabia is the relationship of private higher education institutions with the MoHE. As one higher education reformer who has served on several internal regime committees examining the expansion of private education stated:

Now the vision is clear, implementing is going to be extremely difficult because higher education [needs to be] freed up from the government bureaucracy [allowing] the universities to become more and more independent. ..I think they haven't addressed that independence yet, because you know like any other government issue, to give something independence from a government bureaucracy is a struggle.<sup>583</sup>

The regulations or “rules of the road” governing the relationship between the MoHE and private institutions remained vaguely defined. As one private college Dean characterized the college’s relationship with the MoHE, “we keep pushing until they say stop, but we make it hard for them to say stop.”<sup>584</sup>

Even as private higher education administrators and officials initiated new programs, such as undergraduate degrees in law for women, they had to be negotiated with MoHE officials to obtain approval.<sup>585</sup> While private universities enjoyed a greater degree of freedom than public universities in terms of faculty and staff hiring, student selection, and program initiation, they remained ultimately dependent on the MoHE for licensing and curriculum approval. This oversight tended to fluctuate, due to personality, relationships, and the prevailing political winds. As one dean of a private “for-profit” college put it, “tenure in the ministries of education is a problem, because it is hard to change a system of education, a whole mind set, when the employees remain the

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<sup>583</sup> Aramco Vice President, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008.

<sup>584</sup> Dar Al Hekma College official, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, March 2008.

<sup>585</sup> The Ministry enjoys a considerable role in following up the establishment and the operation of the private colleges in the Kingdom, in all fields, thru licensing them, the evaluation of their academic and administrative staff, and, later, the evaluation of the performance of their graduates in both governmental and private sectors; Interviews, private college officials, Jeddah, 2008-2009.

same.”<sup>586</sup> In a 2011 follow-up interview, a former private university president cited the ambiguity of MoHE control over private institutions as a driving factor behind his decision to retire, stating, “I left because private education was not independent. What does private mean if it is no different from public?”<sup>587</sup>

Another persistent and long-term challenge in expanding private higher education in Saudi Arabia is financing. A member of the Majlis Al-Shura described the financial challenges,

In my opinion, we have well established government universities. They are very good, they have their own problems, but they have the ability, they have a higher budget etc. in the meantime they have a lot more graduates and regulations. Which is sometimes not a good thing. The new [private] universities have a lot more freedom, but less money. Private universities are more for elites ....So, I wish, I’d like to see the positive things in the private universities in the government universities and the good things in the public universities in the private universities (laughs) sometimes it is difficult. But, I think everything is changing in the last few years, there is a lot of movement, a lot of change. But at the same time we have to be careful because it’s not a joke for the continuation for the specialization which is needed in the future, not just for the country but for everybody.<sup>588</sup>

As higher education has been a solely government funded sector for the past three decades, no system exists for lending to those who cannot immediately afford the high tuition of private colleges and universities.<sup>589</sup> There are however expanding scholarship opportunities for the best performers in private education. For example, in 2008 the MoHE approved new regulations which would allow the top 30% of students (via GPA

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<sup>586</sup> Vice Dean, College for Business Administration (CBA), interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008.

<sup>587</sup> President Al-Yamama University, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>588</sup> Member of the Majlis Al-Shura’s Education Committee, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, 2009.

<sup>589</sup> Vice Dean, College for Business Administration (CBA), interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008.

rankings) in private colleges to receive full tuition from the government.<sup>590</sup> In addition, there are several private institutions that provide scholarships – such as the King Faisal Foundation.<sup>591</sup>

### **Prospects for privatization**

The case for privatization of higher education as a vehicle for reform in Saudi Arabia is mixed. While private colleges backed by liberal elites have had significantly more leeway in proposing curriculum changes and “experimental” programs than public institutions, all syllabi, courses of study and curriculum changes are ultimately still vetted by the MoHE.

Continued expansion of the private higher education sector is dependent on private financing and the willingness of business and technocratic elites to continue push for changes in the private higher education sector’s relationship with the MoHE.

### **Peripheral Institutions**

A second significant development in higher education post-2003 was the regime’s use of peripheral institutions to implement controversial educational initiatives. Unlike privatization, which relied on market forces and liberal elites to create new institutions, the regime carved out “islands of efficiency” such as Aramco, SAGIA, and King Abdullah Economic City to implement flagship education projects such as King Abdullah University of Science and Technology.

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<sup>590</sup> Royal Decree No. 6304/MB of 18/8/1427H stipulated the approval of the scholarships project for private higher education students.

<sup>591</sup> Professor, Al-Faisal University, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008.

## **King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST)**

*“A good university is an engine for change”<sup>592</sup>*

The King Abdullah University for Science and Technology (KAUST) was established by a Royal Decree from King Abdullah in 2006, with a ground breaking ceremony in 2007.<sup>593</sup> King Abdullah in his speech marking the inauguration of the first class at KAUST on September 23, 2009 stated,

Humanity has been the target of vicious attacks from extremists, who speak the language of hatred, fear dialogue, and pursue destruction. We cannot fight them unless we learn to coexist without conflict – with love instead of hatred and with friendship instead of confrontation. Undoubtedly, scientific centers that embrace all peoples are the first line of defense against extremists. And today this university will become a House of Wisdom to all its peers around the world, a beacon of tolerance. This is the third meaning of the university.<sup>594</sup>

KAUST was founded as an exclusively scientific research institution, with a focus on graduate level research. In many ways it is the exemplar of the technocratic elite. KAUST’s mission statement emphasizes the globalized nature of scientific knowledge and competition, and thus KAUST’s need to operate on the global playing field. As one Aramco veteran involved in establishing KAUST put it,

KAUST was established to be an international, global university, not just for Saudi students...its purpose wasn’t to get graduate students, it was to get scientist and minds, researchers that can transfer and translate those great innovations and inventions and research base to feed the economy. It was to drive and be driven by the economy’s needs.<sup>595</sup>

The curriculum is entirely secular, with no required courses in religion or Arabic, in contrast to all other education institutions, both private and public, in the country.

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<sup>592</sup> Saudi Aramco VP, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008.

<sup>593</sup> Caryle Murphy, “King Invests 10 billion in New University,” *The National, UAE*, September 23, 2009.

<sup>594</sup> King Abdullah’s inauguration speech, presented at KAUST, September 2009; English translation available at: <http://inauguration.KAUST.edu.sa/inauguration/speeches/King-Abdullah-Speech.aspx>.

<sup>595</sup> Saudi Aramco VP, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008.

The exclusive oversight and control of the establishment of KAUST was explicitly granted by King Abdullah to Aramco instead of to the Ministry of Higher Education. The ceding of oversight authority of the most high profile education project in Saudi Arabia's history to Aramco instead of the Ministry of Higher Education, was a departure from the bureaucratic norm and had profound implications for the public perception of both the MoHE and KAUST.

The precedent for insulating KAUST from the MoHE was first established with KUPM, as discussed in Chapter three. However, unlike with KUPM, KAUST was not placed under the Ministry of Petroleum; instead Aramco was the sole institution responsible for establishing KAUST. KAUST is also a far more controversial education initiative than the technocratic KUPM. KAUST is pushing the conservative cultural envelope in several key dimensions. As one journalist stated,

KAUST came up and it's a minor storm, because for the first time it will be mixed, boys and girls professors male and female. And it will be conducted all in English, not following the Saudi curriculum, not even under the MoHE, but it's under Aramco. So this is something that bothers a lot of conservatives. And the managers of a lot of the universities are not even Saudi. So all this is showing the frustration of the ruler of this country with the way things are going in higher education.<sup>596</sup>

By removing an educational institution that would ordinarily fall entirely within the sphere of MoHE authority and placing it under the exclusive authority of another government entity – Aramco - we enter into the paradox of an institution created or repurposed by the monarchy to maintain its independence from the rest of the regime.<sup>597</sup>

While the MoHE retains its status as the official governing body for higher education, King Abdullah has created a parallel system of oversight, through a series of unique

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<sup>596</sup> Professor, Al-Faisal University, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>597</sup> Siraj Wahab, "We Want KAUST to Reach MIT Level," *Arab News*, October 21, 2007. Available from <http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=1&section=0&article=102682&d=21&m=10&y=2007>.

extra-bureaucratic maneuvers. This parallel system allows for experimental change, without taking on the transformation of the entire system, which could quickly shut down any potentially challenging initiatives. As one government official described the use of Aramco to establish KAUST,

The King gave KAUST to Aramco because he wanted it to happen and he knew that if it was given to the MOHE it would get bogged down in bureaucracy. Initially, the *Tatweer* (development) initiative was appropriated for 9 billion riyals, they wanted it to happen through MoHE, but after two years in ministry of finance they couldn't get it co-ed or international. Is KAUST replicable? **I don't know. It's more of a model to see what works and will be tolerated.**<sup>598</sup>

This dissertation labels this hybrid institutional category as “peripheral institutions.” With peripheral institutions, the monarchy itself creates or repurposes institutions that exist outside of the normal bureaucratic structures of the state to implement radical change.

When asked by Arab News why Aramco was tasked with the creation of KAUST, Al-Nasr, the interim President of KAUST replied,

The leadership knows that if we are tasked with something we will deliver. We have huge experience in the execution of mega-projects. We are a very experienced company in training. We are a 75-year-old company and from day one there has been a focus on training. We have been sending students abroad; we have had thousands and thousands of students over the past 75 years that we sent to study at all levels, be it masters or Ph.D...we may not have our own university but we have been in this business ourselves; we are very close to KFUPM. But one bigger dimension to all this, where Aramco can make a difference is this: We are talking about establishing an international university in KAUST that is going to have an international culture, that is going to host people from all over the world: Different nationalities, different beliefs, different faiths, etc. etc. One of the key factors that will make KAUST successful is to have that healthy and positive international culture that everybody will enjoy. Aramco has set the best international model in Saudi Arabia. We have lived with that model for 75 years now. That experience cannot be matched by anybody in Saudi Arabia.

This rationale corresponded with a member of the Majlis Al-Shura's description of the motivation for putting KAUST under Aramco, “Remember Aramco is the source of all

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<sup>598</sup> SAGIA education official, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.

Saudi wealth. So that's maybe, maybe why it [KAUST] is under it. Also, to achieve freedom of regulation in running the university. This could be one of the reasons.”

While KAUST is a single institution with less than 1000 students, its potential as a demonstration effect and model for system wide higher education reform was stressed by both members of Aramco and higher education officials operating in both public and private universities in the Kingdom.<sup>599</sup>

As the interim President of KAUST put it,

We believe KAUST is a catalyst to transform the economy to a knowledge base. It is also setting up by default I would say a good example of what a university should be...it is setting up an environment of competition among the leading universities in Saudi Arabia, meaning King Fahd University, King Saud University, and King Abdul Aziz University...to compete for talent, compete for research money and also compete for the best faculty. And we can already see this happening in islands of excellence in those universities.<sup>600</sup>

This “beacon” model of innovation has a two-fold benefit to the monarchy: it is able to quickly implement limited change within certain parameters and it is able to do this without directly confronting existing institutions and thus entrenched interests – i.e. the MoHE and the conservative *ulema* which could result in a debilitating backlash. As a member of the Majlis Al-Shura stated,

Regarding the knowledge cities, and KAUST – KAUST was established a few years back, this is the first year that they are enrolling students. It is responding to a need in the international knowledge, there is a different understanding. It is different from the other universities; it is more of an international institution, like a torch beam in the area to be.<sup>601</sup>

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<sup>599</sup> President Al-Yamama University, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.; Member of committee for international partnerships, MoHE, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>600</sup> Interim President KAUST, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008.

<sup>601</sup> Member of the Majlis Al-Shura, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

Thus, the plan was not for Aramco to supplant the MoHE, but rather to provide an interim substitutive institution for “model projects” such as KAUST to advance gradual reform at the systemic level.

### **KAUST and co-education**

KAUST was established as the first co-educational university in Saudi Arabia via Royal Decree. In a 2007 speech King Abdullah declared to the nation that KAUST would be a beacon of learning for all – including women.<sup>602</sup> Unlike in all other higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia, men and women would not only be allowed to study on the same campus, but in the same classroom.

KAUST quickly became a lightning rod for conservative criticism and ignited a media firestorm over its policy of coeducation.<sup>603</sup> In one such instance, a popular jihadist website singled out KAUST as an “abomination” and called for its destruction, due to its policy of co-education, its secular curriculum and its “culture of westernization”.<sup>604</sup> The establishment of KAUST as a coeducational institution presented a substantial challenge to the *ulema*’s dominance over the social sphere. The opposition to co-education at KAUST was vociferous even within official religious circles.

Shortly after the inauguration of KAUST in September 2009, Sheikh Saad al-Shethri, a member of the Senior *ulema* Council, stated in a television interview that men and women should not be allowed to study together at KAUST and demanded that

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<sup>602</sup> Mshari Al-Zaydi, “Saudi Arabia: Entering a New Scientific and Technological Age,” *Asharq Al-Awsat*, October 28, 2007.

<sup>603</sup> For instance, Ahmad al-Masri, “Intellectuals class for Confronting the Shaykh’s Oppostion,” *Al-Quds al Arabi Online*, October 2, 2009. Available (in translation) from World News Connection.

<sup>604</sup> “Abu Yahya Al-Libi Criticizes Saudi Scholars, Western Education in Saudi Arabia,” OSC summary of Jihadist Websites, February 6, 2010. Available from World News Connection.



KAUST's curriculum should be supervised by clerics.<sup>605</sup> Meanwhile, Sheikh Abdulrahman al-Barrak, a prominent Sahwa opposition figure to the official *ulema* establishment, issued a fatwa declaring that anyone who permits gender mixing is an apostate and thus deserving of the death penalty.<sup>606</sup> Twenty-Seven prominent sheiks signed a petition to King Abdullah supporting Sheikh Barrak's view.<sup>607</sup> The elephant in the room was whether King Abdullah was included in this pronouncement of apostasy for his support of *Ikhtilat* at KAUST.

In a surprising move, given the pattern of co-optation of religious conservatives throughout the 80's and 90's, the regime did not back down. Highlighting both the regime's sensitivity to a *ulema* led backlash, and its willingness to stand its ground, al-Shethri was promptly removed from the Senior *ulema* Council and the commission-affiliated Standing Committee of Research and Fatwa on the orders of the King.<sup>608</sup> Sheikh Barrak's website was removed by government censors, though it has been reposted on several other Islamist websites. In November 2009, the Justice Minister, Muhammad al-Issa, demarcated the difference between public mingling, *Ikhtilat*, which he stated is permissible in Islam and private meetings between unrelated or single men and women, *Khulwa*, which is forbidden.

We all have heard about the fear from mixing in coeducation on the grounds of applying the principles of Islam on protecting women and guarding their morals

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<sup>605</sup> "Outrage after Sheikh rakes up segregation issue at KAUST," *Saudi Gazette*, October 1, 2009 (accessed January 2011); available from <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=2010022764731>;

<sup>606</sup> "Saudi Cleric Backs Gender Segregation with Fatwa," *Reuters*, February 23, 2010 (accessed March 1, 2010); available from <http://in.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-46408620100223?pageNumber=1&virtualBrandChannel=0&sp=true>.; see also "Saudi Cleric Sanctions the Killing of Anyone who Permits Gender Mixing at Work and in Education," *Al-Quds al-Arabi online*, February 24, 2010, OSC translated text. Available from World News Connection.

<sup>607</sup> Katherine Zoepf, "Talk of Women's Rights Divides Saudi Arabia," *New York Times*, May 31, 2010.

<sup>608</sup> "King Abdullah Dismisses Alshithri," *Asharq Al-Awsat*, March 10, 2009.

and chasteness, which is the point of confusion. The term ‘ikhtilat’ in Shariah is associated with limited jurisprudents like zaka, but in recent treatises the term has included a notion confused with the term ‘impermissible khulwa,’ which is an Islamic principle that no Muslim’s nature and respect for the religion’s principles would allow being broken, as it is protected by Shariah rules.<sup>609</sup>

In December 2009, Sheikh Ahmed al-Ghamdi, head of the religious police in Mecca gave an unprecedented interview to the Saudi magazine Okaz, where he explicitly praised KAUST and then proceeded to deal directly with the question of gender mixing. Sheikh al-Ghamdi declared that nothing in Islam prohibits men and women from mixing in public places such as schools and offices. Sheikh Ghamdi emphasized that gender mixing is permitted in certain circumstances, as was the case during the prophet Muhammad’s life.<sup>610</sup> Sheikh al-Ghamdi’s remarks set off a firestorm in the local Saudi media, attracting both praise and vehement criticism. Rumors circulated that he would be fired, and the Commission to Promote Virtue and Prevent Vice posted a press release on its website stating that he would be replaced. However, hours later the press release was removed from the website and the state news agency reported that the removal order had been cancelled.<sup>611</sup>

By not specifically delineating the circumstances where gender mixing would be allowable, Al-Ghamdi allowed for productive ambiguity for other institutions that wish to embark on co-education while not explicitly stopping the religious police from functioning as enforcers of gender segregation elsewhere. This tactic suggests that while

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<sup>609</sup> “Hai’a chief’s ‘ikhtilat’ interview welcomed,” *Saudi Gazette*, (accessed August 9, 2010); available from <http://www.saudi Gazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=2009121657187>.

<sup>610</sup> See also Caryle Murphy, “Cleric’s support for men and women mingling in public sparks furor in Saudi Arabia,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 13, 2010.

<sup>611</sup> Caryle Murphy, “Saudi Religious Police Chief Risks Job by Backing Mixing of Sexes,” *The National (UAE)*, April 27, 2010.

the highest levels of the regime, namely King Abdullah and his supporters, are willing to expend considerable political capital to defend KAUST and its co-educational environment, they have yet to decide to confront state institutions beyond the circumscribed sphere of the new economic cities and zones – preserving a functional tension between ideology and enforcement.

This debate also suggests that to implement religiously contentious education reforms, business and technocratic elite support is not sufficient; the highest level of regime support is necessary to re-align the political discourse.

## **Financing**

KAUST is the first university in the Kingdom to be established with an endowment (*waqf*). The precise amount of KAUST's endowment is uncertain, but figures from 10 to 15 billion have been widely quoted in the Saudi media.<sup>612</sup> The endowment is labeled as a *waqf* by King Abdullah and the media, which under Islamic law specifies that income from the endowment cannot be redirected to other purposes by future government decisions.<sup>613</sup> Framing the endowment form of financing for a university in Islamic terms serves a dual purpose: to legitimize the endeavor financed the King as Islamically inspired, or at least consistent with Islamic law, and to create a religio-legal barrier to subsequent renegotiation of the project.<sup>614</sup>

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<sup>612</sup> Shafquat Ali, "KAUST: King's Gift to the World," *Arab News*, September 24, 2009.

<sup>613</sup> Caryle Murphy, "King Invests \$10 Billion in New University," *The National (UAE)*, September 23, 2009.; For a further explanation of Waqf see Ibrahim Warde, *Islamic Finance in the Global Economy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

<sup>614</sup> For the evolution of the Waqf see Timur Kuran, *The Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 110: "The unincorporated trust known as the waqf. ... a waqf was established by an individual owner of immovable property to supply in perpetuity a function deemed legitimate under Islamic law. Like a corporation, it could be fine-tuned to specific

The significance of setting up a university endowment for KAUST should not be underestimated as it contributes to KAUST's financial, and thus curricular, independence from the MoHE. KAUST's endowment creates a purposeful separation of the institution from the state to preserve technocratic standards in the long run. With the provision of the Waqf, KAUST became 'officially independent from Saudi Aramco' in May 2007.<sup>615</sup> It now has its own board of self-perpetuating overseers and self-sustaining budget. However, while KAUST is no longer officially under the aegis of Aramco, its advisory team remains largely composed of Aramco veterans.<sup>616</sup>

By carving out an endowment and ensuring international oversight, the King has walled KAUST off from the traditional government institutional structures more effectively than other private higher education institutions. As one Saudi journalist I interviewed noted,

That's the secret...the fact that KAUST depends on an endowment – the concept of endowment didn't exist three years ago. Nobody even heard of the term. This is just an example of what KAUST is doing – today less than two years from the creation of KAUST's vision, there are already two universities, two leading universities in Saudi Arabia have already established endowments dependent on peoples' contributions and donations. The concept of endowment is now becoming the new approach, all because of KAUST.<sup>617</sup>

The endowment model has the potential to be replicated further throughout the Kingdom. Most public universities have traditionally received a yearly budget from the government. However, since the founding of KAUST several public universities are now

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needs....Second whereas a corporation was meant to be controlled by a changing membership, a waqf was to be controlled forever by its founder, through directions contained in the deed (waqfiyya) he had filed when endowing his property. Thus a waqf's mission was irrevocable; not even its founder was authorized to alter its purpose retroactively."

<sup>615</sup> *KAUST Timeline* (accessed April 2009); available from <http://inauguration.KAUST.edu.sa/kingsvision/timeline.aspx>.

<sup>616</sup> Interim President KAUST, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008. Saudi Aramco VP, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, Jeddah.

<sup>617</sup> Professor, Al-Faisal University, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

examining the endowment model for specific research centers and programs including King AbdulAziz University, King Saud University in Riyadh and the soon-to-be opened Princess Noura Bint University also in Riyadh. In addition, several new universities are backed by endowments through foundations, examples include King Faisal University in Riyadh.

### **International Partnerships, not branches**

Another strategy that KAUST's backers have employed to mitigate a conservative reactionary backlash is the pursuit of a myriad of international partnerships in lieu of international branch campuses – unlike the international branch model pursued in both Qatar and the UAE.<sup>618</sup> KAUST has assiduously avoided association with any one institution while seeking to establish multiple research centers with global linkages. This proliferation of research partnerships is part of KAUST's larger strategy to be able to compete in a globalized knowledge economy quickly. For instance, KAUST has partnered with the nationalized SABIC to strengthen the collaboration between KAUST and the Saudi labor sector via the SABIC center for research and innovation. This research center will work to strengthen goals shared by SABIC and KAUST and when completed, it will join two other technical centers now being developed in China and India as part of a global network numbering 16 research centers.<sup>619</sup> While KAUST also relies on the expertise of several internationally renowned, and mainly Western scientific universities – MIT, Harvard, Berkeley, Singapore National University- it is careful to

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<sup>618</sup> See this dissertation's chapter 6 for more details.

<sup>619</sup> *SABIC Signs Agreement with KAUST to Launch New Research and Innovation Center* (accessed April 21, 2010); available from <http://www.ameinfo.com/230243.html>.

emphasize that it is a Saudi institution, not a branch campus or imitative westernized university.

This point was repeated by several members of KAUST's board who emphasized that KAUST was global rather than western in nature:

We do not see ourselves as a branch of anybody. We see ourselves as a university that is built and created to serve a vision. We started with a vision from the leader [King Abdullah], the vision he wants to see is for the university to drive the transformation of the economy, to drive and be a catalyst for the transformation into a knowledge based economy....There has never been a vision of such a thing, where a university is leading the transformation of the entire nation... This is why KAUST is designed this way, is designed solid, is designed free of all constraints of anything. Because if you want an institution to take the lead, the last thing you was to do is to tie it with the constraints of a government. So it has to be independent, it has to reach the outside world, and it has to be run by what the world can expect and accept –which is merit based.<sup>620</sup>

Indeed, the appointment of Dr. Shih Choon Fong, former president of the National University of Singapore as President of KAUST<sup>621</sup> was cited by several Saudi journalists as a canny strategy by KAUST supporters to avoid the 'westernized' label.<sup>622</sup> Instead, KAUST is repeatedly positioned as a 'global crossroads' with Singapore, South Korea and China frequently mentioned as development inspirations.<sup>623</sup> One Aramco executive stressed:

You see what happened with Seoul national university and that Korea Institute of Technology? And Singapore - they did wonderful things to their countries. So the argument that you have to start from scratch, wait 20 years, I don't think is valid. A good university is an engine for change. Singapore, Korea, even Saudi Arabia's College of Petroleum. When the College of Petroleum was started conditions were much worse, there was no infrastructure, but people who went

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<sup>620</sup> Saudi Aramco VP, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008.

<sup>621</sup> P.K. Abdul Ghafour, "Shih Appointed KAUST President," *Arab News*, January 13, 2008.

<sup>622</sup> Al Watan Journalist, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008.

<sup>623</sup> See also *KAUST: International Advisory Committee* (accessed January 2009); available from <http://www.KAUST.edu.sa/about/iac/iac.html> for language emphasizing geographic and cultural diversity of the International Advisory Committee.

there, came out to lead. They served a purpose, they came out to lead industry and businesses and government. And it still stands as a good university.<sup>624</sup>

KAUST is thus created to be a driver of economic and, through its graduates, societal change.

### **King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC)**

Another institution that has been used to implement higher education reform is King Abdullah Economic City. King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC) was established to function as a free trade zone where special regulations pertaining to trade, communications, and “cultural accommodations” such as gender mixing would apply.<sup>625</sup> While KAUST is not located within the formal limits of KAEC, it is part of a wider complex where KAEC’s regulations are supposed to apply. Located in Thuwal, approximately 80 kilometers north of Jeddah and an hour north of Mecca the site of KAUST was chosen as part of a larger complex to be developed from Rabigh all the way to Thuwal, which will include the petrochemical complex (PetroRabigh) and King Abdullah Economic City. This area has been designated for special oversight and is outside the authority of pre-established metropolitan bureaucracies.<sup>626</sup> The entire area has been set aside by the King to promote development linked industry, commerce, education, business and research.<sup>627</sup>

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<sup>624</sup> Saudi Aramco VP, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, March 2008.

<sup>625</sup> “Saudi’s economic cities under pressure to deliver,” *Reuters*, August 20, 2008.; Although it was conceived of as a free trade zone, the actual regulations are unclear, see Steffen Hertog, *Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats: Oil and the State in Saudi Arabia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010),173-180.

<sup>626</sup> “Saudi’s economic cities under pressure to deliver,” *Reuters*, August 20, 2008.

<sup>627</sup> Siraj Wahab, “We Want KAUST to Reach MIT Level,” *Arab News*, October 21, 2007. Available from <http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=1&section=0&article=102682&d=21&m=10&y=2007>.

One government official cited the placement of KAUST in a new economic city as key to reducing a backlash from the MoHE, stating, “In new economic cities, because they are outside the main population centers and small, the MoHE is willing to use them as a testing ground, and to concede some oversight initially.”<sup>628</sup> A faculty member described King Abdullah Economic City as an incubator for further social and economic change:

It’s a new system. The idea is to proscribe a new system of life, a new lifestyle that is more like Aramco than traditional cities. So the system of governance will be different there. But governance I mean how things are run, bureaucratic systems. It will be more like Dubai, but without alcohol and prostitution. Women will be driving cars, there will be cinemas, but not discos. They will be mixed, but they won’t go in bikinis. So it’s the kind of thing that the government wants to happen, but can’t do in existing cities. So this is their way of doing it and then hoping that our cities will follow. They want to set an example and hope that we can do that without going all the way down the road of Dubai or Bahrain.<sup>629</sup>

However, KAEC has met with substantial criticism from a variety of social groups. Some members of the *ulema* have criticized it as being a western haven, while others have criticized implementing these changes only on the periphery criticism of the economic city model extends beyond the conservative *ulema*. A managing director of the Kingdom Foundation, known for financing higher education and “liberal” media initiatives, encapsulated the view that such controlled change could potentially undermine societal dialogue.

We as a nation need to decide if women will drive and wear abayas. What is Saudi and what is cultural and what are undue burdens, but this debate is not happening beyond some enclaves. The economic cities are a few people who are very progressive and liberal trying to create a world they think they want.’ This is an internal problem in society b/c we are spending so much money on expats, not

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<sup>628</sup> SAGIA official, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>629</sup> Professor, Al-Faisal University, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.



Saudis. This promotes a negative view of Saudi culture. People could turn against KAUST because of mistakes like that- Similar to the US public's reaction to Dubai Port World. Then there would be a big backlash.<sup>630</sup>

This view encompasses one of the greatest dilemmas of reform in Saudi Arabia – is reform real if it is relegated to the periphery? In other words, is KAUST a vehicle for substantive reform? One way in which KAUST and indeed KAEC function as vehicles for reform is to serve as a testing ground for further reform. This vision of KAUST's ability to transform debate and thus prod or compel formal institutions is a familiar refrain among the technocratic elite in Saudi Arabia.

## **SAGIA**

Another peripheral institution that has been used to facilitate higher education reform is the Saudi Arabia General Investment Authority (SAGIA) which was established by Council of Ministers Resolution in 2000. SAGIA, in tandem with the Foreign Investment Act, was designed to promote foreign direct investment by removing various bureaucratic and regulatory constraints including: streamlining procedures, facilitating issuance of licenses and approval of visas via a “one-stop-shop”.<sup>631</sup> As a member of the Majlis al-Shura stated, “SAGIA is a reform tool. The King established it as a reform tool to encourage Foreign Direct Investment in a non-traditional way. It used to go through the Ministry of Commerce, but now, it's SAGIA.”<sup>632</sup>

SAGIA has also been used by the regime to facilitate higher education reform, by acting as an institutional advocate with the MoHE and the Ministry of the Interior. An official

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<sup>630</sup> Muna Abu Sulayman, Secretary General and Executive Director of the Alwaleed Bin Talal Foundation, phone interview by author, Riyadh, April 2008.

<sup>631</sup> Ministry of Planning, *Achievements of the Eighth Development Plan*, (Riyadh: MoP, 2011).

<sup>632</sup> Member of the Majlis Al-Shura, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

with SAGIA's education unit described its role as "pushing for reform in higher education through multiple channels." One example of this was SAGIA's advocacy role in pushing the MoHE to accept academic accreditation standards from the US. Another example is SAGIA's role in facilitating guest lecturer visas for Faisal University after they had been held up by the Ministry of Interior.<sup>633</sup>

Another way that SAGIA is used to implement education reform is through its authority to create an education and licensing regime in the new economic cities.<sup>634</sup> An example of this is its recruitment of the Thunderbird MBA to King Abdullah Economic City as well as its solicitation of private funding for the first private boarding school in KSA, also to be located in KAEC.

However, SAGIA's outsider status is also a liability as its mandate and its power base is unclear. As demonstrated by Steffen Hertog, SAGIA can be easily defunded and relies to a great extent on other ministry cooperation.<sup>635</sup>

### **King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP)**

The King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) was founded in September 2006, to provide international scholarships at all levels BA, Masters and Ph.D. with a particular emphasis on scientific specializations required by the labor market, such as medicine, engineering, computer science, mathematics and physics.<sup>636</sup> The KASP

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<sup>633</sup> Muna Abu Sulayman, Secretary General and Executive Director of the Alwaleed Bin Talal Foundation, phone interview by author, Riyadh, April 2008.

<sup>634</sup> SAGIA official, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>635</sup> Steffen Hertog, *Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats: Oil and the State in Saudi Arabia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 247-248. SAGIA is a cog in the wheel – although it is outside of normal bureaucratic channels, it relies ultimately on bureaucratic coordination to achieve systemic reform.

<sup>636</sup> *First graduates of Saudi scholarship program recognized in Washington*, June 9, 2008 (accessed August 2009); available from [http://www.saudiembassy.net/latest\\_news/news06090801.aspx](http://www.saudiembassy.net/latest_news/news06090801.aspx).

provides for a monthly stipend, full tuition and fees paid directly to the educational institution, the cost of attending conferences/workshops, expenses for scientific trips, allowances for books and clothes, and, most significantly financial support for the student's spouse and dependants and medical insurance.<sup>637</sup> Unlike prior government scholarship initiatives, KASP encourages females as well as males to study abroad and will financially support the *Mahrams* (guardians) of female students abroad via a stipend. As discussed in Chapter 4, the consolidation of conservative *ulema* control over institutions of education in the 1980's and 1990's led to a halt to scholarships abroad. However, since 2005, Saudi Arabia has sent more than 88,000 students abroad to study under the King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship Program.<sup>638</sup>

There was a sudden leap from 3000 scholarships per annum to over 48,000 scholarships per annum to study abroad from 1995-2007. By 2005, Saudi Arabia ranked first among Middle Eastern countries in the number of students studying in the U.S. and 12th globally. In 2007, the U.S. topped the list of 24 countries that received Saudi students who have been offered scholarships as part of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Foreign Scholarship Program.<sup>639</sup>

KASP acts an official steam-valve or interim solution to improving educational quality and creating economic dynamism through a new class of technocrats, without directly confronting the current university system.

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<sup>637</sup> Ibid.

<sup>638</sup> Wagdy Sawahel, "Saudi Arabia: Rapid growth for universities," *University World News*, Issue 136, August 22, 2010. Available from <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20100820171202577>.

<sup>639</sup> "The Education Sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," U.S. – Saudi Arabian Business Council, 2009. Accessed August 2010. Available from [http://www.us-sabc.org/files/public/Education\\_Brochure.pdf](http://www.us-sabc.org/files/public/Education_Brochure.pdf).

So there is a movement, it's not as fast as we'd like, so maybe that is why King Abdullah decided to fund the scholarship to allow students to go study abroad. I think the message as, if you can't teach our kids here, we'll send them outside so that they can come back and teach a new generation.<sup>640</sup>

However, when these 70,000+ graduate students return, the expectation of change to the system is inherent in the project itself.

Another thing that you have to consider for 20 years almost we had almost no scholars from outside the Kingdom, now a program started, King Abdullah program for sending students outside – now they reach 28,000 students outside the Kingdom, mainly in the US, Britain and Australia. Imagine in five years time these 28,000 come back and spread throughout the Kingdom. There will be a lot of change...More than 25% of them are girls. It's ongoing.<sup>641</sup>

Public reaction to the KASP program has been largely positive and the official *ulema* have generally made supportive statements. A member of the Majlis Al-Shura when questioned on the exponential growth of scholarship students abroad replied, “No, I don't think it's happening too quickly, it's been, it was at a halt and then they realized they had to start, what they lost in the halt, they are going to make it better. It's ok 28 or 30 or 50,000, you can absorb that.”<sup>642</sup>

Given the checkered past of scholarship initiatives engaged in by the Kingdom in the 1970's by King Faisal and the sudden reversal, elimination and indeed prohibition of foreign study and the defunding of international scholarships in the 1980's – it is difficult to classify government scholarship programs as enduring reform. Rather, it is a monarchical initiative which is easily reversed rather than an initiative which has been institutionally protected from regime shifts, such as KAUST.

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<sup>640</sup> Professor, Al-Faisal University, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.; Journalist, Al-Watan, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>641</sup> Member of the Majlis Al-Shura Education Committee, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>642</sup> Ibid.

Similar to KAUST's self-portrayal as an international globalized institution, as opposed to a "westernized" institution, the KASP program has taken several steps to promote itself as global rather than western in nature – even though more than 90% of scholarship students so far have been sent to "Western" countries. As a journalist at *al-Watan*, who has followed the KASP education initiative closely stated,

The backlash so far is muted because precautions were taken. For example, girls cannot go without a *Mahram* (guardian). They also don't send students just to the Western world, but also to the Eastern world – Malaysia, China, Japan and other countries so it's not like we are westernizing the country – globalizing maybe....also to India, Pakistan, Malaysia, to Muslim countries as well. The reaction is muted from the conservatives. They might not like it, but...it's obvious that we need this talent to come back and help to modernize the country.<sup>643</sup>

In an interview in *Asharq Al Awsat*, Grand Mufti Al Sheikh directly confronted questions of the religious propriety of study abroad programs such as KASP:

Q) Throughout the past four years, Saudi Arabia has sent tens of thousands of its citizens abroad on scholarships. What is your advice to them whilst they are abroad or after they return home?

A) I pray to God that they preserve their religion and remain virtuous and strong, gain the knowledge that benefits their country, maintain their morals and are never lured by temptations of civilization that will be of no benefit to them as Muslims. I hope that they will return to their homeland with knowledge, and promote God's religion through their religion. I recommend that they uphold good morals so that others would recognize them as Muslims through their morals and conduct, and to abide by the rules [of the countries in which they live] and at the same time uphold the [Islamic] Sharia morals that guide them towards good.<sup>644</sup>

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<sup>643</sup> Professor, Al-Faisal University, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009; Journalist, Al-Watan, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.; see also P.K. Abdul Ghafour, "Saudis Look East for Higher Education," *Arab News*, March 13, 2006: "Saudi Arabia announced yesterday that it would send more students to Asian countries such as China, India, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea for higher studies in medicine, general science and engineering. Higher Education Minister Khaled Al-Anqari said Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah has approved the move, which comes in line with Riyadh's new "look east" strategy."

<sup>644</sup> Turki Al-Saheil, "Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia: Everybody's Duty to Condemn Terrorist Organizations," *Asharq Al-Awsat*, September, 23, 2009.

The Mufti's answer clearly tries to portray the acquisition of scientific knowledge for the benefit of Saudi Arabia as not opposed to leading a religiously upright life. However, reflective of the inherent tension in promoting study abroad in non-Muslim countries, the Sheikh stops short of a full endorsement and warns of the "temptations of civilization that will be no benefit to them as Muslims." Thus, while the official *ulema* will not sanction or deter such programs, its unease is apparent.

### **Impact of Peripheral Institutions**

As Carol Mershon stated, one of the motivations for creating informal institutions is that actors deem them less costly – in this case in terms of political costs of confronting the *ulema* – than creating (or reforming) the ideal formal institutions.<sup>645</sup> This mirrors Douglas North,

If innovators move too quickly or brazenly, they are likely to provoke countermoves that block or even reverse their agendas. If they move too slowly or timidly, they risk wasting advantageous circumstances that might never again present themselves. A political-discursive strategy that gives reformers a hold on both the scope and pace of change is an essential part of success.<sup>646</sup>

Another motivation for the regime to create new or use peripheral institutions, related to the first, is to pursue agendas that are not yet widely accepted – such as the rapid adaptation of international standards at the expense of cultural dictates – such as co-education or a reduction in religious classes.<sup>647</sup>

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<sup>645</sup> Carol Mershon, "Expectations and informal rules in coalition formation," *Comparative Political Studies* 27, no. 1 (1994): 40-79.

<sup>646</sup> Douglass North quoted in Anna Seleny, *The Political Economy of State-Societal Relations in Hungary and Poland: From Communism to the European Union* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 132.

<sup>647</sup> Mershon.; see also Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, "Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda," *Perspectives on Politics*, 2, no. 4 (December 2004).

## **Reform of State Institutions**

“We used to have this resistance in the past. Now it is a lot of pressure. I will take anyone to task who says that Saudi Arabia is not ready, that Saudi Arabia doesn’t have the assets or that Saudi society is not ready. Instead of resistance we actually have a lot of pressure on us to go and fix things.”<sup>648</sup> – Prince Sultan Bin Salman (November, 2010)

Previous sections have detailed the emergence of private higher education and the use of peripheral institutions such as Aramco to expedite higher education reform. This section will explore how established institutions of higher education, such as the MoHE and the institutions which fall under its authority – namely public and religious universities, have been impacted and whether such change constitutes real reform.

## **Official Discourse**

One such area in which change is visible is in the official discourse surrounding of higher education. In less than eight years, the official discourse has changed from one where liberalizing elites were perceived as a challenge or threat to the existing system to that of a driving engine of necessary economic reform. A member of the Majlis Al-Shura’s education committee highlighted this narrative,

The government in the past, or the MOHE established universities and they realized in the last 5 years that they need to rebuild or restart or re-everything in the education. They started all the universities competing in getting the accreditation overseas, from abroad, from international agencies. And they did, it’s starting. So that by itself rejuvenated, or started the whole system. So that if you take it by itself, so all these graduates from either KAUST or other new universities will help renew the system and renew the economy in various ways and in different areas.<sup>649</sup>

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<sup>648</sup> Abeer Allam, “Interview with Prince Sultan Bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud,” Financial Times, November 11, 2010. Transcript available from <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/3526bcb4-ed78-11df-9085-00144feab49a.html#ixzz1JESgvDu1>.

<sup>649</sup> Member of Majlis Al-Shura, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

Changes in the regime’s discourse are apparent in state institutions such as the education and planning ministries. Globalization of technology has made it difficult to keep national education systems hermetically sealed against international trends and pressures. This economic and conceptual shift is being embraced, at least rhetorically by the education bureaucracy, by an ever-growing emphasis on building a “knowledge economy”.<sup>650</sup> Indeed, the 9<sup>th</sup> development plan mentioned “knowledge economy” over one hundred times and lists Saudi Arabia’s transformation to a knowledge economy as one of its top three objectives.<sup>651</sup> From ‘knowledge cities’ to new universities, the need to transform the education system itself to meet the private sector demands, and indeed global shift towards technological and scientific prowess – especially in the information sector – has become a touchstone of King Abdullah’s addresses to the Majlis Al-Shura and one of the most concerted public outreach campaigns through the government regulated media. There is the repeated message that the state’s role will be reduced in education and that of the private sector will be increased.<sup>652</sup>

In 2007, The Minister of Higher Education declared that the greatest challenge facing institutions of higher education in Saudi Arabia is how to link to the development of a knowledge economy. To achieve this goal, he stated that the ministry, “sought to direct the Saudi system of higher education towards real partnerships with the labor sector, where universities become research centers for knowledge production through developing programs and their methods to provide today's students with the necessary knowledge and skills that would enable them to involve into the labor market based on

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<sup>650</sup> Ninth Development Plan: 2010-2015.

<sup>651</sup> Ibid.

<sup>652</sup> Ibid.



the economics of knowledge.”<sup>653</sup> In 2006, Prince Khalid Al-Faisal Al Saud in an op-ed in Al-Watan newspaper outlined several principles which he viewed as essential for reform. Of the five principles, two were formulated around the reform of the education system. He encouraged the expansion of private sector education and that the government should fully cover tuition to private institutions, instead of merely expanding what he terms a non-functional public education system.<sup>654</sup>

In the Ministry of Education’s Ten Year Plan (2004-2014) there is the explicit acknowledgement that, “The global economy’s tendency towards free trade will result in the liberation of service worldwide, including educational services which will deem education and learning as no longer restricted to formal educational state systems, but rather as subject to privatization and to the private sector’s participation.”<sup>655</sup>

The direct acknowledgment of a shrinking role of the state in directly transforming the system, beyond “investment projects in it” by the ministry is a significant shift from prior ministry of education documents from 1998 and 2002 which emphasized the need for the state to keep a pace with changes in technology and curriculum and that the educational policy is not just part of state policy, but a pillar of

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<sup>653</sup> “Introduction to His Excellency The Minister of Higher Education Dr. Khalid bin Mohammad Al-Anqari”, Quoted in “Higher Education in Saudi Arabia,” Summary Report 1428 AH, Ministry of Higher Education, KSA. Available from <http://www.mohe.gov.sa/en/aboutus/Pages/Achievements-and-aspirations.aspx>.

<sup>654</sup> Prince Khalid Al-Faisal Al Saud, “What if,” *al-Watan*, June 12, 2006. Available (in translation) from Foreign Broadcast Information Service.

<sup>655</sup> Deputy Ministry for Planning and Administrative Development, *Executive Summary of the Ministry of Education 10 Year Plan 1425-1435 H (2004-2014)* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (KSA Ministry of Education, General Directorate for Planning, 2005), 5.

the state.<sup>656</sup> The state is increasingly referred to as a “partner” with the private sector in educational enterprise, rather than the sole provider or gatekeeper.<sup>657</sup> T

The official discourse frames education in relationship with the improvement of the national labor market:

Renewal and development of Saudi society need to take account of future changes and their consequent rapid transformations. Since education generally, and higher education in particular, is the cornerstone in the formation of the intellectual abilities and skills upon which change and development are based, the tasks entrusted to higher education become pivotal.<sup>658</sup>

Another significant shift is the regime’s framing of female education. One example of this is King Abdullah’s promotion of the link between women’s education and work in his 2010 speech to the Shura Council:

Saudi women have participated positively in all programs of development by standing alongside their male brothers as students, employees, teachers, and businesswomen. The Princess Norah Bint Abdulrahman University, with its whole administrative and academic staff, is a witness to the progress of Saudi women’s progress in science and culture.<sup>659</sup>

In addition to the content and purpose of women’s education, the King’s endorsement of co-education at KAUST, in tandem with the firing of several senior *ulema* opposed to co-education, established new parameters for public debate on co-education. As one education reformer stated regarding co-education, “it’s now a question of when, not if.”<sup>660</sup>

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<sup>656</sup> *The Development of Education: 1420-1424 Hijara (1999-2003)*, Prepared by the KSA Ministry of Education in Cooperation with The Ministry of Higher Education and the General Establishment of Technical Education and Vocational Training, paper presented September 8-11th, 2004 in Geneva, Switzerland, 6.

<sup>657</sup> Ninth Development Plan, “mechanisms”.

<sup>658</sup> Ibid.

<sup>659</sup> “King Abdullah, Speech delivered to Shura Council,” *Saudi Gazette*, March 8, 2010. Available from <http://www.saudi gazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=2010030865642>.

<sup>660</sup> Dr. Suhair al Quraishi, President Dar Al Hekma College, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2010.

While there is clearly support for educational reform at the highest levels of the Al Saud regime, the regime risks upsetting a carefully established ruling balance with the *ulema*. The most recent 10 year plan adds as a codicil that cultural mores and national identity are in danger of being eroded by this technical and global transformation of the education sector. In a section entitled “The Cultural Invasion and its Results” warns that, “The development and wide spread of unrestricted mass media communication and the reduction of its costs constitute a *challenge and threat to the Kingdom’s national identity and culture.*” However, unlike in prior reports, there are no specific recommendations made to which agency is in charge of preserving culture, rather there is only the vague recommendation that, “this issue requires a balanced approach that will allow students to enjoy the benefits of modern technology ...while maintaining the Kingdom’s values and faith, and that is able to protect them from the risks that might harm them as individuals and groups that might negatively affect Muslim society.”<sup>661</sup> In many ways the burden of state rhetoric has shifted from vague promises of reform with strong regulations of academic programs and a high degree of censorship, to concrete plans for privatization with gestures to Islamic and national identity.

### **Organizational Changes**

One of the most significant organizational changes to the higher education system after 9/11 was the merging of the General Presidency for Girls Education into the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. After the death of 15 girls in a school fire in Mecca in 2001 because religious police refused to let them leave the building unveiled, a

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<sup>661</sup>*The Development of Education: 1420-1424 Hijara (1999-2003)*, 6.

public outcry erupted placing the blame on the religious police and the school's authorities – namely the GPGE.<sup>662</sup> The entire GPGE was eliminated and for the first time since the founding of the Saudi Arabian state, oversight over women's school and universities was placed under the same institutional umbrella as male education.<sup>663</sup>

The elimination of the institution responsible for the continued separation and segregation of female education signified a significant loss of control of the religious sector over female education. This institutional merger allowed for greater collaboration and consultation between male and female education and the creation of a single curriculum for both male and female primary and secondary students in the subjects of math, science and language arts.<sup>664</sup> In addition, there has been recent discussion of the establishment co-education at the primary level.<sup>665</sup>

Another institutional change is the financing of higher education. As mentioned earlier, in 2008 the Saudi Arabian Government offered scholarships for full tuition as well as stipends equivalent to students in public institutions to the top 30% of students in private higher education. In 2009, several public university administrators cited a government plan to also tie education stipends for public university students, normally at 800 SR a month, to academic performance.<sup>666</sup> This would constitute a significant shift in

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<sup>662</sup> "Saudi Arabia: religious police role in school fire criticized," *Human Rights Watch*, March 15, 2002.; See also Arab News coverage, March 14, 2002 and Arab News, March 25, 2002.; GPGE was put under the Ministry of Education by Royal Decree A/2 of March 14, 2002.; see also Michaela Prokop, "The War of Ideas: Education in Saudi Arabia" in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society, Foreign Affairs*, ed. Paul Aarts & Gerd Nonneman, (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 63-64.

<sup>663</sup> Council of Ministers Resolution 143, 2004. Cited in Eighth Development Plan, "Institutional and Organizational Development", Section 20.1.2.5.

<sup>664</sup> Ministry of Education official, Jeddah branch office of Ministry of Education, interview by author, May 2008.; See also Robert Lacey, *Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia* (New York: Viking, 2009), 237-241.

<sup>665</sup> Patrick Seale, "Saudi Arabia's Royal Revolution," *Middle East Online*, March 3, 2010. Accessed March 10, 2010. Available from <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=38061>.

<sup>666</sup> King Abdul Aziz University Professor, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, April 2008.

the current universal state subsidizing of public university students by tying stipends to performance. However, at the time of writing, this plan has yet to be implemented.<sup>667</sup>

In the international press, much has been made of high-level personnel changes in both the Education and Higher Education Ministries in 2008-2010. The appointment that has garnered the most attention is that of Nora bint Abdullah al-Fayez, to the post of Deputy Minister of Education. The appointment of the first female minister in the entire Saudi government is indeed notable and symbolically potent given the primacy that conservative *ulema* have placed on gender segregation.<sup>668</sup> In addition, Abdullah al-Obaid was replaced as education minister by Prince Faisal bin Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Saud, who is seen as a leader of an effort to remove extremist material and influence from the education system and, as son-in-law to the King, an authoritative broker for reform.<sup>669</sup> Yet, with Kornai's admonishment about cosmetic reform in mind<sup>670</sup>, though symbolically potent, personnel appointments and institutional restructuring are easily reversed not only by the King himself, but with a dynastic transition. Thus, although organizational changes are effective signaling tools for the regime, "real" or substantive institutional reform must occur beyond merely reshuffling cabinet ministers.

### **Expansion of Public Universities**

In the King's speech to the Shura Council in 2010 he declared

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<sup>667</sup> Recent news reports indicate that this plan has been shelved; Caryle Murphy, "Saudi king ignores calls for political reform, gives out money," *GlobalPost*, March 18, 2011.

<sup>668</sup> "Major government reshuffle," *Arab News*, February 15, 2009.

<sup>669</sup> *Ibid.*; For a further analysis see Christopher Boucek, June 2009, *Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst*.

<sup>670</sup> Janos Kornai, *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

Education is one of the most important duties shouldered by this country since its foundation. In order to support higher education, I inaugurated King Abdullah University of Science and Technology at Thul in the presence of a top level world audience. Other new universities in various regions were established to raise the total number of universities to 25. All available resources and capabilities were made available for them with unlimited support. This has ensured that our universities occupy advanced rankings at the level of Arab, Islamic and world universities. We continued the program of sending students on scholarships abroad to provide the best opportunities and access to the world's best universities in the most important specializations.<sup>671</sup>

The 9th Development plan, approved by the Majlis Al-Shura in August 2010, continued to emphasize that education is a key sector for Saudi Arabia to become more competitive in an international market. The spending plan allocates funds for 25 new colleges of technology, 28 higher technical institutes and 50 industrial training institutes, and aims to expand the capacities of public universities to 1.7 million students and primary, intermediate and secondary schools to 5.31 million students.<sup>672</sup> Most of the new universities come from regional branches of King Abdul Aziz and King Saud University branches. The regional branches have been spun off from their parent institutions to become separate universities with their own boards to decentralize the higher education bureaucracy, so as not to operate as “one huge octopus” with the bureaucratic inefficiencies that implies.<sup>673</sup>

## **Table 2: Growth in Higher Education Enrollment 1999-2009<sup>674</sup>**

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<sup>671</sup> “King Abdullah’s Keynote Address to the Shura Council”, Asharq Alawsat, August 3, 2010. Available from <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=3&id=20138>.

<sup>672</sup> “Saudi Arabia Invests 35 billion in Infrastructure, Health and Education,” SAGIA Press Release, September 1, 2010 (accessed September 12, 2011); available from <http://www.sagia.gov.sa/en/SAGIA/Media-centre/News/Saudi-Arabia-invests-385bn-in-infrastructure-health-and-education/>.

<sup>673</sup> Dean, King Saud University, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>674</sup> Source: Ministry of Higher Education Statistical Database: Annual statistical yearbooks (accessed May 2009); available from <http://www.cdsi.gov.sa/showsection.aspx?lid=26&id=318>.

Higher Education	1999/00	2000/01	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Total Enrollment (in 1000s)	371.5	432.4	444.8	525.3	571.8	603.8	636.4	672.0
Total Graduates(in 1000s)	55.8	74.5	73.6	81.7	83.0	94.8	105.0	
Growth in Enrollment (% per annum)	10.5	7.0	2.9	18.1	8.9	5.6	5.4	5.6
Growth in Graduates(% per annum)	7.1	19.0	-1.2	11.0	1.6	14.2	10.8	

However, while there has been a clear expansion in enrollment in higher education, graduates, financing, and the number of public institutions, these changes do not in and of themselves constitute enduring reform. As shown by similar expansion efforts in the 1980's quantity of institutions and expanded enrollments do not necessarily correspond with a higher quality of education received.

A better barometer for reform is to see if public universities are using similar strategies to those of private universities and colleges to entrench reform and protect it from the vicissitudes of Saudi politics.

## Curriculum

As discussed in chapter four, one of the most fundamental attributes of the Saudi Higher Education system throughout the 1980's and 1990's was its excess production of graduates specializing in religion and its dearth of technical and science centered graduates. Between 1995 and 1999 only 10,000 of 120,000 graduates from Saudi universities held a degree in technical subjects – roughly only 2 percent of the total number of Saudis entering the labor market.<sup>675</sup> In 2003, 64 percent of undergraduates graduated with a Shari'a or arts based qualification.<sup>676</sup>

The establishment and gradual expansion of private higher education in the Kingdom has affected the state higher education establishment in several key ways post-2004 particularly in the areas of competition, curriculum, English language usage, and financing. One new private university president articulated the impact of the expansion private higher education on both the MoHE and the public universities which it regulates as one of gradual adaptation:

We started here (our university) in 2004. The story now is different after 5 years. We see that public universities are trying to establish new programs and trying to change their traditions. For example their orientation year/preparatory program – now most of the public universities are trying to establish one because it makes a difference in terms of the quality. This emerged from the private colleges and universities mandatory one year English preparatory program. [This preparatory year is] Not just to teach our students English, but also to try to shift their minds to be independent, and develop critical thinking and writing skills.<sup>677</sup>

In terms of curriculum and substance, changes in the language of instruction and the increased use of international education consultants to construct curriculums has in many

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<sup>675</sup> “People Pressure,” *The Economist*, March 21, 2002.

<sup>676</sup> Tim Niblock and Monica Malik, *The Political Economy of Saudi Arabia*, (Oxford: Routledge, 2007), 208-209.

<sup>677</sup> President Al-Yamama University, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.



ways trickled up from the private education sector, to the public ministries. Though these efforts are imperfectly implemented, and subject to reversal, the systemic change of the Saudi national curriculum in the math and sciences is widespread and represents a significant future commitment.

The focus on expanding funding for science and technology curriculums has been widely lauded by education officials in the Kingdom. The underlying assumption, supported by data from the World Bank, is that scientists and engineers are likely to contribute more to economic growth than are social scientists and students of the humanities, due to the increasing importance of technological innovation.<sup>678</sup> Indeed, a 2008 report by the World Economic Forum attempted to measure the progress of several nation-states in “fostering innovation through networked readiness” by ranking 127 states through a wide spectrum of development and technology variables including technology infrastructure, political and regulatory environment and the quality of higher education. Saudi Arabia was ranked fifth among Arab states (following UAE, Qatar, Tunisia, and Jordan) but had advanced significantly from 48 in 2007 to 38 in 2010.<sup>679</sup>

In primary education there have been several curricular shifts to improving science and math education that mirror the strategies employed by public universities. For example, the new Saudi national math curriculum for grades 4, 6 and 8 was ordered from Houghton Mifflin, and American textbook supplier – unchanged.<sup>680</sup> This introduction of not just foreign, but western textbooks into the national curriculum whole cloth is a departure from prior curriculum adjustments. Yet, even with the introduction of

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<sup>678</sup> World Bank, *The Road Not Traveled: Education Reform in the Middle East and North Africa*, (Washington DC: World Bank, 2008). Available from <http://go.worldbank.org/JLMVU0I6R0>.

<sup>679</sup> World Economic Forum, *The Global Information Technology Report*, 2007-2008, 2009-2010.

<sup>680</sup> Ministry of Education official, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2008.

a new US curriculum in math and science, what is not included is perhaps more significant than what is. History, religion and general social sciences will continue to be the sole ward of the state and reliant on Saudi textbooks. As one Ministry of Education official stated, “Math and science are easy to incorporate new ideas into, but history is too sensitive.”<sup>681</sup>

A sharp divide continues to persist between those studying scientific subjects and humanities majors at the undergraduate level. While rapid revision of science faculties through an increase in international hires, partnerships with international research institutions, and the promotion of access to international science journals, mainly written in English is ongoing, such whole scale curricular revisions to the fields falling under humanities, such as history, political science, and literature has been stagnant. As one official at the Kingdom Foundation, responsible for the curricular reform efforts being pioneered at King Faisal University stated, “How can we create programs if we don’t have people who understand the latest changes in their work, their own culture and their own religion? We need social scientists who are Saudi, not foreign, who understand the culture.”<sup>682</sup>

While many public universities are gradually experimenting with endowments, international partnerships, and curriculum changes, to see a real shift in power dynamics within the higher education system requires a closer look at the religious universities. The religious universities and colleges are institutionally closest to the *ulema* and thus the most sensitive and difficult to change.

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<sup>681</sup> Ibid.

<sup>682</sup> Muna Abu Sulayman, Secretary General and Executive Director of the Alwaleed Bin Talal Foundation, phone interview by author, Riyadh, April 2008.

At the discourse level, several prominent members of the regime have signaled out religious universities for special attention as possible incubators of extremism. One such publicly reprinted episode included Prince Nayef, the Minister of the Interior and likely successor to King Abdullah, addressing staff and students at Islamic University in Madinah, stated all Saudi universities have a significant role to play in fighting terrorism. “I have told King Saud and Imam Muhammad bin Saud universities some Saudis were drawn into terrorism and how we can solve this problem.”<sup>683</sup>

In terms of curricular changes, important initiatives include the expansion or merger of religious institutions with other non-religious colleges and the requirement for religion majors to take classes in fields other than religion.<sup>684</sup>

### **English Language Usage**

Another area of rapid change in formal educational institutions is the embrace of English language textbooks and curricula in higher education.<sup>685</sup> As shown in Chapter 4, English language textbooks and articles were deemed too secular and western to be widely incorporated into the university classroom throughout the 1980s and 1990s. However, in 2007 several public colleges and public universities expanded their English language offerings and several of the new private universities have mandated a year of preparatory English language instruction prior to full enrollment. Al-Faisal University, a new private university based in Riyadh and supported by the King Faisal Foundation

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<sup>683</sup> P.K. Abdul Ghafour , “Shun extremism, Naif tells students,” *Arab News*, November 28, 2008.

<sup>684</sup> Private Businessman #1, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>685</sup> “What Impact are English-based curricula having on education?” *Saudi Gazette*, February 10, 2010.

Available from

<http://www.saudi gazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=2010100284533&archiveissuupdate=02/10/2010>.

plans to conduct the majority of its curriculum in English, with the exception of Arabic and Islamic studies.<sup>686</sup> Public universities such as King Saud University in Riyadh are also implementing a one year English preparatory program for all entering students. Students, both male and female at King Saud University, as of 2009, are offered a preparatory English year for building facility with English communication skills, computers, and TOEFL exam training for subsequent graduate work. This foundation year in English is intended to enable undergraduate students to enter college with enough tools “to write in scientific language and have proper language.”<sup>687</sup> Indeed in higher education, especially the sciences, the most widely cited journals are in English and the authors represent a worldwide scientific community.

While the politics of language education are beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is certainly notable that within a few years the embrace of English as the language of the global classroom has trickled down from KAUST and the pioneer private colleges such as Effat and Dar Al Hekma to the largest and oldest universities in the Kingdom.

### **Accreditation and International Standards**

Public Universities are beginning to follow the practice of securing international accreditation for university majors which was pioneered by private colleges such as Dar Al Hekma in 2000. A Dean at King Saud University stressed that most of the university’s departments are currently working on accreditation from both the new Saudi national accreditation bodies and their respective international accreditation bodies such

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<sup>686</sup> See Al Faisal University curriculum brochure, 2010.; Professor, Al Faisal University, interview by author, Jeddah, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>687</sup> Dean, King Saud University, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.

as ABED for engineering.<sup>688</sup> The President of King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah likewise stated that KAU, “has undergone a sea change with updated buildings, laboratories and trained manpower, enabling it to achieve international academic accreditation.”<sup>689</sup>

As a Dean at King Saud University in Riyadh stated, “There is now a big push for international accreditation and rankings. We want to be on the Shanghai metrics, we want to move up the Times list. These rankings provide an incentive now.”<sup>690</sup> The 9<sup>th</sup> Development plan itself noted international education rankings as a positive incentive for the improvement of the quality of higher education in Saudi Arabia citing King Saud University’s rank of 247 and KFUPM’s rank of 266 in the Times-QS classification, as well King Saud University’s inclusion in the Shaghai classification “which is the toughest and the most widely regarded academic classification.”<sup>691</sup>

International accreditation also became part of the wider formal institutional reform of the MoHE starting in 2004. The notion of accreditation, dependent upon international standards, which was pioneered among private colleges to initially circumvent the MoHE, became a model for bureaucratic reformers appointed to the ministry. The MoHE began to internally incorporate international accreditation standards through the National Commission for Assessment and Academic Accreditation (NCAAA), established in 2004 to be responsible for academic accreditation and quality

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<sup>688</sup> Ibid.

<sup>689</sup> Muhammad Hmaidan, “A Revolution is Underway,” *Arab News*, January 26, 2010.

<sup>690</sup> Dean, King Saud University, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>691</sup> Ninth Development Plan.

assurance in higher education institutions.<sup>692</sup> Many of the accreditation standards adopted, particularly in the areas of science and technology, rely on the input of international experts and accreditation bodies such as the ABET.<sup>693</sup> However, national accreditation, though increasingly linked to international standards, remains ultimately subject to MoHE approval. In the words of one MoHE official, “we need to make sure the programs fit the unique conditions of the Kingdom.”<sup>694</sup>

Public universities are also increasingly signing independent MOU’s with international partners. However, it should be emphasized that international partnerships are viewed as a limited partnership with full ownership of the program by the Saudi institution rather than a whole cloth importation of a program. A Dean at King Saud University, the largest public university in Saudi Arabia, framed the reluctance to bring a branch model from the West as follows,

We don’t want to bring a model from US, it doesn’t work, but want to be part of the international community, not an island, this is what we’re aiming at. We want to keep the local flavor. The MoHE – they are signing MOUs and service contracts [with international institutions] by themselves – King Saud University alone currently has 90 MOUs with international institutions ranging from joint research centers, to individuals. The idea is knowledge transfer. We now even have a vice dean for knowledge transfer.<sup>695</sup>

An embrace of the accreditation of international universities to operate in the Kingdom, as has been the model in Qatar and the U.A.E. is unlikely in near future.<sup>696</sup> As a participant in a MoHE committee on international universities explained,

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<sup>692</sup> Introduction to His Excellency The Minister of Higher Education Dr. Khalid bin Mohammad Al-Anqari. Quoted in *Higher Education in Saudi Arabia, Summary Report 1428 AH* (accessed July 2010); available from <http://www.mohe.gov.sa/en/aboutus/Pages/Achievements-and-aspirations.aspx>.

<sup>693</sup> MoHE official, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>694</sup> MoHE official, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>695</sup> Dean, King Saud University, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>696</sup> Qatar’s Education City has branch campuses of Georgetown, Texas A & M, Cornell Weill Medical School, Carnegie Mellon, Northwestern University’s Journalism School and Virginia Commonwealth

The committee said/the ministry said we can allow international universities to operate in Saudi Arabia but have to go through same bylaw as Saudi institutions. But in my opinion if you see the bylaw, I don't think any international universities will operate under that law because it doesn't give the flexibility that the university can use to introduce new programs to look into the needs of the market and to adopt new initiatives because for example the bylaw says that the minister of higher education should approve the appointment of the president, the minutes of the board, etc. second issue is the women. Will the international universities come and operate in Saudi culture when separation between genders is a must for the bylaw? And you know [elsewhere] in the Gulf, it is a different situation and these restrictions are not there. So the international university they have more flexibility in terms of culture and regulations elsewhere. So I think if they come to the MoHE they have to develop a new policy for international universities and take into consideration how international schools are operating, and study the quality of international schools and branches in the Gulf.<sup>697</sup>

This appraisal was reiterated by a member of the Majlis Al-Shura:

I think if you go to SAGIA, they are pushing to open branches of international schools, and economic cities now have an initiative. If you go to ministry of higher education, I think in the ministry there are some reluctance in the ministry they do want to experience that kind of...there are some political vision and leadership.. if they cannot get it from king Abdullah or the cabinet, it will be difficult for the ministry to observe ...to meet the needs of the international schools as well as to look at the cultural advances and problems that can be created by...I think the culture is still not ready for that, that's the ministry's opinion, they don't want to take a big jump, or step.<sup>698</sup>

While international accreditation and international academic partnerships are increasing among public universities in Saudi Arabia, the model remains one of partnership rather than whole scale importation. This allows for international standards to be applied, while adjusting course offerings to meet the cultural and development context of Saudi society.

### **Analysis of Higher Education Reforms 2000-2010**

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University; Abu Dhabi has a branch campus of New York University and is planning to open branch campuses of the Sorbonne and INSEAD.

<sup>697</sup> President Al-Yamama University, interview by author, Riyadh, KSA, May 2009.

<sup>698</sup> Ibid.

In the past decade, there have been several changes in the field of higher education in Saudi Arabia that have limited the power of the *ulema* over higher education and increased the presence of “liberal” stakeholders in higher education, such as business and technical elites. The creation of economic cities, the introduction of a private higher education sector and the increase in international education partnerships have all emerged seemingly through tacit understandings between business and technical elites and the regime.

The regime is allowing selective privatization, in areas that do not directly confront the *ulema*, such as in the economic cities, while holding off on rapid reform of public universities. It is easier to build a new institution, than change the old. While the regime is able to push formal institutions to allow selective privatization and external referents such as accreditation boards, the formal bureaucracy nonetheless remains highly centralized and continues to control the bulk of the higher education system.

In examining the trajectory of change in the higher education sector and its impact on Saudi society, shifts in the institutions which comprise the Saudi Arabia education system reflect larger shifts in the Al Saud’s relationship with religious elites and technical/business elites. For example, in recent education reform efforts (post-2003), the monarchy seems to be maneuvering around its own state institutions, such as the Ministry of Higher Education, to enact reform through peripheral institutions or through the establishment of new institutions. This bureaucratic layering reflects the regime’s accommodation of new actors, while reluctance or inability to confront religious interests in main education institutions, such as the MoHE, head on. The monarchy is using new institutions – such as the introduction of a private education - to allow the political space



for reformers to operate in without formal regime support for controversial education reforms. Other reform tactics include the use of peripheral institutions; where the regime actively endorses reform, albeit outside of established bureaucratic channels. These multiple institutional strategies enable the regime to avoid directly challenging the entrenched and politically combustible *ulema* control of educational institutions, such as the Ministry of Higher Education, while allowing business and technical elites to initiate controversial reforms on the periphery.<sup>699</sup>

How is the regime managing a tense process of reform? The regime has pursued a multifaceted process of higher education reform by:

### **1. Privatization of Higher Education**

As discussed in chapter four, during the early stages of experimental privatization led by business and technocratic elites, the regime distanced itself from explicitly endorsing the new institutions reforms. By allowing pioneer reformers to push the envelope and negotiate with the MoHE themselves, the regime avoided direct confrontation with the conservative *ulema* dominated MoHE. It accomplished this by limiting the number of institutions that were allowed to open, keeping it to supporters of the regime who would be sensitive to the pace of reform, and limiting it mainly to women's colleges which were initially seen as peripheral education endeavors and thus potentially less likely to be replicated. Colleges were both small in scope, i.e. not universities, and located in the relatively more 'open' western port city of Jeddah.

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<sup>699</sup> There seems to be change in even this institution with the appointment of the first female Deputy Minister of Education (2009), and the appointment of a new minister of higher education who is not a member of the Al-Shaikh family – suggesting a move away from total *ulema* dominance over the education system.

These first-mover private colleges served as an experimental model for reform – not only for testing out reform strategies such as financing, curricular innovations, English language classes, and international accreditation – but for measuring public reactions to such reforms. Members of the board of trustees confirmed their awareness of the experimental nature of the college, and the need for gradual change rather than fast-paced reform that could incite a backlash from conservatives and thus provoke the regime to publicly denounce their endeavors.<sup>700</sup>

This phase of higher education reform could be characterized as largely informal, vulnerable to shifts in public opinion, and easily quashed. It was only when public regime support for the expansion of private higher education in 2003 signaled the sustainability of the private college model that emboldened reformers were able to push ahead with controversial curricular reforms and take a more aggressive stance vis a vis the MoHE.

While confrontation with between private institutions and state educational institutions such as the MoHE and the Interior Ministry remained frequent,<sup>701</sup> private institutions were unlikely to be closed down because of formal regime support. This regime support allowed them to advocate more strongly on a case-by-case basis for controversial programs.

## **2. Peripheral Institutions**

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<sup>700</sup> Interviews, Jeddah, DAH Members of board of trustees, founding administrators, 2008-2010

<sup>701</sup> Instances include off-the-record conversations with the Ministry of Interior when an event is considered too controversial i.e. a talent show or gender mixing for graduation. Sometimes these interventions shut down the proposed event or project, more often or not they present delays as the college negotiates and seeks royal support behind the scenes. Based on personal observation and conversations. Jeddah 2008-2010.

The second category of institutions that the regime has used in higher education reform can be characterized as peripheral institutions. This chapter has shown that the regime does not have the limitless power to impose educational change, as predicted by traditional rentier theorists, but rather it must maneuver around its own bureaucracy which reflects prior compromises with societal interests.<sup>702</sup> In the case of higher education in Saudi Arabia, this intra-regime maneuvering is seen most clearly by the use of peripheral institutions such as Aramco and SAGIA to initiate dramatic reform projects that require a high degree of support from the regime – both monetarily and politically – but that present a challenge to existing formal institutional structures, such as the Ministry of Higher Education.

Saudi Aramco in particular is an exemplary case of this form of institutional appropriation. Saudi Aramco, though it is a nationalized company, operates outside of the normal bureaucratic framework and is insulated from normal processes of state compromise with the *ulema*, as demonstrated in previous chapters.<sup>703</sup> In the case of higher education reform, Saudi Aramco has been used by the regime to act as overseer of KAUST in lieu of the MoHE. It has stated support for its new mission from the highest regime authority – King Abdullah – but its expanded scope of duties has not been regularized into the formal bureaucracy i.e. it is not challenging the MoHE’s role as overseer of the entire higher education sector. In many ways this represents the boldest form of regime support for systemic institutional reform as it is the monarchy’s

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<sup>702</sup> See Kathleen Thelen, “How Institutions Evolve” p. 218 for a discussion of institutional path dependence: “Scholars of path dependence emphasize some contingency at the moment of institutional innovation and suggest that that forces behind the creation of a particular institution may be quite different from the forces that sustain it over time.”

<sup>703</sup> See chapter 3 & 4 for an institutional history of Aramco

endorsement of a parallel institution to replace the MoHE's oversight of a flagship educational project.

The benefits of the regime's use of peripheral institutions include that it allows for a faster pace of reform, such as with the establishment of KAUST. It also limits bureaucratic push-back as it has the official approval of the King. The costs to the regime include that it exposes the regime to direct criticism as opposed to the gradual and deniable experimental reform by pioneers that allowed for official deniability. This struggle can be seen in the Al-Shethri debacle; the King must stand behind his reforms or risk seeming weak.

In the case of KAUST, its insulation from bureaucratic meddling through its placement under Aramco and its endowment increases its long-term viability in the face of future regime transitions. However, in terms of scope, it remains a limited initiative that does not directly challenge the MoHE's control over the higher education system at large.

Peripheral institutions facilitate the rapid implementation of education reform initiatives which can signal the parameters for greater education reforms. While many peripheral institutional reforms are reversible by royal edict, they carry potent symbolic weight, such as co-education at KAUST. The ability for these peripheral reforms to trickle down and transform the higher education system as a whole however remains to be seen.

### **3. Personalistic Royal Initiatives (i.e. Kingdom scholarships)**

This category of reform does not constitute sustainable reform. As it is personalistic, it is easily reversed. While some have argued that the KASP program will

produce a large technocratic class that may provide a stronger constituency for continued liberalization of the education system in the future, recent Saudi Arabian history does not bear this out. Though scholarship enrollment increased dramatically under King Faisal, modernizing reforms were easily reversed under King Fahd in the 1980's and 1990's. As Heller and Safran argued, the technocratic elite in the 1980's was not unified in their desire or ability to press the regime for reform.<sup>704</sup> Yasmine Saad Salaam also makes a similar argument in her dissertation on American technocrats.<sup>705</sup>

While there could prove to be a “tipping point” of the number of western educated technocratic elites that would constitute a strong force for reform in face of regime opposition in case of the ascension of a less reform oriented King or a serious challenge to the regime's religious legitimacy, such as the Gulf War presented and the Mecca Crisis presented, discerning what that tipping point might be is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

#### **4. Reform of State Institutions**

While there are significant and ongoing changes in terms of curricular innovation, international outreach, English language usage, and funding increases to the scientific disciplines in the public universities, it is difficult to label this as ‘real institutional reform’. As defined in the literature review, ‘real’ as opposed to cosmetic reform of institutions must be difficult to reverse – and hearty enough to sustain a transition in leadership such as a succession post-King Abdullah. All of the above mentioned changes

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<sup>704</sup> Heller and Safran, “The New Middle Class and Regime Stability in Saudi Arabia”, Harvard Middle East Papers, Modern Series, No. 3, 1985.

<sup>705</sup> Salaam.

in the formal higher education system can be reversed via executive fiat or easily defunded by the Ministry of Higher Education.

However, while direct reform of formal higher education institutions is the least effective of all the institutional strategies for lasting reform discussed in the preceding chapter, it nonetheless carries a hard to quantify, but potent symbolic weight in terms of shaping the political discourse regarding gender mixing, exposure to international media and standards, and creating a new technocratic leadership base.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the strategies that education reformers in Saudi Arabia have employed since 2000 to change the higher education system. By highlighting the origins of higher education reform, strategies for reform, and the process of institutional change this chapter attempted to answer the question of how politically sensitive education reform occurs in the context of an autocratic Islamic state. Using Kornai and Levitsky as theoretical touchstones, the final section of this chapter described how various reform strategies have affected the higher education system as a whole.

## Chapter 6

### **Education reform in a regional context: The Case of Qatar and the UAE**

This chapter will place Saudi Arabia's higher education reforms since 2000 in a regional context through secondary case comparisons with Qatar's and the United Arab Emirates' education reform initiatives. Qatar, the UAE and Saudi Arabia each face the forces of rapid globalization and the impact of accelerated development. They are also rentier states which rely to a vast degree on the distribution of oil wealth in return for loyalty and legitimacy. While each state has a unique political history, these states share a hereditary monarchy, vast oil/gas wealth, Islam as a conservative social force, and are currently undergoing varying degrees of economic liberalization.

Each of these states has also implemented a variety of education reform initiatives in the past ten years. Qatar has pursued a dramatic transformation of its entire education system from K-12 through higher education since 2001. The UAE as a federated state has a diversity of models at work, from free zones in Dubai to the Abu Dhabi's more statist approach with selective private partnerships. This chapter will seek to answer why and how these oil monarchies have pursued different education reform models, the relative success of these models and the implications for wider reform efforts.

#### **Qatar**

Qatar as an independent state was established upon the withdrawal of the British from the Gulf in 1971.<sup>706</sup> While Qatar is an oil monarchy, its demographic structure, small population and wealth per citizen all serve to differentiate it from its larger neighbor Saudi Arabia. Qatar holds the world's third largest natural gas reserves and is the single largest supplier of liquefied natural gas,<sup>707</sup> and with its small population of approximately 250,000 Qataris, Qatar has the fourth highest GDP per capita in the world.<sup>708</sup> As non-nationals seek employment in Qatar's oil economy, the total population of Qatar has doubled in five years, from nearly 750,000 to some 1.7 million, with a population of ratio of 1:5 Qataris to non-nationals.<sup>709</sup>

Due to its extreme oil wealth and small native population the Qatari government faces few financial restraints and limited social pressures.<sup>710</sup> The government is able to provide a range of social benefits to its citizens including public sector employment, free education and healthcare, and subsidized utilities.<sup>711</sup> The Al Thani family is the primary political force in the country, and historically has been the only substantial source of political opposition to a reigning Amir. Neither merchant families nor the religious establishment have acquired enough clout to form secondary centers of political opposition for a variety of historical and demographic reasons.<sup>712</sup> Indeed, the current

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<sup>706</sup> Rosemary Said Zahlan, *The Making of the Modern Gulf States: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Ithaca: Ithaca Press, 1998), 19-31.

<sup>707</sup> U.S. Energy Information and Administration, Country Analysis: Qatar, Accessed May 2, 2011.

Available from <http://www.eia.doe.gov/countries/country-data.cfm?fips=QA>.

<sup>708</sup> World Bank Statistical Database, Qatar.

<sup>709</sup> Qatar statistics authority, *Population Structure* (accessed February 17, 2011); available from [http://www.qix.gov.qa/portal/page/portal/qix/subject\\_area?subject\\_area=177](http://www.qix.gov.qa/portal/page/portal/qix/subject_area?subject_area=177).

<sup>710</sup> Otto Pohl, "Social Change; By Degrees: Qatar Opens up by Importing Universities", *International Herald Tribune*, March 25, 2005.

<sup>711</sup> Andrew Rathmell and Kirsten Schulze, "Political Reform in the Gulf: The Case of Qatar," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 36, no.4 (October 2000):47-62.

<sup>712</sup> Mehran Kamrava, "Royal Factionalism and Political Liberalization in Qatar," *Middle East Journal*, 63, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 401-420.



Amir, Sheikh Hamad, came to power via a bloodless coup to unseat his aging father in 2005.<sup>713</sup>

Since Sheikh Hamad's rise to power in 1995, Qatar has pursued a variety of economic, social and even some limited political reforms.<sup>714</sup> In 1998 the Ministry of Information was abolished, which signaled a move towards greater press freedoms.<sup>715</sup> Qatar officially became a constitutional monarchy through an April 2003 referendum.<sup>716</sup> The constitution officially grants women the right to vote and run for national office and provides for an elected advisory council. However, the promised national elections for the advisory council have been delayed, and municipal elections have not been held since 2007.<sup>717</sup>

Qatar is a study in contradictions as it rises in global prominence. It is the host of both the first Arab all news network, Al Jazeera as well as the Al Udeid airbase, which serves as the logistics hub for US operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as one of the few Arab states to contribute forces to the NATO operation in Libya.<sup>718</sup> It also shares gas fields with Iran and was the first GCC nation to host an Israeli interest section.<sup>719</sup> Qatar's rapid development has also necessitated an improvement of human resources to "meet the technological, business, and industrial needs of the country while at the same time responding to the social and cultural challenges that are bound to accompany accelerated development." A disproportionate portion of Qatar's national labor force is

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<sup>713</sup> Ibid.

<sup>714</sup> "Qatar's Liberalization Drive Wins Applause," *Mideast Mirror*, May 9, 1997.

<sup>715</sup> Rathmell and Schulze.

<sup>716</sup> Kamrava.

<sup>717</sup> Ibid.

<sup>718</sup> Ibid.

<sup>719</sup> Christopher M. Blanchard, "Qatar: Background and U.S. Relations," *Congressional Research Service Report* (Washington DC: CRS, May 5, 2010).

employed in the public sector. Approximately 77% of Qataris in the workforce are employed either directly by the government or government related sectors.<sup>720</sup> As a World Economic Forum report on Qatar's economic competitiveness noted one of the most fundamental challenges Qatar faces is the quality of its education system. Similar to other GCC states, Qatar inherited a centralized and highly bureaucratic traditional education system that produced low technical skills for its graduates and thus an inability for graduates to connect with the labor demands of an emerging market.<sup>721</sup>

Similar to the UAE and Saudi Arabia, education in Qatar was largely informal until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>722</sup> Since becoming Amir, Sheikh Hamad has pursued an ambitious project of investing in human capital, particularly through transforming Qatar's education system. Sheikh Hamad's second wife, Sheikha Moza is also seen as a primary driver of education reform, and serves a highly visible role as a figure head for reform, unusual for a female in the Gulf.<sup>723</sup>

In many ways, Qatar functions without the ideological or resource constraints of Saudi Arabia. Its accelerated reforms and process of modernization reflect both the potential horizon and limits of bureaucratic transformation in a Gulf monarchy. At the World Innovation Summit for Education in Doha Sheikh Abdulla Ali Al-Thani in his opening address stated that, 'We have the will and the resources both to carry our reforms through and to be a pioneer in the theory and practice of education, not just

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<sup>720</sup> Stasz, Eide and Martorell, *Post Secondary Education in Qatar: Employer Demand, Student Choice, and Options for Policy* (Qatar: RAND, 2007), xiii.

<sup>721</sup> World Bank, "Shaping the Future : A Long-Term Perspective of People and Job Mobility for the Middle East and North Africa," (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2008). Accessed December 2, 2009. Available from <http://go.worldbank.org/YOUKBKTCE0>.

<sup>722</sup> Sheikh Hamad was educated in the United Kingdom and graduated from Sandhurst Military Academy and Cambridge University.

<sup>723</sup> Danna Harman, "An American Education Thriving...in Qatar," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 22, 2007.

locally but also regionally and internationally.<sup>724</sup> The sections below will detail how the Al Thani regime has initiated and implemented massive reforms to the education sector and the relationship of those reforms to greater liberalization efforts.

### **Qatar Foundation and Education City**

Qatar Foundation was founded in 1995 to help Qatar “transition from a carbon economy to knowledge economy by unlocking human potential”.<sup>725</sup> Although Qatar Foundation is technically an NGO, Sheikha Moza serves as its chairperson and its budget relies heavily on donations by the royal family<sup>726</sup> as well as funding some of its activities through profit-making branches such as Vodafone-Qatar.<sup>727</sup> In many ways QF functions as a parallel social ministry, albeit with a private sector model of management and competition.<sup>728</sup> Qatar Foundation is also the institution behind Qatar’s most high profile education experiment – Education City.

With a multi-billion dollar price tag,<sup>729</sup> Education City is Qatar’s flagship higher education project and the most internationally prominent education venture in the region. Education City is a 2500 acre complex housing seven prominent international branch degree programs from several US universities including Weill Cornell Medical College,

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<sup>724</sup> “Doha to host global summit on education; Forum in September to boost Qatar’s position as a hub in the Middle East,” *Straits Times* (Singapore), March, 2009.

<sup>725</sup> Qatar Foundation, *History* (accessed March 2, 2011); available from <http://www.qf.org.qa/news-center/press-room/faqs/faqs?t=316&>.

<sup>726</sup> See *Qatar Foundation Mission* (accessed March 3, 2011); available from [www.qf.edu.qa](http://www.qf.edu.qa).

<sup>727</sup> Qatar Foundation Press Release, “Vodafone and Qatar Foundation Take First Steps Towards Launch of Vodafone Qatar,” (accessed March 5, 2011); available from <http://www.vodafone.com.qa/go/pressrelease/vodafone-and-qatar-foundation-take-first-steps-towards-launch-of-vodafone-qatar>.

<sup>728</sup> Abdullah Al Thani, Vice President Education QF, interview by author, February 2011, Doha, Qatar.

<sup>729</sup> Estimates for the construction of Education City are not public, but the teaching and research hospital for Cornell medical school alone is to be funded by an \$8-billion government endowment.

Georgetown University's Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Texas A&M University, Virginia Commonwealth University's design program and Carnegie Mellon University's Computer Science Program and, most recently, Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism. Its inception dates back to 1998 when Sheikha Moza commissioned Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) to establish a design program for women, this was followed in 2002 by a degree granting branch campus for VCU's design program. Building on this model, Qatar Foundation launched Education City in 2003 to serve as a platform for a network of branch campuses of internationally prominent university degree programs that teach a select range of their most highly regarded degree programs, and conduct related research.

Qatar Foundation provides funding for each degree program through 10 year contracts, facilitates visas for faculty and staff and covers the the cost of running each campus - estimated at around 15 million a year.<sup>730</sup> Each branch school maintains academic independence from the Qatar Foundation and awards degrees from the home institution.<sup>731</sup> However, while each institution maintains that they have the same standards for admission as at the home campus, through MOU's with the Qatar Foundation they aim to have entering classes comprised of approximately 50% Qatari nationals. To promote Qatari nationals to gain access to these new universities, the Qatar Foundation also runs a one-year bridge program for Qatari high school students in Education City that culminates in an international baccalaureate degree. In addition to

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<sup>730</sup> Abdullah Al Thani, Vice President Education QF, interview by author, February 2011, Doha, Qatar; cost of campus: Ian Wylie, "Campus in the sand: Keen to develop its higher education, Qatar has enticed US universities to set up stall in its capital city," *The Guardian*, May 27, 2008. Accessed March 3, 2011. Available from LexisNexis.

<sup>731</sup> "Doha to host global summit on education; Forum in September to boost Qatar's position as a hub in the Middle East," *Straits Times* (Singapore), March, 2009.

the network of universities and education enterprises in Education City, Qatar Foundation has also established the Qatar Science and Technology Park to help local companies develop the cultural and operational skills to compete internationally. To lure foreign investment, the park established a free zone on site, where foreign companies enjoy no taxes, duty-free importing and exporting and unrestricted repatriation of capital and profits.<sup>732</sup>

Education City stands out as a bold and pricy experiment in international education in the Gulf. Hosting western branch campuses has challenged several cultural norms in Qatar and has been a lightning rod for both praise and criticism in the wider Gulf region. Unlike national institutions of education in Qatar, all campuses and programs in Education City are co-educational and the English-only curriculums, with the exception of Islamic Studies, are entirely determined by the home institution.<sup>733</sup> Emblematic of how rapid the cultural shift has been, the first time Sheikha Moza was publicly photographed for a Qatari newspaper was at the inauguration of the Education City campus for Texas A&M in 2004. Sheikha Moza is now regularly featured spearheading social initiatives throughout Qatar and world in the national press.<sup>734</sup> As a Dean of the VCU branch campus in Education City stated, “It is a day-by-day negotiation, the cultural context is always shifting, opening, changing, it is a dynamic engagement.”<sup>735</sup>

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<sup>732</sup> Omar El Akkad, “Qatar's Vast Wealth Aimed at Knowledge Economy,” *The Globe and Mail* (Canada), February 13, 2006.

<sup>733</sup> VCU became co-educational in 2006.

<sup>734</sup> Danna Harman, “Backstory: Qatar is Transformed by a Modern Marriage,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 6, 2007; Danna Harman, “Backstory: The Royal Couple that put Qatar on the Map,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 5, 2007.

<sup>735</sup> Dean VCU, interview by author, Doha, Qatar, February 2011.

However, with a total enrollment of approximately 1,400 students, of which less than 700 are Qatari, Education City was not designed to accommodate the vast majority of Qatari secondary school graduates seeking higher education. Instead, as will be discussed in the following section, the national Qatar University takes over 97% of all Qatari secondary school graduates. As one education analyst involved in education reform in Qatar put it, “Education city’s purpose is to establish new institutions, not reform the old ones.”<sup>736</sup> For this reason, Education City is often viewed as an expensive bubble, disconnected from the wider educational landscape in Qatar. Negative publicity in the local press tends to focus on Education City as a secular endeavor, tied in to the United States.<sup>737</sup> Indeed, many Qatari educators interviewed pointed to the difference in funding between Education City and Qatar University as representative of the difference between the high profile prestige projects geared towards an international audience and systemic change in higher education. As one Qatari education administrator stated of the relationship between Education City and Qatar University, “It is not meant for the average Qatari, it is meant for the international community. It is a diplomatic effort.”<sup>738</sup>

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<sup>736</sup> Education Policy Analyst, interview by author, Doha, Qatar, March 2011.

<sup>737</sup> An example of suspicion of Education City as an American imperial enterprise is summed up in the following excerpt of a sermon of Yusuf Al-Qarawadawi, a prominent Egyptian cleric living in Qatar. FBIS Report, January 20, 2004, in translation from World News Connect:

*Al-Qaradawi says: "As to the conditions of reform. The first is that the reform must consider the basic aim we mentioned. It must proceed from within this nation. It must not be dictated on it. There are people who want reform that is imposed from outside. They say that were it not for the Americans we would not have managed to reform ourselves and change our situation. No nation can reform another unless this reform agreed with its aims. We have our own aims and they have theirs. How can they agree? Reform cannot be dictated from outside. The reform that is dictated from outside is suspicious. We cannot possibly feel reassured about it. There is no doubt about that." "Real reform...must begin from the nation. It must be carried out by its ulema and wise men that are prompted by public motives and the general wishes of the nation...So the first condition of reform is to adhere to our religious authority and proceed from within ourselves. Our authority is Islam and the Islamic shari'ah." - Doha Qatar Television Service in Arabic, sermon from Umar Bin-al-Khattab mosque in Doha*

<sup>738</sup> QU Department Chair, interview by author, Doha, Qatar, January 2011.

However, much like the management of KAUST in Saudi Arabia, backers of Education City see it as a beacon for future economic and social reforms. In an example given of how Education City fits into the larger landscape of liberalization in Qatar one Qatar Foundation official stated, “Schools such as the Medill journalism school will make an impact in society over time. The more educated they are, the more journalists will push, will inquire, will refuse censorship, self or otherwise. They will push for change in a broad sense. It will be organic.”<sup>739</sup>

### **Qatar University**

Qatar University was established as the first national university by Emiri decree in 1977. As the international branch campuses in Education City were not intended to serve the vast majority of secondary school graduates, attention turned to improving the national university, Qatar University. In 2003, Qatar University had approximately 600 teaching staff and 8-9000 students in six colleges: Education; Humanities and Social Sciences; Science; Sharia, Law, and Islamic Studies; Engineering; and Business and Economics.<sup>740</sup> Qatar University is a gender segregated campus, with one male campus and one female campus. However, unlike in Saudi Arabia’s public universities, both male and female faculty and staff are present at each campus, and, since 2003, QU’s President is a female.

In August 2003, Sheikh Hamad, who at the time was also the Supreme Head of Qatar University, appointed Sheikha Al Misnad as the new President of Qatar University.

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<sup>739</sup> Abdullah Al Thani, Vice President Education QF, interview by author, February 2011, Doha, Qatar.

<sup>740</sup> Joy S. Moini, Tora K. Bikson, C. Richard Neu, Laura DeSisto with Sheikha Jabor Al Thani, *The Reform of Qatar University* (Qatar: RAND, 2009).

In October 2003, the Amiri Diwan commissioned the American think tank RAND-Qatar Policy Institute (RQPI) to assist Qatar University to develop new leadership in designing and implementing a major reform of the University. According to the RAND report, the reform committee identified seven major impediments to Qatar University fulfilling its mission of providing quality undergraduate education to Qatari nationals: “inadequate administrative infrastructure, excessive administrative centralization, failure of academic and administrative structures to keep pace with changing educational demands and trends, lack of systematic academic planning, lack of cohesion among the individual academic programs, inadequate faculty quality, and lack of faculty commitment to QU’s mission.”<sup>741</sup>

Prior to the university reform initiative, Qatar University functioned essentially as a ministry under the central government. All budget allocations had to be approved by the Ministry of Finance, and organization charts, staffing plans, and personnel actions had to be approved by the Ministry of Civil Service Affairs and Housing.<sup>742</sup> One of the most significant institutional reforms for the university was Sheikh Hamad devolving his role as Supreme Head of QU. This move, in combination with separating QU funds to an annual, non-ministry basis, granted QU independence from the Qatari central government for the first time since its establishment.<sup>743</sup> However, while Sheikh Hamad officially transferred his oversight of the university to a board of trustees in 2004, the university does not have an endowment and remains annually level-funded by the Qatari

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<sup>741</sup> Ibid.

<sup>742</sup> Ibid.

<sup>743</sup> Sheikha al Misnad, President, Qatar University, interview by author, Doha, Qatar, March 2011.



government. In practice this means that QU remains dependent on informal sway with the regime for increased funding allocations.

According to individuals involved with the reform of Qatar University, the direct support of the Amir was critical to initiate and implement the large scale reorganization of the university in face of bureaucratic resistance. Opposition to the proposed university reforms included faculty who would be affected by the changes, as well as some students. The President of Qatar University Sheikha Misnad characterized this resistance as limited stating, “While the new becomes the norm, resistance is normal.”<sup>744</sup>

One of the most challenging aspects of QU reforms is addressing what it means to be a national university in an increasingly globalized higher education landscape. In terms of curricular reform, there has been a dual push to emphasize research and make English the medium of instruction in all post-graduate degrees with the exception of Islamic studies.<sup>745</sup> English as the medium of instruction has proved difficult for many students who are not yet proficient in the language, and, according to some critics of the reform, diminishes the social and religious roles of the university in national life. Other significant challenges to higher education reform in Qatar include the pace of reform. A professor at Qatar University describe how rapid change has been disorienting, stating,

Yes, we are looking to be a part of the world, but we can’t just forget our past, our history, social relations and social behavior... There needs to be more inclusion of native Qataris as part of the change. There is a feeling that it is expatriate driven... We need to bring the Qataris with us, because it is our country, our society. We need to bring the educated elites along.<sup>746</sup>

However, the President of QU addressed the criticism of the fast pace of reform stating that, “Everything around us has changed, the whole thing has changed and the

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<sup>744</sup> Ibid.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid.

<sup>746</sup> QU Department Chair, interview by author, Doha, Qatar, January 2011.

new generation has changed. We must change too, we can't escape change.”<sup>747</sup> In terms of the impact of the larger landscape of reform on Qatar University, several faculty members at QU cited Education City as a positive force in pressuring Qatar University to accelerate its development. However, there also exists a sense of unequal emphasis between the national university and Education City's international branch campuses. As one professor said “Qatar University is always being told to participate in Education City. But Qatar University is the only national university, it is 37 years old. They have to come to us as well.”<sup>748</sup>

To date, the reform of Qatar University has been partially implemented. While the administration is still hierarchical, there have been significant changes to departmental organization, the promotion of younger professors and a renewed concentration of research through linkages with the Qatar National Research Foundation.<sup>749</sup> Significant changes since 2003 included the focus moving from solely undergraduate education to research and graduate studies, in this capacity QNRF plays a leading role. In addition to the reform of Qatar University, several community colleges have been added to the higher education landscape in the past five years to focus on providing vocational education, allowing Qatar University to focus more exclusively on undergraduate education. Community colleges, such as the college of the North Atlantic (CNA) have been founded through a commission directly appointed by Sheikh Hamad.

### **K-12 Education Reform: Independent Schools Model**

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<sup>747</sup> Sheikha al Misnad, President, Qatar University, interview by author, Doha, Qatar, March 2011.

<sup>748</sup> QU Department Chair, interview by author, Doha, Qatar, January 2011.

<sup>749</sup> Sheikha al Misnad, President, Qatar University, interview by author, Doha, Qatar, March 2011.; Moini et al.

One of the most dramatic education reforms initiated under Sheikh Hamad was the decentralization of the K-12 education system. K-12 education is often far more difficult to reform than tertiary education due to the direct impact on the widest swath of society- as one Qatari education reformer put it, “Everybody is a stakeholder in primary education in Qatar.”<sup>750</sup>

Upon Sheikh Hamad’s ascension to the throne one of the first initiatives he undertook was a reorganization of the education bureaucracy. In 1995, Sheikh Hamad appointed a committee of seven prominent Qataris to examine the performance of the current K-12 and post-secondary education system with an eye towards transforming it into an internationally competitive system.<sup>751</sup> The minister of education was fired and replaced with a technocratic reformer. However, by 2001, despite several years of study, the education system remained stagnant.

In 2001 a committee of eight people was appointed by Sheikh Hamad to examine and re-galvanize the K-12 education initiative that had started in 1995, but petered out.<sup>752</sup> This review was commissioned by Sheikh Hamad directly and initiated quietly outside of MoE channels, and indeed outside of Qatar itself. In October of 2001, RAND was commissioned to do a “quiet review” to evaluate the current K-12 education system and propose reform alternatives. The use of international evaluators and consultants, such as the RAND Corporation, to assess the K-12 system gave the government more space to evaluate the current education landscape without stirring up immediate bureaucratic

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<sup>750</sup> Official in Ministry of Finance/Ed committee member 2002/3, interview by author, Doha, Qatar, February 2011.

<sup>751</sup> Darwish al-Emadi, member of the original education reform commission and former SEC president, Qatar, interview by author, Doha, Qatar, January 2011.

<sup>752</sup> Ibid.

opposition.<sup>753</sup> As one committee member noted “the Sheikh had already tried to initiate reform within the MoE system, without success, so he started to look outside the system for reform ideas.”<sup>754</sup>

Based on RAND’s evaluation, three models of system wide transformation were proposed. The first model proposed the immediate dissolution of the Ministry of Education in favor of a complete decentralization of K-12 schools via privatization; the second model proposed a phased transition to independent schools over several years as the education bureaucracy slowly transitioned; and the third model proposed retaining the Ministry of Education and working within it to initiate more vigorous reforms. Sheikh Hamad and the reform committee chose the second model of phased transition. This model allowed the regime time to deal with the political and logistical ramifications of dismantling an education bureaucracy which was seen as hierarchical, overly bureaucratic, and resistant to innovation. In its place a parallel bureaucratic structure, the Supreme Education Council, would be created to oversee the implementation of an independent school model with the understanding that the SEC and independent school model would eventually replace the MoE and centralized school system over the course of ten years.<sup>755</sup> These independent schools would be state funded and function in a similar manner to US charter schools to provide increased accountability for performance, variety, and choice for parents and students in Qatar.

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<sup>753</sup> Ibid.

<sup>754</sup> Adil Say’id, Evaluation Institute Official, interview by author, Doha, Qatar, February 2011.

<sup>755</sup> RAND, *Education for a New Era: Design and Implementation of K-12 Education Reform in Qatar*, (Qatar: RAND, 2007): Higher Education Institute is responsible for scholarships and other post-secondary training options. It was previously called the private education department related to diplomas, not degrees. SEC and Qatar Foundation are separate entities, but Sheikh is vice chair of the SEC and Chair of Qatar Foundation.

The SEC was established 2003 with Crown Prince Tamim Al Thani as Chair and Sheikha Moza designated as the Vice Chair of the SEC to signal the Amir's prioritization and political will behind education reform. The first 12 Independent schools were opened in the fall of 2004. In a Washington Post interview, the Director of RAND-Qatar's education unit stated, "These changes are consistent with the emir's vision of the country...Changes like more openness in the economy, entrepreneurship and ultimately democracy require a population that's used to these things. This was the opportunity to really build a model school system, to combine the best elements from around the world."<sup>756</sup> However, the planned pace of reform presented a significant challenge as once a few independent schools were opened, parents whose children were still in the older schools felt at a disadvantage and advocated for a faster transition so that their children would not be at a comparative disadvantage vis-a-vis independent school students. To accommodate growing pressure from parents the phased transition model was accelerated from ten years to four years. This sudden shift from an entirely centralized educational system to decentralized independent schools prior to widespread community engagement resulted in several challenges: community attitudes towards the change; inefficiencies and disparities in the new schools and unclear and inconsistent administrative procedures. The reform required independent schools to operate independently from the government ministries, with the SEC providing curricular standards but leaving curricular implementation to each independent provider. Independent school leaders could be anyone from the community, this was supposed to jump start innovation and out of the box thinking – the participation of leaders from the private business sector was

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<sup>756</sup> Susan B. Glasser, "Qatar Reshapes Its Schools, Putting English Over Islam; Conservatives See Reform as extension of U.S. Influence in Gulf", Washington Post, February 2, 2003

particularly encouraged. This model was also intended to allow the maximum flexibility to independent school operators to tailor new and creative curriculums. However not necessarily all were competent school managers, and it proved to be a tough learning curve with real time effects on students and their families. In addition, finding high caliber and trained teachers who could communicate in English, as well as develop their own curriculums from the new guidelines proved to be an immense undertaking.

Perhaps the most significant challenge was that K-12 reform proved to be more culturally sensitive and central to national identity and the project of the state than higher education reform. In particular, new curricular standards proposed by the SEC were met with widespread skepticism and confusion. The SEC recommended standards proposed that English instruction become mandatory from the first grade on and math and science courses were to be taught entirely in English. In addition, and most controversially, Islamic studies and Arabic courses to be cut back as a percentage of the curriculum hours.

<sup>757</sup> Negative press about the education reform characterized the use of western consultants and the new curricular specifications which did not require Islam or Arabic as an attack on traditional Qatari identity and Islam's role in the social fabric. Qatar's education reform also attracted criticism from around the Gulf, with a leading Saudi newspaper, *al Watan*, characterizing the Qatar program as led by a "Jewish foundation," as it described Rand<sup>758</sup> and forced secularization from several religious leaders.<sup>759</sup>

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<sup>757</sup> Susan B. Glasser, "Qatar Reshapes Its Schools, Putting English Over Islam; Conservatives See Reform as extension of U.S. Influence in Gulf," *Washington Post*, February 2, 2003. Accessed February 3, 2009. Available from LexisNexis.

<sup>758</sup> Ibid.

<sup>759</sup> "Abu Yahya Al-Libi Criticizes Saudi Scholars, Western Education in Saudi Arabia," *OSC summary of Jihadist Websites*, February 6, 2010. Accessed February 19, 2011. Available from World News Connection.

The Ministry of Education, which was the largest employer of Qatari nationals, also proved to be a more formidable obstacle to decentralization than originally anticipated. The lack of prior substantive engagement with various stakeholders in the education system prior to initiating the reform model led to a bureaucratic backlash. The independent schools faced growing opposition from the MoE, and this bled into the public perception of the educational changes.<sup>760</sup> As the first Supreme Education Council Minister noted, “When you come in as a new player, it is always a struggle to establish yourself. The MoE had everything and we were taking it away.”<sup>761</sup>

Public dissatisfaction, in combination with little progress in international assessments such as the TIMSS, led to a gradual re-centralization of government control under the new Supreme Education Council (SEC). Thus while the initial re-structuring of the K-12 system was intended to grant greater autonomy to schools to implement curricular reform, the extent of the challenge and the lack of clear guidelines undermined community confidence in the reform efforts. As one SEC official stated, “Right now we are back in a centralized system, but we don’t want to admit it...the reform needs a reform”. As one observer noted, “The political will is there, the financial support is there, but what is missing is the right set-up and human resources. We need a clarification of vision.” This recentralization of education under the SEC points to the bureaucratic challenges involved in education reform even in the absence of organized opposition or interest groups. Rapid reform, while not destabilizing to the Qatari’s regimes legitimacy,

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<sup>760</sup> Official in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview by author, Doha, Qatar, January 2011.

<sup>761</sup> Darwish al-Emadi, member of the original education reform commission and former SEC president, Qatar, interview by author, Doha, Qatar, January 2011.

can create social and economic complications resulting in a backtracking of reform and re-centralization.

While many Qatari education professionals interviewed said they thought the idea of transforming the system through independent schools was a good one, they cited problems with implementation as one of the main reasons for its mixed success. However, as one architect of the education reform stated, “Reform is not linear, achieved 50% of what we wanted, but 50% better than before.”<sup>762</sup>

### **Analysis of Qatar’s Education Reforms**

While Qatar has taken the most dramatic and definitive steps to transform its education system of the three Gulf monarchies studied, it has also had to face the practical tensions involved in implementing radical systemic changes. Unlike Saudi Arabia, Qatar has been able to design and rapidly implement widespread institutional reform in both its K-12 and higher education system. The decentralization of K-12 education, while only partially successful, represents a fundamental shift in the relationship of the citizens to the state. The Qatari Amir has placed his political will and visible support behind a range of experimental and ambitious reforms, outpacing demands from society and even many liberal elites. Indeed, several scholars and close observers have pointed to Qatar’s liberalization project as aimed towards raising its global prestige and international prominence, rather than driven by internal factors.<sup>763</sup>

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<sup>762</sup> Official in Ministry of Finance, Education Reform Committee member 2002/3, interview by author, Doha, Qatar, February 2011.

<sup>763</sup> Kamrava.; Rathmell and Schulze.



Several unique factors could explain Qatar's ability to rapidly change its education system. As mentioned previously, Qatar does not have a longstanding tradition of the religious establishment acting as a guarantor of legitimacy. Although Qatar is a Wahhabi Sunni state, the religious establishment has been largely politically neutralized and thus does not act as a significant factor in political decisions.<sup>764</sup> Without cohesive opposition groups to appease, reform has been initiated through an entirely top-down process, with Sheikh Hamad and Sheikha Moza as its driving force.

However, even without significant opposition forces, education reform in Qatar has faced several significant challenges. The existing bureaucratic structures of the state, such as the Ministry of Education, proved more resilient to change than anticipated and the Amir and his family's direct involvement in reform efforts at critical junctures was needed to provide the requisite momentum to surmount initial bureaucratic resistance. Cultural resistance has also had to be taken into greater account as shown with the reinstatement of Islamic and Arabic as mandatory facets of the independent schools' curriculum. In addition, human resource needs, such as bilingual and qualified educators have also proved difficult to find and require long-term development. Nonetheless, while institutional reforms have often met with bureaucratic and cultural resistance, the pace and scope of reform far outpaces that of any other GCC state studied in this dissertation.

### **The United Arab Emirates: The Case of Abu Dhabi and Dubai**

“We are convinced that all members of society and its religious, cultural, educational, media, volunteer, and other organizations have pioneering roles to play in the stage we envisage. Activating, developing, and supporting this stage is a national duty and is part of the government's duty to establish the creative

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<sup>764</sup> Zahlan, 99-105.

environment that we spoke of. All in all, we do not view the parliamentary elections as the only manifestation of democracy.”<sup>765</sup> - *Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed bin Nahyan, President of the UAE, 2006*

The United Arab Emirates was established as a federated state on the eve of the British terminating treaty relations in the Gulf in 1971. It is composed of seven former trugal states: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ras al-Khaimah, Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwan and Fujairah, each of which possesses varying degrees of power and influence within the federation with Abu Dhabi and Dubai being the most prominent. The population of the UAE is estimated at 8.2 million, of which only approximately 11.5% are UAE nationals and the remaining majority being expatriate workers and their dependents.<sup>766</sup>

The UAE’s relatively open borders and economy, symbolized by Dubai at the height of its status as a financial center, co-exist with an autocratic political structure composed of ruling families and tribal elites. The structure of government is authoritarian with power resting mainly in the hands of a President from the wealthiest and most powerful emirate of Abu Dhabi and a prime minister from the commercial and trading powerhouse Dubai as well as a Supreme Council composed of the Amirs of all seven federated states.<sup>767</sup> A partially elected Federal National Council (FNC) was established in 2006 as an advisory body to the Supreme Council; it has 40 members, half of which were elected in a limited election.<sup>768</sup> Recent gestures towards political liberalization, such as

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<sup>765</sup> “Exclusive Interview with UAE President Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan,” *Asharq Al Awsat*, November 25, 2006; translation available from *MidEastWire* November 28, 2006, (accessed January 2011).

<sup>766</sup> U.A.E. National Bureau of Statistics, *2010 National Report* (accessed January 17, 2011); available from (<http://www.uaestatistics.gov.ae/ReportPDF/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9%202006%20-%202010.pdf>).

<sup>767</sup> Zahlan, 107-125.

<sup>768</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, *UAE Country Report: April 2011* (accessed May 1, 2011); available from ([http://country.eiu.com/FileHandler.ashx?issue\\_id=1027937487&mode=pdf](http://country.eiu.com/FileHandler.ashx?issue_id=1027937487&mode=pdf)).

the partially elected consultative FNC, are widely viewed as circumscribed and superficial.

The official federal budget accounts for only about one-quarter of revenue and expenditure. The vast majority of spending is at the emirate level, with Abu Dhabi responsible for the defense budget and with Dubai being the only other emirate to contribute to the federal budget.<sup>769</sup> Recent shifts in global financial markets have greatly affected the less oil rich emirates. The 2008-2009 global financial particularly affected Dubai's real estate dependent economy, and necessitated a bail out from oil-rich Abu Dhabi. This change in Dubai's economic status reverberated throughout the federated structure of the emirates affecting its relative power vis-à-vis Abu Dhabi and its ability to pursue its own economic and political model separate from the broader confederation.<sup>770</sup> In addition, the gap in living standards between the emirates of Abu Dhabi and Dubai and the other emirates has become more pronounced in the past decade.<sup>771</sup>

In the less affluent Northern Emirates, the discrepancy between infrastructure and social services in comparison to Abu Dhabi and Dubai is substantial.<sup>772</sup> The education zones of Umm al Qaiwain, Sharjah, Ras al Khaimah, Ajman and Fujairah all operate under the federal Ministry of Education which allocates an annual budget to each one. However, education officials have complained that without significant increases in

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<sup>769</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>770</sup> Liz Alderman, "Dubai Keeps Building, But More Soberly, After Financial Crisis," *New York Times*, September 30, 2010.

<sup>771</sup> Kenneth Katzman, *The United Arab Emirates: Issues for U.S. Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Services Report, March 10, 2011).

<sup>772</sup> Afshan Ahmed, "Northern Schools Seek Cash Reforms," *The National (UAE)*, Apr 3, 2011

federal allocations they will be left behind by the education reforms in Abu Dhabi and Dubai.<sup>773</sup>

Approximately 90% of all working UAE nationals are employed the public sectors, with wages that are higher than similar jobs in other countries and relative to the value they create.<sup>774</sup> In addition, approximately 93 per cent of Emirati household income comes either directly or indirectly from government revenues.<sup>775</sup> However, the state's distribution of jobs and benefits has begun to experience significant strain, especially after the financial crisis. According to McKinsey, unemployment has reached an average of 14 per cent and youth unemployment is estimated at 30 per cent.<sup>776</sup> In response to the looming jobs crisis, the UAE government recently decreed that UAE nationals should make up at least 20% of a company's workforce, irrespective of sector.<sup>777</sup> However, as with Saudi Arabia, the national workforce is seen as lacking the requisite high-level skills to compete in a globalized labor market.

As with other states in the Gulf, a modern education system in the UAE is a relatively recent phenomenon. Under the leadership of the founder of the UAE, Sheikh Zayed, in the 1960's and 1970's school enrollment was expanded throughout the Emirates. Indeed, the constitution of the UAE, adopted in 1971 prioritizes education as a pillar of national development with Article 17 stating that "Education shall be a fundamental factor for the progress of society. It shall be compulsory in its primary state

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<sup>773</sup> Ibid.

<sup>774</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, *UAE Country Report: April 2011* (accessed May 3, 2011); available from [http://country.eiu.com/FileHandler.ashx?issue\\_id=1027937487&mode=pdf](http://country.eiu.com/FileHandler.ashx?issue_id=1027937487&mode=pdf).

<sup>775</sup> Jorg Schubert, "Securing Prosperity for the Next Generation of UAE Nationals," *The National (UAE)*, April 26, 2011.

<sup>776</sup> Ibid.

<sup>777</sup> Ibid.

and free of charge at all stages, within the Union.”<sup>778</sup> While the constitution also provides each emirate with the right to develop their own social and economic development plans, in practice autonomy from the federal institutions exists only for Abu Dhabi, and to a declining degree for Dubai.

These power shifts and different levels of autonomy from the federation are visible in the separate education models pursued in each Emirate. Due to their independent sources of financing and influence, separate bureaucratic entities oversee education in both Dubai and Abu Dhabi with different levels of connection to federal institutions, namely the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) and the Ministry of Education (MoE). For example, the Abu Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC), the Dubai Education Council (now KHDA) and the federal ministries of education are all tasked with reforming the education system. The setting up of independent or semi-autonomous administrative bodies like the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) in Dubai and the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) in Abu Dhabi has given rise to a complicated landscape of education reform actors in the UAE.

To understand the institutional pathways of education reform in the UAE, it is necessary to first understand how emirate level institutions of education interact within the federation. This section will focus on the cases of Dubai and Abu Dhabi and the institutions and actors which have been central to the project of education reform in each emirate.

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<sup>778</sup> UAE Constitution, amended 1996 (accessed March 5, 2011); available from [www.worldstatesmen.org/uae\\_const.doc](http://www.worldstatesmen.org/uae_const.doc).

## Federal Institutions of Education

In 2006, Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, a member of the ruling family of Abu Dhabi, was placed in charge of the higher education sectors in the UAE. He is also Chancellor of two of the UAE's three government-sponsored institutions of higher learning: United Arab Emirates University and the Higher Colleges of Technology and president of the third, Zayed University.<sup>779</sup>

All federal institutions of higher education are free for UAE nationals. The national higher education institutions consist of the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), UAE University and Sheikh Zayed University. Each national institution is open to both genders, but separated by gender at the undergraduate student level.<sup>780</sup> Of the approximately one million UAE nationals, 250,000 are in K-12 education; 15,000 in HCT; 16,000 at UAE University; 2000 at Zayed University; and 5000 are studying at private educational institutions or overseas.<sup>781</sup> While the majority of UAE students go to national universities, due to the limited number of seats, and the increased desire for specialization, an increasing number of students are opting to attend private institutions of higher education, of which 60% are for-profit with varying degrees of quality.<sup>782</sup>

The oldest higher education institution is the federal UAE University, founded in 1977, with its main campus located in Al Ain in Abu Dhabi. Women represent 79 percent of the student body. UAEU is currently seeking to move from an Egyptian style of higher

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<sup>779</sup> For a more extensive biography see [http://www.uaecabinet.ae/English/Pages/cabinet\\_members.aspx](http://www.uaecabinet.ae/English/Pages/cabinet_members.aspx). (accessed March 5, 2011).

<sup>780</sup> Faculty and staff are mixed genders. Some graduate programs are also mixed gender. Dr. Federico Velez, Department Head, Zayed University, interview by author, Abu Dhabi, UAE, February 2011.

<sup>781</sup> Stewart Godwin, "Globalization, Education and Emiratisation: A Study of the United Arab Emirates," *Electronic Journal on Information Systems in Developing Countries*, 27, no. 1(2006): 1-14. Available from <http://www.ejisdc.org/ojs2/index.php/ejisdc/article/viewFile/195/177>.

<sup>782</sup> Dr. Badr Aboul-Ela, Director Commission for Academic Accreditation, MoHESR official, interview by author, Abu Dhabi, UAE, February 2011.

education with an emphasis on memorization to a more interactive North American style of education. At both the undergraduate and graduate level, classes are increasingly taught in English, but the curriculum remains predominantly taught in Arabic.<sup>783</sup> UAE University awards undergraduate degrees in 70 subjects as well as some graduate degrees and an increasing percentage of its programs are internationally accredited.<sup>784</sup> UAE University relies fully on federal funding, the bulk of which is from Abu Dhabi. However, UAE U spends 25% of its budget on a foundation year program to prepare students for undergraduate level work. Due to this dynamic the Abu Dhabi government has recently launched a massive overhaul of its K-12 education system, which will be discussed in a subsequent section.

Other federal higher education institutions include Zayed University (ZU) which was established in 1998 as an all-women's institution, and to include men. Organized into five colleges—Arts and Sciences, Business Sciences, Communication and Media Sciences, Education, and Information Systems, the primary language of instruction is English. It is viewed as primarily a liberal arts college with a curriculum similar to the US undergraduate model as well as accredited by the US' Middle States Commission on Higher Education.<sup>785</sup> Zayed University's main campus is located in Abu Dhabi, with a second campus in Dubai.

Another key institution in the higher education landscape of the UAE is the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), the largest higher educational institution with an enrollment of 16,000. Founded in 1988 with a vocational focus, HCT now includes

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<sup>783</sup> Dean, UAE U, interview by author, Al Ain, UAE, February 2011.

<sup>784</sup> Vice Provost, UAE U, interview by author, Al Ain, UAE, February 2011.

<sup>785</sup> *Zayed University Mission and History* (accessed April 19, 2011); available from [www.zu.ac.ae](http://www.zu.ac.ae).

16 men's and women's colleges with 13 campuses distributed throughout five emirates. The colleges offer more than 80 programs at four different credential levels—Diploma, Higher Diploma, Bachelor and Masters. More than 10,000 of the current students are female.<sup>786</sup>

The federal ministries responsible for education are the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) and the Ministry of Education (MoE). The CAA, under the umbrella of the MoHESR is responsible for licensing private higher education institutions including military schools and community colleges throughout the Emirates.<sup>787</sup> The CAA itself is reviewed by external review committee composed of US and European accreditation agencies.<sup>788</sup> In the UAE, all K-12 government schools, with the exception of schools in Abu Dhabi, are controlled by the MoE. Private schools throughout the emirates, with the exception of those operating in the free-zones of Dubai, are licensed by the MoE.

## **Dubai**

Under the leadership of the Maktoum family and with limited natural resources, Dubai has largely operated independently from the federation, opting to build its wealth through commercial ventures and as a tourist destination. To do so, Dubai has enticed private sector investment and FDI through the creation of numerous free zones. The free zones in Dubai allow for 100% foreign ownership of commercial ventures as opposed to

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<sup>786</sup> *Higher Colleges of Technology* (accessed April 19, 2011); available from [www.hct.ac.ae](http://www.hct.ac.ae).

<sup>787</sup> Dr. Badr Aboul-Ela, Director, Commission for Academic Accreditation, MoHESR official, interview by author, Abu Dhabi, UAE, February 2011.

<sup>788</sup> *Ibid.*



companies operating outside the free zones which require a local sponsor and stipulate a maximum 49% foreign ownership. In addition, companies operating in the freezones enjoy tax free status for a set period of time, usually 5-15 years depending on the freezone and type of company.<sup>789</sup>

Mirroring its free-market strategy for soliciting business investment, Dubai created several “free zones” for private education entrepreneurs to operate in including Dubai Knowledge Village and Academic City. These multi-university complexes enjoy loose regulatory standards and minimum government interference in order to attract a variety of education institutions. As of 2010, more than 25 universities were located, or planning to be located, in these special Free Zones, the majority of which operate on a for-profit model. Unlike in Abu Dhabi, private higher education institutions operating in Dubai’s free zones are not required to be licensed by MoHESR, although some opt for it.<sup>790</sup> Degrees from unlicensed institutions however are not recognized by UAE federal ministries. Thus, while federal accreditation of institutions operating in Dubai’s free zones remains voluntary, the UAE government will not recognize degrees from non-accredited institutions for federal employment. As a result, private higher education institutions which do not seek accreditation cater primarily to non-nationals.

At the K-12 level, Dubai’s Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) oversees education, both private and public, in the emirate, having taken over the role from the Dubai Education Council in 2007. The Dubai Education Council (DEC) was launched in July 2005 under the directives of Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al

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<sup>789</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, *UAE Country Report: April 2011*.

<sup>790</sup> Dr. Badr Aboul-Ela, Director Commission for Academic Accreditation, MoHESR official, interview by author, Abu Dhabi, UAE, February 2011.

Maktoum, UAE Vice-President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai to develop the education sector. The mission of the DEC, now KHDA, was to develop five key areas of the education sector: Universities, K-to-12 Education, Corporate Training, Vocational Training and People with Special Needs.<sup>791</sup> The 'Dubai Schools' was launched to develop international primary and secondary (K-12) education in Dubai by promoting the establishment of high-quality internationally-accredited schools. Schools operating under the 'Dubai Schools' umbrella were able to be established as branch campuses of reputed international schools or as new institutions offering various international curricula. “The first schools in the cluster will offer national curricula from countries such as the US, UK, Canada, Australia and the International Baccalaureate (IB).” The licensing of all educational institutes in Dubai (including those located in the free zones was governed by the KHDA until 2010, when it was placed more directly under the federated Ministry of Education’s CAA.

However, Dubai’s free market approach to education reform has been imperiled by its recent financial woes. As private sector revenue has decreased due to the 2009 financial collapse, Dubai has had to increasingly rely on Abu Dhabi for financial support. As a result federal institutions, such as the MoHESR are exerting an increased authority over the education sector in Dubai.<sup>792</sup> While emirate level institutions such as KHDA still exist, they increasingly work in tandem with the federated institutions of education, calling into question the viability of its decentralized and deregulated education reform model. In addition, according to several academic policy experts, the loose regulatory

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<sup>791</sup> “Dubai Schools Signs its First Accreditation Partner: Council of International Schools,” *Middle East Company News Wire*, March 6, 2006.

<sup>792</sup> Afshan Ahmed, “Minister Hails 'Major' Reform of Education,” *The National (UAE)*, October 26, 2010.; also background interviews with various diplomatic officials.

framework for education provision has resulted in several substandard diploma mills operating in the freezones – which recent closer regulation by the MoHESR is meant to counter.

## **Abu Dhabi**

Due to Abu Dhabi's great wealth and historically prominent role under the founder of the UAE, Sheikh Zayed, Abu Dhabi is the leading power within the federation.<sup>793</sup> Abu Dhabi's massive oil reserves provide it with 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the UAE's wealth and it is home to 42% of all Emiratis.<sup>794</sup> Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahyan is the Amir of Abu Dhabi as well as the President of the UAE. In recent years, particularly following the financial crisis in Dubai, Abu Dhabi has played an increasingly assertive role in the federation and paradoxically autonomous role in establishing emirate-level institutions in particular in education and health services.<sup>795</sup> Contrary to Dubai's free market approach to education, Abu Dhabi has pursued a centrally regulated and coordinated approach, albeit at the individual Emirate level, to reforming its education system.

### **Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC)**

The main institutional body responsible for the reform of Abu Dhabi's education system is the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC), established by the Amir of Abu

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<sup>793</sup> Zahlan, 107.

<sup>794</sup> Vivian Salama, "United Arab Emirates Population Rises 65% Over Four Years," *Bloomberg News*, March 31, 2011 (accessed April 5, 2011); available from <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-03-31/united-arab-emirates-population-increases-65-over-four-years.html>.

<sup>795</sup> Provost UAE University, phone interview by author, Al Ain, UAE, March 2011.

Dhabi, Sheikh Khalifa in 2005.<sup>796</sup> The Chairman of ADEC is Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi. ADEC is tasked with transforming the entire education system in Abu Dhabi, both at the K-12 level and higher education. ADEC, similar to SAGIA in Saudi Arabia, partners with the private sector to modernize facilities, reduce bureaucracy and improve and innovate curricula at all levels.<sup>797</sup>

Through the creation of emirate-level institutions such as ADEC, Abu Dhabi has created a fully independent parallel structure of bureaucratic authority with little to no coordination with the federal level bureaucracy. Based on interviews with the MoHESR and university officials, ADEC functions for all intents and purposes outside of the federated education ministries. While ADEC may partner with the CAA to ensure accreditation standards, ADEC is seen as a dynamic institution purposefully independent from the federated MoE and MoHESR with the highest level of the Amir's political backing to implement reform. According to one education analyst in Abu Dhabi, ADEC was created because, "The federal structure has its own history and baggage. Abu Dhabi cannot reform the federated structure, so it is overwhelming it."<sup>798</sup>

According to ADEC's mission statement, ADEC is focusing on four main issue areas to improve Abu Dhabi's system of education: "lifting the quality of higher education to internationally recognized levels; aligning higher education with the

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<sup>796</sup>The Abu Dhabi Education Council was established on September 10, 2005, in accordance with Law No. 24 enacted by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE President, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and Ruler of Abu Dhabi. The chairman of ADEC is His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, and the Vice Chairman is HH Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Presidential Affairs. See *Abu Dhabi Education Council History* (accessed March 2, 2011); available from [http://www.abudhabi.ae/egovPoolPortal\\_WAR/appmanager/ADeGP/Citizen?nfpb=true&pageLabel=p\\_citizen\\_departments&did=121674&lang](http://www.abudhabi.ae/egovPoolPortal_WAR/appmanager/ADeGP/Citizen?nfpb=true&pageLabel=p_citizen_departments&did=121674&lang).

<sup>797</sup> Kathryn Lewis, "Education Reform Plan Thrown Open for comment," *The National (UAE)*, November 6, 2008.

<sup>798</sup> Academic Administrator, UAE U, interview by author, Al Ain, UAE, February 2011.

emirate's social, cultural and economic needs; investing in research for an innovation-based economy; and providing all qualified students with affordable access to higher education.”<sup>799</sup> Attesting to ADEC’s mission Director General of ADEC, Mughar Khalil stated, "We recognize that we have a long way to go in a short time if we want Abu Dhabi to take its place as a leader on the world stage and if we want our citizens and residents to have the necessary skills to compete...As educational development progresses, we will learn to embrace new ideas and develop new skills.”<sup>800</sup>

To achieve this objective at the K-12 level ADEC launched the “New School Model” in 2010. The New School Model constitutes a whole cloth reengineering of the K-12 curriculum and school structure. It emphasizes increased parental involvement, and bilingual Arabic and English education in public schools, with subjects such as mathematics and science taught solely in English.<sup>801</sup> It also places an increased emphasis on technology and assessment tools. ADEC is also subjecting private schools, generally attended by the expatriate population, to more rigorous evaluation and licensing procedures via ADEC inspection teams.<sup>802</sup>

## **Higher Education**

Among the most prominent higher education initiatives in Abu Dhabi, and indeed the UAE is the opening of several high profile international branch campuses in Abu Dhabi. Similar to Qatar’s Education City, these high profile international branch

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<sup>799</sup> Robin Lyndhurst “Foreign Colleges Fuel Innovation in Local Education,” *The Sunday Times*, October 17, 2010.

<sup>800</sup> Ibid.; also background conversations with diplomatic officials in UAE, February 2011.

<sup>801</sup> Afshan Ahmed, “Subjects Cut in Overhaul of Public Schools,” *The National*, UAE, April 6, 2011.

<sup>802</sup> Consultant for ADEC, interview by author, Abu Dhabi, UAE, March 2011.; and Afshan Ahmed, “Minister Hails ‘Major’ Reform of Education,” *The National (UAE)*, October 26, 2010.

campuses are viewed more as a source of national prestige on the international stage, rather than a driver of education reform at the national level. These international universities enjoy the direct financial support of the host government, and do not operate on a for-profit basis (or a student cost model).<sup>803</sup>

Unlike ADEC's mission, these high-profile international branch campuses, such as NYU-Abu Dhabi, the Sorbonne and INSEAD function to attract an international network of enhanced human capital to promote Abu Dhabi's transformation to a knowledge economy. Indeed, while some partnerships at the level of faculty conferences and student exchanges between these high profile international institutions and the national universities exist, their interactions are ad-hoc and do not rise to the level of a formal relationship. For example, NYU-Abu Dhabi functions separately from the federated education umbrella as well as ADEC. It has the direct backing of the Supreme Council, and of Sheikh Khalifa, with its academic freedom and administrative independence guaranteed through MOUs with the Supreme Emirate Council.

Semi-private institutions such as Abu Dhabi University, Khalifa University, and MASDAR enjoy varying levels of royal family financial support and are designed to promote linkages between the Abu Dhabi labor market and knowledge economy sectors. For example, the Masdar Institute for Science and Technology (MIST) which began accepting students in 2009, is essentially the UAE's equivalent of KAUST. MIST is designed as a high profile graduate education and research university focused on developing the next generation of solutions to the world's dependence on fossil fuels.

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<sup>803</sup> Various Private University Administrators, interviews by author, Abu Dhabi, UAE, February 2011.

In sum, Abu Dhabi is pursuing a more statist model of education reform, with emirate level institutions such as ADEC functioning as replacements for the often more bureaucratic and less innovative federal ministries. Unlike Dubai, which initiated education reform via privatization and decentralization, Abu Dhabi is embracing its role as a coordinator for education reform at all levels.

### **Relevance to Saudi Arabia**

Placed in a greater regional context, Saudi Arabia's higher education reform faces many of the same challenges of aligning the education sector to labor market needs as its neighbors: an unwieldy bureaucracy, the legacy of a welfare system based largely on oil rents, and the careful need to balance the forces of globalization with national and local identity and culture – particularly in the delicate areas of language of instruction and curricular reform.

However, unlike either Qatar or the UAE, Saudi Arabia has assiduously shunned the foreign branch campus model. Its flagship higher education project, KAUST, is fully national, but partners with international institutions. As argued in previous chapters, this unique model is a result of Saudi Arabia's particular educational history of strong religious interests in education serving as a legitimacy tool for the Al Saud regime.

All three GCC countries have experimented with varying levels of decentralization and privatization of education. Qatar, with no cohesive opposition groups other than intra-Al Thani rivalries, has been able to boldly implement several pilot education reform projects and create the most high profile western branch campus model

in the Middle East. These reforms have been largely formulated under the direct request of the Amir and implemented top-down with little broader societal participation.

The UAE's emirates have each pursued different approaches to privatization, with Dubai at one end of the spectrum embracing an unfettered market approach prior to the financial crisis of 2009, and Abu Dhabi at the other, pursuing a more statist approach with select privatization through MOU's with various emirate-level government institutions such as ADEC. Saudi Arabia in this regional context has been the last and most hesitant to embrace widespread privatization of education. Saudi Arabia, similar to Abu Dhabi, has opted for select privatization of certain institutions while maintaining a deliberately ambiguous relationship between private institutions and the national education ministries. This ambiguous relationship has allowed the Al Saud regime to maintain control over the system as a whole, while allowing different degrees of experimentation on the periphery.

These different education models pursued by the three GCC studies suggests that demography, ideology, and resources all play a significant role in the degree to which a monarchy is able to pursue institutional innovation. This is an area that I would like to explore further in future research.



## Conclusion

Saudi Arabia is not a monolithic regime with a clear separation of state and society. Rather, the Al Saud regime has been engaged in a complex process of co-optation of elites, balancing of political and religious opposition, and adaptation to the twin challenges of globalization and modernization since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Al Saud regime has weathered severe tests to its legitimacy before. From King Abd Al-Aziz's battle with the Ikhwan in 1929, to managing the dual challenges of Arab nationalism and revolutionary Islam in the region, the Al Saud has navigated challenges to its stability through a variety of methods: co-opting opposition leaders, expanding the social welfare net, and suppressing dissent. The most fundamental pillar of the regime's legitimacy, and its most challenging is its relationship throughout the past century has been the Wahhabi religious establishment.

With the discovery of oil, the material challenges of the developing nation shifted from one of subsistence to what Hertog terms 'segmented clientism'.<sup>804</sup> As oil rents permeated the political and social culture, various groups were co-opted into the institutions of the state, creating a variety of unwieldy bureaucratic fiefdoms. The religious establishment gained tremendous influence over social sector institutions such as the ministries of education, in exchange for largely ceding the military and political sphere to the Al Saud regime. However, as demonstrated throughout this dissertation, the separation between the social sector, the economic sector and the political sector is a false one. As the economic and social pressures attendant with globalization increase, the

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<sup>804</sup> Steffen Hertog, "Segmented Clientelism: The Political Economy of Saudi Economic Reform Efforts," in *Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society, Foreign Affairs*, ed. Paul Aarts & Gerd Nonneman, (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 111-144.

education sector that the regime ceded to the *ulema*'s influence in the 1980's becomes ever more central to addressing the challenges of job creation and modernization.

The seeds of higher education reform in Saudi Arabia were planted 1990's when the prolonged accommodation of the *ulema* by the regime contributed to a severely strained economic sector leading to a small, but influential lobby of liberal elites to press for private higher education. These early private efforts were limited in scope, dependent on informal regime support and vulnerable to political shifts, such as the Gulf War. The Al Saud monarchy, under the leadership of King Abdullah, accelerated the liberalization of the education sector following 9/11 and threat of domestic terrorism in Saudi Arabia. Unlike prior regime compromises with religious opposition groups during previous crises, such as 1979 and the Gulf War, the Al Saud monarchy post 9/11 explicitly endorsed the project of higher education reform, and in doing so recast its relationship with both the *ulema* and liberal elites. This increased political space allowed the growing liberal elite to press more cohesively for various education reform measures, such as the increased use of international accreditation and metrics, the expansion of English language usage and an emphasis on secular subjects such as the sciences.

While this dissertation is unable to definitely answer whether and when education reform would have occurred without the external shock of 9/11, the experience in neighboring Gulf monarchies, such as the UAE and Qatar, suggests that education reform to meet the employment needs of a growing youth demographic is a shared priority, while the mechanisms used and constraints faced in doing so vary depending on bureaucratic and social resistance. Unlike in Qatar and the UAE, the Al Saud monarchy depends to a greater degree on religious legitimization of its rule and as such has opted

not to directly confront the *ulema* dominated education ministries. Instead, the Al Saud monarchy has pursued gradual liberalization of the education sector through the use of pilot reform projects, such as KAUST, peripheral institutions such as Saudi Aramco, and limited privatization to create the space for liberal elites to initiate controversial reforms.

Saudi Arabia thus presents a “mixed case” of reform. The potential of the Saudi Arabia’s current reforms, which are mainly on the periphery and take place outside of previously established institutional channels, to create a cascade affect and transform the education system as a whole is uncertain and remains dependent on the regime’s willingness to champion current reforms and provide the requisite political space for liberal elites to continue to operate.

### **Recent Reforms**

Liberal critics often claim that the regime is using the specter of militant Salafis to delay substantive and far-reaching liberalization, while dissident *ulema* charge the Al Saud regime with backing creeping Westernization at the expense of Islam and traditional culture. Nonetheless, in the past 10 years the regime has pursued both a carrot and stick approach to economic and social reform - allowing selective privatization of the economic sector through such mechanisms as membership in the World Trade Organization, opening the co-educational King Abdullah University for Science and Technology,<sup>805</sup> and pushing for gradual reform of the social sector through a series of a

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<sup>805</sup> KAUST has been heralded as a beacon for future higher education reform initiatives, however its secular curriculum and co-educational mandate has been the subject of substantive religious opposition. See “Al-Barrak’s ‘death *fatwa*,” *The Saudi Gazette*, February 27, 2010 (accessed June 3, 2010); available from <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=2010022764731>.

national dialogue forums broadcast on national television on topics such as women's rights and religious tolerance, all while coming down hard on opposition.<sup>806</sup>

Among the most significant moves towards political liberalization were elections at the municipal level in 2005, and expanded powers for the *Majlis al-Shura*, including some access to budget information and the ability to propose new legislation.<sup>807</sup> However, the impact of these initiatives was mixed at best. The municipal elections were marked by low voter turnout, the exclusion of female candidates, and a subsequent round of elections scheduled for 2009 was cancelled.<sup>808</sup> In 2009, after a period during which reform had been largely viewed as stalled,<sup>809</sup> King Abdullah announced a significant reshuffling of his cabinet. These changes were notable as they placed more reform-minded and technocratic ministers in top positions including the ministries of education and the judiciary, along with the appointment of Nora bint Abdullah al-Fayez as Deputy Education Minister, the first woman to serve in a senior ministerial position.<sup>810</sup> Other significant moves included the expansion of the Senior *ulema* Council and 2010's royal decree limiting the power to issue official *fatwas* to the Senior *ulema* Council, both of which were seen as trying to limit the ability of religious interests to oppose reforms.<sup>811</sup> On a day-to-day level, the influence of the religious police, especially in the kingdom's

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<sup>806</sup> Notably the arrest of Fouad Al Farhan in 2007. See Faiza Saleh Ambah, "Dissident Saudi Blogger Is Arrested," *The Washington Post*, January 1, 2008. Accessed January 12, 2009. Available from LexisNexis.; and "Saudi Arabia: Charges against Rights Activist Frivolous," *Human Rights Watch*, July 14, 2010 (accessed September 2010); available from <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/07/14/saudi-arabia-charges-against-rights-activist-frivolous>.

<sup>807</sup> Andrzej Kapiszewski, "Saudi Arabia: Steps Towards Democratization or Reconfiguration of Authoritarianism?" *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 41, No. 5-6: 459-482.

<sup>808</sup> Edward Burke and Ana Echagüe, "'Strong Foundations?': The Imperative for Reform in Saudi Arabia," Working Paper 84, FRIDE (June 2009).

<sup>809</sup> Hassan M. Fattah, "After First Steps, Saudi Reformers See Efforts Stall," *The New York Times*, April 26, 2007.

<sup>810</sup> P.K. Abdul Ghafour, "Major Government Reshuffle," *Arab News*, February 15, 2009.

<sup>811</sup> Christopher Boucek, "Saudi Fatwa Restrictions and the State-Clerical Relationship," *Arab Reform Bulletin*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (October 27, 2010).

western region, the Hijaz, significantly diminished, and press censorship was eased, especially on controversial social issues such as gender segregation.

However, reform, even under a popular leader like King Abdullah, has been partial and tends to backslide due to competing interests, both within the royal family and society at large. The bureaucracy itself is difficult to change. Indeed, as shown throughout this dissertation, reform of the most critical sectors is often carried out outside of established bureaucratic channels through either new institutions such as the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA) or insulated “islands of efficiency” like Saudi Aramco.<sup>812</sup> Gradualism is the mantra, and even reforms with substantial political effects are halted by a bloated bureaucracy and the perennial threat of a conservative backlash.

The real challenge is transforming the economy in a way that allows for the productive employment of the 47 percent of the Saudi population who are under the age 18.<sup>813</sup> Given the dual pressures of youth demographics and weak job creation, this is the single most pressing issue facing the Saudi regime. To address this gap, King Abdullah embarked on a rapid expansion of the higher education system, expanding from 6 to 24 universities in less than ten years, in addition to allowing for the cautious introduction of private education and funding a massive \$2.4 billion overhaul of K-12 education. However, improving the quality and not just the quantity of education is a long-term struggle. As the 9<sup>th</sup> Development Plan itself states, “Quality is the essential element in

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<sup>812</sup> See Steffen Hertog, *Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats: Oil and the State in Saudi Arabia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

<sup>813</sup> John Sfakianakis, “Banque Saudi Fransi: Saudi Arabia Economics - Employment quandary,” *The Gulf Intelligence*, February 21, 2011. Accessed March 1, 2011. Available from <http://www.thegulfintelligence.com/Docs.Viewer/8ad91021-1053-43d7-b8a8-d250151257ab/default.aspx>.

ensuring that graduates of the educational system contribute actively to development, rather than being a burden on it.”<sup>814</sup> Indeed, addressing the mismatch of skills to the labor market’s demands will require years, if not decades.

As protests brought down regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, many turned to Saudi Arabia’s monarchy as the next regime to be rocked by widespread social unrest. Indeed, several petitions were circulated in the wake of the revolutions, including “A Declaration of National Reform”<sup>815</sup> and “Toward the State of Rights and Institutions.”<sup>816</sup> Each emphasized enhanced economic, political, and social liberties and was signed by an array of liberal elites as well as some prominent Islamists. However, the forecasted “day of rage” did not materialize and protests were largely limited to Shi’i population in the Eastern Province. Public debate about social and economic reforms is overshadowed by regional developments, particularly the Shi’i-led protests against the Sunni minority al-Khalifa regime in Bahrain.

The Al Saud regime finds itself in a difficult position, as much-needed reform of the education and economic sectors is a long-term commitment that could take years to come to fruition, while unemployed and underemployed youth in Saudi Arabia are growing impatient waiting for structural reforms to take root.<sup>817</sup> An example of this dilemma is the King’s recent announcement following the Arab Spring of an increase in public sector salaries, unemployment benefits, as well as the intention to create one million jobs through accelerated Saudization of the workforce over the course of two

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<sup>814</sup> Ninth Development Plan, 394

<sup>815</sup> *A Declaration of National Reform* (accessed February 2011); available from <http://www.saudireform.com/?p=english>.

<sup>816</sup> See the blog *saudijeans.org* for more information on recent petitions.

<sup>817</sup> “Unemployed Saudi Graduates Stage Rare Protest,” *The Peninsula* (Qatar), January 10, 2011 (accessed January 21, 2011); available from <http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/middle-east/138569-unemployed-saudi-graduates-stage-rare-protest.html>.

years.<sup>818</sup> While these measures may act as a temporary steam valve for employment pressures, they can create inefficiencies in the labor market and private sector, leading to a negative feedback loop. This balance between employing the growing youth population in the near-term and creating a dynamic and healthy economy for the long-term will remain a critical challenge for the regime.

At the same time, the regime must contend with an often reactionary religious sector, labyrinthine bureaucracy, and volatile regional environment, all of which serve as impediments to rapid reform. Unlike during past crises, the media and information environment has changed substantially and with it the ability of the regime to suppress dissent. Though the media is censored in Saudi Arabia, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the regime to keep news from reaching others either in the outside world or inside the kingdom. The proliferation of blogs, social media, and satellite channels has the potential to upset the traditional balance of accommodation and obfuscation. The impact of the youth revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia, as well as the upheaval in Yemen, Libya, and Bahrain on the Kingdom is uncertain, but it underlines the urgency of the moment.

How the regime handles the current unrest will be crucial. Will it be a replay of the ephemeral liberalization of the 1970s, which was quickly reversed when the regime was threatened by the 1979 Mecca crisis? Will it adopt the wait-and-see approach of the 1990s when, after the internal unrest and criticism following the 1991 Gulf War, the regime moved to adopt the long-discussed “basic laws,” but then did little to implement

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<sup>818</sup> Ghazanfar Ali Khan, “Saudis to Have over a Million Jobs in Two Years,” *Arab News*, March 1, 2011.

them? Or will the regime move to accelerate the implementation of reforms to the education and economic sectors despite opposition from an array of conservative forces? While it is too early to tell if reforms to the higher education sector will endure the multiple political challenges presented by the Arab Spring, based on the regime's announcement of new municipal elections to be held in April, coupled with tightened control over the press and increased funding to security forces, the regime is trying to forge a limited compromise with liberal reform advocates while appeasing Islamists; a reversion to the traditional formula of co-opting dissent. In his March 18 address, King Abdullah announced the establishment of an anti-corruption commission, while strengthening support for the religious establishment, military, and internal security, including adding over 60,000 new jobs in the interior ministry alone.<sup>819</sup> The King also stated that criticism of religious scholars in the media would be met with swift prosecution - returning the favor after the Senior *ulema* Council's issued *fatwas* condemning demonstrations as against Shari'a law. These recent actions underline the legitimacy tight rope that the Al Saud regime continues to walk and the fragility of reform efforts.

Education reform in Saudi Arabia continues to be a politically charged endeavour with potential winners and losers among various co-opted groups. The Al Saud regime has attempted to initiate controversial education reforms without upsetting its legitimacy balance by creating new and peripheral institutions, such as academic cities, international partnerships and quasi-governmental organizations, as a backdoor to reform. This enables the regime to avoid directly challenging established institutions, and their

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<sup>819</sup> Caryle Murphy, "Saudi King Ignores Calls for Political Reform, Gives out Money," *GlobalPost*, March 18, 2011.



entrenched interests, while allowing such groups as business elites to initiate needed reforms on the periphery. By allowing for limited privatization the regime seems to be creating greater political space for liberal elites to push for education reform but only within carefully proscribed limits. This model is also evident in other GCC monarchies with the establishment of such new bodies as the Abu Dhabi Educational Authority (ADEC) in Abu Dhabi to route around the federalized Ministry of Higher Education, the Qatar Foundation which functions essentially as a parallel social ministry, and the use of Saudi Aramco to manage King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in lieu of the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) in Saudi Arabia. These new or outsider institutions allow a regime to circumvent its own bureaucracy to rapidly implement pilot project reforms.

However, while model projects such as KAUST challenge the status quo of the *ulema* dominated social sphere, there has yet to be sustained systemic change to the education sector as a whole. Bureaucratic layering can only go so far; eventually the monarchy has to reformulate its relationship with the various interest groups that constitute the education sector to create sustainable institutional reform rather than one shot initiatives. In an increasingly integrated information driven global economy, the flexibility, adaptability and quality of national education systems will become key to driving economic competitiveness and growth. As such, Saudi Arabia, and indeed the region, must empower local elites to initiate reforms through increased privatization while assuring quality through international metrics and linkages. Reform will most likely remain a gradual process driven by elite experimentation and cautious implementation.

The cost of back tracking on education reform, both to the creation of domestic private sector jobs and as a test of the monarchy's ability to transform its public sector is high. While it is too early to tell how creating more globally linked education standards and innovative institutions will transform the relationship between each monarchy and its citizens, it is likely that a more educated populace will demand more dynamic and accountable public institutions. Whether the current model of cautious liberalization can deliver such dynamic and globally competitive institutions remains to be seen.

## Appendix I

### A chronology of key events in Saudi Arabia (1871-2011)

**1871** - The Ottomans take control of the province of Hasa.

**1891** - The Al Saud family are exiled to Kuwait by the Rashidi family.

**1902** - Abd-al-Aziz Bin-Abd-al-Rahman Bin-Faisal Bin-Turki Bin-Abdallah Bin-Muhammad Al Saud (often known as Ibn Saud) takes control of Riyadh bringing the Al Saud family back into Saudi Arabia.

**1912** - The Ikhwan (Brotherhood) is founded based on Wahhabism; it grows quickly and provides key support for Abd-al-Aziz.

**1913** - Hasa is taken from the Ottomans by Abd-al-Aziz.

**1921** - Abd-al-Aziz takes the title Sultan of Najd.

**1924** - Mecca regained.

**1925** - Medina retaken.

#### **Brotherhood trouble**

**1926** - Abd-al-Aziz is proclaimed King of the Hijaz in the Grand Mosque of Mecca.

**1928-30** - The Ikhwan turn against Abd-al-Aziz due to the modernization of the region. They are defeated by Abd-al-Aziz.

**1932** The areas controlled by Abd-al-Aziz are unified under the name Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Abd-al-Aziz is proclaimed King.

**1933** - King Abd-al-Aziz's eldest son, Saud, is named Crown Prince.

**1938** - Oil is discovered and production begins under the US-controlled Aramco (Arabian American Oil Company).

**1953** King Abd-al-Aziz dies and is succeeded by the Crown Prince Saud Bin-Abd-al-Aziz Al Saud. The new King's brother, Faisal is named Crown Prince.

**1960** - Saudi Arabia is a founding member of Opec (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries).

**1964** King Saud is deposed by his brother, the Crown Prince, Faisal Bin-Abd-al-Aziz Al Saud.

**1970** The OIC (Organisation of the Islamic Conference) is founded in Jeddah.

**1972** Saudi Arabia gains control of a proportion (20%) of Aramco, lessening US control over Saudi oil.

**1973** Saudi Arabia leads an oil boycott against the Western countries that supported Israel in the October War against Egypt and Syria. Oil prices quadruple.

**1975** King Faisal is assassinated by his nephew, Faisal Bin-Musaid Bin-Abd-al-Aziz; he is succeeded by his brother, Khalid Bin-Abd-al-Aziz Al Saud.

**1979** Saudi Arabia severs diplomatic relations with Egypt after it makes peace with Israel.

**1979** Extremists seize the Grand Mosque of Mecca; the government regains control after 10 days and those captured are executed.

**1980** Saudi Arabia takes full control of Aramco from the US.

**1981** Saudi Arabia is a founding member of the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council).

**1982** King Khalid dies of a heart attack and is succeeded by his brother, Crown Prince Fahd Bin-Abd-al-Aziz Al Saud.

**1986** King Fahd adds the title "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques" to his name.

**1987** Saudi Arabia resumes diplomatic relations with Egypt, severed since 1979.

**1990** Saudi Arabia condemns Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and asks the US to intervene; it allows foreign troops to be based in the Kingdom

**1992** King Fahd announces the "Basic Laws of Government" emphasizing the duties and responsibilities of a ruler. He proposes setting up a Consultative Council (majlis al-shura).

**1993** King Fahd decrees the division of Saudi Arabia into thirteen administrative divisions.

**1993** The Consultative Council is inaugurated. It is composed of a chairman and 60 members chosen by the king.

**1994** Islamic dissident Osama Bin Laden is stripped of his Saudi nationality.

**1995** King Fahd has a stroke. Crown Prince Abdullah Bin-Abd-al-Aziz Al Saud takes on the day-to-day running of the country.

**1996** King Fahd resumes control of state affairs.

**1996** A bomb explodes at the US military complex near Dhahran killing 19 and wounding over 300.

**1997** King Fahd increases the members of the Consultative Council (majlis al-shura) from sixty to ninety.

**1999** Twenty Saudi women attend a session of the Consultative Council for the first time.

**2001** Several British workers are arrested in Riyadh after a series of blasts in which a British and an American national are killed.

**2001** 11 September - 15 of the 19 hijackers involved in attacks on New York and Washington are Saudi nationals.

**2001** King Fahd calls for the eradication of terrorism, saying it is prohibited by Islam; government takes the unprecedented step of issuing ID cards to women.

**2002** Saudi foreign minister says his country will not allow the US to use its facilities to attack Iraq, even in a UN-sanctioned strike.

**2003** US says it will pull out almost all its troops from Saudi Arabia, ending a military presence dating back to the 1991 Gulf war. Both countries stress that they will remain allies.

**2003** Suicide bombers kill 35 people at housing compounds for Westerners in Riyadh hours before US Secretary of State Colin Powell flies in for planned visit.

**2003** More than 300 Saudi intellectuals - women as well as men - sign petition calling for far-reaching political reforms.

**2003** Police break up unprecedented rally in centre of Riyadh calling for political reform. More than 270 people are arrested.

**2003** Suicide attack by suspected al-Qaeda militants on residential compound in Riyadh leaves 17 dead and scores injured.

**2003** King grants wider powers to Consultative Council (majlis al-shura), enabling it to propose legislation without his permission.

**2004** Stampede at Hajj pilgrimage leaves 251 dead.

**2004** Four police officers and a security officer killed in attacks near Riyadh. Car bomb at security forces' HQ in Riyadh kills four, wounds 148. Group linked to al-Qaeda claims responsibility.

**2004** Attack at petrochemical site in Yanbu kills five foreigners. Attack and hostage-taking at oil company compound in Khobar; 22 people are killed.

**2004** Three gun attacks in Riyadh within a week leave two Americans and a BBC cameraman dead. The same week, a US engineer is abducted and beheaded, his filmed death causing revulsion in America.

Security forces kill local al-Qaeda leader Abdul Aziz al-Muqrin shortly afterwards, but an amnesty for militants which follows has only limited effect despite a fall in militant activity.

**2004** Attack on US consulate in Jeddah; five staff and four attackers are killed.

Two car bombs explode in central Riyadh; security forces kill seven suspects in a subsequent raid.

**2005** First-ever nationwide municipal elections. Women do not take part in the poll.

**2005** Saudi royal court announces death of King Fahd. He is succeeded by the former crown prince, Abdullah.

**2005** Five gunmen and three police officers killed in clashes in the eastern city of Dammam.

**2005** World Trade Organization gives the green light to Saudi Arabia's membership following 12 years of talks.

**2006** 363 Hajj pilgrims are killed in a crush during a stone-throwing ritual in Mecca. In a separate incident, more than 70 pilgrims are killed when a hostel in the city collapses.

**2006** Saudi Arabian Government says it has foiled a planned suicide bomb attack on a major oil-processing plant at Abqaiq.

**2006** Six men allegedly linked to al-Qaeda are killed in a shootout with police in Riyadh, the latest of several incidents involving Islamist militants.

**2006** Saudi Arabia moves to formalize the royal succession in an apparent bid to prevent infighting among the next generation of princes.

**2007** Four French nationals are killed in a suspected terror attack near the north-western ruins of Madain Saleh, which are popular with tourists.

**2007** Police say they have arrested 172 terror suspects, some of whom trained as pilots for suicide missions.

**2007** Religious police are banned from detaining suspects. The force has come under increasing criticism for overzealous behavior after recent deaths in custody.

**2007** Royal decree orders an overhaul of the judicial system.

**2007** Authorities announce arrest of a group of men suspected of planning attacks on holy sites during the Hajj pilgrimage.

**2009** Interpol issues security alerts for 85 men suspected of plotting attacks in Saudi Arabia, in its largest group alert. All but two are Saudis.

King Abdullah sacks head of religious police, most senior judge and central bank head in rare government reshuffle. Also appoints country's first woman minister.

**2009** Saudi troops move to enforce buffer zone in northern Yemen after becoming involved in border clashes with Yemeni rebels.

**2010** US officials confirm plan to sell \$60 billion worth of arms to Saudi Arabia - the most lucrative single arms deal in US history.

**2010** Officials announce arrest of 149 militants over past eight months, most of them allegedly belonging to al-Qaeda.

King Abdullah undergoes back surgery in the US.

**2010** Tunisian President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali finds sanctuary in Saudi Arabia after fleeing a popular uprising at home.

**2011** President of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak resigns office after a month of protests

**2011** GCC Peninsula Shield Force, led by Saudi Arabia, enters Bahrain after protests against the Sunni minority Al Khalifa monarchy.

**2011** King Abdullah announces increased welfare spending, as unrest continues across Arab world.

**2011** Public protests banned, after small demonstrations in mainly Shia areas of the east. King Abdullah warns that threats to the nation's security and stability will not be tolerated.

**2011** Criticism of the official *ulema* in the press is banned

**2011** Municipal elections announced

**2011** Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh enters Saudi Arabia for treatment after explosion, following months of protest against his regime



## Appendix II:

### Timeline of Regulatory Change of Private Higher Education in Saudi Arabia<sup>820</sup>

- In 1991, Ministry of Higher Education started a study on the private higher education.
- The Council of Ministers Decree No. 33, issued on 18/2/1996, stipulated the authorization of the Minister of Higher Education to prepare a new vision for the establishment of private colleges, and enabling the private sector to establish non-profit educational institutions.
- The Higher Education Board Decree No. 3/10/1419 of 6/2/1998, stipulated the approval of the regulations related to non-profit private colleges, which enabled the charity foundations to establish non-profit private colleges.
- The Council of Ministers Decree No. 127 of 8/6/1998 stipulated that the Ministry of Higher Education will handle the establishment of charity foundations.
- The Decree of HH Minister of Higher Education No. 334 of 4/1/1999 stipulated the approval of the executive rules of the establishment of charity foundations related to educational purposes post secondary (high school) level, and licensing them.
- The Council of Ministers Decree No. 212 of 1/9/2000 stipulated the approval of the regulations related to private colleges, which enabled private sector and charity foundations to establish private colleges.
- The Decree of HH Minister of Higher Education No. 35/1/1398 of 15/1/2001 stipulated the approval of the executive rules, administrative procedures, and technical regulations related to private colleges.
- Royal Decree No. 7/B/10466 of 1/4/2002H stipulated the approval of the establishment of Prince Sultan University and Faisal University.
- The Council of Ministers Decree No. 87 of 6/4/2002 stipulated the approval of leasing government lands for very low rents, and granting easy loans to private colleges.
- Royal Decree No. 7/B/6024 of 9/2/2003 stipulated the approval of the regulations related to private universities.
- Royal Decree No. 6304/MB of 18/8/2006 stipulated the approval of the scholarships project for private higher education students.

Under the Seventh Development Plan, a number of measures and steps were taken to develop and upgrade general education institutions; foremost among which were:

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<sup>820</sup> Source: <http://www.mohe.gov.sa/en/studyinside/privateedu/Pages/Overview.aspx>

- Putting the General Presidency for Girls Education under the Ministry of Education by Royal Decree A/2 of 14/3/2002.
- Entrusting the Ministry of Education with supervising general education undertaken by other agencies, such as the National Guard, Ministry of Defense, and Royal Commission for Jubail and Yanbu, by Royal Decree A/2 of 30/4/2003.
- Instituting kindergarten education as a separate stage, with separate buildings and classrooms, independent from other educational stages, by Royal Decree 7/B/5388 of 2002.
- Instituting mandatory education between 6 and 15 years of age by a Council of Ministers Resolution issued in 2004.
- Introducing English language classes from grade six (elementary stage) as a basic subject, along with improving English language teaching at intermediate and secondary schools, by Council of Ministers 376 Resolution 171 of 2003.
- Merging The Higher Committee on Education Policy and the Higher Education Council into one body, The Supreme Education Council, establishing a national center for evaluation and development of general and technical education under the supervision of the Supreme Education Council, and transferring the Agency for Girls Colleges and Agency for Teachers Colleges from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Higher Education; all by Council of Ministers Resolution 143 of 2004.



## Appendix III

### Table of Private Higher Education Universities (April 2010)<sup>821</sup>

#### Private Universities Offering Bachelors & Masters Degree Programs

No.	University Name	City	Teaching Start Date	Accredited Majors
1	<a href="#">King Abdullah University for Science and Technology</a>	Jeddah	1430/1431	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Applied Mathematics</li> <li>2. Biosciences</li> <li>3. Chemical Engineering and Bio-Engineering</li> <li>4. Computer Science</li> <li>5. Geology and Geophysics</li> <li>6. Electrical Engineering</li> <li>7. Ecology and Eco-Engineering</li> <li>8. Material Science and Engineering</li> <li>9. Mechanical Engineering</li> </ol>
2	<a href="#">Prince Sultan University</a> (Men and Women)	Riyadh	1420/1421	Marketing , Finance , Accounting , Computer Science , Information Systems , Interior Design Engineering , English Language Translation, Law (Women) , Master of Business Administration (MBA)
3	<a href="#">Arab Open University</a> (Men and Women)	Riyadh branch only	1423/1424	Information Technology and Computing , Elementary Education Diploma , Business Administration Accounting , Finance , Management Information Systems , Executive Masters in Business Administration "EMBA" , Information Technology , Computer Science , Computer Engineering , Electrical Engineering (Men) , Mechanical Engineering (Men) , Civil Engineering (Men) , Interior Design (Women)
4	<a href="#">Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University</a> (Men and Women)	Al Khobar	1427/1428	Medicine , Engineering , Science , Technology Management
5	<a href="#">Alfaisal University</a>	Riyadh	1428/1429	Accounting , Marketing , Finance , Quality Management , Management Information Systems , Insurance
6	<a href="#">Al Yamamah University</a> (Men and Women)	Riyadh	1425/1424	Computer Science , Information Systems
7	<a href="#">Effat University</a> (Women)	Jeddah	1420/1421	, Early Childhood Education , English and Translation , Electrical & Computer

<sup>821</sup> Source: <http://www.mohe.gov.sa/EN/STUDYINSIDE/PRIVATEEDU/Pages/listphe.aspx>

8	<a href="#">Dar Al Uloom University</a>	Riyadh	1429/1430	Engineering , Business Administration , Architecture Computer Engineering and Information Technology (Computer Science , Software Engineering , Information Technology) , College of Business Administration (Financial and banks , Accounting and auditing , Marketing management , Human resources management) , College of Law (General Law , Special Code) , College of Education (Early Childhood Education , Special Education , English Language , Computer Science)
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<http://www.mohe.gov.sa/en/studyinside/privateedu/Pages/Colleges.aspx>

### Private Higher Education Colleges

#### Colleges Offering Bachelors & Masters Degree Programs

No.	College Name	City	Teaching Start Date	Accredited Majors
1	<a href="#">Dar Al-Hekma College</a> (Women)	Jeddah	1420/1421	Graphic Design , Interior Design , Banking and Finance , Management Information Systems , Special Education-Gifted and Talented , Special Education-Learning Disabilities , Nursing , Law
2	<a href="#">Prince Sultan College for Tourism and Business</a> (Men)	Abha	1420/1421	Tourism and Hospitality Management , Hospitality Diploma , Business Administration
3	<a href="#">Albaha Private College of Science</a> (Men and Women)	Al Baha	1422/1423	Computer Engineering , Computer Science
4	<a href="#">College of Business Administration</a> (Men and Women)	Jeddah	1424/1425	Marketing , Management Information Systems , Human Resources Management , Finance , Accounting , Business Logistics Management , Masters of Business Administration
5	<a href="#">Soliman Fakeeh College for Science and Nursing</a> (Men and Women)	Jeddah	1424/1425	Nursing , Medical Sciences
6	<a href="#">Riyadh College of Dentistry</a> (Men and Women)	Riyadh	1424/1425	Dentistry , Dental Hygiene , Pharmacy , Dental Lab. Technology , Medical Laboratory , Dental Assisting , Diplomas in all majors
7	<a href="#">Ibn Sina National College for Medical Studies</a> (Men and Women)	Jeddah	1425/1426	Human Medicine , Pharmacy , Dentistry, Nursing
8	<a href="#">Qassim Private College</a> (Men and Women)	Qassim	1426/1427	Dentistry , Computer , Languages
9	Prince Fahd Bin Sultan College (Men and Women)	Tabuk	1426/1427	1. College of Computer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Computer Science</li> <li>○ Computer Engineering</li> </ul>

- 2. College of Business Administration
  - Management
  - Marketing
  - Accounting
  - Finance
- 3. College of Engineering
  - Mechanical Engineering
  - Electric Engineering
  - Civil Engineering

10	<a href="#">Prince Sultan College for Tourism &amp; Managment</a> (Men)	Jeddah	1427/1428	Tourism and Hospitality Management , Tourism and Hospitality Diploma , Business Administration Master Program for accredited specializations
11	<a href="#">Batterjee Medical College</a> (Men and Women)	Jeddah	1427/1428	General Medicine , Nursing , Physical Therapy , Health Administration , Imaging and Radiology , Medical Laboratories , Emergency Medicine
12	<a href="#">Saad College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences</a>	Al Khobar	1427/1428	Nursing
13	Arriyadah College of Medical Sciences	Jeddah	1427/1428	Nursing
14	Almarifah College for Science and Technology	Riyadh	1429/1430	Medicine , Pharmacy , Nursing , Computer Science , Information Systems
15	<a href="#">Buraydah College for Applied Medical Sciences</a>	Buraydah	1429/1430	Nursing , Radiology , Physical Therapy , Clinical Laboratory Science , Rehabilitation Medicine , Public Health Science , Nutrition
16	Mohammad Al Mani College for Medical Sciences	Al Khobar	1429/1430	Pharmacy
17	Global Colleges	Riyadh	1429/1430	Medicine and Surgery , Nursing , Computer
18	Al-Farabi Dentistry College	Riyadh	1429/1430	Dentistry, Nursing
19	<a href="#">Al-Ghad International Medical Science Colleges</a> (Men and Women)	Riyadh, Jeddah, Dammam, Abha, Qassim, Tabuk, Najran, Al Madinah Al Monawwarah, Hafr Al Batin	1430/1431	Medical Laboratories, Nursing, Health Management, Emergency Medicine, Radiology
20	Sulaiman Al Rajhi Colleges (Men)	Al Bukayriyah	1430/1431	Medicine

## Appendix IV

### Table of Public Universities Saudi Arabia

University	City	Year of Founding*
King Saud University	Riyadh	1957
Islamic University	Medina	1961
King Abdulaziz University	Jeddah	1967
Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University	Riyadh	1974
King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals	Dhahran	1975
King Faisal University	Al-Hasa	1975
Umm Al-Qura University	Mecca	1980
King Khalid University	Abha	1998
Taibah University	Medina	2005
Taif University	Taif	2004
Qassim University	Al Qassim	2004
University of Ha'il	Ha'il	2006
Jizan University	Jizan	2005
Al Jawf University	Al Jawf	2005
King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences	Riyadh	2005
Al Baha University	Al Baha	2006
Princess Nora bint Abdulrahman University	Riyadh	2007
University of Tabuk		
Najran University	Najran	2006
Northern Borders University	Arar	2007
University of Dammam	Dammam	2010
Al Kharj University	Al Kharj	2010

- Year of founding as established by the Ministry of Higher Education. Several universities have not yet accepted an entering class

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*Arab Reform Bulletin*  
*Associated Press*  
*BBC Summary of World News Broadcasts*  
*Business Week*  
*Chicago Tribune*  
*Christian Science Monitor*  
*Financial Times*  
*Foreign Broadcast Information Service*  
*GlobalPost*  
*Gulf News*  
*Human Rights Watch*  
*Human Rights Watch*  
*Intelligence Newsletter*  
*International Herald Tribune*  
*Middle East Company News Wire*  
*Middle East Economic Digest*  
*Middle East Quarterly*  
*Mideast Mirror*  
*MidEastWire*  
*New York Times*  
*Okaz*  
*OSC Summary of Jihadist Websites*  
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*Reuters*  
*Saudi Gazette*  
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*The Guardian*  
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