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**SAUDI ARABIA: POLITICS OF REFORMS IN
THE POST-9/11 ERA**

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**SAUDI ARABIA: POLITICS OF REFORMS IN
THE POST-9/11 ERA**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of
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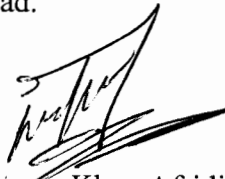
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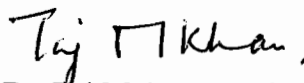
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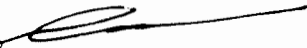


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DEDICATED TO

**This thesis is dedicated to my father (may Allah bless his soul in heaven)
whose teachings imparted in me the strength for continuous effort,
courage to face any obstacle and firm believe in Allah to accomplish my
objectives.**

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ABSTRACT

Term "reform" or "reformation" is not new for Saudi society. Since its formation these terms are continuously being used. The transformation of Arabian Peninsula's geographic arrangement into modern state of Saudi Arabia itself is the result of socio-religious reform movement of Wahhabism. Later it passed through many reformation phases in the context of Pan Arabism, rising religious militancy after Iranian Revolution, falling oil prices in different global political scenarios, Persian Gulf War, and finally the worst among all, events of September 11, 2001. Before 9/11 some reformed socio-political and religious parameters started changing a stubborn and orthodox sphere into comparatively modernize and flexible environment. Since 9/11 Saudi Arabia is facing many internal and external threats. These threats are mainly considered as the major drivers that led the Saudi society towards serious steps of socio-cultural, economic and political reforms. Reform process and its outputs in Saudi Arabia has become a matter of great significance, not only for Royal House and Saudi citizens, but also for international community as well.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ARAMCO	Arabian American Oil Company
CASOC	California Arabian Standard Oil Company
CDLR	Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights
CMA	Capital Market Authority
CPSU	The Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CPVPV	Commission of the Promotion of Virtue and the prevention of Vice
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FIL	Foreign Investment Law
FM	Foreign Minister
FP	Foreign Policy
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
G-20	Group of Twenty
GCC	Gulf Cooperative Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HRC	Human Rights Commission
JCCI	The Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry
KAUST	King Abdullah University of Science and Technology
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

KSU	King Saud University
NLF	National Liberation Front
NRF	National Reform Front
NSHR	National Society for Human Rights
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
SAGIA	Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority
SEC	Supreme Economic Council
SOCAL	Standard Oil of California
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNFPA	United Nations' Population Fund
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republic
WIR	World Investment Report
WTC	World Trade Centre
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWI	World War One
WWII	World War Two

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Statement of the Study

Since sixteenth century, Arabian Peninsula was under the nominal suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire. Where Ottomans held strong control over Hijaz, but failed to extend their powers in the land of Najd. It was ruled by nomadic tribal leaders. Local Najdi amirs were free from foreign intervention and enjoyed a relatively autonomous position. Deraiya was the capital of Najd. During eighteenth century an Islamic reformer Muhammad Abdul Wahhab allied with Al-Saud, amir of Deraiya. It was a unique alliance where political and religious factions allied with each other to serve their purposes. Political faction was aimed to extend its influence over the Arabian Peninsula while the religious reformer wanted to purify Islamic trends and practices from the impurities and laid the origin of a new trend in Islam known as "Wahhabism". In twentieth century Arab World started to experience a stage of "state formation" and Saudi Arabia is one of the new emerging states of Arab world during that time period.

The modern Saudi kingdom was founded by Abdul Aziz bin Saud in 1932 after years of struggle. King Abdul Aziz was an absolute monarch, like previous amirs of Najd, he became a focal point, a centre for mediation and decision making and a source of endowments. During his rule, King Abdul Aziz started constructing infrastructure of the

country mainly including roads network and advanced telecommunication systems. He introduced sophisticated and advanced technology in his country and set infrastructure for health care, education and agriculture etc. This legacy of development was continued by the descendents of King Abdul Aziz. King Saud formed the council of socio-economic Ministries of health, education and commerce. One of his great contributions to the kingdom's progress was the development of education sector as he setup many schools and universities in Saudi Arabia. His Successor, King Faisal introduced many social, economic, and bureaucratic reforms along with a promise for political reform and creation of *Shura* council.

Many times Saudi kings promised for reforms because of certain threats posed to Saudi Arabia. First threat was posed to the Kingdom in the context of Pan-Arabism when a movement of free princes, a liberal fraction in the royal family, demanded the constitutional reforms for the establishment of republicanism. This movement was short lived due to a decline in the Pan-Arabism movement itself.

After oil discovery in 1930s, Saudi king started utilization of oil revenues for transforming his country into a modern state. During the reign of Faisal, majority of Saudis started to enjoy the benefits of oil wealth. State started to provide a wide range of social services including health and education to the people. Royal family started to spend petro-dollar to buy political consent of the people. An era of modernization and physical transformation started in the country. This modernization was not acceptable to radical Islamic groups and there started socio-political tensions. These tension triggered by the external factor of Islamic revolution in Iran. Second threat emerged in Saudi

Arabia in the context of Iran-Iraq war followed by falling oil prices in 1980s which led to decrease in oil generated revenues of the state. On the one side Saudi government had to invite American forces to counter Iraqi threat, and on other side, it had to cut its welfare policies. Government failed to continue its promises of welfare and was unable to spend much to buy the political will of the people. Internal and external threats emerged in the kingdom followed by the demands for reforms.

The third threat emerged in Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of Persian Gulf War. A wave of political manifestation evoked in the kingdom. People started demanding political and social reforms. Saudi government responded to the demands by introducing some reforms like the establishment of *Shura* Council.

Fourth major milestone in the history of reform is known as the post 9/11 events, since fifteen of the nineteen hijackers were Saudi nationals. Radical Islamists are under direct criticism from international media and from Saudi liberals. After the incidents of 9/11, a new class of Islamists, known as Islamo-liberals has emerged. Besides that, a wave of radical Islamism has also been evoked in society. The two factions demanded the implementation of reforms according to their own agendas. Ulama are considered as one of the significant parts of the decision making as they provide the necessary religious legitimacy to the king. But now a larger group of reform-minded liberals, among intellectuals, business class, and moderate religious class, has also been emerging. This newly emerged group is asking for Socio-political and economic reforms, having attachments with religion and negating any foreign-led reform program. On the other side, autocratic rulers do not want to yield their powers. The main objective of

introducing reforms in an authoritarian rule is to demonstrate a change to the masses without giving up any of real power of the monarch. This study is an attempt to scrutinize the demands for reforms made by the people, and the reform strategies, adopted by the government to address these demands.

1.2. Literature Review

Reform process in Saudi Arabia is not new but it lacks research oriented material for a detailed analysis of the situation. Unavailability of sufficient material raised many hurdles during the course of this study. The entire material is directly related to the historical description of the emergence of Saudi State, challenges it faces since its formation, i.e. Persian Gulf War and the collapse in oil prices. Very limited research work has been done on the politics of reforms and more specifically on the reforms in post 9/11 scenario. This study is an attempt to analyze the reform process in Saudi Arabia in pre and post 9/11 scenario. Few books and articles studied and reviewed in this perspective, are discussed as below:

Alexei Vassiliev's "The History of Saudi Arabia" (1998) describes the socio political structure of Saudi society in a historical perspective. This book provides a full description of the movement of Wahhabi religious reformers along with the various developmental stages of Saudi state. It also provides a comprehensive understanding of the "oil factor" in the transformation of Saudi state and the role of newly emerged middle class in Saudi Arabian society. This book also examines Saudi Arabia's role in international affairs.

The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia (2006) of David Commins analyzes the debates on the nature of Wahhabism. This book finds out the origin of Wahhabism and its penetration in other parts of the world. After 1920, Wahhabi ideology became part of modern Saudi state's bureaucratic system. Commins tries to find out the challenges that Wahhabism faces after the events of September 11.

Dr. Sheikh Mohammad Iqbal's book Emergence of Saudi Arabia (1977) is another book which provides historical description of the emergence of Saudi Arabia. It discusses the efforts of founding father of Saudi Arabia, Ibn Saud, for the integration of Arabian Peninsula under his rule. It describes domestic and international policy decisions from 1901 to 1953. Furthermore, it narrates the progress of Saudi Arabia in social and economic sectors from 1933 to 1953.

Another book by Dr. Sheikh Mohammad Iqbal is The Arab Glory the Arab Grief. It is divided into two parts. Part one deals with the reforms and renaissance in Saudi Arabia during Ibn Saud and Faisal's rule. Part two of this book comprehensively describes the Israel-Palestine role in the Saudi Arabian perspective.

The House of Saud by David Holden and Richard Johns provides a detailed analysis of Saudi Arabia in historical perspective from 1902 to 1979. This book gives a full story about the American relations with new Saudi State and the start of oil production under American sponsored company. It describes the division of House of Saud in 1950s after the death of Ibn Saud. This book provides the characteristics of Saudi society when it started to experience modernization after oil boom. It also explains the revival of Ikhwan ideology during the incident of mosque uprising.

Madawi Al Rasheed's book, *Politics in an Arabian Oasis: the Rashidis of Saudi Arabia* (1991) is a detailed study of Rashidi dynasty of Arabian Peninsula before the emergence of Saudi Arabia. It clarifies the picture of tribal setup in the Arabian Peninsula. Finally it gives relationship among the two most powerful tribes and dynasties of that time in Arabian Peninsula, i.e. Rashidis and Sauds. Later; it describes the features of Wahhabi movement and its political implications.

John S. Habib's (1978) *Ibn Saud's Warriors of Islam: the Ikhwan of Najd and their role in the creation of the Saudi Kingdom, 1910-1930*, seeks to address the political origin of modern Saudi Arabia and the distinctive religious infrastructure of the state. This book mainly explores the role of Ikhwan movement in the formation of Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia: A Case Study in Development by Fouad Al-Farsy (1978) explores the historical origins of the Kingdom and its sources. It mainly tends to illustrate the institutional organization and governmental structure and functions of Saudi Arabia. Furthermore the writer has explained the role of "oil factor" in Saudi Arabian economic and social development and the relationship of Saudi state with ARAMCO. He studied the development of Saudi economy and the evolution of its Quran-based constitution.

Mordechai Abir's book *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society and the Gulf Crisis* (1993) discusses the development of Saudi social and political structures. It explores the changes in Saudi Arabia in 1980s followed by economic recession and the rise of Islamic militancy. Furthermore, it describes the Iran-Iraq war and its impact on Saudi Arabia. In addition to that this book analyzes the Iraq-Kuwait crisis and its ramifications in the kingdom.

Saudi Arabia: the Coming Storm by Peter W. Wilson and Douglas F. Graham (1994) provides a brief sketch of the land and people of Saudi Arabia. It discusses the political system of the kingdom in detail and provides foreign relations of Saudi Arabia. It explores the impact of Operation Desert Storm on Saudi Arabia in the perspective of military and security structure of the state. Economic background, the impact of years of oil boom and collapse in oil prices has also been discussed in this book. Lastly, it contains a discussion about some other aspects of Saudi Society, i.e. human rights and labor issues.

In this regard many articles have also been written like an article entitled: The Irony of Islah by Gwenn Okruhlik seeks to address the Saudi Arabian domestic politics in the context of events of mosque uprising, Gulf War and September 11. The article discusses the politics of reforms after September 11 and argues that these reforms will consolidate the political power of ruling family rather to give Saudi people a liberal political structure.

Another article, The Liberal Impulse in Saudi Arabia by Richerd Hrair Dekmejian explores the liberal trends in Saudi society that emerged after the openness promoted by the then Crown Prince Abdullah. Dekmejin traces the roots and development of Saudi liberalism and describes the reformists' petition presented to Abdullah in January 2003. A profile description of the liberal constituency has also been discussed along with the future trends of the society and the impact of 2003 bombings on the reformists' agenda.

In another article, *The Rise of Political Islamism in Saudi Arabia*, Richard Dekmejian narrates the impact of the Persian Gulf War on Saudi Society, the rise of Islamic militancy and its demands and the response of Saudi government towards these demands.

In another article, *Political Reforms in the Gulf: The case of Qatar* by Andrew Rathmell and Kirsten Schulze, reform process has been discussed in Gulf states and most specifically in Qatar in the aftermath of the collapse in oil prices and the Persian Gulf War.

Similarly another article, *Islamic Revivalism and Change in Saudi Arabia: Juhayman Al-Utaybi's Letters to the Saudi People* by Joseph A. Kechichian, describes the events and the ideology that caused the seizure of Makah mosque by Juhayman Al-Utaybi in November 1979. The writer here argues that Al-Utaybi and his followers considered themselves as the defenders of Ikhwan ideology by restoring its honor and their move was political in nature.

Another article, *Between Islamists and Liberals: Saudi Arabia's New "Islam Liberal" Reformists* by Stephane Lacroix, discusses the emergence of a revised version of reform demands by new Islamo-liberal reformers. Along with this, it describes the Shiites demands of a democratic change within the Islamic norms by revising official Wahhabi doctrine. It explores the factors that provide an opportunity to the liberals to strengthen once again. And finally this article analyzes the published manifestos and letters of demands by the liberals.

In another article, *God, the King and the Nation: Political Rhetoric in Saudi Arabia in the 1990s* by Madawi al-Rasheed, the impact of the Persian Gulf War on the Saudi political

and social systems has been described. In the aftermath of Gulf crisis, king Fahad presented his Basic Law. Al-Rasheed argues that this law is considered as a major milestone in reform process but it's only the continuation of the traditional political setup in new form.

A lot of literature, books and articles are available on the history of Saudi Arabia and reforms in Saudi society, which provide adequate material relevant to the topic. It's highly beneficial for understanding the relationship not only in current scenario but also historically. I found it considerable to conduct the research in the context of post September 11, 2001, scenario. From the above mentioned literature, it seems sufficient in order to conduct the desired research which will fill the existing gap.

1.3 Objective of the study

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the threats and challenges to Saudi Arabia that have been emerged in the aftermath of 9/11. The study will also review the political, social and economic reforms that have been adopted by the royal house to counter the rising demands for reforms from outside and inside of the kingdom. Moreover it will throw light not only on the significance of the Saudi reform process but also its implication for the ruling elite, public and the west.

1.4. Related Questions

Some of the main questions which will be addressed in the study are as follows: What are the political changes and reforms that occurred in the history of modern Saudi Arabia?

What are the threats perceived by ruling elite which played an important role in the reformation of Saudi society in pre 9/11 era? What are the factors that led the Saudi royal family to opt the way of political, social, and economic reforms in the aftermath of 9/11? What kind of reform strategy has been adopted by Saudi government in order to tackle the threat and challenges which emerged in post 9/11 scenario? And to what extent these reforms liberalized the autocratic political structure of Saudi Arabia?

1.5. Hypothesis

In the post 9/11 scenario, many internal and external factors are pushing Saudi regime towards reform process. Hence, 9/11 is perceived as a threat by Saudi regime and it started to adopt many reform policies to counter this threat in the form of social, political and economic reforms which are affecting state and society in one way or the other.

1.6. Justification of the Study

Saudi Arabia is an important regional and international player due to its geo-political strategic significance. It connects western world with Asia. It is located with Africa on the one side and with Iran and South Asia on the other. The kingdom exists in the middle of the strategically important Indian Ocean Area. Another reason of Saudi Arabia's importance is its world's largest oil reserves which provide Saudi Arabia an influencing economic and political position. It is considered as the most significant member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Furthermore, Saudi Arabia's membership of G-20 organization enhanced its significant role as an international player.

Besides that, it is also considered as a dominant regional state due to its larger area and population. Whole Muslim Ummah has great concern with Saudi Arabia because it hosts and guards the two most important and holiest places of Muslims.

Saudi Arabia contains a unique form of government as being the only nation to use Quran as its constitution. It presents a unique model of nation building where a country transforms its system from eighteenth century scenario to a developed society within two decades. Still Saudi society is in gradual transition and is moving from a close society to an open one. The study about a society, like Saudi Arabia, could be very beneficial for a student of politics.

From the literature reviewed it can be inferred that most of the work has been carried out in the historical perspective but it is foremost important to work in a new international order, after 9/11, and to find out the implications of reform process in Saudi Arabia. This area is almost unexplored and there exists insufficient work to understand the relationship of state and society in the aftermath of September, 11 2001.

1.7. Research Methodology

The research is based on three basic components, i.e. description, analysis and prescription. The study is conducted in an historical and contemporary perspective. All the issues related to the subject would be analyzed to evaluate the politics of reforms after 9/11. In order to understand the key questions on practical ground, the study must be made through detailed analysis, review and interpretation of various sources. The data being utilized for this study have been gathered from the government publications,

official documents, statements, debates in the Shura Council, different Commission Reports etc. as the primary source material whereas books, scholarly articles, research journals, and literature available on internet as the secondary source material.

1.8. Organization of Study

For comprehensive analysis and better understanding, the study is divided into six Chapters, starting from the statement of the problem and ending with a Conclusion.

Chapter one is an introduction to the study which includes the significance and objectives of the study. It also addresses the key questions pertaining to the subject. Further, the chapter also comprises the literature review and layout plan of the study.

Chapter two discusses the political system and its various types. It describes the types of changes of political system. It focuses on the political, social and economic changes that occurred in the whole Persian Gulf Region.

Chapter three is divided into two parts. First part discusses the history of political reforms and changes in Saudi Arabia. Second part gives a detailed account of socio-political and economic threats and Saudi reform strategies to counter these threats in pre 9/11 period.

Chapter four discusses the internal and external threats that emerged in post 9/11 period. It examines the efforts of coalition building among ruling elite and public for the support of reform process.

Chapter five consists of a detailed study of reform strategies adopted by the Saudi government to satisfy the demands for reforms and to counter the threats to the system in the aftermath of 9/11.

Final part of the study consists of the conclusion to analyze the whole research work.

1.9. Periodization of the Study

The study mainly focuses in the post 9/11 scenario of politics of reforms in Saudi Arabia besides that it briefly reviews the pre 9/11 scenario.

CHAPTER 2: TYPES OF CHANGES IN POLITICAL SYSTEM: BACKGROUND OF REFORMS IN THE PERSIAN GULF STATES

The study deals with the reforms and changes in political system of Saudi Arabia since its formation. Before describing the reform process in detail, it is important to briefly illustrate a political system, its types and the changes. It is also beneficial to have a brief overview of the whole Persian Gulf region in the context of socio-political and economic changes in order to have a better understanding of the reform process in Saudi Arabia.

2.1. Political System

A political system is comprised of different institutions, like legislature executive, judiciary and bureaucracy, political parties, interest groups and unions. These political institutions interact with each other and fulfill the requirements of a political system. Hence "political system operates as a mode of policy production, a way of formulating and implementing public decisions that affect the general society."¹

According to David Easton's model, political system is a combination of input, output and outcome. Inputs enter in a political system in the form of demands and support of particular actions. Legitimate powers of that political system direct some policy decisions

¹ Charles F. Andrain, *Comparative Political Systems: Policy Performance and Social Change* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), 7.

to follow those inputs. These decisions are known as outputs which further interact with the political system and produce a change or outcome in that system.² These outcomes further define the policy decisions. People, sometimes, try to influence policy makers through certain means of activism. In democratic political systems people support those political parties which carry their ideology and promise to fulfill their demands. Decisions are made by different people with different processes which consequently formulate several types of political systems in this world.³

2.2. Types of Political System

Some of the important types of political systems could be described as:

Authoritarianism refers to a limited political pluralism where interest groups and political parties are not allowed to indulge in activism. It is a personalized form of political system. Authoritarian monarchy is the most traditional political system in the world. One type of authoritarianism is socialism as it is also known as “socialist authoritarianism”. It consists of one-party rule with a centralized system of government and without freedom of expressions. Another type of authoritarianism is military regime. Military regime comes to power after a throw of previous civilian government. This action is usually known as coup d'état.

Another type of political system is anarchism. This system is a “belief that every coercive central political power in society results in tyranny and oppression and hence that

² See Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell Jr., *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966), esp. pp. 29-33, for a presentation of the model.

³ Jean Blondel, *Comparing Political Systems* (New York: Praeger, 1972), 16.

government is neither essential nor desirable.”⁴ This type of political system has nothing to do with government. It forms several groups within society to run farms and factories and it believes on the free harmonious cooperation among these groups.⁵ Such kind of political system emerges when people start thinking that government is evil and there is no need of government institutions. It refers to an absence of government and lack of law and order.⁶

One more type of political system is democracy. In democratic political system, people rule either by direct democracy or by electing their representatives. Because of the large populated societies of today, it is hard to practice direct democracy. Hence representative democracy exists now-a- days. Until French revolution, democracy was not a universally acceptable form of political system but now it is considered to be the only acceptable form of political system.⁷

2.3. Political Change and its Types

Political change is the replacement of one form of political system with another form. These changes could occur in various shapes and kinds. It depends upon the structure of political system and upon people’s will. Sometimes these changes appear gradually and sometimes rapid changes appear to the political stage. It can replace the whole political system or can only replace some of the existing institutions. Among various forms of

⁴ Wilbur W. White, *White's Political Dictionary* (Cleveland, OH: World Publishing, 1947), 18.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.19.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.19.

⁷ Roger Scruton, *The Palgrave Macmillan Dictionary of Political Thought* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 170.

political changes, revolution, evolution, coup d'état, and reformation are some important forms which will be discussed in detail.

2.3.1. Revolution

It is not easy to define the term 'revolution' and the phenomena denoted by it.⁸ The meaning of the term has changed since its first use in seventeenth century. For the first time this term was used in the English Civil War of 1642–1649. This was known as the Glorious Revolution. It was followed by the American Revolution in eighteenth century. Both revolutions brought political transformations, avoided violence, and retained sufficient social continuity to guarantee stability.⁹ French revolution in eighteenth century was considered to be a model revolution and archetype of all coming revolutions.¹⁰ It set the rules and definitions of the revolution and gave a modern meaning to the term revolution. Previously, the term was used for turning the current affairs or revising some of the prevailing political conditions but after French revolution it was regarded to be a phenomenon which created a new situation.¹¹ Revolution denoted a major political and social transformation.¹²

According to Marxism theory, during revolution one class defeats another class. Marxian theory of revolution is based upon two versions. The first version denotes that:

Revolutions occur when productive forces develop to the point where production relations begin to fetter them and, those

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 598

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 599

¹⁰ Maryanne Cline Horowitz, ed., *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (New York: Thomson Gale, 2005), 2117.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Scruton, *Op.cit.*, 598

*enormous forces having been contained only briefly, the fetters burst asunder, toppling all institutions along with them.*¹³

The second version holds that:

*Revolution is the product of class struggle, which grows until all existing institutions are invaded by it, when open conflict breaks out, leading to the replacement of the ruling class by those that had been ruled by it.*¹⁴

According to Leninist theory of revolution accumulation of political power is necessary element in revolution while Marxism only believes revolution in social terms.¹⁵ During 1989, anti-communist and nonviolent revolution occurred in Eastern Europe. These revolutions involved the whole population. They demanded rule of law, freedom of expression and property rights. The nature of these revolutions was opposite to those of Lenin's theories.

According to modern theorists, revolution may occur as a result of a coup or as a result of a popular revolutionary struggle. Not only any oppressive regime but also a lawfully elected regime may pass through a revolution.¹⁶ Revolution is considered to be a major process of system change because it changes the prevailing political system to a new order by transforming the society through a revolutionary struggle.

2.3.2. Evolution

Major social and political changes occur as forms of evolution. Political, social and economic institutions adopt several changes with the passage of time by the process of

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 599

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Michael Freeman and David Robertson, ed., *The Frontiers of Political Theory: Essays in a Revitalized Discipline*, (New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1982), 58.

evolution.¹⁷ Evolution opposes revolution and the forceful change in existing political system. Evolution believes in a beneficial change through a continuous and gradual process rather a sudden change.

2.3.3. Coup D'état

Coup d'état stands for a sudden forcible change of political system and a sudden stroke of policy.¹⁸ This forcible change of government is brought by those who already hold some form of power either political power or military power.¹⁹ It completely modifies the prevailing constitution. A coup d'état is different from revolution as the latter is brought by people and by those who hold no power in the prevailing political system.²⁰

Examples of cop d'état include the seizure of power by Bolsheviks in 1917 and Mussolini's seizure of power in 1925.²¹ In 1999 Pervez Musharraf assumed power in Pakistan through a bloodless coup.

2.3.4. Reform

Reform is another process of political change. It is different from other process of change in the sense that it happens within the "framework of a constitution" and it never questions the "legitimacy of the sovereign power."²² The word reform is derived from a

¹⁷ Scruton, *Op. cit.*, 230

¹⁸ White, *Op.cit.*, 78

¹⁹ Scruton, *Op.cit.*,149

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*,p.585

Latin word *reformare* which means to recast or reshape.²³ Reform stands for the improvement in an existing condition or situation.²⁴

Reform and revolution are two different terms. Reform denotes a “substantial change through an orderly and lawful process” whereas revolution denotes a “radical change through violent and illegal means”.²⁵ But until eighteenth century both terms were used for the same meaning. It was after the French Revolution that gave a distinct meaning to these two terms.

Reform is usually supported by popular support which plays an important role for its success. It is advanced by people for ideological reason²⁶ and adopted by government institutions to satisfy the peoples’ demands. During 19th century, in the UK reform meant “electoral reforms”; extension of the franchise through the Reform Act 1832, and the Representation of the People Acts 1867, 1884, and 1918.²⁷

According to Oxford English Dictionary, reform is an “alteration for the better.”²⁸ But Marxists deny this meaning of reform which brings change within the prevailing power structure while arguing that it is against the spirit of socialist revolution. During 1980s, USSR leadership tried to bring social and economic reforms to avoid the coming economic downfall. They just tried to reform the small business and limited portions of society while holding other major institutions under communist control. These efforts of

²³ Horowitz, *Op.cit.*, 2025

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Scruton, *Op.cit.*, 585

²⁸ Horowitz, *Op.cit.*, 2025

reform were not successful because of incompatibility between requirements of reform and the communist monopoly.²⁹

Reform could be of many types, it could be in the shape of form social reforms, and it could be in the form of political or economic reforms. Main purpose remains the same, to bring a positive change within the existing structure. In the modern world, economic reforms depend upon political system of a country and political reforms depend upon the economic policy reforms. If political system is well governed, transparent and accountable then economic reforms could be successful in a country and vice versa.

Reform is considered as an important change in the political system which further tends to alter the prevailing political system. Political system is run by a group of political leaders who form several strategies. These strategies are implemented through different institutions of the state. Reform process brings changes through these strategies. Sometimes changes occur in these strategies and in the political system but it does not constitute reform because not all changes turn into a reform process.³⁰

Sometimes reform coalition breaks up into groups.³¹ This happens when, among supporters of the reform process, some think that there is no need to go further for reform strategy while others wish to continue the reform process. This situation creates limitations on the reform process and if reformists ignore these limitations it will create

²⁹Scruton, *Op.cit.*, 585

³⁰ W. J. Tompson, "Khrushchev and Gorbachev as Reformers: A Comparison," *British Journal of Political Science* 23, no. 1 (1993): 80.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 83

serious challenges to the survival of state, political system or to the power of the reformists themselves.³²

2.4. Three Phases of Reform Process

Reform process which is the result of changes introduced by the political leadership is called "reform from above."³³ Major reform from above changes the arrangement of power in institutions, arrangement of economy and state's international position.³⁴ Hence the purpose of reform is to revise the existing system. Before going in the detailed discussion of Saudi Arabia's reforms it is necessary to understand the common framework of evolution of the reform process. It is based on three phases; these phases can appear simultaneously in a political system or can occur one by one.

Soviet Union's introduction of reforms, perestroika could be taken as case study for the practical implementation of reform process divided into three phases. These were the reforms from above. A reform from above always occurs under some specific historical conditions. Perestroika was the policy of economic and political liberalization. In 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev came to power and in 1986 he decided to introduce reforms in the Soviet political and economic structures.

³² *Ibid.*, 80

³³ Valerie Bunce, "Domestic Reform and International Change: The Gorbachev Reforms in Historical Perspective," *International Organization* 47, no. 1 (1993): 110.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

2.4.1. Phase one: Threat Identification

The first phase is “threat identification.”³⁵ The emergence of military, economic or political crises threaten the very survival of the state or the regime itself. Reform process always starts to counter a particular threat.

When Gorbachev came to power, Soviet Union was facing a very acute threat of economic stagnation. In the meantime Soviet system was facing political and social problems as well.³⁶ Severe economic crisis not only triggered these political and social problems but also raised legitimacy issues to soviet regime.³⁷ Legitimacy of Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its ideological monopoly based upon the economic progress. After Soviet’s economy became stagnant CPSU lost its legitimacy to rule the state. Economic crisis also defamed the geostrategic and international policies of Soviet Union.³⁸ All these factors had appeared as threat to the stability of the state and Gorbachev identified the threat in time. Soviet leader started thinking that adoption of a new course is inevitable and satisfactory economic growth could only be achieved after initiating a reform agenda.

³⁵Tompson, *Op.cit.*, 82

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

2.4.2. Phase Two: Reform Strategy

Political establishment identifies threats and in the second step “reform strategy” is formulated and implemented to counter the crisis.³⁹ Leader’s ideological affiliation plays an important role in the evolving of the reform strategy.

After the identification of an economic and political threat in Soviet Union and after the leadership disposed for reforms, a strategy of the reform process was required. As the economy was stagnant and the big hurdle for any change was the size and the power of bureaucratic structure.⁴⁰ Hence it was impossible to start any political or economic reform process without eliminating the power and size of the bureaucratic and party elite. Gorbachev started to decentralize the enterprises which was opposed by the party elite.⁴¹ Extensive economic transformation was not possible without major political modifications.⁴² For all these transformations and modifications Gorbachev needed a strong policy. He initiated *Perestroika*, political and economic reforms. *Perestroika* opened up the economy for personal enterprise and allowed foreign firms to enter in Soviet Union. *Perestroika* proposed the liberalization of authoritarian political structure. It called for major reformation of the centralized economy. It demanded the polarization of political power; transfer of power from communist party and from politbureau to people.⁴³ In addition to that he started the policy of *Glasnost*- openness and publicity.⁴⁴ *Glasnost* provided to the press an opportunity to unveil the corruption cases of party

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁴⁰ Christopher Young, “The Strategy of Political Liberalization: A Comparative View of Gorbachev’s Reforms,” *World Politics*, 45, no. 1 (Oct., 1992). Via jstor, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2010518>

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Tompson, *Op.cit.*, 87

⁴³ Young, *Op.cit.*

⁴⁴ Ron Hill, “The Collapse of the Soviet Union,” *History Ireland*, 13, no. 2 (2005). Via jstor, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27725240>

officials.⁴⁵ It produced pressure from below for reform. At last political reforms were introduced in 1987 and in the following years, Gorbachev successfully restructured the Supreme Soviets and other institutions of State power.⁴⁶ Slight improvement was done in economic reform.

2.4.3. Phase Three: Coalition Building

Reform strategy is evolved in a way that not only satisfies the reformer's goal but also inculcates more and more supporters for the reform process within the society.⁴⁷ The practice to make more people as the supporters of reforms process is the third step, "coalition building".⁴⁸

Reformers could only be able to implement their reform strategy if they are successful in coalition building. Continuation of reform process is possible after having sufficient support from the people, opposition groups and more importantly from the ruling elite. Sufficient support by other actors could be won by "paying off or threatening" and by "convincing other actors that there is more to fear from existing threats to the status quo than from reform."⁴⁹ Gorbachev appointed considerable number of reform-minded people to gain more and more support from the party. However, he failed to appeal the interests of powerful institutions within the government.⁵⁰ To get more and more supporters for the reform process it is also necessary to make sure that victims of reforms are far less

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Tompson, Op.cit., 87*

⁴⁷ *Ibid., p. 82.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid., p. 89.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid., p. 92.*

than the beneficiaries. In the case of Gorbachev reforms, policy of *Glasnost* or democratization offended party officials and hence the victims of reforms were growing in number with the passage of time. Gorbachev tried to mobilize public to get support for his reform process by using *glasnost* and democratization, but he was unable to meet the rising popular expectations. He also tried to get support from the intelligentsia but he found their support for a short time only.

This reform model could be implemented for the study of reform process in the Persian Gulf region and more specifically in Saudi Arabia.

2.5. Persian Gulf: Historical Background of Reforms

Most of the Arab states achieved their independence by the end of the twentieth century. Among these, majority of the states exercised authoritarian political system. Later, many states opted limited socio-economic and political reforms. Among these are the six Gulf States, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain. Saudi Arabia and UAE remained as absolute monarchies and the rest were constitutional monarchies. In 1950s, the Arab states were getting rid of the British colonial rule and were at the peak of their Arab-nationalism and pan-Arabism feelings. The Persian Gulf States always sensed ideology of Arab-nationalism, hosted by their neighboring countries, as a threat to their monarchic powers. More specifically, Iran and Saudi Arabia perceived nationalistic threat to them vibrantly. Both were absolute monarchies at that time. The Persian Gulf States faced some liberal movements led by nationalist activists and this threat became severe in 1958 when nationalists overthrew Faisal II in a neighboring country Iraq. Furthermore,

leftist coup in Southern Yemen in 1967 and Baath party's gaining of power in Iraq in 1968 ignited nationalist threat to more vividly Persian Gulf states. These events made the people of the Gulf enough aware that they started demanding their right of participation in decision making process. These monarchic states faced a pressure from their people for participation in decision making. While the monarchs were reluctant to accept peoples' demands as it could enable them to question the former's legitimacy to rule.

For many years, Gulf States remained stable politically, socially and economically. Because of their immense economic resources, the monarchs were able to satisfy people's economic objectives. In the meantime, they were considered credible guards of religious faith against socialism, nationalism and Zionism.⁵¹ Their political and economic condition changed in late 1980s. When their oil based economies plunged due to stagnant oil prices in international market. Decline in public revenues limited the welfare policies of Gulf regimes. In all the six monarchies there emerged internal opposition and tough external threats. External threats were listed as Iranian revolution, Gulf war, and the incident of 9/11. Internal oppositions were aftermath of the external threats.

2.5.1. Oil and Changing Economic Situations of Gulf Region

Each of the Gulf States has different political background and different socio-economic scenario.⁵² However, the entire Gulf States share one thing in common and that is their

⁵¹ Gawdat Bahgat, "The Gulf Monarchies: Economic and Political Challenges at the End of the Century," *The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies*, 23. No. 2(1998). Via Questia, <http://www.questia.com/read/5035374472?title=The%20Gulf%20Monarchies%3a%20Economic%20and%20Political%20Challenges%20at%20the%20End%20of%20the%20Century>

⁵² Andrew Rathmell and Kirsten Schulze, "Political Reform in the Gulf: The Case of Qatar." *Middle Eastern Studies*, 36, no. 4 (2000). Via Jstor, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4284113>

highly centralized economies and the rentier state systems. Two-third of the world's oil assets are present in the Persian Gulf region. After Arab-Israel war in 1973 and Iranian revolution in 1979, oil prices soared up which gave massive capital to Gulf monarchs. Gulf rulers generously spent petro dollar for the welfare of their people and succeeded to maintain political, social and economic stability. However, by the mid 1980s, oil prices started to decline and hence, the oil based gulf economies experienced a substantial budget deficit.⁵³

Gulf States adopted many methods to counter the economic downfall. Among those methods, one was to cut the public expenditure. It was the hard decision to take. In 1994 Bahrain, Oman and Qatar planned to cut public expenditures.⁵⁴ Kuwait decided to revise its policy of subsidies on domestic utilities, petrol and telephone services.⁵⁵ UAE doubled the price of electricity and announced a new healthcare fee in 1995.⁵⁶ Saudi Arabia also cut its public spending and in 1995 it was recorded as the lowest since 1988.⁵⁷

Another method, permission of private sector to work, was also adopted to face the immense economic pressure. Certain reforms in legal code, establishment of stock markets, and privatization policies fulfilled economic and political needs of the time.⁵⁸ Kuwait government privatized large share of its assets.⁵⁹ Private sector in Dubai was already dominant.⁶⁰ Saudi government was hesitant to go for privatization policy.⁶¹

⁵³Bahgat, *Op.cit.*

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸Rathmell and Schulze, *Op.cit.*

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*Ibid.*

During the same period, representative bodies had also been created or improved.⁶² One of the examples was the establishment of Oman's Consultative Council. The purpose of the council was to combine the principles of Islam with the modern notions of participatory democracy.⁶³ Like King Fahad in Saudi Arabia, introduced a "Basic Law" and established a Consultative Council.⁶⁴ Though the members of those bodies were selected rather than elected with limited powers but still it was considered to be the first step towards participatory political system in the Gulf region.

Gulf States ignored economic sectors other than oil. During oil price crisis they were of the view that to bear costs of welfare state was not possible. Their full dependence on oil sector and the centralized economic system led Gulf economies to downfall. In the late 1990s Gulf monarchies took some fiscal measures which "paved the way for political reforms."⁶⁵

As a decline in welfare policies of monarchs, there started unrest among the people of Gulf States. Consequently political reforms were proposed to the rulers in the form of petitions. Those petitions were put forward by intellectuals and religious figures. They demanded equality before Law, accountability of all government institutions against corruption, return to Islamic values, cut in oil production to increase prices, and adoption of anti-Israel and anti-west policy.⁶⁶ It is important to note that, most of those reformers

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Gawdat Bahgat, "The Changing Economic and Political Environment in the Gulf Monarchies," *The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies*, 20, no. 3(1995). Via Questia, <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=5035541571>

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

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wanted to bring change from inside of their political system without bringing down the prevailing political system.

2.5.2. Iran's Revolution: Impact on the GCC States

Iranian revolution of 1979 was considered to be a major and irresistible threat to the Six Gulf monarchies: Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, and Qatar. Iranian revolution has had long lasting impacts on the regional politics and on the domestic politics of each Gulf State. The revolution played a significant role for the inclination of Persian Gulf States towards limited reforms as a result of on the pressure from both inside and outside.

Gulf States feel threatened from the revolution, first, because of their perception of the "export of revolution"⁶⁷ from neighboring country. Iran was much confident to reshape the world according to its own norms and to spread its own Islamic vision throughout the Muslim world.⁶⁸ New regime in Iran considered Islam as the basis of the new Iranian Republic. New religious clergy was in contrast with Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia. Iranian revolutionary elements claim that they rule according to Islamic customs. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini argued that the monarchic political system is non-Islamic and Iranian model of republic is the only Islamic political system. A few incidents of Iran's interference in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain were filed. During the early days of revolution any group could stand up in Gulf States, announced its links with Iranian revolution and demanded liberalized political system. Sometimes they were having support from Iran

⁶⁷ Gary Sick, "Iran: The Adolescent Revolution," *Journal of International Affairs* 49, no. 1(1995):145-166.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

and sometimes they rose up against their regimes due to their own underprivileged life style. Nonetheless it was a common belief that the uprisings or public demands for change, occurring in Gulf States, were backed by Iranian revolutionary elements. Second, Iran's aspirations for the military and nuclear powers were also threatening rest of the region.

Whole discussion could be concluded in a way that, Gulf States' perception of Iranian revolution as threat to them was in fact based upon two reasons. First reason was the behavior of Iranian revolutionary regime itself. Second reason was the inspirations of revolution from a neighboring state which the people of Gulf States could get and, consequently, in future could ask their share in decision making. In response to these threats, Gulf States started describing the Iranian regime as non-Islamic. Saudi Arabia launched a campaign to propagate the insufficiencies of a revolutionary regime. Practically six states united in a forum called GCC. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was formed in 1981 by six Gulf States to counter the Iranian political and economic domination in the Persian Gulf region.

2.5.3. Persian Gulf War (1990-1991): Impact on GCC States

In 1990s political environment of Gulf region started to get change. The rulers were trying hard to maintain the status of welfare state. They were struggling to follow their promises to a growing population with declining economies. Gulf monarchs enjoyed their people's support due to their generous welfare policies. But after decline in oil prices, political consent was under stress. This political pressure was further provoked by the

Gulf War of 1990-91. The war not only exhausted many of the public reserves but also highlighted the fragility of the defense and strategic policies of Gulf rulers. They depended on foreign arms for their defense. Christian armies had been invited to defend the holy land of Islam, which offended the people of Gulf States. All these incidents showed that in the post-Gulf war scenario, rulers of the region would be different from their ancestors.⁶⁹

Gulf societies moved from desert life to a modern urbanized life due to massive oil wealth. Their political system started to evolve during the past century. Ruling families of Gulf States seriously considered the changing economic, political, social and geo-strategic conditions as a threat to their regimes. There was a need to respond to the new forces in a new way and to make an efficient reform strategy. Political developments in the region were results of a combination of three forces; existence of a deep rooted discontent, organized opposition to mobilize this discontent; the reactions towards the situation by different monarchs of Persian Gulf States.⁷⁰ Each gulf state formulated its own reform strategy to counter the new pressure. Their policies and political development is further discussed as below:

Kuwait was the only Gulf State that completely came to an end during Gulf war. The war put a direct threat to its very survival. Iraq occupied Kuwait during Gulf war in 1990 and the ruling family took asylum in Saudi Arabia. For the restoration of Kuwait's sovereignty, royal family needed the help not only from its folks but from outside world

⁶⁹Bahgat, *Op.cit.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

as well.⁷¹ In accordance to that, the ruling family promised a full restoration of parliamentary life and popular participation to get arms support from the western world and to mobilize its own population in its favor.⁷² After liberation in 1991, Kuwait revived its parliamentary life but ruling family did not fulfill its promise of “full democratization” and elected a body having few powers.

After the incident of 9/11, women were also allowed to participate in the elections. Consequently, in the last elections of May 2009, two women parliamentarians were elected first time in Kuwaiti history and in the history of Gulf States as well. Kuwait parliament was dissolved thrice from 2008 to 2009 and hence elections held after every dissolution. Reasons for frequent suspensions were the growing tensions between cabinet and parliament.

Kuwait is considered to have a better and historically prolonged version of democratic political system than other Gulf States. Kuwaiti constitution allows a free elected parliament with real legislative powers and al-Sabah family rules Kuwait under this constitution. But still the real powers remained in the hands of ruling family without major political reforms.

In Bahrain majority of population are Shia while the ruling family is Sunni. Conflict between opposition groups and most prominently Shia groups and ruling family caused a deep rooted civil discord by the mid 1990s. Shia majority population claimed discrimination in social, economic and political benefits. In 1992 a petition was presented

⁷¹ Gawdat Bahgat, “The Gulf Monarchies: Economic and Political Challenges at the End of the Century,” *The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies*, 23, no. 2(1998): 147. Via Questia, <http://www.questia.com/read/5035374472?title=The%20Gulf%20Monarchies%3a%20Economic%20and%20Political%20Challenges%20at%20the%20End%20of%20the%20Century>

⁷² *Ibid.*

to Emir which demanded the restoration of constitution and a elected national assembly.⁷³ In response to that Emir established a consultative council consisted of 30 nominated members without having real legislative powers. Council failed to fulfill the public demands therefore activists created a Committee of Popular Petition (CPP) in October 1994 and 25,000 signatories were gathered on its platform.⁷⁴ People from all walks of life gathered on the CPP forum. Government arrested the leader of CPP which annoyed public more. In 1994, a sound wave of protests and unrest started in Bahrain for the next eighteen months. In order to control the public unrest, the Emir reshuffled his cabinet and arrested his opponents. Consequently, a political crisis emerged. In 1999, Shaikh Hamad bin Isa acceded to the throne. He pardoned political prisoners and promised to formulate and then implement a modern constitution. In order to that, referendum held in 2001 where electorates massively voted for the creation of 40-member parliament and the forty-member appointed shura Council.⁷⁵ In 2002, Emir Hamad declared himself as the King of Bahrain and promised to conduct parliamentary and municipal elections. Bahrain's first municipal elections were held on May 9, 2002. In October 2002, the parliamentary elections were held in which 190 members including 8 women were elected to the parliament.⁷⁶

Recently in October 2010, Bahrain's third elections were held where Shia won almost half of the seats. However, a little change is being expected in the Sunni-rule state

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Joseph A. Kéchichian, "Democratization in Gulf Monarchies: A New Challenge to the GCC." *Middle East Policy Council Journal*, 11, (2004). Via Middle East Policy Council, <http://www.mafhoum.com/press7/221S26.htm>

⁷⁶ <http://gulfnews.com/> (accessed October 20, 2002)

because of limited powers of the parliamentarians. Parliamentary bill needs to get approval from the king's appointed body of Majlis Shura. Ultimate power is in the hands of ruling family. A genuine democratic society in Bahrain is only possible provided elected political institutions is allowed to take independent decisions.

Qatar is small populated entity with immense oil wealth. Rulers are enormously generous to give wide range of benefits to their small population. This welfare state is eager to provide a supportive environment for new investors. This prosperous environment does not mean that Qatar is not experiencing socio-economic and political reforms. In the aftermath of Gulf war, since the coup in 1995, Qatar started to pronounce its reform strategy. This reform strategy focused upon liberalization which will further lead towards democratization. Reform strategy is mainly based upon three concepts; to boost the role of private investors, to provide freedom of expression, and to move towards democratization.⁷⁷

Economic reforms started in 1995 when Doha stock market was established. This was the first step towards private sector economy. Elections of Chamber of Commerce in 1998 showed Qatar's aspiration for major role of private sector in its economy. In these elections, 3,700 Qatari businessmen elected their seventeen representatives to the chamber board.⁷⁸ These elections were held for the first time in Qatar's history. Previously chamber board members used to be appointed by the Emir of Qatar.

The Emir took several steps towards liberalization and providing the right of freedom of expression was one of them. He eased press censorship in the late 1990s. Al-Jazeera, a

⁷⁷Rathmell and Schulze, *Op.cit.*

⁷⁸*Ibid.*

Doha based satellite TV channel was established which became renowned for taking essential steps in order to explore controversial political, social and religious issue.⁷⁹

Important steps have been taken for democratization of Qatar's political system and broadening up of its political participation. Prior to king Hamad's coup, Qatar's only political institution was its thirty-member appointed Shura. This Shura Council was more or less similar to other Councils in most of the Gulf States. In March 1990, municipal elections were held, any citizen above 25, including women, could stand and vote. Strong electorate of 22000 out of 74000 voted to select 29 members of municipal council.⁸⁰ In 2003, Qatar's constitution was approved by referendum. It established a large elected advisory council which would have the powers to pass laws, subject to the Emir's agreement.⁸¹ Women were allowed to vote and hold the office as well. Emir Hamad approved the constitution in 2004, and it started to work in 2005.⁸² In 2007, Qatar's third municipal elections were held with a turnout of 51.1 percent.

Omani society is homogeneous, 75 % population including the ruling family is Ibadhi. Due to this homogeneity, Omani political system is less confrontational and more accommodative.⁸³ This harmony between people and the ruling family has improved by a massive rise of the living standards. There never existed any kind of constitution or elected legislature unlike the rest of Gulf States. Only in 1981, a Consultative Assembly

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed., s.v. "Qatar," <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=117041067> (accessed November 10, 2010)

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Gawdat Bahgat, "The Gulf Monarchies: Economic and Political Challenges at the End of the Century," *The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies*, 23, no. 2(1998): 147. Via Questia, <http://www.questia.com/read/5035374472?title=The%20Gulf%20Monarchies%3a%20Economic%20and%20Political%20Challenges%20at%20the%20End%20of%20the%20Century>

was established without legislative powers. Aftermath of Gulf war, no petitions were presented to the ruler, as it happened in other Gulf States. In 1991, Sultan himself took an initiative and established a nominated body of fifty nine members Consultative Council in place of Consultative Assembly. Sultan Qaboos had chosen one nominee from each province. Council had right to review the cultural, social and economic matters of legislation.⁸⁴ It was restricted to review foreign and defense policy matters or to question the ministers of these areas.⁸⁵ In 1993, the membership was stretched to eighty along with two female members. Hence, so far Oman became the only monarchy to have women legislators.⁸⁶ In 1994, a plot to overthrow the government failed. In the aftermath of that failed coup, Sultan introduced "Basic Law" in 1996. After 9/11, lower house of the advisory council was elected first time in 2003.⁸⁷

There exists good relations between the ruling family and the people in UAE. In 1950s, oil was discovered in UAE due to which it became one of the richest countries in the world. People started getting so many welfare facilities and economic benefits that the chances of discontent were almost abolished. However, the ruling family established an appointed forty-member Consultative Federal National Council in 1972. Like other Gulf States the council does not have legislative powers.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Gawdat Bahgat, "The Changing Economic and Political Environment in the Gulf Monarchies," *The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies*, 20, no. 3(1995):271. Via Questia, <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=5035541571>

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Gawdat Bahgat, "The Gulf Monarchies: Economic and Political Challenges at the End of the Century," *The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies*, 23, no. 2(1998): 147. Via Questia, <http://www.questia.com/read/5035374472?title=The%20Gulf%20Monarchies%3a%20Economic%20and%20Political%20Challenges%20at%20the%20End%20of%20the%20Century>

⁸⁷ *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed., s.v. "Oman."

⁸⁸ Gawdat Bahgat, "The Gulf Monarchies: Economic and Political Challenges at the End of the Century," *The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies*, 23, no. 2(1998): 147. Via Questia,

In the aftermath of Persian Gulf War, Saudi Arabia started to experience a political change. This political change was, in fact, inaugurated by Saudi government to combat the rising popular dissatisfaction. In 1993, king Fahad created regional assemblies for each of the provinces with a royal family member as the president of every assembly. First time in the history of Saudi Arabia, a Shura Council was established for the purpose to debate, review and advice the kingdom's domestic and foreign policies.

Summing up the whole debate, it could be argued that two factors are considered important in the study of socio-political and economic changes in Persian Gulf States. First, the changing political situation of the region on the whole and second, the oil based economies of Gulf States.

Due to the immense oil wealth, rulers of six Gulf States provided wide range of welfare services to their people to acquire the political consent. After the collapse of oil prices in mid 1980s and early 2010s, this political strategy of acquiring political consent became invalid. Popular discontent started against rulers and rulers don't have enough money to depoliticize their people. Now both sides, rulers and people, need to have a new social arrangement. Rulers announced limited reforms to satisfy their people, and this is considered to be the major reason to initiate reform process in Gulf monarchies.

External threats to the Persian Gulf states are being taken as another reason to open the debate about reforms. As the reforms have been used to contain the peoples' growing discontent, they have also been used as defense against external threats. These external

threats are enlisted as Iranian revolution, Gulf war, and most recently September 11 incident.

Political reforms in the Persian Gulf States should not be taken as democratization or political participation because collective control over public policy does not exist. Reforms are less supportive to genuine democratization and more aiming to control the changing economic and political situations. Before discussing the reform process one should keep in mind the structure and social fabric of these societies. The policies which are introduced as to counter the changing situation are allowing people to participate in decision making to some extent. This limited opening up and liberalization is gradually and slowly leading these societies towards reformation. Though the pace is slow and unsatisfactory, but sudden change in such monarchic states is not possible via reforms.

Moving towards a detailed study of reform process in the gulf region, it is more suitable to pick Saudi Arabia as a case study. Saudi Arabia is dominant state among the rest of Gulf States because of its larger population in the region, the largest oil reserves, wide geography and its vital role at international stage. Saudi Arabia is directly effected by September 11 incidents. International community started to criticize its political system as the root of all evils. What steps Saudi Arabia has so far taken to counter all such criticisms is the area of concern of this study. It would be appropriate to have a detailed historical back ground of Saudi Arabia in the context of its emergence, and social developments. That is to be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: REFORMS IN SAUDI ARABIA

PRE 9/11 PERIOD

Part One: History of Political Reforms and Changes in Saudi Arabia

The term “reformation” or “*Islah*” is not new for Saudi Arabian people. Its root could be traced in the 18th century’s religious and socio-political reform movement of Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab. His movement aimed to purify Islamic practices of the time from all kinds and *bida* and to return to the Quran and original *Sunnah*. Thus it unified the people of Arabian Peninsula under one banner against polytheists and against the “dominant form of Islam in Ottoman Empire”.⁸⁹ This movement provided people an ideological justification for their national struggle against Turks.⁹⁰ It attracted bedouins of the Peninsula with *Jihad* calls and got the support from Najdi nobility. Though it was supported by Najdi nobility but it also demanded the fair treatment of lowest social groups.⁹¹ Thus it became a powerful reform movement of the Peninsula, which changed the entire structures of society, people, religion and state. Again in 19th century, it provided ideological and motivational grounds for the unification of larger parts of Arabian Peninsula under one state, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Hence one could say that

⁸⁹ Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia* (London: Saqi Books, 1998), 80.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

the major factor in the formation of Saudi State was the reform movement of that time which was started to counter the challenges to the pure Islamic norms.

3.1 The Arabian Reformation, *al-Islah al-Arabi*: Eighteenth Century

Central Arabia was officially part of the Ottoman Empire from the sixteenth century. But it was not totally subject to the Ottoman rule because of its poor resources and its geographical isolation. This situation remained similar until the rise of the Wahhabi movement, or Wahhabism, that emerged in the mid eighteenth century. The founder of that religious revivalist movement was sheikh Mohammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab. He was follower of Hanbali school of thought and the fourteenth century revivalist, Ibn Taymiyya.⁹² At that time, the people of the whole peninsula were following the superstitious practices, cult of tree and stone worship, which was far away from the original teachings of Islam.⁹³ Wahhabi ideology rejected all kinds of *bida*, which prevailed in Arabia during those days. It not only served the interests of Saudi family but also asked for the better treatment of the lowest social groups.⁹⁴ Abdul Wahhab called the people to return to the true Islamic practices based only on the Quran and Sunnah and avoid to get indulged into *bida* (innovations).⁹⁵ He aimed to restore Islam in its original shape and started preaching in his home town, Uyanah.⁹⁶

⁹² Madawi Al Rasheed, *Politics in an Arabian Oasis: The Rashidis of Saudi Arabia* (London: I.B. Tauris and Co Ltd., 1991), 30.

⁹³ Johs S. Habib, *Ibn Saud's Warrior of Islam: The Ikhwan of Najd and their Role in the Creation of the Saudi Kingdom 1910-1930* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), 05.

⁹⁴ Vassiliev, *Op.cit.*,

⁹⁵ Phillip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs: from the earliest times to the present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) p. 567.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

3.1.1. Origins of Wahhabi Movement and Saudi Rule

Abdul Wahhab moved towards Deraiya and in 1744 Ibn Saud and Abdul Wahhab agreed to make an alliance to work together for the cause of Islam. This alliance provided the basis of the first Saudi Wahhabi dynasty. The main objective of the alliance was to turn the Muslims to true faith.⁹⁷ It resulted into very fast spread of Wahhabi ideology and established the influence of Ibn Saud throughout the central and eastern Arabia.⁹⁸

Between 1744 and the sheikh's death in 1792, Saudi Realm expanded to all of central Arabia.⁹⁹ Following years Hijaz also came under Saudi rule. Since the rise of Islam, it happened first time that large territory came under one flag.¹⁰⁰ The reason for such an expansion under one rule was the common religious grounds that had been provided by socio-cum-religious movement of Wahhabism.

3.1.2. Socio-Religious Reforms under Wahhabism

Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab trained so many Ulama to contribute his Unitarian efforts.¹⁰¹ He himself answered the criticism of other Ulama who rejected this ideology. Politically, al-Saud family gained all powers and on religious spheres Wahhabi doctrine was dominant.¹⁰² Instead of Najd and Ottoman lands, Deraiya became the destination of

⁹⁷ Sheikh Mohammad Iqbal, *Emergence of Saudi Arabia; a Political Study of King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud 1901-1953*(Srinagar: Saudiyah Publishers, 1977), 07.

⁹⁸Hitti, *Op.cit.*

⁹⁹ David Commins, *the Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 19.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*,p. 26.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

religious students from all over the peninsula and was considered as the hub of religious scholarship.¹⁰³

Before Wahhabi domination, Ushayqir was considered as an important center for religious learning, at some time it was birthplace of eighteen Ulama and the adopted home of fourteen others.¹⁰⁴ It was also the home of Ibn Abdul Wahhab's ancestors. In 1766 it came under Wahhabi authority.¹⁰⁵ Ulama, who opposed Wahhabi ideology, departed and in 1800 all religious teachers were the followers of Wahhabi ideology.¹⁰⁶ Same pattern was followed in other towns of Washm, Sudayr and Najd Regions.¹⁰⁷

3.1.3. Political Reforms under Wahhabism

Wahhabism did not change the social structure of the occupied territories.¹⁰⁸ The methods to extract the income of the ruling class were the same as used to be in the earlier times.¹⁰⁹ Charity was the main feature of Saudi state and, to some extent, used for its own political interests, encouraged the loyalty of the people of central Arabia.¹¹⁰ Different regions and tribes were directly or indirectly dependent on the Saudi State and they were united under the Emir of Deraiya because of his armed forces.¹¹¹ While the Wahhabi

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁰⁸ Vassiliev, *Op.cit.*, 112-139

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

Ulama were the main factor for the centralization policy of Deraiya.¹¹² The conquests of two holly cities by Wahhabis were undermining the repute of the Ottomans.¹¹³

Turkish sultan was unable to ensure safety of his subjects so that they could perform Hajj. He assigned the task to Muhammad Ali, ruler of Egypt, to bring back the cities. His forces captured Medina in October 1812, Jidda in 1813, Mecca and Taif in the same year and Najd in 1815.¹¹⁴ To get local people's support, Muhammad Ali lifted some taxes and reduced the custom duties in Jidda and rewarded the poor with money and gifts.¹¹⁵

During the rule of Egypt in Arabia, there was not even a single policy for the development of society, promotion of economy and security of the lives, property and trade routs was introduced.¹¹⁶ People started to remember the old days of Saudi rule.¹¹⁷

Feudal-tribal anarchy broken out in Najd and Turki ibn Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Saud appeared in Najdi stage.¹¹⁸ He captured Deraiya and moved towards Riyadh. Second Saudi state was able to revive. But it was short lived Saudi Dynastic rule due to unfavorable circumstances and power politics within the ruling family. Rashids of Shammar tribes declared as the undisputable rulers of central Arabia.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-158.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-158.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-158.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

3.2. Revivalism of Arabian Reformation: Nineteenth Century

For the third time in nineteenth century, Saudi family got opportunity to rule the Emirate of Riyadh.¹¹⁹ With the support of Najdi people, Kuwaiti rulers and Britains, young Amir Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rehman started to consolidate territories under his rule.¹²⁰ He was known as Ibn Saud.

3.2.1. Socio-political and Economic Reforms under Revival of Arabian Reformation

Till the year 1906, Central Arabia was under the full control of Ibn Saud. To counter tribal uprisings, Ibn Saud created his army from the scattered nomadic population known as Ikhwan. Ikhwan provided political military and economic advantages to Ibn Saud. Ikhwanism, religious-cum-economic movement, was considered as an important step for the revival of the religious reforms of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab. They formed permanent army, which helped Ibn Saud in the extension of his dominion. Along with internal stability, Ikhwan settlements also provided agricultural prosperity. Apart from all advantages it served, Ikhwanism created a narrow-minded body in society.¹²¹

Ikhwan helped Ibn Saud to capture al-Hasa region and to extend his influence to the western parts of Oman.¹²² The conquest of Hasa provided Ibn Saud an opportunity to improve his relations with Ottomans and Britain.¹²³ In addition to this, revenues that

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Iqbal, *Op.cit.*, 47-51

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 51-56.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

gathered from sea-coast customs of Hasa were also a major benefit for Ibn Saud.¹²⁴ Superior military skills of Ikhwan army along with the diplomatic skills of Ibn Saud played an important role to bring the territories of present Saudi Arabia under Saudi rule. After the completion of the conquest of Hijaz, Ikhwan were sent back to their settlements, and at that moment they created troubles in Najd.¹²⁵ They condemned the policies of Ibn Saud for hiring foreigners in the administration and for sending the government officials abroad to get training in modern techniques.¹²⁶ They started to create problems for Ibn Saud on the grounds of negligence of religious duties by Ibn Saud and on having diplomatic ties with infidel governments of Britain and Iraq.¹²⁷ Ikhwan decided to defend the faith through jihad. Ibn Saud first negotiated with them but failed, then he crushed them by massive force in 1929.¹²⁸ By 1930 Ikhwan revolt was practically brought to an end. The end of Ikhwan movement was resulted into the end of tribal wars, followed by the replacement of tribal loyalties with the central government.¹²⁹

3.2.2. Emergence of Modern Saudi Arabia

On 18 September 1932, Ibn Saud merged all the parts of his rule in one state and gave it a new name, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In 1933 his eldest son Saud was appointed as the crown prince.¹³⁰

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 166-183.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 166-183.

¹²⁷ Iqbal, *Op.cit.*, 166-183

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 166-183.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 166-183.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

3.2.2.1. Administrative and Structural Reforms of Newly Formed Kingdom

After the consolidation of the isolated parts of Arabia, Ibn Saud gave immediate attention to administrative aspects of the State. He created regular army, and introduced elements of modern education system. He adopted the latest means of communications and transport while constructing new roads and railways, and establishing wireless, telephone and telegraph centers at different places in the state. Setting up of ministries and approval of the constitution of Hijaz further paved the way for modernization of the kingdom's political structure.

The world economic crisis, 1929-1933, resulted in great reduction of the number of pilgrims in Saudi Arabia, which were the main source of the kingdom's revenue. After facing the financial problems, Ibn Saud signed concession agreements with Standard Oil Company of California¹³¹ for the extraction of oil. "From the late 1930s Saudi Arabia entered a new era- that of oil- though its impact on the country only really began to be felt in the late 1940s. Both the kingdom's international position and the development of its society were to be influenced henceforth by a powerful new factor."¹³²

Part Two: Socio-Political and Economic Threats and Saudi Strategy

Since its formation, Saudi Arabian government comes across several threats and experiences several reform moves. Each time, the ruling elite form and introduce reform strategies in social, political and economic sectors to combat the challenges

¹³¹ Fouad Al Farsy, *Saudi Arabia: a Case Study in Development* (London: Stacey International, 1978), 44.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 320.

resulted by these threats. Hence a threat in Saudi society proves to be a driving force of reform.

Most of the times, September 11, 2001 is considered as the major factor accelerating the Saudi Arabian reform process.¹³³ That is not true, because other drivers, like Pan-Arabism, collapse of oil prices and Gulf Crises, are as much important as September 11 for the understanding of the Saudi Arabian domestic politics and the reform process Saudi Arabia.

3.3. Pan Arabism and Saudi Response

In the context of Pan-Arabism, there were several reform movements penetrated in Saudi society like ARAMCO workers' strikes, activities of National Reform Front, and Movement of Free Princes.

3.3.1. Early Socio-Political and Economic Reforms

After the death of Ibn Saud in November 1953, his eldest son Saud became the king and Faisal was nominated as crown prince.¹³⁴ First cabinet was formed in Saudi Arabia and Faisal was appointed as deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs.¹³⁵ In his first political statement, Saud expressed his intentions to continue his father's policies and to establish religious principles.¹³⁶ Along with this, he promised certain social and

¹³³ Gwenn Okruhilk, "The Irony of *Islah (Reform)*," *The Washington Quarterly* 28, no.4 (2005): 157.

¹³⁴ Farsy, *Op.cit.*, 335

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

economic developments.¹³⁷ He faced several external and internal problems. Petro-dollar brought development and modernization in Saudi society.¹³⁸ Saud tried to upgrade education system with the idea of modernization.¹³⁹ On the one side, Ulama' class demanded an end to the modernization while, on the other side newly emerging middle class and 'Liberal Princes' asked for more and more modernization and constitutional reforms.¹⁴⁰ During that period, state was getting hefty amount of revenues from oil export but the king considered national income as his personal property and lavishly spent it on his palaces, harem, and guests.¹⁴¹

3.3.1.1. The ARAMCO Workforce Demands for Reforms: 1953-1956

Al-Hasa, with unpleasant weather, was a backward region until 1940s and its population was poor and suppressed. Mostly it consisted of Shiites agriculturalists and nomadic Sunni tribesmen. In 1946, after the discovery of oil and its exploitation the situation and circumstances in eastern region, al-Hasa, started to change.¹⁴² Standard Oil of California (SOCAL) was the pioneer company which started oil extraction from Saudi Arabia. Later, in January 1944, it changed its name to the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO).¹⁴³ Oil revenues helped Saudi Arabia to enter a new era of social advancement and raised its international position.¹⁴⁴ This oil company developed an

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Mordechai Abir, *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society and the Gulf Crises* (New York: Rutledge, 1993), 29.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Vassiliev, *Op.cit.*, 320

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

infrastructure of roads, healthcare institutes and schools which helped the suppressed people of the Eastern province to change their life style; especially it provided Shiites community of al-Hasa region to get higher education and better salaries.¹⁴⁵ Many Americans and other western people came to Hasa and maintained their own life style there. Along with them, thousands of Aramco workforce from Italy, India, Pakistan, Palestine and Lebanon also effected local population's way of life, and ideas. These ideas were unfit for the Wahhabi kingdom. Aramco was the only way for Shiites population and unskilled bedouins to improve their life style. It was difficult for Wahhabi bedouins to find high positions among foreign skilled workforce and they considered it as discrimination of foreign 'infidels' against them. On the other side Shiites employees were sent abroad from the company for further training and later appointed to the medium-level positions but not to high positions. Shiites were attracted by the idea of social and political equality of the radical anti-western Arab nationalism.¹⁴⁶ Large numbers of Palestinians were also employees of Aramco and they were hosting anti-western sentiments. While the nomadic workforce was angry with the American employees' luxurious life style provided by Aramco. All these factors led the employees to hold strike for their demands. Workers' Committee demanded "higher salaries, improved work conditions and facilities and the right to organize the workers. A copy of the demands was also handed to the government."¹⁴⁷ Owing to these strikes, the main source of revenues was badly affected. Now government decided to stop the strikes by using force and arrested leaders of Workers' Committee. Later on, the strikes ended when

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Abir, *Op.cit.*, 32-33

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

the King ordered the workers to return to work, granted a 20 per cent pay rise for Aramco workers along with many other concessions and released the jailed persons.

Eastern province and Aramco workforce became a hub of nationalist and radical leftist activism. Shiites population was of the view that Saudi government and Americans are the oppressors of their oil resources. On the other side, Hijazis were also considering the Najdis regime as tyrant, which imposed strict rules on them under Wahhabi ideology.¹⁴⁸ In the time period of King Ibn Saud, Hijazis were having self-government kind of political system under Prince Faisal but after Saud came into power, he abolished their political system and ordered to move all government offices to Riyadh.¹⁴⁹ Hijazis didn't want any separation from Najd because of the benefits they were getting from oil revenues.¹⁵⁰ However, Hijazi intelligentsia was more in favor of reforms or overthrowing the regime or the reduced interference of Wahhabi Ulama in the development.¹⁵¹

After the Egyptian revolution of pan-Arabism, the al-Hasa region was occupied by unrest of ARAMCO's labors. During the year 1953, ARAMCO faced labor strikes and other difficulties.

In 1955 anti western and anti American feelings among the people of Hijaz and Eastern provinces reached to their climax. They started to agitate against government. When King Saud visited Dahrn in May 1956, he faced a hostile demonstration of nationalists and communists.¹⁵² They were demanding the nationalization of Aramco and abolishing of American Military Base in Dahrn. Next month Aramco workforce went on a major

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

strike and Aramco was completely shut down. Strike was suppressed by the regime. Few numbers of demonstrators were killed and others were sent to prison.¹⁵³

3.3.1.2. National Liberation Front's Demand for Reforms: 1953

All above factors, along with the impact of Egyptian revolution, led to the formation of National Reform Front by young army officers, small Najdi intelligentsia, some of the members from Hijaz and the leaders of the ARAMCO workforce. The front's demands were: to free the country's oil reserves from the control of western-led oil companies, to give people the right for political and social associations, to give people the right for demonstrations and strikes, to propose a constitution and introduce an elected parliament, to introduce agricultural and industrial developmental policies, to abolish the institution of slavery, and to establish schools for girls.¹⁵⁴

NRF was socialist and secularist in its orientation and was influenced by the Palestinian Arab nationalists (Qawmiyyin al-Arab) Later it changed its name (National Liberation Front) and continued its activities under the influence of Nasserite movement of pan-Arabism.¹⁵⁵

3.3.1.3. Movement of Free Officers

Meantime, a movement called the 'Free Officers' emerged in the armed forces and the members of the Arab Nationalists engaged in the anti-regime activities but these activities were of little harm to the regime. In 1969 members of this movement seriously tried to

¹⁵³ Jose. Arnold, *Golden Swords and Pots and Pans* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), 205.

¹⁵⁴ Vassiliev, *Op.cit.*, 339

¹⁵⁵ Abir, *Op.cit.*, 35

overthrow the regime but failed and some were executed and others were imprisoned.¹⁵⁶ King Saud issued a royal decree banning all sorts of strikes and demonstrations and tightened kingdom's control on media.¹⁵⁷

3.3.2. Free Princes Movement and Saudi Response

King Saud was losing his control on state affairs. He was facing complex internal and external problems. He was also alleged with corruption charges. At that time the whole of Middle East was occupied by Nasser's call of pan-Arabism. Saudi people were fed up with the corruption in their ruling class so they saw outside, Nasser, as their leader. Many young princes got attracted towards Nasser and formed a group called "Free Princes."¹⁵⁸ Most active prince was Talal bin Abdul-Aziz and they wanted to replace the existing order with constitutional monarchy. Then clashes aroused between Saud and Nasser and Saud reversed his foreign policy against Nasser which led to a political and financial crisis for the country.¹⁵⁹ Political crisis was there because Saudi people were against western-led policies of their ruler and they were more in demands for the changes in social, political and foreign policy structures and financial crisis aroused because now Saudi Arabia was not in good position with Egypt to use the famous oil route, the Suez canal, that is nationalized by Nasser and was in the use of Saudi Arabia when both states were having good relations. Kingdom experienced a heavy fall in oil revenues and faced

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Peter W. Wilson and Douglas F. Graham, *Saudi Arabia: the Coming Storm* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1994), 49.

¹⁵⁹ Abir, *Op.cit.*, 30

bankruptcy due to lavish expenditures. Officials did not receive their salaries and state budget deficit reached 300m riyals.¹⁶⁰

3.3.2.1. Rivalry in the Royal House

At the eve of this situation of crisis, Al-Saud split into three groups; first the supporters of Saud and conservatives; second the supporters of Faisal who favored financial reforms and policies of modernizations to combat the rising nationalist feelings in the middle east; third the pro Nasser group or young liberal princes who wanted constitutional monarchy and fast modernization of the kingdom.¹⁶¹

When Saud's plot to assassinate Nasser came in the media, Faisal resigned from the position of deputy Prime minister. Then after a lot of family pressure, Saud transferred his all powers to Faisal. Third group of young liberal princes also supported Faisal for his promises of reforms. Then a power struggle of six years (1958-1964) started among the members of royal family.

During this six years of power struggle, important political reforms were discussed but serious steps were never taken to implement them.¹⁶² When Talal realized that Faisal will not fulfill his promises of some democratic reforms, he and his supporters started to advocate their demands in the press and tried to win the people's support.¹⁶³

Talal and his supporters were having see-saw relationship with the regime. In 1958, they supported Faisal to come into power; in return Faisal promised for some democratic

¹⁶⁰ Vassiliev, *Op.cit.*,341

¹⁶¹ Abir, *Op.cit.*,30

¹⁶² Wilson and Graham, *Op.cit.*, 48.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

reforms.¹⁶⁴ When Faisal came into power, he abolished press censorship but he ignored his promise of reforms. Talal proposed the establishment of a constitutional monarchy.¹⁶⁵ Faisal rejected the proposal and consequently Talal and his supporters advocated their greater reform program through press and tried to buildup the Saudi public opinion in their favor.¹⁶⁶ Now, for the implementation of reform package, Talal looked up at Saud and supported him to regain his powers. Saud came to power again with the help of Free Princes.

3.3.2.2. Demands of Liberal Fraction in the form of “Organic Law”

Constitutional reforms became common phenomena in Saudi Arabia.¹⁶⁷ Saud exploited this reform movement to regain his powers and promised ‘Liberal Princes’ for reforms in the kingdom after he came into power. Saud again took over all his powers from the hands of Faisal by rejecting Faisal’s budget¹⁶⁸ and announced the formation of a new government in 1960 which he would lead.¹⁶⁹ Consequently, Faisal resigned and Liberal Princes got key positions in the new Saud government with a promise to implement the proposed political reforms.¹⁷⁰

Nationalists, constitutionalists and Liberal Princes got strategic positions for the first time in the history of Saudi Arabia in the Saud government and there was not any senior prince in the new cabinet. In June 1960, constitutional reform proposal was forwarded to

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁶⁵ Vassiliev, *Op.cit.*, 357.

¹⁶⁶ Wilson and Graham, *Op.cit.*, 53

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.50.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Abir, *Op.cit.*, 40

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Saud for approval but after the immense criticism from Ulama class, Saud rejected it on the basis that Quran is the only source of Saudi Arabia's constitution and in a way he isolated himself from reform agenda.¹⁷¹ Now Saud opposed any activities by reformists and at the end of 1961, he dismissed his progressive advisers and started to promote moderates in his government rather Liberal Princes.¹⁷² Saud passed a security law according to which death penalty or 25 years' imprisonment could be given to any person who engaged in any aggressive act against the royal family or the state; the formation of political parties and the profession of any other ideology except Islam were also banned.¹⁷³

Talal explained his reform program as a way to open up the Islamic heritage of consultations and justice.¹⁷⁴ He projected a constitution which affirmed Islamic Sharia as a key source of kingdom's system.¹⁷⁵ This constitution gave rights of private ownership, freedom of expression and freedom of association.¹⁷⁶ It constrained king's powers of introducing any law unless it was first approved by the Council of Ministers.¹⁷⁷ King had the right to appoint and dismiss president of the Council of Ministers.¹⁷⁸ All decrees had to be signed by the president.¹⁷⁹ Talal's Organic law was considered to be a radical approach in diminishing monarch's powers.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 40- 41.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁷⁴ Wilson and Graham, *Op.cit.*, 50

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

But Talal's Organic Law was never implemented because of the pressure from other members of Royal family and Ulama class. Talal started to pressurize Saud for the implementation of his Organic Law but faced a royal decree by Saud that any minister who will try to change the present political order will be sent to prison.¹⁸⁰ Talal gave his resignation and went to Egypt. Meantime in 1962, Yemeni Royal Regime, supported by Saudi government, was overthrown by rebels known as republicans who were supported by Egypt. Egyptian troops entered into Yemen to support the rebels which created a threat, both internal and external, to Saudi regime.

3.3.2.3 . Faisal's resumption of Power and his Strategy to Combat Pan Arabism: 1964-1975

Once again Saud proved to be unable to hold the government and faced political and economic crisis. Saud asked Prince Faisal for his cooperation and dismissed Talal and other Liberal Princes from the cabinet. Faisal changed its foreign policy towards Egypt and dismissed many of Egyptian advisers from Saudi administration.¹⁸¹ States withdrew their ambassadors from each other's capital, Faisal also established the Ministry of Information and dismissed Egyptian and local nationalists to combat the hostile Saudi press.¹⁸² A strict press law with more state control was announced. After Faisal came into power, again, he countered Talal's reform package by announcing his Ten-Point Plan for Reforms.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹⁸¹ *Abir, Op.cit.*, 40

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 43.

3.3.2.4 . King Faisal's Ten-Point Reform Strategy

Faisal's ten point program called for the creation of constitution, Consultative Assembly, and an independent judiciary. It also aimed for the reformation of the Committee of Public Morality and regulations regarding economic, social and political developments. Along with this, it called for the provision of education, health facilities and other social and welfare facilities. Lastly, it abolished the institution of slavery.¹⁸³ Many critics are of the view that the above reform program was just to counter the free princes' attacks on the political order and to satisfy public and reformists in the context of overthrow of Yemen's royal regime. Some regarded the promise of the creation of constitution, transformation of judicial system and reformation of Committees of Public Morality as "vague".¹⁸⁴

Though Free Princes' movement had great impacts on Saudi society, but it was not able to sustain for long. After the fall of the ideology of pan-Arabism and the rise of Islamism, it seemed that this movement disappeared from the stage for some years. After announcing his ten-point program for reforms, even Faisal tried to re-establish his family's deep roots with Wahhabism and conservatism. The policy of pro-conservatism was continuously favored in coming years especially after the event of mosque uprising by a radical Islamic group.

Faisal's reign was considered as the glorious time period in Saudi Arabia's history. Kingdom started its journey towards modernization. Overall progress was achieved in the fields of education, public health, planning agriculture, roads and transport, civil aviation,

¹⁸³Vassiliev, *Op.cit.*,364-365

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

defense potential and Hajj administration.¹⁸⁵ Saudi Arabia emerged as a prominent actor on the spheres of international amenity and peace under Faisal's leadership.

After Faisal's assassination, crown prince Khalid became king and within three days Fahad became the crown prince. Though Khalid used the same policy makers of Faisal's time period but he believed more in consensus.¹⁸⁶ Khalid reorganized the council of ministers in 1975; crown prince Fahad was named as deputy prime minister and Abdullah as second deputy Prime Minister. Abdullah was also made commander of the Saudi Arabian National Guards.¹⁸⁷ Fahad played a major role in policy making, he became chief spokesman of the kingdom and was having important role in decision making process of modernization, foreign policy and oil policy.¹⁸⁸ Khalid focused much on agricultural developments, and on the expansion of industrial complexes of Yanbu and Jubayl.¹⁸⁹

3.3.3. Rising Islamic Militancy and Saudi Reform Strategy

Religious sentiments gave motivational grounds to Saud's warriors to unite Arabian Peninsula under one rule between 1912 and 1925.¹⁹⁰ Hence monarchy had its strong grounding in Abdul Wahhab's Muwahhidin movement. Despite its religious grounds, monarchy has had to face challenges from Islamic militants.

¹⁸⁵ Sheikh Mohammad Iqbal, *The Arab Glory the Arab Grief* (New Delli: Jagowal Press, 1977), 129.

¹⁸⁶ Helen C. Metz, ed. *Saudi Arabia: A Country Study*. (Washington: Library of Congress, 1992.). via <http://countrystudies.us/saudi-arabia/13.htm>

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ R. Hrair Dekmejian. "The Rise of Political Islamism in Saudi Arabia," *The Middle East Journal* 48, no.4 (1994): 627.

3.3.3.1. Mosque Uprising: 1979

In November 1979, a serious threat had emerged in the form of mosque uprising. Mosque uprising was planned by Juhaiman al-Utaibi and his followers. He was a student of Islamic University of Medina's Department of Religious Studies. He criticized the spiritual decline of the kingdom and the concept of modern state system of the ruling class. He not only criticized the royal family for being away from the true Unitarian concept of Islam but also criticized the Ulama class for their support to the royal family.¹⁹¹ Utaibi and his followers took control of Mecca's Holy Mosque on November 20, 1979.¹⁹² Their demands were to expel all foreigners from the kingdom; to abolish all western innovations from the kingdom; to abolish Al-Saud monarchy and establish an Islamic republic; Al-Saud's full accounting of their personal wealth taken from the country; breaking of all diplomatic ties with infidel countries; ceasing immediately, of all petroleum based exports to America; and acquiring control of oil production in order to improve country's economic situation.¹⁹³

3.3.3.2 . Saudi Government's Reform Strategy to Combat Extremism

After receiving religious approval, king Khalid decided to send Saudi troops to crush the rebels and after two weeks, government cleansed the mosque from rebels.¹⁹⁴ This event was followed by Shiite's rioting in Hasa region which was suppressed by the regime.

¹⁹¹ Wilson and Graham, *Op.cit.*, 57

¹⁹² Joseph A. Kechichian, "The role of Ulama in the Politics of an Islamic State: The Case Study of Saudi Arabia," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 18, no. 1 (1986): 58.

¹⁹³ Joseph A. Kechichian, "Islamic Revivalism and Change in Saudi Arabia: Juhayman al- Utaybi's Letters to the Saudi People," *The Muslim World* LXXX, no. 1 (1990): 6-8.

¹⁹⁴ Robert Lacey, *The Kingdom: Arabia and the House of Saud* (London: Hutchinson, 1981), 486.

These events were resulted in several orders delivered by the royal family to overcome such kind of uprisings against the regime in future. Imams were instructed to preach about the religiosity of al-Saud during Friday prayers; officials, who were criticized by al-Utaibi for their corruption, were replaced; expatriates were asked to follow the Unitarian teachings of the kingdom; work started on Consultative Assembly under religious leadership; women rights were curtailed; mutawaeen were given more free hands; salaries of Ulama were raised and all these steps were taken to improve the royal family's image as the servants of Islam and to avoid any kind of opposition from Islamists.¹⁹⁵

Khalid died in 1982 and after him, Fahad took over the throne. Prince Abdullah, head of the National Guard, became the Crown Prince and First Deputy Prime Minister.¹⁹⁶ King Fahad's full brother Prince Sultan, Minister of Defense and Aviation, became the Second Deputy Prime Minister.¹⁹⁷

During the reign of king Fahad, voices for political reforms were raised by radical opposition organization like People's Democratic Party, Movement of Free Princes, and some small factions of the leftist-oriented groups. Each organization was having supporters from students, intellectuals and largely from Eastern province. Saudi government jailed and suppressed large number of reformists and activists. King Fahad did not show any tolerance to those activists. In 1986, the number of Saudi political prisoners was about 900 while non-Saudi activists were forcefully deported from the kingdom in large numbers.

¹⁹⁵Wilson and Graham, *Op.cit.*, 59

¹⁹⁶Abir, *Op.cit.*, 98

¹⁹⁷Vassiliev, *Op.cit.*, 446

As Crown Prince, Fahad was considered as one of the royal family's liberals and was the chief architect of the kingdom's modernization program,¹⁹⁸ a hope rose that he will fulfill the long-awaited political reforms agenda.¹⁹⁹ But Fahad was unable to further progress on the way of reformation because of the immense pressure from Ulama and because of the rivalry in the family, between king Fahad and Crown Prince Abdullah.

3.4. Oil Factor

3.4.1. Oil Boom: Start of Saudi Welfare System

In 1973, Saudi Arabia and other oil producing Arab countries imposed oil embargo on the United States and Europe. This decision had been taken in support of Egypt's war against Israel. Oil boycott escorted a remarkable increase in oil prices. Oil prices raised from \$3 a barrel in 1972 to \$17 by 1973.²⁰⁰ It continued to rise for the following years until the Iranian revolution 1979 when the oil price reached \$40 per barrel.²⁰¹ Similarly, the kingdoms GDP raised triple times from 1975 to 1980.²⁰²

Infrastructural projects were started along with the construction of roads, hospitals, schools, seaports and airports.²⁰³ Transnational pipe lines, huge water desalination plants were constructed. Furthermore, twin industrial cities, cement factories and oil refineries were to constructed.

¹⁹⁸ Wilson and Graham, *Op.cit.*,60

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*,p. 177

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 178

In addition to above, billions of riyals were distributed for agricultural, industrial and service enterprises through credit agencies.²⁰⁴ Interest-free housing loans were also given to poor and low-income people. Industry grew vastly due to government spending. Approximately, 1,200 industrial plants were operating in the kingdom by the year 1984.²⁰⁵

There was strict government control over the price of food items. To gain the peoples' support for the House of Saud, grand welfare policies were launched. Government provided almost free education and healthcare facilities.

3.4.2. Collapse of Oil Prices: Impact on Saudi Politics

By early 1981, oil prices started to collapse due to Iran- Iraq war (1981-1988). Though Saudi Arabia cut down its oil production to control the fall of oil prices but it was in vein. In 1980, kingdom's oil production was 9.9 million bpd, while in 1985 it was dropped to 2 and 3 millions bpd.²⁰⁶ Saudi oil revenue fell sharply from \$101.81 billion in 1981 to \$13.55 billion in 1986.²⁰⁷ Similarly, the kingdom's GDP dropped 55.1 percent during these six years, i.e. 1981-1987.²⁰⁸

3.4.2.1. Economic Hardships and Saudi Reform Strategy

As Saudi Arabia was a rentier state and provided a wide range of welfare facilities to its people, the with a fall in oil prices made it difficult for the government to continue its

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

wide range of welfare policies anymore to buy the consent of the people. Economic hardships affected public confidence which encouraged government to initiate political and administrative reforms. As a result, two groups emerged and demanded reform policies according to their own agendas. Progressive group was demanding Consultative Assembly, freedom of the press, women participation in the workforce, and a liberal society to counter the economic depression.²⁰⁹ On the other side, the pro-religious conservative group considered the economic slow down as the result of “kingdom’s staying away from Islam” and the only solution was a pure Islamic system.²¹⁰ Saudi society was divided into two factions and king was stuck between the two, doing nothing in this regard.²¹¹

The ruling family decided to side with the religious group to avoid religious radicalism for the protection of its centrality at national level. In this regard, King Fahad changed his title from “Your Majesty” to “Custodian of the two Holy Cities” to achieve legitimacy for his rule.²¹² There was a rise in funds to Islamic institutions from government sector and a large number of graduates of these institutes became part of government machinery, as “bureaucrats, political officers, judges, professors, and preachers.”²¹³ Along with this, Saudi Arabian mujahideen returned from Afghanistan and penetrated into Saudi societies. Hence the Saudi Arabian Fundamentalism was boost up by two factors; one, the presence of conservatives in every field of life and, second, the penetration of mujahideen into the society.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² Okruhilk, *Op.cit.*, 157

²¹³ *Ibid.*

3.5. The Persian Gulf Crisis and the Reforms

The decade of 1990s proved to be the crucial time period in the Saudi Arabian history. The Gulf war changed trends in Saudi society and polity. This event influenced, if not turned, the social, economic and political aspects of Saudi Arabia. In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait and US forces started operation "Blue Storm" to liberate Kuwait. The presence of the Large Iraqi army on the northern borders of the Kingdom was a threat. In spite of heavy expenditure on military, Saudi forces were unable to cope with this threat. Saudi ruling family was having legitimacy to rule on the basis of its role as the guardians of Islamic land and ideology.²¹⁴ Hence the ruling family had to respond the issue in order to legitimize its rule. King Fahad collated USA. Consequently, US-led forces stationed in Saudi Arabia. This decision showed the shortcomings of the Saudi defense organ despite spending a lot on it.

3.5.1. Impact of Gulf war on Saudi Society

Before the Gulf war, Saudi society had gone through a twenty years of intensive development. The Gulf war affected the highly developed Saudi society in many ways; it gave new political socio-economic directions to the small group of liberals or modernizers, it modified the traditional religious class in new religious-political groups,

²¹⁴ Madawi al-Rasheed, "God the King and the Nation: Political Rhetoric in Saudi Arabia in the 1990s" *The Middle East Journal* 50, no. 3 (1996): 361.

and finally it produced a clot of middle class away from tribal bonding and swinging between liberals and religious class.²¹⁵

Saudi society was divided on the issue of presence of foreign troops²¹⁶ nevertheless, the Presence of large number of foreign forces gave Saudi soil an access to international media and openness to the Saudi society. This “relative openness” drove the Saudi liberals to reemerge.²¹⁷ Though a *fatwa* was extracted from the official Ulama class to justify the invitation and presence of foreign troops, nonetheless Fahad was facing the criticism from the fundamentalists that why non-Muslim military troops are present in the kingdom. On the other side, liberals were demanding a change in social and political culture. This situation intensified after October 1990, when more than one thousand Kuwaiti notables and princes met in Jeddah and promised the free elections and restoration of the parliament.²¹⁸ Saudi people, fundamentalists and progressives, started asking for the implementation of same measures in Saudi Arabia.²¹⁹

Due to the western pressure, government “relaxed some of the strict rules.”²²⁰ Saudi liberals began to think that this openness is favorable for the demands of political reforms. But this proved to be an illusion when government immediately arrested the fifty Saudi women protesters who drove their cars in Riyadh against the government’s ban on women driving. Later on, government suspended all of them from their jobs to calm

²¹⁵ Michel G. Nehme, “The Shifting Sands of Political Participation in Saudi Arabia,” *Orient* 36, no. 1 (1995): 51.

²¹⁶ Madawi al-Rasheed, “God the King and the Nation: Political Rhetoric in Saudi Arabia in the 1990s,” *The Middle East Journal* 50, no. 3 (1996): 361.

²¹⁷ Richard Dekmejian, “The Liberal Impulse in Saudi Arabia,” *Middle East Journal* 57, no. 3 (2003): 403.

²¹⁸ Wilson and Graham, *Op.cit.*, 64

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ Madawi al-Rasheed, “God the King and the Nation: Political Rhetoric in Saudi Arabia in the 1990s,” *The Middle East Journal* 50, no. 3 (1996): 362.

down the immense pressure from the religious class against the women drive. Hence the situation remained the same for the liberals.

This openness provided different groups of the society an opportunity to directly demand for reforms or for political change. Two sectors were demanding for the political change; the “so-called secular-liberal group” and the religious group.²²¹ Both groups presented their petitions to the king.

In December 1990, secular petition was submitted to the King, signed by forty-three public figures including prominent businessmen, writers, and journalists.²²² They asked the king “for the formation of a Consultative Council, the implementation of the Law of the Provinces, an investigation of the judicial system, the enforcement of people’s equality before law, freedom of the media, the clarification of the role of Virtue and the Deterrence of the Vice, and the amelioration of the status of women in the country”.²²³ They also stressed on the understanding of the true Islamic law to avoid extreme conservatism in the society.²²⁴

To counter the liberals’ demands and to influence the king, Islamists submitted their petition to the king in May 1999, wherein they requested implementation of the following twelve reforms (*Islah*):²²⁵

1. Create a full independent consultative council given the autonomous powers of domestic and foreign policy making.
2. Abolish all economic, political and administrative laws that are contrary to the Sharia.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ Aziz Abu Hamad, *Empty Reforms: Saudi Arabia's new Basic Laws*, New York: Human Rights Watch, 1992.

²²⁵ R. Hrair Dekmejian, “The Rise of Political Islamism in Saudi Arabia,” *The Middle East Journal* 48, no. 4 (1994): 630-631.

3. All state officials and representatives within and outside the country must possess upright conduct, sincerity and honesty along with their expertise.
4. Ensure the equality and justice among all the members of the society regardless of one's high or low positions in the society.
5. All officials must be strictly supervised, and even those who acquire high influential positions must be accountable.
6. Distribute national wealth among all the social classes in a just manner; cancel all the taxes; lift the restriction on the Islamic banking system to purify the public and private financial institutions from *riba*.
7. Build a strong and well equipped army with a goal to protect the country and its holy places.
8. Reform the mass media according to the kingdoms' policy to serve Islam and give freedom to media with an objective to spread awareness through accurate news within the limits of Sharia.
9. Develop a foreign policy in accordance with the interests of the *ummah* and Islamic Sharia.
10. Remove all constrains from religious institutions of the country that might restrict them from performing their tasks.
11. Unify all the judicial institutions, along with this provide the actual independence to the institution of judiciary and extend its authority over the whole of society.
12. Give individuals a full access to their rights according to the limitations of Sharia.

Fahad had nothing to do but to respond to fundamentalist's demands and banned the female driving. Along with this, he announced a cut in taxes and fees but "the extra-legal vigilantism of mutawwa volunteers remained mostly unchecked and the government felt reluctant to take any decision against these "self-appointed guardians of public morality."²²⁶ The government also took stand to restrict media campaigns. In this regard, the senior pro-Government Ulama strongly condemned the May letter as disrespectful to the king.²²⁷ In fact, the letter showed a split

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 632.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 633.

between “the official religious establishment” and “the younger Islamic activists.”²²⁸

3.5.2. Fahad’s Reform Package in 1992

Fahad responded to the demands by introducing three statutes; the Basic Statute of Government, the Statute of the Provinces, and the Statute of the Consultative Assembly.

The Basic Law is all about the system of the government and its functions; it mentioned monarchy as the system of the government and declared Quran and Sunnah as the code of conduct for the government. According to this statute, judiciary remained independent and judges can be appointed and terminated by the royal decree. This law gave a definite role to Saud family in government.

Second Law, the Statute of the Provinces, reformed local government and defined the rights and duties of the provincial governors. It divided the Kingdom’s thirteen provinces into governorates and created provincial councils comprised of the governing prince, his deputy, local representatives of government ministers and, at least, ten experienced and well qualified citizens appointed by the king. The major objective of this statute is to abolish corruption, to control the financial matters of the provinces and to strengthen the ministry of interior.²²⁹

Fahad’s third statute, the Statute of Consultative Assembly, was considered as the most important because it established an assembly of sixty appointed members and one speaker. This assembly was given the right to express its views on kings’ policies on

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 634.

²²⁹ Wilson and Graham, *Op.cit.*, 72-73

international treaties and on economic plans. Along with this, it could interpret laws and could review the reports of state ministries and agencies. It could also question the ministers and could propose laws.²³⁰

Fahad's three statues provided some rights to Saudi citizens. They prohibited the entry of anyone into homes without the consent of the owner of the home or without any legal means; this could stop the unauthorized searches by mutawwa'in. They also gave a first national public forum for discussion. First time in the history of Saudi Arabia, the citizens were having limited public participation in the decision making process. These Statues allowed the judiciary to work independently. But this reform package did not deal with the issues of discrimination against women and religious minorities and other human rights violations. Abu Hamad considered these Laws as 'empty Reforms'; "the reforms did not, for example, ban extra judicial killings, torture or cruel and inhuman punishment."²³¹

Islamists were not satisfied with these reforms and they again sent a 45-page memorandum of advice to Sheikh Ibn Baz in September 1992 and criticized the policies of the government: to abolish all governmental control on writing, preaching and publishing rights of Ulama and Islamic scholars and teachers, to allow the Ulama to supervise and take part in the work of all agencies, ministries and embassies of Saudi Arabia for the assurance of the implementation of Islamic Sharia in all sectors, to establish a Supreme Sharia Court for the revision and purification of all laws so as to

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

²³¹ A. Abu Hamad, *Empty Reforms: Saudi Arabia's New Basic Laws* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1992).

make them incompatible with Islam, and to reduce the powers of police.²³² In addition to that they demanded “to revise the curriculum of some universities and institutes to focus on *fiqh* and to prohibit the teaching of Western law, and to censor all foreign materials, magazines, and television programs to prevent the dissemination of infidel and secular ideas and nude pictures, to cancel expenditures on sports stadiums, and palaces.”²³³ They also asked for the extension of “financial aid only to Muslim in need and not to the infidels regimes of Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Russia, Syria, and Tunisia, and to establish a strong army of a half-million soldiers, motivated by the spirit of Jihad and sacrifice in order to protect this holy country, fight the Jews, and help the Muslims.”²³⁴

This time their demands were more radical and bold than the demands of May 1991. They also accused Ibn Baz and other senior Ulama for being sided with the government. Such kind of activities prompted King Fahad to replace these Ulama with ten pro-government Ulama. This split in Ulama class made the young Islamists to directly attack the government.²³⁵ King Fahad warned the Islamists, in December 1992, to stop anti-regime propaganda. At that time, liberals were not in a condition to directly criticize the government so they became silent “critical observers.”²³⁶

In response to the strict government control over the political system, in May 1993, Islamists formed Saudi Arabia’s First human rights organization, CDLR, which directly challenged the Saudi authorities. The purpose of the foundation of this organization was

²³² R. Hrair Dekmejian, “The Rise of Political Islamism in Saudi Arabia,” *The Middle East Journal* 48, no. 4 (1994): 633- 644.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 634.

²³⁶ Richard Dekmejian, “*The Liberal Impulse in Saudi Arabia*,” *Middle East Journal* 57, no. 3 (2003): 404.

to monitor the human rights abuse in the kingdom. Three months after founding of this organization, in August 1993, King Fahad announced the list of 60 members for the Consultative Council. Consultative Council was established to review and give advice on domestic and foreign policies without any real legislative power. Along with this government declared CDLR as illegal and arrested many of its founding members. Furthermore, to control Islamic militancy and Islamic movement, Saudi government took various measures. These included: the establishment of Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Da'wa Council to monitor Islamic universities, mosques and Friday Prayer sermons and the formation of Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs to look at the Saudi foreign policy in the Islamic world. In addition to that, Saudi government banned television Satellites to control the flow of information.

In conclusion, Saudi Arabia had to face four major threats due to which different social, political and economic challenges were encountered by the kingdom. Government had introduced several policies and reform strategies to counter all these threats. The first threat coming to the Saudi Society was in the context of Pan Arabism. On the one side, Aramco workforce started to demand social benefits whereas on the other, Shiites started to demand their adequate share in economic, political and social sectors. These uprisings were generating threat to the Saudi government's sustainability and economy of the kingdom. At this stage government took requisite steps to identify and neutralize the threats. Government adopted carrot and stick policy, sending many to prison and announcing some pay increments for the workers. Meanwhile a reformist fraction emerged in the royal family with their demands for reforms. They asked for the

establishment of republicanism and presented their demands in the form of "Organic Law". To counter this law, King Faisal introduced his ten point reform Package.

Second threat to Saudi Arabia was in form of falling oil prices. Saudi Economy is oil based hence it had to face severe economic depression during the collapse of oil prices in 1980s. As a rentier state, Saudi Arabian, government promised a wide range of welfare policies to its people to buy their political consent for the royal family. After economic depression, it failed to continue its wide range of economic policies, consequently people started to ask for more accountable political system. The Kingdom was divided into two major groups i.e. liberals and conservative religious class. At this stage government adopted a strategy to ally with religious class to avoid any kind of religious radicalism against the ruling family. The royal family started to provide more funds and financial incentives to the religious groups.

The Gulf war in 1990s, had been identified as the third threat to the Saudi society which brought a major political change. In the aftermath of Gulf war, people started to ask for more openness and political participation. Both factions of society, liberals and religious class put forward many petitions to the king and demanded a transformation. To counter the rising demands for reforms King Fahad introduced his own reform package and created a Shura Council of 60 appointed members. It was the first time that the people were having a national public forum for discussions. Though it was not holding any real legislative powers but it provided a limited public participation in policy making process. Fourth threat countered by the kingdom of Saudi Arabia was after September 11, 2001 when it came under the spotlight of international critique. This time period is considered

as a rebirth of Saudi reformists. This time, liberal faction in Saudi Arabia was more organized and planned. The Saudi regime had to face a two-folded pressure for political, social and economic reforms. Ruling family has so far introduced several reform strategies to overcome these pressures. These strategies include political, social and economic reform policies and will be discussed in the following chapter in detail.

CHAPTER 4: THREAT IDENTIFICATIONS AND COALITION BUILDING FOR REFORMS: POST 9/11 PERIOD

Saudi Arabia is rising as an important political actor on the global stage for its active participation in world's affairs due to its significance in oil sector. On the other hand, it is also considered significant in promoting terrorism. Besides that, an important role was played by Saudi Arabia as a mediator in resolving the crises of Lebanon, Sudan, Somalia and Pakistan. In order to resolve the Arab-Israel conflict, various solutions were proposed by her as well as being a member of G-20, a group of important industrialized and developing economies, it became more significant economically. International community has a lot of concerns regarding its internal political, social and economic changes and developments.

Significant transformations emerged in the political, economic and social scenario of Saudi Arabia in the recent years. These transformations are considered as remarkable in such an authoritarian political structure. In fact, Saudi government implemented these transformations as reform strategies to combat the social, political and economic challenges. Especially after 9/11 incident, Saudi government faced immense pressure from international as well as domestic community to introduce reforms to combat rising notions of extremism in Saudi society.

4.1. Rebirth of Saudi Fundamentalist and Liberal Factions in Saudi Arabia: Post 9/11 Period

Islamists in Saudi Arabia have been divided into three main groups in the context of Gulf crisis from the end of 1990s.²³⁷ First group comprised of the prominent members of the former al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya, who turned to religion and did not give attention to the political issues of their country.²³⁸ Second group comprised of those radical Islamists who devoted their lives to “global Salafi-Jihadi politics”.²³⁹ Third group is comprised of those people who have adopted middle way, known as Islamo-Liberals.²⁴⁰ These reformists started to demand for a change in the political system within an Islamic framework.²⁴¹ This became a new trend in Saudi society because for the first time reformists demanded not only political changes but also religious changes.²⁴²

Before September 11, these reformists were only able to express their views privately. Meanwhile public internet access began in the kingdom in late January 1999.²⁴³ Now reformists started to use internet as an important tool to spread their message via blogs and websites. The Saudi daily *al-Watan*, founded in 1998, gave a platform to these reformists while allowing genuine political debates on its pages.²⁴⁴ Later on, its editor-in-chief was dismissed by the regime on 27 May 2003 in response to seven senior clerics’

²³⁷ Stéphane Lacroix, “Between Islamists and Liberals: Saudi Arabia's New “Islam Liberal” Reformists,” *Middle East Journal* 58, no. 3 (2004): 345.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 346.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ <http://www.afp.com/afpcom/en/> (accessed February 1, 2010)

²⁴⁴ Lacroix, *Op.cit.*, 354

complain.²⁴⁵ Events of September 11th, 2001 provided reformists an opportunity to re-emerge as main social force. Now they started to advocate their reforms publically in the form of political manifestos and petitions.

4.2. Factors/Threats that led to Reforms

Saudi Reform process must not be considered the result of mere one event or factor.

There are several factors and threats that triggered the reform process in Saudi Arabia.

4.2.1. External Factors: The USA and September 11, 2001

The attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September, 2001 brought some hard facts for Saudi Arabia: 15 of the 19 terrorists were Saudi nationals. The mastermind of Islamic extremists, Osama bin Laden, was a Saudi national until 1994.²⁴⁶ Besides that it was a common belief that Saudis provided money to finance 9/11 and other terrorist acts. Many of the terrorists detained in Guantanamo Bay were carrying Saudi passports. Saudis were also involved in the attacks on US embassy in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998.²⁴⁷ Saudi Arabia was declared, in the report of the Council on Foreign Relations' Independent Task Force, as the major source of funds for al-Qaeda operations.²⁴⁸ Congressional 9/11 report in USA also confirmed Saudi governments contacts with al-Qaeda.²⁴⁹ This involvement in terror-sponsor was highly criticized by

²⁴⁵ New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com/> (accessed May 28, 2003)

²⁴⁶ Iris Wurm, "Operation: Reforming the Kingdom, External and Internal Triggers of the Reform Process in Saudi-Arabia," *Peace Research Institute Frankfurt* (2008). Via, wurm@hsfk.de (accessed October 30, 2010).

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

foreign media and especially by Americans. U.S media highlighted the security risks for America to continue its controversial Alliance with Saudi Arabia.²⁵⁰ On the other side, the U.S government was not directly criticizing Saudi government because of its oil dependence on Saudi Arabia. A legislative bill against Saudi Arabia was also proposed in the U.S House of Representatives in 2003. Though it was not passed because the State Department declared that Saudi Arabia had taken actions against al-Qaeda, but behind the scene, Saudi Arabia was under immense pressure and criticism for doing nothing to combat rising notions of extremism and terrorism. After facing all these critiques, Saudi government realized that it had to reconsider its response towards the terrorist attacks on its ally, U.S.A.

4.2.2. Internal Factors

4.2.2.1. Rising Terrorism

For a long time since 9/11, Saudi government remained hesitant to take any serious step against terrorism. But this stance had to change in 2003 when, on 12 May, Saudi soil encountered terrorist blasts. Twelve suicide bombers attacked the high security foreign compounds in which 34 people were killed and more than 200 injured. Later, two truck bombs exploded in Riyadh on November 9, 2003 in which 17 people were killed and 122 wounded. These events were followed by another terrorist attack in April 2004, where 4 people were killed and 148 injured. During the year 2004 more attacks were made against foreigners. All these terrorist attacks indicated that the regime had a wrong perception about the intensity and nature of terror threat and now it had to change its policy to

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

combat this threat. Saudis considered May 12, 2003 as “their September 11” and Saudi government changed its response when terrorism came home.

4.2.2.2. Petitions for Reforms

Terrorism was not the only problem for the kingdom to initiate reform process. Other threats are also of main significance that led the Saudi government to adopt the path of reforms. One threat was the wave of manifestation that evoked in the Saudi society in the aftermath of 9/11. Citizens demanded reforms and proposed several changes through letters to the King, petitions, and manifestos. They asked for their share in decision making. Intellectual community was united. As in April 2002, 150 Saudi intellectuals published a manifesto, “How we can co-exist”. This document was having a sense of Saudi nationalistic and Islamic ideologies. Signatories put an emphasis for a peaceful co-existence with the west and stressed on the need to have dialogues with their American counterparts.²⁵¹ This manifesto was supported by all socio-political groups including liberals and women except Shiites community.²⁵² Two radical Islamists, Salman al-Awda and Safar al-Hawali also signed the document but later they signed an “exploratory manifesto” where they contradicted each and every argument of the previous manifesto because of the massive criticism from their peers.²⁵³ Hence the first attempt to bring the Saudi intellectual community together failed. Nonetheless this publication gave recognition to the new ideology of Islamo-Liberals.

²⁵¹ Lacroix, *Op.cit.*, 359.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

In January 2003, these reformists sent another document entitled "Strategic Vision for the Present and for the Future of the Homeland."²⁵⁴ This document was signed by 104 professors, intellectuals and former officials.²⁵⁵ Later, around 40 of the signatories met Prince Abdullah at his palace in Riyadh for three hours. This charter contains the elements of loyalty with the Saudi royal family. It includes political, social and economic demands. First, under political demands it asks for the separation of powers, implementation of the rule of law, equality of rights for all citizens, creation of elected body of shura council, complete freedom of speech and creation of an independent civil society.²⁵⁶ Second, under economic demands it asks for the diversification of oil-based economy and a fair distribution of wealth.²⁵⁷ At the third place, under social demands the signatories ask for the improvement of public services, and ending of discrimination and unemployment.²⁵⁸ Moreover, they deal with the issue of human rights especially women rights and asked for the organization of national dialogue conference in which all regions and groups would be participated.²⁵⁹

The signatories of this document were aware of the international and domestic circumstances. They knew that unity was the need of time; they avoided retaliation with any group of the society and showed full loyalty to their country and their leadership. They presented a moderate document while giving religious clothing to it to avoid any

²⁵⁴Richard Dekmejian, "The Liberal Impulse in Saudi Arabia," *Middle East Journal* 57, no. 3 (2003): 404.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶Lacroix, *Op.cit.*, 360

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 361.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

kind of opposition from Ulama class and common people. They justified their document with Prophet Muhammad's tradition regarding giving advice to those in power.²⁶⁰

In December 2003, more than 300 Saudi women filed an eight point petition demanding more rights. In 2003 and 2004, Abdullah received at least 6 petitions. These petitions exhausted the Royal patience and government adopted the policy of carrot and stick to respond to these threats.²⁶¹

4.2.2.3. Unemployment and Education Deficiencies

One of the biggest challenges of Saudi Arabia is its increasing population. Saudi Arabia has one of the greatest population growth rates of 3.5% in the world. Experts are estimating that 270 billion USD will be required over the next twenty years for maintaining the existing standards of living and welfare for the growing population. It would be difficult to create new jobs for growing population. Hence, creating new jobs is one of the highest political priorities in Saudi Arabia. Based on the analysis of the increase in population, it is estimated that nearly six million new jobs will be needed for the youth by 2020. But its practical implementation seems difficult in view of the unfavorable circumstances faced by the Saudi economy.

Saudi Arabia's education system does not fulfill the high-tech needs of the economic sector. It is not capable to educate and train a technical labor force. Consequently, a huge number of foreign trained labors are recruited which results in an economic burden. In this sector, the main problem faced by the Saudi government is the opposition from

²⁶⁰ Richard Dekmejian, "The Liberal Impulse in Saudi Arabia," *Middle East Journal* 57, no. 3 (2003): 405.

²⁶¹ Wurm, *Op.cit.*

religious class to reform the educational system. Saudi government faced criticism not only from indigenous reformists but also from international community. It was international pressure that pushed Saudi government to reform its educational sector.

4.3. Coalition Building through Culture of Dialogue

In order to get the reforms approved both the royal family and the reformists in Saudi Arabia needed supporters from every sphere of life and this objective was achieved through dialogue culture. After realizing the importance of dialogue, the dialogue culture was introduced in consideration of challenges faced by the nation for its unity and prosperity on both the domestic and international level. This paved the way for coalition building at national and international level.

4.3.1. National Dialogue

In May 2003, Saudi soil witnessed terrorist attacks. "Realizing the importance of national dialogue and the challenges to harm the national unity and prosperity on both the domestic and international level, King Abdullah, when he was Crown prince, announced the establishment of the King Abdul Azi'z Centre for National Dialogue in August 2003."²⁶² King Abdulla said during the announcement that "I have no doubt that the center and the continuation of dialogue under its auspices is a historic achievement that will secure a channel for the responsible expression of opinion. This, in turn, will have an

²⁶² *Raid Qusti*, "Dialogue Chief says no Boundaries in Forums," Arab News, April 20, 2007, <http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=1§ion=0&article=95206&d=20&m=4&y=2007>

impact on the fight against extremism and provide an atmosphere where considered views and new ideas that reject terrorism and extremist thought can emerge.”²⁶³

Purpose of the establishment of this centre is to create new environment of dialogue among various sections of society and to promote public interest in the consolidation of national unity based on the Islamic faith.²⁶⁴ Main objectives of the establishment of this dialogue center are; to consolidate national unity according to Islamic Sharia; to set a true image of Islam within and outside the country; to support the dialogue concept in the society to provide solution for intricate problems pertaining to social, cultural, political, economic, and educational sectors; to encourage more people for their participation in national dialogue process in order to promote justice and freedom of expression in the society on the basis of Islamic Sharia; to reactivate the national dialogue process in collaboration with the relevant establishment not only inside the kingdom but with the organizations and individuals outside the kingdom, and finally, to develop a strategic vision for national dialogue and implement the obtained results from the process.²⁶⁵

Up till now, eight national dialogue meetings have been held. During the first four-day meeting, discussions were concentrated on two main themes. They were national unity, the role of Ulama in cementing it and international relations, agreements with international relations and their effect on national unity.²⁶⁶ Second meeting of national dialogue was held in the holy city of Makah between Dec. 27 and Jan 1, 2004. In this

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ “King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue,” <http://www.kacnd.org/eng/> (accessed Jun 12, 2010)

²⁶⁵ “King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue,” http://www.kacnd.org/eng/center_goals.asp (accessed Jun 12, 2010)

²⁶⁶ “King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue,” http://www.kacnd.org/eng/first_meeting.asp (accessed Jun 12, 2010)

meeting, fighting religious fanaticism and extremism was the main theme.²⁶⁷ The third meeting was held in June 2004 in which women's rights and their obligations to the society formed the main theme. Opening of the three-day gathering was made by Sheikh Saleh bin Abdurahman Alhusayen, who was the chairman of the third national dialogue meeting. In the meeting, he highlighted the requirements for mutual understanding between men and women.²⁶⁸ Each must understand the importance of other and their role in life.²⁶⁹ He emphasized that relations between men and women should be characterized by complementing one another rather than by competing against each other.²⁷⁰

These meetings were represented by more than 700 people, relating to different groups of the Saudi society. They discussed legal (Based on Shari'ah), socio-economic and political issues related to the internal matters.²⁷¹ Secretary General Faisal bin Muammar said that there are "no boundaries" in the discussion raised in the national forums. He said there provided freedom of speech to different social segments of the Saudi community. It is important to start a culture of dialogue in a society which is monarchic in its mood.²⁷²

KSA has unveiled plan to launch an exclusive national television channel in the near future with the purpose to promote the spirit of dialogue on main issues. In addition, Dr Abdul Aziz Al Khoja, the kingdom's Minister of Culture and Information, observed that following dialogue and diversity is the only way forward in this age of digital

²⁶⁷ "King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue," http://www.kacnd.org/eng/second_meeting.asp (accessed Jun 12, 2010)

²⁶⁸ "King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue," http://www.kacnd.org/eng/Third_meeting.asp (accessed Jun 12, 2010)

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ "King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue," <http://www.kacnd.org/eng/roea.asp> (accessed Jun 12, 2010)

²⁷² *Qusti, Op.cit.*

information. He said that ministry will carry out all spade work through studies, hold discussions and seek consultations before presenting the proposal to launch the dialogue channel to King Abdullah.²⁷³

4.3.2. International Dialogue

King Abdullah met Pop Benedict XVI on November 7, 2007 both of them emphasized on the need to start dialogue process between Muslims, Christians and Jews for the promotion of peace, justice and moral values.²⁷⁴ The Muslim World League, in its conference in Makkah in June 2008, decided to hold a global inter-faith dialogue in Spain. This decision was appreciated by the participating Muslim scholars from all over the world. Abdullah Al-Turki, Secretary General of the Muslim World League, defined the aim of the dialogue as of guaranteeing a safe future for mankind by understanding each other.²⁷⁵

²⁷³<http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Saudi+Arabia+set+to+launch+national+dialogue+channel.-a0203105118> (accessed Jun 12, 2010)

²⁷⁴ *Khaled Almaena*, "King, Pope Stress Peace, Justice," Arab News, November 7, 2007, <http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=4§ion=0&article=103269&d=7&m=11&y=2007> (accessed Jun 12, 2010)

²⁷⁵ *Badea Abu Al-Naja*, "Global interfaith dialogue set for July 16 in Madrid," Arab News, June 22, 2008 <http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=1§ion=0&article=111125&d=22&m=6&y=2008> (accessed Jun 12, 2010)

Reforms such as elections to the Municipal Council 2005, change in educational policies, and liberalization of economy, are some basic measures tend to transform state and society's structure. Important thing to note would be whether these reform-oriented measures will really lead the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia towards a more liberalized and modernized state or it will just consolidate the power of the royal family.

5.1. Political Reforms

5.1.1. Reforms of the Shura Council since September, 2001

Shura Council has a long history since its formation in 1920s by founding King Abdulaziz. Members of this council are appointed with limited powers of legislation. In 1992, King Fahad brought some changes in the Shura Council after the demands of religious class in 1991 named as Memorandum of Advice. Fahad's Consultative Council, with sixty appointed members and one speaker, provided with the rights to express their concerns about public matters, to send their question to ministries and to propose new laws. Council's focus was more on legal issues like "Sharia, socio-economic development plans, and annual reports of ministries and other government agencies" and on these matters it could issue recommendations to the cabinet.²⁷⁷

In July 1997, the membership of the Consultative Council was expanded from 60 to 90 and again in May 2001 from 90 to 120 members. Since September 11, the council has passed through several changes including the expansion of its members in numbers.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p, 15

its recommendations directly to the king. This shows “an improved degree of responsiveness on the side of the executive.”²⁸³ Article 23 was also amended and according to the amended law, Shura members are having more freedom to propose, discuss and enact new internal regulation.²⁸⁴

Media can now cover the debates of Shura Council. Council members can discuss any issue. Up till now they have discussed issues like the strategies to combat terrorism and extremism, fiscal policies, corruption allegations against government officials, and educational reform plans.²⁸⁵ They have also discussed those matters which have previously been considered as taboo for public discussion. One of the examples of freedom of discussion is the debate on women’s driving ban to legally allow them to drive. Al-Zulfa, a liberal reformist member of the council, proposed this law.²⁸⁶ Though his proposal was not successful but paved the way to addressing such explosive and sensitive issue within Saudi public sphere for the first time.

Though these changes are not enough and still Shura Council does not have real legislative powers and its members are not elected one but its position in Saudi politics has been changed. Now it is not a body singularly dominated by Wahhabi clerics but also housing some other professionals like liberals and modern Islamists. Secondly, its diversified debate agenda shows the “plurality of views and necessity for reforms.”²⁸⁷

²⁸³Hamzawy, “*Op.cit.*, 11

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ *Arab News*, “Saudi Shoura Rules Out Debate On Women Driving,” May 23, 2005, www.arabnews.com

²⁸⁷Hamzawy, *Op.cit.*, 12

5.1.2. Municipal Elections 2005

A royal decree in 1993 gave a system of provincial government. In this system, the government established municipal council in all over the country. Their responsibilities were mostly of an administrative nature that included monitoring of local developments, to advise executive authorities, to prepare budgetary programs, to monitor public revenues and expenditures, to monitor laws regarding public services, and to give opinion on issues indicated by the executive.²⁸⁸

Since 9/11, Saudi reformists have been championing the cause for Shura Council elections, constitutional monarchy and an independent judiciary. In response to these demands, the government decided to hold partial elections for 178 municipal councils of the country in 2005. Half of the members were elected while remaining half were appointed. These elections took place in three stages from February to April 2005. Voters turnout ranged from 25 to 35 percent. It was difficult for analysts to interpret election results as elections were not based on party system, but it seems that in eastern province Shi'a candidates won most of the seats and in other regions seats were won by those candidates who had clerical support.²⁸⁹ Women were not allowed to contest or vote in the elections but they were promised to be part of this political process in next municipal elections. Members of military forces were also excluded to vote. Voting age was fixed at 21.

Many scholars considered these elections the result of international pressure and contrary to the principles of democracy. International community also heavily criticized the

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ *Ibid., p. 17.*

election process containing several shortcomings and one of them was the exclusion of women from this electoral process. While criticizing these elections one should understand the political fabric of the Saudi society. These elections should be considered important for providing grounds to reform process. These elections became landmark and strengthened the debates on reforms. Further, they became the source to trigger the interest of Saudi for reform the process. Next elections were postponed for two years which were supposed to be held in 2009. According to state news agency, the reason given to this delay was that government wanted to ensure the participation of maximum citizens in the management of local affairs and drafting a new regulation for the council to achieve this goal.²⁹⁰

5.1.3. Other Major Political Changes

On 14th February 2009, King Abdullah announced some basic changes in the formation of his cabinet. At first stance, he announced to re-establish the Grand Ulama Council.²⁹¹ This is a body which offers consensus opinion and advice on the religious aspects of law and regulations. Opening of this office denounce the power of individual clerics. It also tempted to include representatives of all Sunni schools of law. Consequently, the monopoly power of Hanbali School or the Wahhabi establishment will be affected. The

²⁹⁰Saudi Press Agency, <http://www.spa.gov.sa/English/index.php> (accessed July 02, 2009)

²⁹¹*P.K. Abdul Ghafour*, "Major government reshuffle," Arab News, Sunday 15 February 2009 <http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=1§ion=0&article=119244&d=15&m=2&y=2009> (accessed December 2, 2009)

expansion does not include any Shiite religious scholar that however might come in future.

Second, the ultra-conservative head of the Commission of the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, Sheikh Ibrahim al-Ghaith, was replaced by a more moderate individual, Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin. The new head has already noted that his approach to the mission of the organization will be “innocent until proven guilty” and more forgiveness than punishment. This change is also considered as important reshuffle in the establishment.

Third, conservative Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Council, Sheikh Salah al-Luhaidan, stated that satellite TV broadcasters deserved to be tried and executed for the irreligious content of their programming. He was replaced by Saleh bin Humaid. Saleh was formerly head of the Saudi Shoura Council where he played an active role in promoting laws to protect women. It is also being expected that he would be more favorable and supportive for reform process. It is also being planned that Supreme Court should take place of Supreme Judicial Council. On the other hand, former head of Supreme Judicial Council has been moved to head the Shura Council. That's not an unimportant position but it holds considerably less powers. In addition to all above changes, The King named three news advisers to the Royal Court. One of the new advisers, Sheikh Abdelmohsen al-Obeikan, is more significant because he plays an important role in the kingdom's rehabilitation programs for militant jihadists detained by

Saudi or foreign security services, along with this, he has some credibility in extremist circles.²⁹²

On 27th March 2009, King Abdullah appointed Prince Nayef, Interior Minister, as the Second Deputy Prime Minister.²⁹³ Following day prince Talal, senior liberal-minded prince, argued that reform process in their country will likely stop in case prince Nayef becomes king. Second Deputy Prime Minister was appointed by the king according to Article 57 of the Basic System of Government. This article states that; “the King appoints and relieves deputies of the prime minister and ministers and members of the Council of Ministers by Royal decree; the deputies of the prime minister and ministers of the Council of Ministers are responsible, by expressing solidarity before the King, for implementing the Islamic Shari’ah and the state’s general policy; the King has the right to dissolve and reorganize the Council of Ministers.”²⁹⁴

In the Saudi system, the king is also the prime minister of the state, his nominated successor, the crown prince, is deputy prime minister, and the “crown prince in waiting” becomes the second deputy prime minister. This position was created in 1968 by King Faisal when the crown prince Khalid was uninterested in government affairs and the role was given to then prince Fahad, became crown prince in waiting.²⁹⁵

²⁹²Hamzawy, *Op.cit.*, 2.

²⁹³ <http://www.arabnews.com/> (accessed June 20, 2010)

²⁹⁴ The Saudi Gazette, “Naif appointed Second Deputy Prime Minister,” March 28, 2009, <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=2009032833428> (accessed June 20, 2010)

²⁹⁵Hamzawy, *Op.cit.*, 12

5.2. Socio-Cultural Reforms

5.2.1. Women in Saudi Society

There is an on-going debate or confusion in Saudi Arabia about the role of women in public and private life. Three forces are involved in this debate: one conservatives, second reformists and third government. Conservative force tried to constrain women in private life only without any participation in public life. Reformists force promotes women to work equally with men in private and public life. They advocate the principle equal rights of citizenship for women and men. Government role is also important in this regard. Sometimes it sides with reformists and sometimes with conservatives. The relationship of these forces regarding women status since 9/11 is described below in detail.

Saudi women are completely dependent on men of their societies and cannot take decisions independently.²⁹⁶ Women could not have occupational and educational opportunities and faced immense social restrictions to acquire any social status. Government and religious establishment defended this social framework for females by Islamic creed.

5.2.1.1. Changes in Social Life of Women Since 9/11

Saudi women cannot drive, they have less advantage in family laws as compared to men. Saudi women are not allowed to borrow money in their names, can't open their business without their husband's or father's approval.²⁹⁷ While in Islam, Prophet Muhammad's

²⁹⁶ Wilson and Graham, *Op.cit.*, 240

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

(PBUH) wife, Khadija was running her business before and after getting married to Prophet (PBUH). Along with this, women in Saudi Arabia are unable to get home loans or land grants from the government.²⁹⁸ They are forced to follow a particular dress code and if they don't do they can be punished by the religious police force, mutawaeen.

King Abdullah started a program of national dialogue. The 3rd meeting was held in June 2004 on women issue. It consisted of the theme of women's rights and their obligations to the society.²⁹⁹ There were equal number of women participants as of men, 35 each. Meeting was called for the establishment of special organization in order to have keen observation not only on the main issues but also for the needs of women. In order to set up a committee, King Abdulaziz Center was called for National Dialogue to differentiate traditions from those of Islamic laws regarding women's rights. Participants emphasized that women must be provided with better employment opportunities and for this purpose they must be given equal opportunities to enter in any field of specialization. They also asked to review the rules and regulations of women employment according to Sharia so that women will be able to get greater job opportunities. They said that women should be given the opportunities to express their views freely in all discussions on public affairs. Finally, they called on the mass media for its main focus on the problems pertaining to the women so that general public would get aware of the women's rights and their role in society and in family according to Islamic norms. This step is considered of vital importance in a society where such kind of discussion is not common. Now people got engaged in discussions on human and women rights. Many newspaper articles and news

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ http://www.kacnd.org/eng/center_goals.asp (accessed June 22, 2009)

contains substance about women life and their rights. It shows a healthy trend in the society which is being reformed though at a slow pace.

Recently a Saudi cleric has announced that women can participate in some of the games. This should be considered as an important step in a society where women are not permissible to participate in any game.³⁰⁰

5.2.1.2. Political Life of Women and their Empowerment since 9/11

Since 9/11, the Saudi government has permitted women to appear as candidates and voters in some of the institutional elections. Such as, women have been allowed to appear in the elections of Jeddah Chambers of Commerce and Industry, first elections of the Saudi Engineers Council, and the elections of Saudi Journalists Association.

The Jeddah Chambers of Commerce and Industry is the single largest chambers in the Arab Gulf region. It consists of 42,000 members and controls more than 40 percent of trade activities in the kingdom. It is the only largest body in the Kingdom which holds elections where 12 members are elected while the remaining six members are appointed by the ministry.³⁰¹ In 2005, women candidates and voters participated for the first time in the elections held in that year. Many people consider this participation as the first step to

³⁰⁰ *Abdullah Al-Dani*, "Judge Sees No Harm In Women's," Saudi Gazette, May 27 2010, <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=2010052773565> (accessed June 2, 2010)

³⁰¹ *Galal Fakkar*, "Minister likely to endorse JCCI elections soon," Arab news, November 17, 2009 <http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=1§ion=0&article=128536&d=17&m=11&y=2009> (accessed Jun 22, 20210)

improve the status of women in Saudi society.³⁰² Two women, al-sulaiman and Nashwa Taher, won elections to the Board of Directors of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry and two other were appointed in the Board by the Ministry of Commerce. It was for the first time that two women were elected in the JCCI board. This election was also different from previous one because it included a large number of women as candidates as well as voter. "Election officials said both the turnout and the number of candidates were a record in the chamber's 60 year history."³⁰³ Interesting thing to note is that men played an important role for the victory of women as only 100 women of the registered 3,880 chamber members casted their votes.³⁰⁴

In the next elections of JCCI held in 2009, another woman Lama Alsulaiman won and got elected as Vice Chairperson of the apex business organization in the country. Following that, the Ministry of Commerce appointed four other women in the Board of Directors of JCCI board members in CCIs from the Eastern Province.³⁰⁵

On 27th December 2005, a Saudi woman won a seat on the 10-member Board in the first ever elections of the Saudi Engineers Council. Before these two events, two Saudi women journalists, Nawa al-Rasheed and Naheed Bashatah, won seats on the Board of the Saudi Journalists Association in 2004.

³⁰² Halima Mazfar, "A King's Vision: Expanding the Role of the Saudi Women," *Asharq Al-Awsat* January 08, 2006, <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=3&id=5840> (accessed Jun 22, 2021)

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ Asharq Al-Awsat, "Two Saudi women Win at Jeddah Chamber Elections," November 30, 2005, <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=2886> (accessed June 2, 2010)

³⁰⁵ Jafar Al-Shayeb, "Women's Rights Gain Focus in Saudi Arabia." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, www.CarnegieEndowment.org/ArabReform (accessed July 12, 2010)

On February 24, 2003 the Saudi Journalists' Association was made to protect the journalist' rights in the Kingdom and further to coordinate their relations with the media establishment.³⁰⁶ In 2004, nine members have been elected to the Board and among them, two are women.³⁰⁷

In 2004, Majlis appointed three women to serve and make recommendations on women related issues on its Advisory Council. The Majlis further enhanced the representation of women by increasing their number to six.³⁰⁸ This step is considered useful for giving women an opportunity to participate in political process, for the first time in the kingdom's history.

Besides that Saudi Arabia launched an all-news satellite channel in 2004 and appointed the country's first female news reader.

First Municipal Elections were held in Saudi Arabia in 2004, this event was the first event of its kind, as any kind of political activity was banned in Saudi Arabi under monarchy. In those elections, women were not allowed to participate because of the strict segregated rules. There were not arrangements of separate election booths, so women remained out of this limited political process.

Now there started a national campaign in the kingdom to let women participate in municipal elections of 2011. People from almost all fields of life like human rights activists, writers, and elected members of Shura Council are supporting the campaign. It shows that empowering women has become a priority of the national activists. But yet

³⁰⁶2004 Press Release by the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington DC, June 10, 2004, <http://www.saudiembassy.net/archive/2004/press/page34.aspx>

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁸ *Halima Mazfar*, "A King's Vision: Expanding the Role of the Saudi Women," *Asharq Al-Awsat*, August 01, 2006, <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=3&id=5840>(accessed July 12, 2010)

the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs has not allowed women to vote or to register as candidates.³⁰⁹ The First female minister in the kingdom's history was appointed by King Abdullah in February 2009. Norah al-Faiz who was an American-educated official, has become the first woman to enter the governing elite of the kingdom.³¹⁰ After a royal decree, she became the Deputy Minister for Girls' Education and this event has been highlighted in media reports of the kingdom. Her remit is restricted to girls' education only but this is really a way to progress that women have a say in their education policies. It is also important to note that Thoraya Obaid, an executive of the United Nations was supported by the government in the elections. Obaid was the first Saudi Arabian Executive Director of the United Nations' Population Fund (UNFPA) who enjoys her reputation as a fighter and a pioneer for the education of women.³¹¹

5.2.1.3. Economic Life of Women

A woman in Saudi Arabia cannot start business with her name; she needs to register the business in the name of her guardian. She cannot go abroad without the written permission of her guardian even for business purposes. Prior to 2008, women in Saudi Arabia could not acquire rooms in hotels without *mahram*, she could not get an apartment in her name. Such rules proved to be a big hurdle for working women to work individually or with any organization. Along with this, it is also not allowed for women

³⁰⁹ Jafar Al-Shayeb, "Women's Rights Gain Focus in Saudi Arabia." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, www.CarnegieEndowment.org/ArabReform (accessed July 12, 2010)

³¹⁰ *Hassna'a Mokhtar*, "First woman minister ignites hopes," *Arab News*, February 15, 2009, <http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=1§ion=0&article=119245&d=15&m=2&y=2009>(accessed July 12, 2010)

³¹¹ Amani Hamdan, "Women and education in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and achievements," *International Education Journal* 6, no.1 (2005): 54.

to drive. The only country where, by law, females are prohibited to drive is Saudi Arabia. Even sometimes women are not allowed to go alone with drivers. The Saudi labor laws have 245 articles but only 12 are related to women while it needed to include a lot.

After 9/11, some reforms have been taken to give women more space in business and workplaces. As now women are allowed to have an optional ID cards to travel into GCC countries without *mehrams*. One sign of change is that more and more women are participating in doing their own business now. Women were owner of the forty percent of the wealth in Saudi Arabia in 1995; recently Riyadh Chamber of Commerce has noted that women registration in business increased to five times since then.³¹²

The Jeddah Economic Forum provided women a platform to raise their concerns. The Forum held its first meeting in 1999. Initially, women were not allowed to attend the forum or to speak in it. Next year 50 women joined the forum as silent listeners without their voices as they were to sit in a separate room. In 2001, 100 women joined the forum from different areas and asked questions in written form. In 2002, 200 women took part, they asked question and still no female speaker was there. In 2003, women had their own day at the forum. In 2004, over four hundred women participated. Next day their photographs, without veils, were published in the kingdom's newspapers like Ash-raq Alaust, Okaz and al-Watan, and this was the first time in the history of the state that females appeared in the newspapers with their photographs. The crown prince Abdullah received hundreds of telegrams in opposition of the event.

³¹² Sifa Mtango, "A State of Oppression? Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia," *Asia-Pacific Journal on Human Rights and the Law* 1 (2004): 53.

King Abdullah is also eager to provide women more opportunities. In 2006, he visited India and China which was his first official tour of Asia since ascending the throne. During the tour, King was accompanied by a delegation of both Saudi men and women.³¹³ This step of the king signaled his vision about the equal role of women in the society.³¹⁴

The Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information appointed first Saudi woman Dalal Aziz Diao' as its new Director for Radio Jeddah's program.³¹⁵ Being first Saudi woman, she would be responsible for 19 departments, including women's radio programs, entertainment shows, news and broadcasting round the clock."³¹⁶

There are several religious and social restrictions on Saudi business women. But the scenario has changed for the last few years to some extent. Prince Khalid Alfaisal, Governor of Makah, modified the article 160 of Labor Law in 2008. The original Law prohibited men and women to work together; this law was revised. Ministry of Labor also revised laws in the same year in order to free working women from the requirement of a male guardian's approval to get or leave a job. Nevertheless women constitute less than 15 percent of workforce in the kingdom not due to less educational skills but due to "gender-Specific" laws. These laws provide women a couple of service benefits for their absence from the job during marriage or childbirth. Many companies do not want to hire women to avoid extra benefits like childcare etc.

³¹³ By *Halima Mazfar*, "A King's Vision: Expanding the Role of the Saudi Women," *Asharq Al-Awsat*, August 01, 2006, <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=3&id=5840>

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ *Amal al Qabadaya*, "Saudi Women Breaks From the Mold," *Asharq Al-Awsat*, May 23, 2006, <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=5&id=5053> (accessed June 20, 2010)

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

5.2.1.4. Educational Life of Women

Before 1950, education for women was prohibited. First informal school for girls was opened in 1957 which faced huge criticism from the Ulama class. Later on, in 1960, first public school was opened for girls. In Buraidah, religious class went for protests on the issue and they only dispersed after the troops' interference.³¹⁷ Most of the curricula were based on religious teachings and schools were given under the control of General Presidency for Girl's Education to avoid the criticism. General Presidency for Girl's Education was strictly controlled by Clerics. Boys' education was overseen by the Ministry of Education and funds provided to this ministry were far more than those of girls and female teachers were also less professional than their male counterparts. Male teachers were not allowed to teach girls. The Table below shows the year-wise increase in the enrollment of female students:

Year	Male	Female	Total
1970	412,000	135,000	547,000
1975	673,000	311,000	984,000
1980	951,000	511,000	1,462,000
1985	1,273,000	876,000	2,149,000
1990	1,624,000	1,310,000	2,934,000
1995	2,022,000	1,912,000	3,934,000
2000	2,405,000	2,369,000	4,774,000

Source:

http://www.moe.gov.sa/openshare/englishcon/AboutSaud/Education6.htm_cvt.html

³¹⁷ Wilson and Graham, *Op.cit.*, 240

First informal school Dar ul-Hanan was opened by the efforts of King Faisal and his wife Iffat in 1957. She wanted to teach girls science, language and liberal arts but religious class was of the view that only religious teachings should be given to girls. Iffat started to argue that "her beliefs on women's education are derived from Quran and the Hadith. Iffat has repeatedly quoted Quranic verses that state that "women and men alike should attain knowledge."³¹⁸ Quarter of a million women got enrolled in schools and colleges by the end of 1970.³¹⁹ In 1960, after women education started officially, there were 15 schools for girls but this number reached to 155 in 1970.³²⁰

Number of women students in 1960 was 5,180, in 1970 it reached to 135,000, and in 1980 it was about 511,000.³²¹ While in 1990, the strength of female students reached to 1,310,000 which increased to 2,369,000 in 2000.³²²

According to the World Fact Book 2003, literacy rate in Saudi Arabia is 78.8% and literate men are 84.7% while women's literacy rate is 70.8%.³²³ Besides that, Saudi Arabia's government's education figures for 2000 revealed that 58 percent of the 32,000 students in higher education institutions comprised of women.³²⁴

On March 11, 2002, there broke out fire due to short circuit in one of the intermediate schools of Makah. It caused 14 students dead and some 52 students injured. This incident

³¹⁸ Amani Hamdan, "Women and education in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and Achievements," *International Education Journal* 6, no.1 (2005): 50.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

³²¹ Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Education, http://www.moe.gov.sa/openshare/englishcon/About-Saud/Education6.htm_cvt.html (accessed August 09, 2010)

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ CIA, The World Fact Book, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sa.html> (accessed August 09, 2010)

³²⁴ Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Education, http://www.moe.gov.sa/openshare/englishcon/About-Saud/Education6.htm_cvt.html (accessed August 09, 2010)

led to a heavy criticism on the role of General Presidency of Girls' Education and the CPVPV. Due to the lack of funds for the General Presidency for Girls' Education, most of the girls' schools are in rented buildings with inadequate safety facilities. There are more than 9,000 rented schools in the kingdom and half of them are girl's schools.³²⁵

Members of the CPVP also stopped the rescue force to enter into the building because they thought that teachers and students must be without *hijabs* so it would be sinful to approach them.³²⁶

Grave criticism mounted against the role of General presidency for Girls' Education. It lacked funds as compared to the Ministry of Education for Boys. Consequently the standards and facilities provided to girls in education sector were far less and incompatible to the modern education system. Several media reports and news also condemned the role of CPVPV during that incident, as they interfered the rescue process and also beat some of the scaring girls who came out of the fear of fire without wearing abayas.

After some days, king Fahad amalgamated the General Presidency for Girls' Education with the Ministry of Education, the two agencies remained separate for 40 years. Many newspapers approved the dismissal of the head of GPGE and considered it a good step towards the reformation of country's conservative educational system.³²⁷ Last year in

³²⁵ *Abdul Wahab Bashir*, "Heads must roll, says press," Arab News, March 13, 2002, <http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=1§ion=0&article=13435&d=13&m=3&y=2002> (accessed August 09, 2010)

³²⁶ *Khaled Al-Suhail*, "Abdullah Vows Action To Prevent Repeat Of Makkah School Tragedy," Arab News, March 16, 2002, <http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=1§ion=0&article=13531&d=16&m=3&y=2002&pix=kingdom.jpg&category=Kingdom> (accessed August 09, 2010)

³²⁷ BBC News, "Sacked Over Saudi School Fire," March 25, 2002,

2008 government clearly instructed all schools for both boys and girls in the country to allow rescuers to enter their premises in emergencies.³²⁸

Besides the administrative reforms, there is a need to revise the school curricula to boost the role of women in nation building. Samra Al-Quwaiz, lecturer at the College of Administrative Sciences-Accounting Department at the King Saud University, said that “it is time to start moving and change the curriculum,” adding that “it is a shame that what I am teaching now is the same as what I was taught years ago.”³²⁹

In 1970, first girls’ college was opened in Riyadh; this was followed by the opening up of ten more colleges for girls by 1980s.³³⁰ Subjects related to Arts, Education, Science, Mathematics, Religion, Arabic, Geography, History, English, Psychology Home Economics and Library Sciences were taught in the colleges.³³¹ On the way to progress, women were able to access university education first time in 1979 and enrolled in Riyadh’s King Saud University, the first university that has women’s campus and offered subjects like Arabic, English, History and Geography.³³² Later on, other women’ campuses were established with more subjects offered like Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, Public Administration and Education. Before the establishment of these separate campuses for women in King Saud University, “the Jeddah campus of the University of

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1893349.stm

³²⁸ *Abdullah Obaidallah Al-Ghamdi*, “Rescuers to be Allowed to Enter Girls Schools,” *Saudi Gazette*, June, 20 2009,

<http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=2010051772631> (accessed July 12, 2010)

³²⁹ *Razan Baker & Lulwa Shalhoub*, “Revision of School Curricula Vital in Boosting the Role of Women,” *Arab News*, March 21, 2007,

<http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=6§ion=0&article=93953&d=21&m=3&y=2007>(accessed July 12, 2010)

³³⁰ *Hamdan*, *Op.cit.*, 51

³³¹ *Ibid.*

³³² *Ibid.*

King Abdulaziz, admitted women to economics in 1967, and the Dammam City Campus of the King Faisal University in 1978 opened a centre for women which included colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Agriculture, Nutrition, Home Economics and Education".³³³

Before 2005 Saudi women were not allowed to get enrolled in subjects like architecture, Engineering and Journalism but after 2005, they are permitted to study these programs as well. Now Saudi women are able to study any subject offered to men. In 2008, a women's department was opened in the Law Faculty at King Saud University.³³⁴ Along with this, women were allowed to get media education first time ever in the kingdom's history. The government is now considering different plans to build a technical college for women. On building of this college, women will be able to enter in a new profession that was not open for them previously.³³⁵ In 2002, King Khalid University in Abha admitted women to Computer Sciences, Biology and English.³³⁶

Amani Hamdan argued about the rise of women in educational institutes as: women's education is actively supported by the government which is evident from the hundreds of schools for girls and the women's campuses in almost all universities. Further, the government has not restricted its efforts to the young generation only but literacy courses are also being offered to older women. These classes are supported by the government administratively, financially and technically.³³⁷ The adult education programs are introduced to enroll women beyond elementary school age or older. Though these

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ Halima Mazfar, "A King's Vision: Expanding the Role of the Saudi Women," *Asharq Al-Awsat*, August 01, 2006, <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=3&id=5840> (accessed June 12, 2010)

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ Hamdan, *Op.cit.*, 52

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.53.

courses are available in most of the districts but not in all districts across the country and contribute constructively in the rise of literacy rate among women. These steps taken by the government have created more jobs for female teachers.³³⁸ Finally, there is a continuous increase in the numbers of women attending higher education to pursue masters and doctorate level.

In October 2008, King Abdullah launched a SR20 billion girls' university project in Riyadh.³³⁹ This university is also considered as the World's largest women university. This project is almost completed in 2010 and will prove to be the milestone in the history of women's education. In 2009, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology opened which equally provides opportunities in all the departments for women as to men. Now days, women's educational institutes and number of women students are increasing and "their illiteracy rate has substantially declined, and they consistently do better on standardized school tests and achieve higher grades than their male counterparts".³⁴⁰

An expert on girls' education became the first woman minister in Saudi Arabia. She has been appointed as deputy education minister and head of new department for women. Moreover, in Saudi Arabia, the world's largest scholarship program is offered to women and because of this program, thousands of women got doctorates from western universities.³⁴¹

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.53.

³³⁹ *Mohamed Al-Ghamdi*, "Light Dawns On Girls' Education," *Saudi Gazette*, March 12, 2008, <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=2008103020589> (accessed June 2, 2010)

³⁴⁰ *Hamdan, Op.cit.*, 53

³⁴¹ *The World Bank (2007) The Status of Progress of Women in the Middle East and North Africa, Washington D.C, 2007.*

It has been observed from the study of women education history in Saudi Arabia that women's education is taking another route.

5.2.2. Educational Reforms

Directory of Education was established in Saudi Arabia in 1923 by the founder of Kingdom, King Abdulaziz. It contributed a lot in establishing various elementary schools and colleges, one Sharia college and one teacher's training institute. Ministry of Education was established in 1953 which proved to be a very positive step in the history of educational development in Saudi Arabia. The number of boys' schools increased from 290 to 2922 from 1953 to 1970.³⁴² Formal girls education started very late in the kingdom after a separate institute was established in 1960 and given the responsibility of girls' education. From 1980 to 2008, five years educational plans were made and as a result education in the kingdom increased rapidly during these years. Consequently, the total number of total schools for girls and boys reached to 32119 in 2007.³⁴³ In 1985, Higher Education Commission was established with the responsibility to supervise universities and institutions of higher education. The commission has proved to be a milestone in the educational development of the kingdom.

The question raised here, that why there is a need to reform educational structure of Saudi Arabia? Two reasons can be given to answer this question. One that Saudi Arabia's educational system is inadequate to cope with the modern developments. A Major part of

³⁴² Abdel Rahman Ben Ahmed Mohammed Sayegh, "Development of Public Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Current Indicators and Future Dimensions," *Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia*, (2009): 2.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3.

the curricula is comprised of religious learning, even in the specialized fields of engineering and medical. Though inclusion of religious teaching is important in a Muslim society like Saudi Arabia but there should be a balance between religious and non-religious topics in text books. It is necessary to produce a number of graduates equipped with knowledge of modern sciences so that they could replace foreign labor and become able to run different sectors. Second reason to reform educational structure is given after the terrorist attacks of September 11 2001, and terrorist attacks on Saudi soil in May 2003, it is being argued that Saudi text books promote intolerance and hatred among its students against non-Muslims and non-Wahhabi sects of Islam. So there is a need to reform the text books.

Saudi educational system is considered to be the one basic source to spread extremist feelings among people and after September 11, 2001, there is huge international pressure on Saudi establishment to put its educational system on the road of reforms. International community and liberal elements in Saudi Arabia demand that new educational system must be free from Wahhabi-controlled educational system and must teach the lessons of tolerance for other religions and sects. The Saudi government's educational reforms since 9/11, can be divided into three segments. First segment deals with the changes in text books. Second segment deals with the reforms in educational institutions. Final segment deals with the replacement of concerned authorities who create hurdles in educational reform process with those of reform friendly people.

Introducing reforms in educational system is not easy for the Saudi government. Moderate factions in royal family several times clashed with the religious establishment

over the educational reform measures.³⁴⁴ Religious establishment is fearful about losing one of their strongholds in society.³⁴⁵ Immense opposition emerged to government measures of educational reforms, consequently significant reform measures have not been taken to the educational system of Saudi Arabia.

Since 9/11, the Ministry of Education reviewed its text books and gradually removed some of the extremist views, mostly the Wahhabi interpretations about non-Wahhabi sects and non-Muslims, from Curricula. Hence they try to create balance between religious and non-religious topics in the text books. For example, in 2002, “discriminatory references to Shiite Muslims and non-Muslims were partially removed from textbooks and replaced by passages calling for the respect of other religions and cultures.”³⁴⁶

Western analysts still consider these steps inadequate and argue that Saudi text books are still spreading violent feelings among students against non-Muslims which cause terrorist activities. On the other side, Saudi religious establishment is opposing any act to reform the curricula. Though Saudi government introduced reformed text books but at a sudden they can't extract all of the controversial topics from the books only on western demands while ignoring their own country's political fabric. The liberal-minded Minister of Education, Muhammad al-Rashid, also decided to introduce English language instructions in primary schools.

³⁴⁴Hamzawy, *Op.cit.*, 2

³⁴⁴ <http://www.arabnews.com/> (accessed June 20, 2009)

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Second segment is about the institutional reforms. Before 2002, girls' education and boys' education come under separate administrative structures. In March 2002, Saudi government merged both bodies. This step is considered to be being the most important in the history of female educational development. After this step, females are having the same opportunities in educational sector as of male students. The following table will show that equal budget is allocated for both genders in education sectors:³⁴⁷

A. The Budget of the Boy's Sector

Spending Categories	Item	Cost	Percentage to the total
First	Salaries and wages	30,625,036	83.39%
Second	Continuous expenses and support	1,939,084	5.28%
Third	Maintenance and Operation Programs	337,871	0.92%
Total of the first three categories		32,901,991	89.59%
Fourth	Projects (Capital Expenditures)	3,488,881	9.50%
Qualifications and Additives		334,198	0.91%
Total		36,725,070	100.00%

B. The Budget of the Girl's Sector

Spending Categories	Item	Cost	Percentage to the total
First	Salaries and wages	31,434,022	83.87%
Second	Continuous expenses and support	1,948,932	5.20%
Third	Maintenance and Operation Programs	348,559	0.93%
Total of the first three categories		33,731,513	90.00%
Fourth	Projects (Capital	3,429,370	9.15%

³⁴⁷ Abdel Rahman Ben Ahmed Mohammed Sayegh, "Development of Public Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Current Indicators and Future Dimensions," *Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia*, (2009).

	Expenditures)		
Qualifications and Additives		318,575	0.85%
Total		37,479,459	100.00%

Wahhabi clerics strongly opposed all above mentioned steps to reform education sector. The most important of them were the unification of male and female curricula and the “minimal increase in credit hours devoted to nonreligious sciences.”³⁴⁸ Religious class’ opposition for the education reform measures failed to pressurize government to reverse its measures. 156 clerics demanded in a petition in 2004 to push government back.³⁴⁹ Consequently in 2005, after an organized denunciation campaign, ultra conservative education minister resigned from the post and Abdullah Salih al-Ubaid, a graduate of an ultraconservative university, replaced him.³⁵⁰ This slowed down the process of reforms in educational sector.

King Abdullah launched an educational reform package in the name of Tatweer in 2006. This body is independent from the country’s education ministry. This project costs SR9 billion initially.³⁵¹ One of the columnists in Guardian newspaper described the program as:

*The program’s goal is not only to see more students graduate prepared for jobs but also to create a citizenry that is open and able to deal with religious differences – and less likely to harbor extremism. Tatweer reform involves changing school curricula throughout the country to include more open debate and discussion as opposed to rote memorization.*³⁵²

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁵¹ Mohammed Al-Kinani, “SR9 billion Tatweer Project Set To Transform Education,” The Saudi Gazette, March 20, 2007, <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=2008081814710> (accessed May 12, 2010)

³⁵² Asma T Uddin, “A Motor Of Change For Saudi Arabia”, Guardian UK, December 18, 2009,

According to Abdul-Wahhab Al-Mikaimzi, Chief of Public Relations in the ministry:

*The project consists of four axes: developing teachers' skills, developing curricula, enhancing school activities, and improving school environment.*³⁵³

For the promotion of science and technology, several educational programs and heavy funds have been allocated for the research projects at universities. In addition, funds have also been allocated for teacher's training programs in order to improve the quality of education.³⁵⁴ During 2007, universities in the kingdom introduced several programs. A foundation program to encourage critical thinking was introduced in King Faisal University with the purpose to change the learning attitudes of the students and to prepare them for success in their university studies.³⁵⁵ In order to promote science and technology and developing the research facility, King Saud University has launched a Nobel laureate program with the objective to spread a culture of science and innovation within the country to enlist it among the knowledge-based societies.³⁵⁶ University has also launched a research-chair project financed by the government, businesses, banks and philanthropists to support research in all scientific, social and academic fields.³⁵⁷ Another

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2009/dec/18/saudi-arabia-religious-tolerance-kaust>(accessed May 12, 2010)

³⁵³ *Mohammed Al-Kinani*, "SR9 billion Tatweer Project Set To Transform Education," *The Saudi Gazette*, March 20, 2007,

<http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=2008081814710>(accessed May 12, 2010)

³⁵⁴ *Samar Fatany*, "Education Reform Is the Pathway to the Future by Samar Fatany," *Arab News*, October 2, 2007, <http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=7§ion=0&article=101957&d=2&m=10&y=2007> (accessed May 12, 2010)

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

major step towards the reformation of education is the introduction of English in primary schools throughout the kingdom, which will put an end to the controversy of teaching English in Saudi schools.³⁵⁸

In September 2009, King Abdullah inaugurated King Abdullah University of Science and Technology. This is an international graduate-level research university dedicated to inspire a new era of scientific achievement in the country that will also benefit the region and the world. This institution is a realization of decades-long vision of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah. It is governed by an independent, self-perpetuating Board of Trustees and supported by a multi-billion dollar endowment.³⁵⁹ On the occasion of its inauguration, the king said that “the institution will not just be a new “House of Wisdom.” It will be a “beacon of tolerance” in a world attacked by extremists.” Further he added that “humanity has been the target of vicious attacks from extremists, who speak the language of hatred. 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’ ... a beacon of tolerance.”³⁶⁰

On the development of education, King Abdulla said during his address to the Shura Council in 2010:

*We are determined to create more than 200,000 educational jobs to correct the status of teachers. This is part of our endeavors to provide enough job opportunities to our citizens.*³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁹ King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, <http://www.kaust.edu.sa/about/about.html> (accessed April 18, 2010)

³⁶⁰ *Shafquat Ali*, “KAUST, King’s gift to the world,” Arab News, September 24, 2009, <http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=1§ion=0&article=126714&d=24&m=9&y=2009> (accessed April 18, 2010)

³⁶¹ Asharq Al-Awsat, “King Abdullah’s Keynote Address at Shura Council,” March 08, 2010, <http://www.aawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=3&id=20138>(accessed April 18, 2010)

Furthermore he said that:

*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.*³⁶²

In the third step to reform the educational structure, in 2009, King Abdullah replaced the conservative education minister Abdullah Salih al-Ubaid, with a new minister Prince Faisal bin Abdullah bin Mohammed.³⁶³ Whereas Faisal bin Abdul Rahman Al-Muammar, Secretary-General of the King Abdul Aziz National Dialogue Center, has been named as deputy minister of education with the rank of a minister.³⁶⁴ In addition to this, first female deputy minister for girl's education, Nora bint Abdullah Al-Fayez, is also considered to be a moderate.³⁶⁵

In 2010, Saudi Government "launched a giant holding company to act as the Ministry of Education's investment arm. The company will help finance a nationwide project for the promotion of general education. The new company will be financed by public investment and specific government funds."³⁶⁶

³⁶² *Ibid.*

³⁶³ P.K. Abdul Ghafour, "Major government reshuffle," Arab News, Sunday 15 February 2009 <http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=1§ion=0&article=119244&d=15&m=2&y=2009> (accessed April 18, 2010)

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁶ Galal Fakkar I, "Education Ministry To Establish Own Investment Arm," Arab News, February 10, 2010,

All these steps have resulted into significant advancement in educational sector. Illiteracy has declined in Saudi Arabia. Norah Al Fayez said that illiteracy in declined “approximately 60 percent in 1980 to 13 percent in 2009.”³⁶⁷

5.2.3. Openness in Saudi Society since 9/11

5.2.3.1. Coeducation

Saudi Arabia is highly segregated society, men and women can't study together. In September 2009 Saudi Arabia opened its first co-educational university. It is also considered as a rare Saudi secular institution. There will be no dress code for women. On the other side university is facing heavy criticism from the Muslim clerics. This opposition is mostly led by Sheikh Saad Bin Naser al-Shatri, who criticized the curricula of the university and called its co-ed classes as “evil”. On the other side of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Makkah, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Ghamdi, supported the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) and addressed the issue of “ikhtilat”, the mixing of the sexes.³⁶⁸ He argued:

*The term 'ikhtilat' in this usage is a recent adoption that was unknown to the early people of knowledge. Mixing was part of normal life for the Ummah and its societies. The word in its contemporary meaning has entered customary jurisprudential terminology from outside.*³⁶⁹

<http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=1§ion=0&article=132706&d=10&m=2&y=2010> (accessed April 18, 2010)

³⁶⁷ Hayat al-Ghamdi, “Illiteracy drops significantly, says Al-Fayez,” Arab News, April 15, 2010, <http://arabnews.com/saudiarabia/article43517.ece> (accessed April 18, 2010)

³⁶⁸ Majid Al-Mufadhali, “Hai'a Chief: Kaust An 'Extraordinary Move And Huge Accomplishment,’” Saudi Gazette, December 11, 2009,

<http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=2009121156698&archiveissupdate=11/12/2009> (accessed May 2, 2010)

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Quoting different Ahadith he said:

*Those who prohibit ikhtilat cling to weak Ahadeeth, while the correct Ahadeeth prove that mixing is permissible, contrary to what they claim.*³⁷⁰

On KAUST, Sheikh Al-Ghamdi described the university as an

*Extraordinary move and huge accomplishment to be added to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's record and the history of the Islamic Ummah.*³⁷¹

Al-Ghamdi's views were strongly opposed by Clerics and religious class. But he stick to his views and said:

*You can write in the newspaper from my own mouth that I still hold to the view I expressed on ikhtilat, and I won't go back on it, and I'll continue to repeat what I wrote.*³⁷²

Above discussion shows clash of ideas among religious scholars which points out the openness of society because such kind of debate in the conservative society of Saudi Arabia has never been expected earlier.

5.2.3.2. Media Openness

During 1950s and 1960s, Saudi government used mass communication to propagate Islamic teachings and to counterbalance the socialist Nasserist attack on the Arab monarchies. Television media introduced in 1965 in Saudi Arabia and faced immense

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

³⁷² *Muhammed Saeed Al-Zahrani, "Segregation Of Sexes: Hai'a Chief Stands By His Comment," Saudi Gazette, April 6, 2010, <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=2010040668546&archiveissuedate=06/04/2010> (accessed May 2, 2010)*

opposition in the form of public riots. Later people accepted the introduction of television as one of the sources to spread Islamic teachings. In 1977 the Higher Committee of Information was created with the responsibility to functionalize the media in spreading Islamic values and practices.³⁷³ Satellite transmission was also used to spread Islamic teachings after 1985. In 1990 Saudi Arabia launched its first Satellite channel for Islamic teaching and to inform people about construction projects.

In the 1970s, Saudi Arabia's few picture houses were shuttered after a push by religious class to limit the opportunities of mixing of sexes. They considered it against Islamic values.³⁷⁴ Several years after in 2005, the Saudi authorities allowed a hotel in Riyadh to screen foreign cartoons dubbed into Arabic to audiences - but only to women and children.³⁷⁵ In 2008, first Saudi film festival was organized under Rotana media. Following that in 2009, after 30 years of ban, a film show was opened in the kingdom.³⁷⁶ This film was screened at the King Fahd Cultural Centre to a huge audience. The show was an important turning point in Saudi culture and society.³⁷⁷ Film was produced under Rotana, owned by the Saudi billionaire Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal.³⁷⁸ Conservatives and hard liners strongly opposed the opening up of cinema.³⁷⁹

³⁷³ Noha Mellor, "The Rise of a Media Kingdom," *The Middle East Institute, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 1979-2009: Evolution of a Pivotal State, A Special Edition of Viewpoints, (2009): 10.*

³⁷⁴ Guardian UK, "Saudis In Riyadh Enjoy First Taste Of Film Going In Three Decades," June 9, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2009/jun/09/riyadh-screening>

³⁷⁵ BBC News, "Protests As Saudi Film Screened In Riyadh," June 8, 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8089763.stm

³⁷⁶ Gulf News, "Cinema Returns to Riyadh on Friday after 30 years," <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/cinema-returns-to-riyadh-on-friday-after-30-years-1.2114>

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁹ Rahman Shaheen, "Saudi security forces deter anti-Manahi film protesters in Riyadh," Gulf News, June 7, 2009, <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/saudi-security-forces-deter-anti-manahi-film-protesters-in-riyadh-1.2119> (accessed May 2, 2010)

Same year King Saud University in Riyadh launched a drama course. It will be the first Saudi university to offer such a specialized course, which will teach male and female students about the dramatic arts. The course will be launched in the academic year of 2009/2010.³⁸⁰

5.2.3.3. First Independent Human Rights Organization

In response to the demands of reformists, Saudi government establishes an independent non-governmental human rights organization for the first time in 2004 to sustain the basic rights of Saudis.³⁸¹ The main purpose of National Human Rights Association (NHRA) is to implement the international human rights charters signed by Saudi Arabia.³⁸² In the association a special panel will also be made to look over the women rights violations. NHRA is composed of women, intellectuals, government officials and members of Shura Council. A government department for human rights, the Human Rights Commission (HRC), was established in 2005.

5.2.3.4. Civil Society Law

On 31st December 2007, a draft bill concerning civil society organization was approved by the Saudi Shura Council. It allowed the creation of the National Authority for Civil

³⁸⁰ *Iman al Khaddaf*, "Drama to be Taught in Saudi Arabia for the First Time," *Asharq Al-Awsat*, June 24, 2009,

<http://www.aawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=7&id=17188> (accessed May 2, 2010)

³⁸¹ Saudi Embassy Press Release in Washington Dc, 2004, "First independent human rights organization in Saudi Arabia", <http://www.saudiembassy.net/archive/2004/press/page59.aspx> (accessed December 28, 2010)

³⁸² Saudi Embassy press Release in Washington Dc, 2004, "First independent human rights organization in Saudi Arabia", <http://www.saudiembassy.net/archive/2004/press/page59.aspx> (accessed December 28, 2010)

Society Organizations along with the description of their administrative structure and regulations.

5.3. Economic Reforms

5.3.1. Saudi Arabia's Economic Background

Saudi Economy is oil based with centralized economic policies. It contains about 20% of the world's proven petroleum reserves.³⁸³ It is the largest oil exporter country and plays a leading role in OPEC.³⁸⁴ Saudi economy's 80% of budget revenues, 45% of GDP, and 90% of export earnings are based on oil.³⁸⁵ There was a real economic rise of 14.5% and 8.0% in Saudi Arabia's economy between the years 1969 to 1974 and 1974 to 1979 respectively.³⁸⁶ From 1979 to 1989, the economy dropped to 1.8% and there was no real growth in those years.³⁸⁷ Oil prices rose due to Gulf War in 1990 and 1991 and hence the Saudi oil revenues also rose to 9.5% in 1990 and 10.3% in 1991.³⁸⁸ During the years 1991 to 1995 there was an economic slowdown in Saudi economy and the reason was once again fall in oil prices.³⁸⁹ Same pattern of economic rise and fall was followed in next decade.

³⁸³ CIA, the World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sa.html> (accessed November 01, 2010)

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ Anthony H. Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia Enters the Twenty First Century: the Political, Foreign Policy Economic and Energy Dimensions* (New York: Praeger, 2003), 239.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.241.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.242.

5.3.2. Key Economic Challenges to Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's dependence on oil revenues is the key challenge. Since many years KSA is trying to diversify its economy. In 1970, first five year economic plan was announced for economic development. Its oil based economy flourished during the oil boom's time period in 1970s and 1990s. It is seeking to invest in other sectors and wants to diversify its economy. Though other sectors cannot replace oil as the kingdom's main revenue source but it wants to reduce its dependence on oil sector.

Human capital is considered to be an important component of national economy. Education and Health are the supportive components. Health sector of Saudi Arabia is satisfactory but Kingdom's education system is considered to be the main hurdle in its economic progress. Its education system is not adequate to support the rising market demands of diversifying economy.

Unemployment is another problem for kingdom's economy. Its limited economy is finding it hard to give opportunities to an increasing number of graduates. Most of the population is unskilled and one third population comprises of the foreign labor, which is considered to be an economic burden.³⁹⁰ Approximately 5.5 million foreign labors are working here.³⁹¹ Kingdom needs more skilled workforce to reduce its unemployment level and to reduce dependence on the foreign labor.

³⁹⁰ AMEinfo.com, "Saudi Economic Reform To Accelerate In 2008," January 23, 2008, <http://www.ameinfo.com/144599.html>(accessed April 14, 2010)

³⁹¹ CIA, the World Factbook, "Saudi Arabia Becomes 149th Member of WTO," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sa.html>

5.3.3. Reform Strategies and Economic Challenges

To overcome the above mentioned problems, Saudi Arabia has launched several economic reforms. As it passes through various forms of reforms, economic reforms are not exempted. These reforms are shaped in varieties of ways, as measures to push the country forward and exhibiting the extent to which the country is progressing in all ramifications. These economic reforms include kingdom's accession to WTO, its policies to attract more and more FDI, diversification of its economy and its privatization policies.

5.3.3.1 New Economic Laws and Strategies

All economic reforms could be discussed under two main categories. One category is the announcement of new economic laws and agreements which encourage economic reform measures and kingdom's accession to WTO is one of them. On 11th December 2005, Saudi Arabia became 149th member of WTO and formally joined the organization.³⁹² Membership of this organization provides various benefits to the Saudi economy. Oil dependence will get reduced with the passage of time and inflow of foreign direct investment has already increased. After becoming the member of WTO, kingdom's economy is considered to be an open economy for foreign investors. It becomes a major recipient of FDI in the region with an increased inflow from \$2bn to \$18bn a year since

³⁹² P.K. Abdul Ghafour & Khalil Hanware, "Saudi Arabia Becomes 149th Member of WTO," Arab News, December 12, 2005, <http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=6§ion=0&article=74599&d=12&m=12&y=2005> (accessed April 14, 2010)

2006.³⁹³ In 2007, Saudi Arabia signed a record number of joint ventures, 1,438, which is 32 percent higher than the number of joint ventures in 2006.³⁹⁴

In 2003, Saudi Arabian Capital Markets Law was passed which strengthened the Saudi economy by inspiring the citizens to participate in the capital markets.³⁹⁵ Foreign Investment Law has been approved to “allow foreign investors to own property, transfer capital and profits, claim full ownership of their projects and enjoy a reduction in tax rates. The law protects foreign investors from confiscation of property without a court order or expropriation of property, except for public interest, against an equitable compensation.”³⁹⁶ The U.S. Saudi Council for Trade and Investment was established in 2003 which has expanded trade opportunities for both the countries.³⁹⁷

5.3.3.2. Economic Institutions

Second category of reforms includes establishment of institutions which further promote economic reform measures. Two of the most important institutions are Supreme Economic Council and Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority. Supreme Economic Council, SEC, was established in 1999 with the aim of privatization, formulation of economic policies, and opening up of market for investors. Likewise, Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority, SAGIA, was created in 2000 to formalize the process of

³⁹³ Saudi economic reform to accelerate in 2008, Saudi Arabia: Wednesday, January 23, 2008 AMEinfo.com, <http://www.ameinfo.com/144599.html>

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁵ Political and Economic Reform in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, *Diplomat* 6, (2007): 32.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabian Washington DC, <http://www.saudiembassy.net/issues/saudi-us-relations/>

economic liberalization. It is responsible to create business-friendly environment by attracting more and more investments for sustainable economic growth.³⁹⁸

In 2002, the kingdom decided to privatize many of its vital economic sectors and this task was assigned to SEC. Infrastructure, railways, highway management, telecommunications, civil aviation, desalination, government hotels, sports clubs, health services, municipal services, education services, operation and management of social service centers, Saudi employment services, agricultural services, construction and management of public parks and recreation centers, and cleaning and waste collection are the sectors opened up for privatization.³⁹⁹ Privatization policy helped a lot to meet the challenges of regional and international competition. It encouraged private sector investment of local and foreign capital and developed the domestic capital market. This policy indicates Saudi government's commitment to economic reforms. This policy is mainly adopted to overcome the key economic challenge of unemployment and unskilled labor in the kingdom. It created employment opportunities for the citizens and provided them adequate skills to run the institutions.⁴⁰⁰

Saudi Arabia decided to construct King Abdullah Economic City in 2005. Later, it decided to construct five more economic cities.⁴⁰¹ These six mega cities will be constructed in different locations of the kingdom within the next fifteen years.⁴⁰² These six projects are being constructed under the supervision of Saudi Arabian General

³⁹⁸ Official website SAGIA, <http://www.sagia.gov.sa/en/SAGIA/Vision-and-Mission/>

³⁹⁹ Political and Economic Reform in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, *Diplomat* 6, (2007): 34.

⁴⁰⁰ Official website of US Saudi Arabia Business Council, "Privatization Strategy for Saudi Arabia", <http://www.mafhoum.com/press3/112E15.htm>

⁴⁰¹ *Crispin Thorold*, "New Cities Rise From Saudi Desert," BBC News, June 11, 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7446923.stm, 11 June 2008 (accessed July 12, 2010)

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*

Investment Authority (SAGIA). Main purpose to build these cities is to diversify economy from oil sector to other economic sectors and to provide employment opportunities to youngsters who comprise 70 percent of the total population.⁴⁰³ These cities would provide space for foreign investors as well.⁴⁰⁴ In 2009, the kingdom became the eighth biggest recipient of foreign direct investment in the world according to the World Investment Report (WIR) of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The statistics have shown that \$36 billion investment has been made in various projects.⁴⁰⁵

SAGIA also launched another project named 10X10 Program with the purpose to place Saudi Arabia among the top ten most competitive nations by 2010. The targets will be achieved by creating business friendly environment, developing knowledge-based society and by building six mega economic cities.⁴⁰⁶ Furthermore, since the establishment of SAGIA, it has licensed more than 2,000 projects worth around \$15 billion.⁴⁰⁷

In 2007, construction of the largest financial centre of the Middle East, King Abdullah Financial District started. This financial centre would be the headquarter for many financial institutions like Capital Market Authority (CMA), the Stock Exchange (Tadawul) and the Commodity Market, and it would be the centre for many service

⁴⁰³ Christopher Sell, "Saudi Arabia Right To Plan Long Term For Economic Cities," MEED, March 28, 2008, <http://www.meed.com/sectors/construction/saudi-arabia-right-to-plan-long-term-for-economic-cities/1017733.article>

⁴⁰⁵ P.K. Abdul Ghafour, "Economic Cities Draw Foreign Investment: Sagia Chief," Arab News, September 28, 2010, <http://arabnews.com/economy/article148593.ece>

⁴⁰⁶ SAGIA, "SAGIA: 10 x 10 Program" <http://www.sagia.gov.sa/en/SAGIA/Media-centre/Videos/SAGIA/> (accessed September 10, 2010)

⁴⁰⁷ Political and Economic Reform in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, *Diplomat* 6, (2007): 35.

providers like accountants and lawyers etc.⁴⁰⁸ This project will help financial sector to play important role for economic growth of the kingdom.

In 2008, the King announced to reduce cultivation to save precocious water resources. In 1980s, the kingdom was exporter of wheat by 2016 it will import all its requirements.⁴⁰⁹

Saudi Arabia is looking forward to build a knowledge based economy, so that it could be able to produce its own well-trained workforce. For this purpose, since king Abdullah's rule, many universities have been established including twenty-four governmental and nine private sector universities.⁴¹⁰ One of these universities is the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST). These institutions are providing higher education to approximately 1 million people and employing 33,000 teaching staff in 2009-2010.⁴¹¹ Along with this, 34,000 schools have been established for 5 million students.⁴¹² Furthermore, these schools employed 470,000 male and female teachers. In 2009, the King approved the establishment of four more universities.⁴¹³ These steps showed that the kingdom is really keen to construct a knowledge based society for the purpose economic growth and prosperity in the true sense.

⁴⁰⁸ P.K, Abdul Ghafour, "Master Plan for King Abdullah Financial District Approved," Arab News, March 8, 2007,

<http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=1§ion=0&article=93284&d=8&m=3&y=2007>

⁴⁰⁹ AMEinfo.com, "Saudi economic reform to accelerate in 2008," January 23, 2008,

<http://www.ameinfo.com/144599.html>

⁴¹⁰ P.K, Abdul Ghafour, "Master Plan for King Abdullah Financial District Approved," Arab News, March 8, 2007,

<http://archive.arabnews.com/?page=1§ion=0&article=93284&d=8&m=3&y=2007>

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*

In March 2010, the King announced 20-year employment strategy for the kingdom. Under this program, the King announced to create more than 200,000 jobs in education sector.⁴¹⁴

All above economic reforms are resulting into a growing inflow of foreign direct investment in the Kingdom. The World Investment Report 2008 published by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, reported that inward foreign direct investment increased to 33 percent that is \$24.3 billion in 2007 from \$18.3 billion in 2006 and \$12.1 billion in 2005.⁴¹⁵ Saudi Arabia was ranked at 13th number out of 183 economies in the ease of doing business as stated by the World Bank in its report "Doing Business 2010."⁴¹⁶ It also named the Kingdom as the best economy of all the Middle East countries.

This extra ordinary advancement is the result of economic reforms initiated with the approval of Foreign Investment Law (FIL) in 2000. This law allowed the foreign firms to own majority stake in companies in Saudi Arabia. Along with this, the law has minimized the tax rate for foreign firms from 45 percent to 20 percent. Another economic reform which has brought changes in the economic sector of the state is the establishment of Saudi Economic Council (SEC) and Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA). SEC is formulating economic policy of the kingdom including privatization policies whereas SAGIA is looking after foreign investment. It opened up several areas

⁴¹⁴ *Mohammed Rasooldeen*, "King approves 20-year job strategy," Arab News, March 8, 2010, <http://arabnews.com/saudiarabia/article27231.ece>

⁴¹⁵ Dr Jasim Ali, "Saudi Reforms Tell A Tale Of Success In Raking in FDI," Gulf News, October 25, 2008, <http://gulfnews.com/business/opinion/saudi-reforms-tell-a-tale-of-success-in-raking-in-fdi-1.138624>

⁴¹⁶ World Bank Report , <http://www.doingbusiness.org/Documents/CountryProfiles/SAU.pdf> (accessed September 25, 2010)

for foreign investors which previously were barred for private investment.⁴¹⁷ Last but not the least, Saudi Arabia's accession to WTO is considered to be a major step in economic reform measures. The Kingdom has agreed to grant 60 percent equity shareholding for joint projects. Foreign banks have also been allowed to work in the kingdom as local incorporated joint stock companies or as branches of international financial institutions. The Kingdom is driving its economic reforms with the slogan of "a knowledge based economy." And for this purpose it is formulating educational institutions which will produce large number of skilled and trained workforce for the future diversified Saudi economy. The Kingdom is constructing a number of economic cities and industrial zones along with King Abdullah Financial District. These economic bodies will provide more and more jobs to the Saudis. Hence Saudi Arabia's economic growth shows that sustained economic reforms can overcome the economic challenges.

⁴¹⁷ *Jasim Ali*, "Saudi reforms tell a tale of success in raking in FDI," *Gulfnews.com*, October 25, 2008, <http://gulfnews.com/business/opinion/saudi-reforms-tell-a-tale-of-success-in-raking-in-fdi-1.138624>

CONCLUSION

Ottoman Empire, from the sixteen century, nominally ruled central Arabia till the formation of religo-political alliance between Abdul Wahhab and Saud which led to raise the ideology of Wahhabism which is considered to be the corner stone in the formation of modern Saudi State in the twentieth century. After consolidating the isolated parts of Arabia in 1930s, immediate attention was given to the administrative aspects of the state. Accordingly, regular army was created, modern education system was introduced, latest means of communication and transportation were adopted, ministries were setup and constitution was approved in order to modernize the political structure of the state. Besides that, oil production started as well which further paved the way for economic reforms.

The term reformation is not new in the context of Saudi Arabia. As 18th century witnesses the religious and socio-political reform movements with the aim to purify Islamic practices which unified the people of Arabian Peninsula against the dominant of Islam in Ottoman Empire. It gave them an ideological justification for their national struggle and became the powerful reform movement which changed the entire structure of society i.e, people, religion and the state.

Since the formation of Saudi Arabian government, it came across several threats and experienced several reform movements. The threats in Saudi society proved to be a driving force for the reforms. Pan Arabism became the first threat to Saudi government

which was initiated by a Free Princes Movement which was a liberal faction in the royal family. They demanded constitutional reforms for the establishment of republicanism.

Second threat emerged in Saudi Arabia in the context of Iran-Iraq war followed by falling oil prices and decrease in oil revenues of Saudi Arabia. On the one side, Saudi government had to invite American forces to counter Iraqi threat while, on the other side, it had to cut its welfare policies. Government failed to continue its welfare promises due to which they did not get success in getting the political consent of the people.

Third threat emerged in the context of Persian Gulf War. A wave of political manifestation evoked in the kingdom. People started demanding political and social reforms. Saudi government responded by introducing some reforms like establishment of Shura Council. Finally the major reform which is considered to be a milestone in the reform history of Saudi Arabia is the event of September 11, 2001. Events of September 11th, 2001 provided reformists an opportunity to re-emerge as the main social force. Now they started to advocate their reforms publically in the forms of political manifestos and petitions.

Internal factors which are considered important in order to bring reforms includes rising terrorism within Saudi society, petitions for various reforms, rising poverty, unemployment and educational deficiencies. Besides that, the external factor includes the pressure from international community in the aftermath of 9/11. Most important actors which affected the reform process included Royal family, the Wahhabi religious establishment, liberal reformist groups, moderate Islamists, and conservative religious scholars who defined the nature and pace of reform process.

In order to get the reforms approved, both the royal family and the reformists needed the supporters from every sphere of life and this objective was achieved through dialogue culture. This dialogue culture was introduced after realizing the importance of national dialogue and the challenges faced by the nation for its unity and prosperity on both domestic and international levels. This paved the way for coalition building at national and international level. The establishment of the National Dialogue Centre and the interfaith dialogues signaled the openness in society to discuss social taboos. These discussions provided future direction to the kingdom, on the one side, and make more people supportive of the reforms, on the other side, because it included representatives who have not been consulted by the state in the past.

After the incident of 9/11, Saudi government took serious measures to satisfy domestic and international demands for reforms. It introduced several new policies for the reformation of its social and economic sectors to large extent while reforms in political sectors are also introduced to some extent.

In the aftermath of 9/11, several reform strategies are introduced which includes political, socio-cultural and economic reforms. The political reforms include, reforms of the Shura Council, Municipal Elections 2005, changes in cabinet, re-establishment of Grand Ulama Council, and reforms at judicial and ministerial level are also introduced. More reform-minded people are injected into the official schools and courts.

Socio-cultural reforms include women emancipation, human rights, modern education, freedom of press, and openness of society. Since 9/11, the Saudi government has permitted women to appear as candidates and voters in some of the institutional elections,

such as women have been allowed to appear in the elections of Jeddah Chambers of Commerce, first elections of the Saudi Engineers Council, and the elections of Saudi Journalists Association. Women are now being provided with more opportunities in educational and social spheres of life.

The Saudi education system is considered to be the one basic source to spread extremist feelings among people and after September 11, 2001, there is a huge international pressure on the Saudi establishment to put its educational system on the road of reforms. The International community and liberal elements in Saudi Arabia demanded that the new educational system must be free from Wahhabi-controlled educational system and must teach the lessons of tolerance for other religions and sects. In this regard, Saudi government took several measures to introduce a new educational system. It includes the introduction of new education programs, Tatweer, allocations of heavy funds to research projects in universities, establishment of new universities for more advanced studies, and taking over the girls' education under the ministry of education.

Economic reforms include new economic laws and agreements and formation of new economic institutions in order to counter the emerging economic challenges. Oil based economy, less-developed educational system are the main challenges to the Saudi economy. To overcome these problems, Saudi Arabia has launched several economic reforms. As it passes through various forms of reforms, economic reforms are not exempted. These reforms are shaped in varieties of forms, as measure of pushing the country forward and exhibiting the extent to which the country is progressing in all

ramifications. These economic reforms include kingdom's accession to WTO, its policies to attract more and more FDI, diversification of its economy and its privatization policies. Some of the western critiques are of the view that Saudi reform program does not signal liberalization and modernization rather it consolidates the royal family's powers. Before having such kind of analysis about the reform program of Saudi Arabia, one should consider the autocratic political and social structure of the kingdom. Saudi Arabia is considered to be a conservative country. Ruling elite and Saudi citizens desire to implement and preserve their religious values and social traditions. Changes and reforms which have occurred after 9/11 in the kingdom are slow in pace but they are leading the society to openness and liberalization. Limited reforms undertaken in the aftermath of 9/11 open the way for more influential demands for social and economic changes from comparatively vigilant citizens.

It may be summed up that significant transformations emerged in the political, economic and social scenario of Saudi Arabia in the recent years. These transformations are considered as remarkable in such an authoritarian political structure. In fact, Saudi Government implemented these transformations as reform strategies to combat the social, political and economic challenges. Especially after 9/11 incident, the Saudi government faced immense pressures from international as well as domestic community to introduce reforms to combat rising notions of extremism in the society. Thus, it has been maintained that in the post 9/11 scenario, many internal and external factors are pushing Saudi regime towards the reform process. Hence, 9/11 is perceived as a threat by Saudi regime and it started to adopt many reform policies to counter this threat in the form of

social political and economic reforms which are affecting the state and the society in many ways.

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Appendix I
Saudi Arabia Constitution

Chapter 1 General Principles No_Preamble

Article 1

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab Islamic state with Islam as its religion; God's Book and the Sunnah of His Prophet, God's prayers and peace be upon him, are its constitution, Arabic is its language and Riyadh is its capital.111

Article 2

The state's public holidays are Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha. Its calendar is the Hegira calendar.

Article 3

The state's flag shall be as follows:

- (a) It shall be green.
- (b) Its width shall be equal to two-thirds of its length.
- (c) The words "There is but one God and Mohammed is His Prophet" shall be inscribed in the center with a drawn sword under it. The statute shall define the rules pertaining to it.

Article 4

The state's emblem shall consist of two crossed swords with a palm tree in the upper space between them. The statute shall define the state's anthem and its medals.

Chapter 2 [Monarchy]

Article 5

- (a) The system of government⁵²⁵ in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is that of a monarchy⁵¹.
- (b) Rule passes to the sons of the founding King, Abd al-Aziz Bin Abd al-Rahman al-Faysal Al Sa'ud, and to their children's children. The most upright among them is to receive allegiance in accordance with the principles of the Holy Koran and the Tradition of the Venerable Prophet.

- (c) The King chooses the Heir Apparent and relieves him of his duties by Royal order.
- (d) The Heir Apparent is to devote his time to his duties as an Heir Apparent and to whatever missions the King entrusts him with.
- (e) The Heir Apparent takes over the powers of the King on the latter's death until the act of allegiance has been carried out.

Article 6

Citizens are to pay allegiance to the King in accordance with the holy Koran and the tradition of the Prophet, in submission and obedience, in times of ease and difficulty, fortune and adversity.

Article 7

Government in Saudi Arabia derives power from the Holy Koran and the Prophet's tradition.

Article 8 [Government Principles]

Government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is based on the premise of justice, consultation, and equality⁶³ in accordance with the Islamic Shari'ah.

Chapter 3 Features of the Saudi Family

Article 9

The family is the kernel of Saudi society, and its members shall be brought up on the basis of the Islamic faith, and loyalty and obedience to God, His Messenger, and to guardians; respect for and implementation of the law, and love of and pride in the homeland and its glorious history as the Islamic faith stipulates.

Article 10

The state will aspire to strengthen family ties, maintain its Arab and Islamic values and care for all its members, and to provide the right conditions for the growth of their resources and capabilities.

Article 11

Saudi society will be based on the principle of adherence to God's command, on mutual cooperation in good deeds and piety and mutual support and inseparability.

Article 12

The consolidation of national unity is a duty, and the state will prevent anything that may lead to disunity, sedition and separation.

Article 13

education will aim at instilling the Islamic faith in the younger generation, providing its members with knowledge and skills and preparing them to become useful members in the building of their society, members who love their homeland and are proud of its history.

Chapter 4 Economic Principles

Article 14

All God's bestowed wealth, be it under the ground, on the surface or in national territorial waters, in the land or maritime domains under the state's control, are the property of the state as defined by law. The law defines means of exploiting, protecting, and developing such wealth in the interests of the state, its security and economy.

Article 15

No privilege is to be granted and no public resource is to be exploited without a law.

Article 16

Public money is sacrosanct. The state has an obligation to protect it and both citizens and residents are to safeguard it.

Article 17

Property, capital, and labor are essential elements in the Kingdom's economic and social being. They are personal rights which perform a social function in accordance with Islamic Shari'ah.

Article 18

The state protects freedom of private property and its sanctity. No one is to be stripped of his property except when it serves the public interest, in which case fair compensation is due.

Article 19

Public confiscation of money is prohibited and the penalty of private confiscation is to be imposed only by a legal order.

Article 20

Taxes and fees are to be imposed on a basis of justice and only when the need for them arises. Imposition, amendment, revocation and exemption is only permitted by law.

Article 21

Alms tax is to be levied and paid to legitimate recipients.

Article 22

Economic and social development is to be achieved according to a just and scientific plan.

Chapter 5 Rights and Duties

Article 23 [Islam]

The state protects Islam; it implements its Shari'ah; it orders people to do right and shun evil; it fulfills the duty regarding God's call.

Article 24 [Holy Places]

The state works to construct and serve the Holy Places; it provides security and care for those who come to perform the pilgrimage and minor pilgrimage in them through the provision of facilities and peace.

Article 25 [World Peace]

The state strives for the achievement of the hopes of the Arab and Islamic nation for solidarity and unity of word, and to consolidate its relations with friendly states.

Article 26 [Human Rights]

The state protects human rights in accordance with the Islamic Shari'ah.

Article 27 [Welfare Rights]

The state guarantees the rights of the citizen and his family in cases of emergency, illness and disability, and in old age; it supports the system of social security and encourages institutions and individuals to contribute in acts of charity.

Article 28 [Work]

The state provides job opportunities for who-ever is capable of working; it enacts laws that protect the employee and employer.

Article 29 [Science, Culture]

The state safeguards science, literature and culture; it encourages scientific research; it protects the Islamic and Arab heritage and contributes toward the Arab, Islamic and human civilization.

Article 30 [Education]

The state provides public education and pledges to combat illiteracy.

Article 31 [Health Care]

The state takes care of health issues and provides health care for each citizen.

Article 32 [Environment, Nature]

The state works for the preservation, protection, and improvement of the environment, and for the prevention of pollution.

Article 33 [Armed Forces]

The state establishes and equips the Armed Forces⁵²⁵⁵ for the defence of the Islamic religion, the Two Holy Places, society, and the citizen.

Article 34 [Military Service]

The defence of the Islamic religion, society, and country is a duty for each citizen. The regime establishes the provisions of military service.

Article 35 [Citizenship]

The statutes define the Regulations governing Saudi Arabian nationality.

Article 36 [Arrest]

The state provides security for all its citizens and all residents within its territory and no one shall be arrested, imprisoned, or have their actions restricted except in cases specified by statutes.

Article 37 [Home]

The home is sacrosanct and shall not be entered without the permission of the owner or be searched except in cases specified by statutes.

Article 38 [Punishment, nulla poena]

Penalties shall be personal and there shall be no crime or penalty except in accordance with the Shari'ah or organizational law. There shall be no punishment except for acts committed subsequent to the coming into force of the organizational law.

Article 39 [Expression]

Information, publication, and all other media shall employ courteous language and the state's regulations, and they shall contribute to the education of the nation and the bolstering of its unity. All acts that foster sedition or division or harm the state's security and its public relations or detract from man's dignity and rights shall be prohibited. The statutes shall define all that.

Article 40 [Communication]

Telegraphic, postal, telephone, and other means of communications shall be safeguarded. They cannot be confiscated, delayed, read or listened to except in cases defined by statutes.

Article 41 [Residents' Duties]

Residents of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall abide by its laws and shall observe the values of Saudi society and respect its traditions and feelings.

Article 42 [Asylum, Extradition]

The state shall grant the right to political asylum when the public interest demands this. Statutes and international agreements shall define the rules and procedures governing the extradition of common criminals.

Article 43 [Royal Courts]

The King's Court and that of the Crown Prince shall be open to all citizens and to anyone who has a complaint or a plea against an injustice. Every individual shall have a right to address the public authorities in all matters affecting him.

Chapter 6 The Authorities of the State

Article 44

The authorities of the state consist of the following⁵³²³:

the judicial authority;

the executive authority;

the regulatory authority.

These authorities cooperate with each other in the performance of their duties, in accordance with this and other laws. The King shall be the point of reference for all these authorities.

Article 45

The source of the deliverance of fatwa in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are God's Book and the Sunnah of His Messenger. The law will define the composition of the senior ulema body, the administration of scientific research, deliverance of fatwa and its (the body of senior ulema's) functions.

Article 46

The judiciary⁵⁴¹ is an independent⁵⁴²¹ authority. There is no control over judges in the dispensation of their judgements except in the case of the Islamic Shari'ah.

Article 47

The right to litigation is guaranteed to citizens and residents of the Kingdom on an equal basis. The law defines the required procedures for this.

Article 48

The courts will apply the rules of the Islamic Shari'ah in the cases that are brought before them, in accordance with what is indicated in the Book and the Sunnah, and statutes decreed by the Ruler which do not contradict the Book or the Sunnah.

Article 49

Observing what is stated in Article 53, the courts shall arbitrate in all disputes and crimes.

Article 50

The King, or whoever deputizes for him, is responsible for the implementation of judicial rulings.

Article 51

The authorities establish the formation of the Higher Council of Justice and its prerogatives; they also establish the seniority of the courts and their prerogatives.

Article 52

The appointment of judges and the termination of their duties is carried out by Royal decree by a proposal from the Higher Council of Justice in accordance with the provisions of the law.

Article 53

The law establishes the seniority of the tribunal of complaints and its prerogatives.

Article 54

The law establishes the relationship between the investigative body and the Prosecutor-general, and their organization and prerogatives.

Article 55

The King carries out the policy of the nation, a legitimate policy in accordance with the provisions of Islam; the King oversees the implementation of the Islamic Shari'ah, the system of government, the state's general policies; and the protection and defence of the country.

Article 56

The King is the head of the Council of Ministers; he is assisted in carrying out his duties by members of the Council of Ministers, in accordance with the provisions of this and other laws. The Council of Ministers establishes the prerogatives of the Council regarding internal and external affairs, the organization of and co-ordination between government bodies. It also establishes requirements to be fulfilled by ministers, their prerogatives, the manner of their questioning and all issues concerning them. The law on the Council of Ministers and its prerogatives is to be amended in accordance with this law.

Article 57

- (a) The King appoints and relieves deputies of the prime minister and ministers and members of the Council of Ministers by Royal decree.
- (b) The deputies of the prime minister and ministers of the Council of Ministers are responsible, by expressing solidarity before the King, for implementing the Islamic Shari'ah and the state's general policy.
- (c) The King has the right to dissolve and reorganize the Council of Ministers.

Article 58

The King appoints those who enjoy the rank of ministers, deputy ministers and those of higher rank, and relieves them of their posts by Royal decree in accordance with the explanations included in the law. Ministers and heads of independent departments are responsible before the prime minister for the ministries and departments which they supervise.

Article 59

The law defines the rules of the civil service, including salaries, awards, compensations, favors and pensions.

Article 60

The King is the commander-in-chief of all the armed forces. He appoints officers and puts an end to their duties in accordance with the law.

Article 61

The King declares a state of emergency, general mobilization and war, and the law defines the rules for this.

Article 62

If there is a danger threatening the safety of the Kingdom or its territorial integrity, or the security of its people and its interests, or which impedes the functioning of the state institutions, the King may take urgent measures in order to deal with this danger. And if the King considers that these measures should continue, he may then implement the necessary regulations to this end.

Article 63

The King receives Kings and Heads of State. He appoints his representatives to states, and he receives the credentials of state representatives accredited to him.

Article 64

The King awards medals, as defined by regulations.

Article 65

The King may delegate prerogatives to the Crown Prince by Royal decree.

Article 66

In the event of his travelling abroad, the King issues a Royal decree delegating to the Crown Prince the management of the affairs of state and looking after the interests of the people, as defined by the Royal decree.

Article 67

The regulatory authority lays down regulations and motions to meet the interests of the state or remove what is bad in its affairs, in accordance with the Islamic Shari'ah. This authority exercises its functions in accordance with this law and the laws pertaining to the Council of Ministers and the Consultative Council.

Article 68 [Consultative Council]

A Consultative Council is to be created. Its statute will specify how it is formed, how it exercises its powers and how its members are selected.

Article 69

The King has the right to convene the Consultative Council and the Council of Ministers for a joint meeting and to invite whoever he wishes to attend that meeting to discuss whatever matters he wishes.

Article 70

International treaties, agreements, regulations and concessions are approved and amended by Royal decree.

Article 71

Statutes are to be published in the Official Gazette and take effect from the date of publication unless another date is specified.

Chapter 7 Financial Affairs

Article 72

(a) The statute explains the provisions concerning the state's revenue and its entry in the state's general budget⁵³²⁵.

(b) revenue is entered and spent in accordance with the rules specified in the statute.

Article 73

Any undertaking to pay a sum of money from the general budget must be made in accordance with the provisions of the budget. If it is not possible to do so in accordance with the provisions of the budget, then it must be done in accordance with Royal decree.

Article 74

The sale, renting or use of state assets is not permitted except in accordance with the statute.

Article 75

The statutes will define the monetary and banking provisions, the standards, weights and measures.

Article 76

The law will fix the state's financial year and will announce the budget by way of a Royal decree. It will also assess the revenues and expenditure of that year at least one month before the start of the financial year. If, for essential reasons, the budget is not announced and the new financial year starts, the budget of the previous year will remain in force until the new budget is announced.

Article 77

The competent body will prepare the state's final statement of account for the passing year and will submit it to the head of the council of ministers.

Article 78

The same provisions will apply both to the budgets of the corporate bodies and their final statements of account and to the state's budget and its final statement of account.

Chapter 8 Control Bodies

Article 79

All the state's revenues and expenditures will come under subsequent control and all the state's movable and immovable funds will be controlled in order to confirm the good use of these funds and their preservation. An annual report will be submitted on this matter to the head of the Council of Ministers. The law will define the competent control body and its obligations and prerogatives.

Article 80

government bodies will come under control in order to confirm the good performance of the administration and the implementation of the statutes. Financial and administrative offenses will be investigated and an annual report will be submitted on this matter to the head of the Council of Ministers. The law will define the competent body in charge of this and its obligations and prerogatives.

Chapter 9 General Provisions

Article 81

The implementation of this law will not prejudice the treaties and agreements signed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with international bodies and organizations.

Article 82

Without violating the content of Article 7, no provision of this law whatsoever may be suspended unless it is temporary such as in a time of war or during the declaration of a state of emergency. This temporary suspension will be in accordance with the terms of the law.

Article 83

This law may only be amended in the same way as it was promulgated.

Source: http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/sa00000_.html (accessed December 12, 2010)

Appendix II

Saudi National Reform Document

In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Beneficent

His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Bin Abdalaziz, Crown Prince, Deputy of Prime Minister and Chief on the National Guards, May God's peace and blessing be upon you;

We convey to you the admiration of intellectuals in this kind country, from your brothers and sons from different visions and regions, and their appreciation for your call for public participation.

They send you their utmost regards for this initiative, and they consider it as a step in the right direction the country was waiting for, and they see that it is the greatest evidence for the deep relationship between the society and their leadership. They address their standing with the leadership in facing all the dangers and conspiracies against our country.

Since September 2002, your brothers and sons started to form a strategic view for the present and the future of our country. They hope it will help you, along with other efforts, in reaching the desired goals, the unity, stability and strength for this country.

They have tried to deliver this document directly to your Highness' hand in different ways but they failed, so mail was the only way left to deliver it, wishing it will help you in reaching the noble goals. Please accept our best regards.

View for the Present and Future of Our Homeland:

His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Bin Abdalaziz, Crown Prince, Deputy of Prime Minister and Chief on the National Guards;

Citizens were pleased with the transparent way you took in dealing with our country's problems and solving them, through your open meetings with different sections of the society and the intellectuals, and your public declaration of your wish to hear the people's voice. It is a commendable course that generated support among a score of your brothers and sons among the citizens, who are worried about the dangers facing their country since September 11, 2001. For instance, international and regional conditions, which its heart our country occupies, are

threatened with the military action, intervention in internal affairs and redrawing the whole regional map.

The signatories of this document, although they have different aspects and views, they all believe in the unity of their country "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" and its leadership, and they announce their standing with their leaders in facing all dangers which threaten our country's present and future. And they see that facing those dangers require serious reforms to strengthen relations between the leadership and community.

Standing from the prophet "May God's prayers be upon him" saying (The religion is to advice ... for the Muslim leaders and the community), signers of this document are vying to participate in a comprehensive national dialogue. They hope their document will help through its first primary axis and the other four axes, with the governmental and public efforts in pinpointing the problems and solutions.

The First /Primary Axis:

More Steps in Building a Country of Constitutional Institutions,

The legality of government in Quran and Sunna, which are the base of the nation's constitution come from two matters. Firstly, doing what Islam has ordered in matter of rituals and conduct with people. Secondly, citizen's satisfaction with the way their leaders are ruling them, because leaders represent the community to insure their rights and doing their duties.

Since justice is the base of ruling, God ordered social justice and considered it one the foundations of the faith. And since justice cannot be achieved without obligatory shoura, God obliged his prophet Mohammed to use shoura in political matters. He said in His holy book "and consult them in affairs".

At the same time, shoura cannot materialize unless serious steps are made toward: institutional and constitutional system. And this reasserts the importance of developing the basic law system to strengthen the constitutional concepts; which rely on Qur'an and Sunna, depend on the separation of the executive, judicial and legislative authorities, and ensuring of the citizen's basic rights in justice, equality, and equal opportunity.

Also, applying the parliamentary shoura which reflects the public's participation; invoking the social contract between the leaders and community; and to build the national unity on a relationship of acceptance, choice and cooperation, that will be the base stability and progress.

Elected Parliament (elected shoura council):

The signatories form their strategic view in this primary axis in the following:

1. The formation of shoura council by direct elections, from all citizens, to reflect the power of the legislators, to whom affairs are referred, after God's book and His Prophet's way, because they represent the agreement and the trust of the nation in their decisions, to enable the council to carry on its legislative and monitoring duties toward other branches of the government.
2. Forming regional legislators by direct elections, to manage its regional affairs, and ensure the citizen's supervision over executive authority
3. Insisting on the concept of independent of judicial authority, which is set theoretically, but cannot materialize unless all the safeguards are made to apply the concept, such as expanding its authorities in directing all kinds of exceptional judiciary like that exist in several ministries, investigations and prisoner conditions, putting General Persecuting Authority under the High Council of Justice or its supervision. And removing all previsions and interference, which limit the independence and effectiveness of the judiciary, or reduce judge's immunity. Establishing a mechanism to enforce the judicial rulings by the executive branch in a manner to ensure the judiciary's respect and status. Recording judicial rulings and unifying them to develop a written national judicial code to ensure consistency in judicial sentences. Expanding the authority of the high court and developing judges training systems, to give them the ability to reach better solutions to growing and complicated problems.
4. Royal announcement that ensures citizen's rights, especially in the area of freedom of expression, assembly, election's rights and all human rights which Islam has approved before it became international resolutions our country as others has ratified.
5. Announcing the right of establishing civil institutions such as clubs, committees, and educational, economical, social and labor unions to play its rule in encouraging experts and opinion leaders to incite public participation in making decisions. And allowing civil society and human rights activists to function, because these activities will spread the culture of dialog and peaceful debates instead of the culture of elimination and exclusion, in addition to violent struggle which threatens our future.

Economic File:

Second axis, in a Way to Solve the Economical Problem,

The signatories' view in curing what the economy suffers from and what threatens it is the following:

1. Insisting on the concept of fairness in economical plans and distribution the wealth between different regions.

2. Putting the required restrictions to control public spending, and the deciding spending priorities. At the same time, fighting corruption and preventing the spreading of bribery and expropriation of public land.
3. Strengthening and empowering oversight and accountability institutions, such as Public Supervision Directorate and connect it with the shoura council.
4. Considering the national debt a national concern and a major responsibility that requires an effective solution to pay it off following a strict time table. Also, allocating part of the country's income to the next generations who are threatened with the development of alternative sources of energy other than oil.
5. Decreasing the mono nature of the economy, by developing other sources for income and encouraging national and international investments, and developing legal provisions to control its activities and protect its rights.

Dangers and National Unity:

Third Axis: Encouraging Interaction between the Society and Leadership.

To strengthen our internal front in face of external threats and to ensure its unity, they see the following:

1. Insisting on the role of the government and the society in spreading the culture of human rights, which our religion has ordered such as tolerance, fairness, justice, respecting the right of different views.

And encouraging national unity and removing all elements of discrimination, be it sectarian, ethnic, regional or social.

2. Reforming the public services system, to satisfy the minimum needs of each citizen, in employment, housing, education, healthcare and fair trial.
3. Forming programs to solve the increasing unemployment problems. And setting a minimum wage for workers and retirement pensions to allow them a decent life and establishing assistance program for the unemployed.

A Greater Role for Women:

4. The woman is half the society and a primary element in its structure, so she should be given all the rights which Islam has approved, to do her duties and activate her role in public affairs, according to the rules of Islam.

Fourth Axis, Reforming Initiatives:

For the government to ensure to the society of her intentions to make serious reforms to avoid future threats, the signatories see that the government should take some steps that send positive indications, strengthen patriotism, infuse public

trust, and indicate the well of curing the internal problems, by doing the following steps:

1. Announcing a general amnesty for political prisoners or give them a fair and open trial.
2. Restoring the civil rights to reformers who are concerned with the country's situation such as university professors and judges, and reinstating them to their jobs which they were expelled from.
3. Providing the legal freedoms for all social elements, specially scholars and intellectuals, to discuss the public affairs in various structures. And lifting all restrictions on expression in matter of public affairs such as: travel bans, threats with prison, expulsion from work, forced statement to stop writing or expression of opinion.

Fifth Axis: Invitation to a National Dialogue Convention

The signatories see that the best crowning to these initiatives is that the government calls for a national dialogue convention, to discuss the main issues, attended by representatives of all regions, and cultural and social parties, of with its different colors and views. In addition to a group of intellectuals interested in public affairs to discuss challenges and the problems and lay a constitutional foundation for the contractual form of a nation of institutions.

Finally, while we repeat our solidarity with the leadership in facing the impending dangers surrounding our country, we trust it realizes that addressing the faced challenges can't be without serious reforms, which reflect the public's participation.

God is behind the effort, he is the Guide to the right path, May God's peace and blessing be upon you.

Source: Al-bab, "Saudi National Reform Document,"
<http://www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/saudi/reform2003.htm> (accessed January 02, 2010).

