

Chapter 2

The internal dimensions of Saudi security

Successful security for the GCC and the Gulf depends in no small measure on domestic developments in Saudi Arabia and its GCC allies. Prominent among these is the question of succession, both as regards the specific heirs to the present rulers and, more fundamentally, in terms of future directions of succession within ruling families and the new roles to be played by changing societies.¹ Saudi Arabia is nearing completion of the first phase of socio-economic development – building a physical and social infrastructure – and faces the more formidable challenge of a creating self-sustaining economy. Despite outward appearances and government protestations, this engenders significant social change that is likely to lead to demands for fuller participation in decision-making – with obvious ramifications for current policies that rely heavily on personal relations between Western governments and the Al Saud ruling family.

Saudi citizens are becoming increasingly sceptical that Gulf security depends on an alliance with the West that has as its principal objective the containment of Iraq and Iran. Whereas the regime has seen its interests, both in foreign-policy considerations and in regime survival, bound to the establishment and maintenance of close alliance with the West (primarily the US and Britain), many in the Kingdom, at all levels of society, express growing mistrust of the United States, its actions and its policies.

They object to close ties with the United States because of two American policies that have a strong negative impact in the region.

First, they see American actions towards Iraq, backed by Britain, as being primarily responsible for creating the present humanitarian plight of the Iraqi people, and they do not perceive continued sanctions as being useful. Second, they have become increasingly angered by what they regard as Israeli oppression of the Palestinians and by what seems to them to be overwhelmingly uncritical American support of Israel. (Particularly since the second *intifada* began in October 2000, several Gulf regimes have suffered widespread criticism from their people for these alliances). There are many in Saudi Arabia who also believe that the United States and the West exaggerate the dangers from Iraq and Iran in order to sell arms to the Gulf states at inflated prices. Some even believe that they are deliberately prolonging Iraq's international quarantine in order to sell more arms and keep the Gulf states dependent on the West.

The American war on Osama bin Laden and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan has raised fresh suspicions among many Saudis that the United States is fundamentally hostile to Islam. Notwithstanding their widespread opposition to American policy *vis-à-vis* Israel, this is unlikely to be the view of many middle-class Saudis; on the other hand, many lesser-educated and untravelled Saudis may hold this belief, however viscerally.²

The impact of economic and social change in Saudi Arabia inevitably will cause political repercussions, including re-examination of the role of the ruling families and pressure for political participation. Just as inevitably the evolution away from what some have called a 'rentier' society will redefine the basis of the 'social compact' between rulers and ruled and direct more emphasis towards issues that Saudi citizens – as well as the regime – consider important. These concerns lie at the heart of the internal dimension of Saudi security. A brief look at changes occurring in Saudi society will illustrate the background to many of these attitudes and issues.

Changing society

Saudi society has evolved tremendously during the past 30 or more years, and the impact of economic change and progress in development has been to transform many traditional social relationships and to create new expectations and demands. This process has been accentuated by shifts in social class and demography.

The impact of economic change and development

Since the 1960s the Kingdom has embarked on a colossal programme of economic development, particularly through a series of ambitious five-year plans. The first plan (1970–75), overtaken by the explosion of oil prices during 1973–4, was followed by a much better-endowed and more ambitious second plan (1975–80) that emphasised infrastructure improvements, heavy defence expenditures and the immense industrialisation projects at the new cities of Jubayl (on the Gulf) and Yanbu (on the Red Sea). Increasing domestic production, especially in agriculture, and greater emphasis on the role of the private sector were the focus of the next four five-year plans, with an added effort since 2000 to reduce dependence on oil revenues and to develop human resources, implement privatisation policy and improve productivity within the government.

The social impact of this process of development has been enormous, despite the traditionally conservative nature of Saudi society and the government's conscious efforts to foster economic change while simultaneously seeking to avoid social change. Not surprisingly, rising standards of living and better health care have resulted in a population explosion. An annual population growth rate estimated at 4.5% in 1990 and 2.6% in 1999 has resulted in a total population officially estimated at 21.3m – including 5.7m expatriates (as of 1999) – and projected to rise to 33.7m by 2015.³ Some 50% of this population is under 18,⁴ and the education pipeline is full from end to end. The result is more than 175,000 new secondary-school graduates each year, most of whom are now having great difficulty in finding employment. Dissatisfaction and despair today can easily turn to bitterness and alienation tomorrow.

Another important change has been the urbanisation of the population. The urban proportion of the Kingdom's population stood at 85% of the total in 1999.⁵ Riyadh's population, estimated at 30,000 in 1930 and 300,000 in 1968, stood at 1.2m in the 1974 census and is presently estimated at 3.5m.⁶ Jeddah and the Eastern Province conurbation of Dhahran, Dammam and al-Khobar are not far behind. Such demographic shifts have grave implications for tribal and regional loyalties or identities, for relationships within extended families and for the manner in which peer groups are formed. Increasingly, personal connections are being made in ways similar to the West, rather than by traditional ties of family and tribal relationships.⁷

At the same time, there have been wide-ranging shifts in occupation, as much of the population has moved from traditional pastoral, agricultural and fishing lifestyles to government employment or to employment in the modern private sector. Education has created a bulge of mid-level government employees, public- and private-sector managers, military officers, educators and small business entrepreneurs. The consequence is the rise of a substantial middle class (or as some Saudis term it, 'middle-income class') that display many of the same values and goals as middle-class counterparts around the world: greater emphasis on the nuclear family, the building of private villa-style residences, career advancement in salaried positions and so forth.⁸

Perhaps the greatest impact has been in the field of education. The total of enrolled students in all educational institutions rose from 547,000 in 1969/1970 to nearly five million in 1998/1999. The numbers of intermediate and secondary school students rose from 77,000 to 1.8m in the same period, while university students increased from 7,000 to 343,000.⁹ Considerable emphasis has been placed on higher education, concentrating initially on education overseas but subsequently on the development of indigenous universities. One effect of this growing redirection of government scholarship students at university and postgraduate levels is the loss of personal experience of the West and reduced familiarity with Western life, values and ways. The less Saudi students are exposed to direct contact with the United States or Europe, the more they will tend to accept negative stereotypes and political animosity. In the 1970s and 1980s more than 30,000 Saudi students studied in the United States each year; now there are less than 6,000.¹⁰ Most Saudi students and children of any age do not have – and are unlikely to have – any direct contact with the United States (the heavily publicised detention of Saudi students in the United States after 11 September has only worsened this trend).

Another effect of the expansion of Saudi education has to do with the distinction between 'secular' and 'Islamic' universities. The former are modelled on Western institutions; the latter were created originally to provide instruction for *ulama* (religious scholars), *qadis* (judges), *imams* (prayer leaders) and other religious functionaries. Over the years, the Islamic universities have tended to attract a number of less-qualified students and are generally regarded as

having lower academic standards. Not surprisingly, they are centres of conservative Islamic sentiment, including anti-Western and anti-regime feeling. It has long been alleged that, as academically poor students drop out of secular universities, they are able to continue their studies in Islamic universities, and at least some of them are then influenced by the reactionary elements.¹¹

Not surprisingly, religious feelings and institutions have been strongly affected by social change. Saudi Arabia takes pride in describing itself as an 'Islamic state' whose affairs are governed by the *sharia* (Islamic law). The central role and influence of the religious establishment in the Saudi state has long been a major constraint on the latitude of government action; the government must often strike a compromise with the *ulama* in order to get their approval for the introduction of innovations. But the emergence of more radical, anti-government and non-government-approved Islamists introduces another layer of Islam-based conservative complications into the government's calculations. Ever since the siege of the Great Mosque of Mecca in 1979 by disaffected young, anti-establishment Islamists or neo-Ikhwan,¹² there has been a tension between the officially appointed and approved religious establishment and (often younger) anti-government religious critics.

At the same time, Saudi society is influenced by external factors. Satellite television has permitted information and opinions to be absorbed from sources other than government-controlled media, and the emergence of Arabic-language channels such as the Middle East Broadcasting Corporation and especially the iconoclastic Jazeera Television of Qatar has resulted in an audience that extends well beyond the Western-educated elites. It should be remembered, too, that religious viewpoints may be spread by such media just as easily as political ones, and the role of audio cassettes in disseminating divergent and subversive opinions is well known throughout the Middle East.

Saudi Arabia's successful entry into the World Trade Organisation will also entail fundamental changes. The reduction and elimination of subsidies to Saudi industry has already improved the prospects for tighter economic integration within the GCC. With WTO membership, the Saudi economy will undergo significant liberalisation; businesses will find themselves facing foreign competition at home and the government will be required to adopt

more transparency and reform in its economic structure. The privileged role of the ruling family in the economic sphere will undoubtedly be challenged. The privatisation of Saudi Arabian Airlines provides a pertinent example of the changes required: the sale of the airline depends on its being made profitable, and profitability means that the ruling family members' privilege of pre-empting other passengers and flying for free must end. This has direct political implications for the ruling caste's monopoly of power.

The political framework and emerging strains

Not unexpectedly, the process of rapid economic and social change has serious political ramifications, despite official assertions to the contrary. Although the Kingdom has built a modern government and bureaucracy, the fact remains that the Al Saud royal family dominate the country in nearly all spheres. On the one hand, the Al Saud hold the country together and provide the stability that has produced relative prosperity for nearly all Saudi citizens. On the other hand, the concentration of power and privilege in the hands of a single caste imposes a tremendous burden on the country and engenders widespread resentment. Yet, while voices of dissent multiply, the regime's response to the issue of political participation is widely seen as too little and too ineffective.

Old elites and new elites

Change has produced a mix of old and new elites. Some of the old elites have successfully expanded their power; others have seen their standing diminish, sometimes quite severely. New elites, by definition, are newcomers in terms of power relationships, and consequently their power and influence are necessarily limited.

The most important elite in the country is, of course, the Al Saud. Although membership is determined by heredity, thus effectively making it a caste, the family is of considerable size and expanding – the number of male members is not known, but estimates range up to 10,000. The King stands at the apex of this family hierarchy, along with his brothers and other close relations, and they form an inner decision-making elite. A second level consists of the descendants of King Abd al-Aziz (ruled 1902–53), which includes not only the king and his full and half-brothers, but also the grandsons and great-grandsons of Abd al-Aziz. At the outer

edges are the cadet branches – Al Saud al-Kabir, Al Farhan, Al Thunayan, Al Turki and Al Jiluwi, which have lost many family privileges but still rank above the commoners.

Most of the other old elites are diminishing in importance. The Al al-Sheikh, descendants of Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahhab, have long played an important secondary role as the religious guardians of the state and society. Until recently, it looked as if their influence was waning, particularly as non-family members took over many of the top religious positions. This seemed in part to be a consequence of the natural expansion of other candidates into these positions, though there may well also have been a deliberate effort by the Al Saud to dilute the power of the Al al-Sheikh. However, as of 2002, members of the Al al-Sheikh were serving as ministers of Islamic Guidance, Justice, and State, and President of the Higher Council of Ulama. The status and influence of the *ulama* and other religious functionaries has also seemed to diminish – mostly because of growing social complexity and their reduction to salaried government servants, but also because of the rise of hostile Islamic forces and ideologies.

The importance of the tribal sheikhs, at least on the national scene, has also seemed to be waning. In part this was a natural evolution as the centre of gravity of the state’s defences and coercive power shifted from the support of loyal tribal levies to more organised institutions such as the armed forces, National Guard and police units. In addition, urbanisation and competition from new elites increasingly restricted the sheikhs’ influence to internal tribal matters. In years past, alienating the tribal sheikhs could well lead to serious repercussions; with the development of a more complex state structure and security organs, though, it is unlikely that any tribally based dissidence would get very far now. This does not, of course, rule out tribal rivalries within the Army or National Guard, for example, or a belief that one tribe receives more favoured treatment than another – but such developments are not likely to turn actively hostile.

The burden and resilience of the Al Saud

There are more than a few Saudis who feel that the royal family is a burden on the state. As the family effectively controls the receipt and distribution of oil income on behalf of the state, the opportunities for family members to abuse a national trust are virtually unlimited. Additional royal privileges, such as access to government positions,

free air travel and so forth, fill ordinary Saudis with resentment. On the other hand, the Al Saud perform at least two vital functions. First, they are the glue that holds the country together. The present Kingdom has been created out of a hodgepodge of Arabia's regions: the Eastern Province, holding nearly all the country's oil and looking to the Gulf for identity; the Hijaz in the west, home to Islam's holiest places, with a population of heterogeneous origins and an independent Kingdom until the 1920s; the populous south, geographically and culturally close to Yemen; the lightly populated deserts of the north, with great nomadic tribes that spill over into Jordan, Syria and Iraq; and the central region of Najd, home of the Al Saud and the most conservative part of the Kingdom. At various times in the last two centuries the Al Saud have conquered these disparate regions, and since the 1930s (when the name 'Kingdom of Saudi Arabia' was adopted) have absorbed them permanently. Without the unifying and controlling force of the royal family, there seems little reason for these regions to hang together.

On a more personal level, the Al Saud provide the most senior members of the government – King, Heir Apparent, Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Ministers, and the ministers of Defence and Aviation, Interior, Foreign Affairs, Public Works and Housing, and a Minister of State. Younger members of the family are liberally scattered throughout key ministries, the armed forces and the oil industry. While many family members have neither the aptitude nor the discipline necessary to occupy important positions, it is surprising how many others are well-suited to government work.

The issue of political participation

In common with its Gulf allies, Saudi Arabia faces growing pressures for political participation, at least from the expanding educated sector of its population. The shape of participation perceived to be required may not conform to Western models, such as parliamentary democracy, and its scope may well not extend as far as a process of direct elections. Nonetheless, it is clear that a growing desire is emerging for a say in state and government objectives, for fora in which to debate national issues, for the creation of some form of government accountability, and for restrictions on the role and excesses of members of ruling families.

The principal response of the Saudi government to date has been the creation of the *Majlis al-Shura*, or Consultative Council, in

1993. Vague plans and promises for a consultative council of some sort had been floated in Riyadh since the time of King Faisal, and King Fahd reiterated his intention to establish a council on various occasions throughout the 1980s – premises were even built for it adjacent to the new King's Office Complex in Riyadh.¹³ In 1992 the announcement was finally made that an appointed *Majlis al-Shura* would be established, and over the following months a former Minister of Justice was named as Chairman, 60 members were appointed, and the new *majlis* held its first session in December 1993. The second *majlis* (1997–2001) saw its membership increased to 90 members, and the third *majlis* (2001–2005) saw another increase to 120 members. Increasingly the emphasis seemed to be on younger modernists with higher degrees.¹⁴ The *majlis* is not a legislative body, and its purview is limited to the social-service functions of government. Nonetheless, it is said to discuss vigorously a variety of issues in committee; several ministers have briefed the council on developments in their fields; and a growing number of young ministers have been drawn from the council's ranks.

It is highly unlikely, however, that any direct form of elections will transpire in the foreseeable future, nor is the government likely to liberalise domestic media or professional organisations. Still, pressure undoubtedly will grow in coming years, as Saudis witness developments around them in the Gulf.

Defence issues and the social compact

Needless to say, internal changes have direct implications for Saudi defence and security policy. This may take several forms. The long decline in oil revenues (only recently, and perhaps temporarily, reversed) has produced the equivalent of a 'guns or butter' debate; this is almost inseparable from widespread perceptions that many, or most, defence expenditures occur simply as a means to enrich members of the ruling family and their cronies. The regime's heavy reliance on the 'special relationship' with the United States forms another area of disagreement. And furthermore, insofar as Saudi Arabia can be regarded as a rentier state, how far is it reasonable to expect its citizenry to feel a sense of commitment and obligation towards national defence? Differences over defence and security concerns may well prove to be the weakest aspect of the Saudi 'social compact'.

'Guns or butter'

As we have seen, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been one of the world's biggest arms-purchasing states. The pattern of heavy purchases began after the oil-price revolution and continued through the 1980s. Major acquisitions since the Kuwait War have included more than 700 tanks, several hundred armoured personnel carriers, nearly 1,000 light armoured vehicles, several frigates, 72 additional F-15 combat aircraft and several dozen *Patriot* missile batteries.¹⁵ In the later 1990s, however, falling oil prices resulted in a drastic cutback in arms purchases¹⁶ – even as Saudi Arabia's leaders perceived increased security needs, budget problems curtailed their expenditures. Between 1984/5 and 1999, government spending outran revenues by an average of \$13bn a year,¹⁷ creating the need to make difficult choices between competing claims on the government purse. From an economic point of view, the logical step would be to reduce consumer and other subsidies, and indeed the government did act to reduce high subsidies to wheat farmers. But the government has been loath to increase living costs at a time when average per capita income has been falling and prospects for many young Saudis are dim. Some effort was made to increase electricity charges, and petrol prices were raised in 1999. But the government has preferred generally to delay payments, issue bonds and even borrow on the international market rather than risk a public backlash on utility prices.

Complaints about military expenditures are increasingly heard in private conversation across a wide spectrum of the population. Such complaints adopt several forms. One is the straight 'guns or butter' argument, pointing out that the purchase of arms and other materiel reduces the money available for social services or development programmes. In addition, with the shrinking of the economic pie, the issue of corruption has risen to the surface. Paying public officials commissions on military and other state purchases, for example, is not *per se* illegal in the Kingdom, and so does not technically constitute corruption. Nevertheless, popular opinion increasingly regards such commissions – along with such practices as selling dubiously acquired land to the government at inflated prices and the rigged awarding of contracts to members of the ruling family and allied elites – as symptomatic of a corrupt system, particularly objectionable at a time when the average standard of

living has fallen so significantly. In particular, the role in these practices of the Al Saud, who already receive direct stipends from oil revenues, is seen as unfair advantage. Arms deals are regarded as the biggest source of corruption, and some argue that fattening pockets is just as big a factor in such deals as legitimate national needs. Others turn the argument slightly and ask why it is necessary to pay for arms when Saudi Arabia also has to pay for Western states to defend it.

Citizenry defence participation in a rentier state

Two concepts seem to underlie a negative view of universal citizen participation in defence issues in the Kingdom. The first is that, in the absence of taxation, means of government accountability and public participation in formulating a national defence framework (as well as discussing the specific issues around which defence is required), there seems to be little reason for many citizens to feel that the defence and military domain deserves their active and voluntary participation, even in times of emergency. Second, the oil state in Saudi Arabia (and its neighbours) is founded upon a patriarchal conception of the role of the ruler and the ruled: the regime is the source of prosperity and social welfare, in return for which the people implicitly leave the government to decide and carry out policies without consultation.

The combination of this psychological dependency with the potent lure of materialism creates effective limits to expansion of the armed forces and security elements. Most Saudis simply do not see the attraction of a soldier's life, and those that do have been recruited already. Thus, periodic announcements of intentions to expand the armed forces significantly, such as in the aftermath of the Kuwait War, do not get very far. Even though applications to military academies in the Kingdom are vastly oversubscribed (it is said that the Saudi military academy had 21,000 applications for 300 places in 1999), it can be argued that this is a temporary spin-off of tightened economic circumstances rather than a groundswell of desire for a martial life.¹⁸

There are other social ramifications to increasing recruitment. The southern provinces are the most populous in the Kingdom, yet these areas have enjoyed less prosperity, are less represented in senior and visible positions, and for historical reasons are less integrated into the country. (Much the same is true of the rural, tribal

northern border regions and other remote areas of the Kingdom). These areas already provide a high proportion of the security forces – particularly, it is said, in the various units of the Ministry of the Interior – as well as the armed forces and the National Guard.¹⁹ Any expansion of the armed forces would thus entail an increased proportion of southerners, and the regime is unlikely to see this as acceptable. And, given the government's hesitation even to tinker with utility subsidies, it is extremely unlikely that it would resort to stern measures such as conscription.

Saudi citizens' concerns

It should not be surprising that most Saudi citizens are more concerned with domestic issues than international ones, even those of national security. This is true in most countries. But the opinion of many Saudis that their government and rulers are losing touch with the needs, demands and wishes of their people is an extremely serious development, as it strikes at the heart of the regime's legitimacy. Furthermore, this feeling is increasingly entwined with a belief that the regime's security policies are designed, with Western connivance, more for regime survival than to meet the country's real needs.

Popular concern in Saudi Arabia centres on such issues as the following:

1. *Economic difficulties.* Most people recognise that the dizzy heights of prosperity achieved in the 1970s and early 1980s will never be reached again. Yet more than a dozen years of budget deficits, the translation of development projects into recurring budget items, and the cost of paying off the Kuwait War have all meant that the size of the economic pie has shrunk considerably, no matter what oil prices do in the foreseeable future.²⁰
2. *Increased personal indebtedness.* The heyday of materialism may have been short-lived, but its impact lives on: the desire for consumer items – new cars, travel, satellite television – means that many people find themselves living beyond their means. Whereas at the height of Saudi Arabia's economic boom per capita income was on a par with that of the United States, at the start of the twenty-first century it had dropped to some \$7,000 per year, relegating the country to Third World

status with correspondingly poor distribution of wealth and widening income disparity.²¹

3. *Population growth.* Population growth rates in the GCC are said to be as high as 4%, and, even with its recent reduction, Saudi Arabia's is still far too high. The immediate problem is the need for heavy government expenditure on such items as health care and education for the majority of the population under the age of 16. Growing populations also mean heavier use of scarce resources and services, such as water and electricity.
4. *Unemployment.* The long-term consequence of population growth is lack of jobs. This is already serious in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Oman. The Kingdom produces some 175,000 secondary-school graduates every year, yet there are jobs for only one in three Saudis seeking employment. The problem grows worse with every passing year.²²
5. *Continuing high-level corruption.* Since the 1980s the economic pie has shrunk, yet ruling families and allied elites appear to make no concessions over what they feel is their due. Hence, their standard of living remains unchanged or has risen, while that of most citizens has been declining. Corruption in all its forms has become a burning issue at all levels of society.
6. *Wasted financial resources.* Public reaction is particularly hostile to arms purchases of almost any sort, to luxury and/or status projects undertaken by the state, and to other perceived non-essentials. 'White elephants' are singled out as symbols of ostentation and abuse of public funds.
7. *Strife over women's roles and gender relations.* Traditionally, public roles for women have been among the most restricted in the world, but the boom in education, economy and government structure has created opportunities that women throughout the Gulf have slowly used to their advantage. While many men in Saudi Arabia have the same attitudes to women as their grandfathers, many others – typically younger and more educated – wish wives to work, are prepared to give women equal political rights. Unfortunately, the debate over women's rights seems to have become a focus for the struggle between liberals and Islamists.²³
8. *Inequities in social structure.* In part, the net effect of the oil revolution in the Gulf has been to reduce distinctions between

social and economic groups because of increased social mobility, education and economic opportunities. More importantly, however, it has also widened divides between them as the rich and privileged prosper while many citizens remain trapped in low-paying jobs and limited financial means. This has caused resentment in various states (most dramatically in Bahrain, where the unrest of the 1990s was fundamentally driven by economic grievances overlaid by social divisions). In the Kingdom, significant and troubling differences remain between *inter alia* Najdis and Hijazis, the rural north and south of the country and the more urbanized centre, and the Shiite minority (mostly found in the Eastern Province) and the rest of the country.

9. *Questions of identity.* Expatriates form some 25% of Saudi Arabia's population. The question of national identity surfaces when Saudis must speak English to Indians and Filipinos in shops, when children learn nursery stories and legends from Sri Lankan nannies, and when political attitudes are shaped in schools by northern Arab teachers. Dependence on expatriates becomes mixed with resentment in the minds of the growing legion of young unemployed Saudis.

National security and relations between rulers and ruled

The legitimacy of Saudi Arabia's rulers rests upon a social compact that depends partly on a traditional, patriarchal foundation and partly on their managing the state so as to provide for the economic and social well-being of the citizenry. But as the population expands, so government becomes more complex, the ruling family grows more distant from the ruled and the regime's legitimacy faces an increasing danger of erosion. The regime is reluctant to undertake meaningful political reform, and its failure to respond to popular demand, no matter how muted at present, invites alienation. Most senior members of the Al Saud are aware of the problem. However, they are also on the horns of a dilemma: they seek to preserve their state and their position through alliance with the United States and the West, yet an increasing proportion of their population objects to American and Western policies in the region. The imbroglio since 11 September has strained the American–Saudi relationship and has undoubtedly

subjected Saudi Arabia's domestic political framework to similar stress. The muttered opposition to American policies and vague expressions of support for America's enemies today may produce widespread criticism of the stewardship of the Al Saud tomorrow.

There are numerous reasons why the internal dimension of Saudi security is significant. First, there is a clear and urgent need for the present regime to manage effectively the political transitions a changing society requires. The patriarchal Saudi state must embrace progressive liberalisation and popular participation in the decision-making process – and sooner rather than later. Second, the regime must somehow come to terms with the sharpening tension between its dependence on the American relationship and popular discontent with American policies. In part, this seems to be the path that Prince Abdullah is following, but much will depend upon the direction of succession after him.

Third, one aspect of the emerging discord between rulers and ruled over foreign policy and security goals is the Gulf's failure to generate a genuine indigenous debate on, and conceptualisation of, Gulf security. This failure is the direct result of the closed nature of Gulf (and especially Saudi) politics. Many key issues of popular concern are not covered by the media and only cautiously raised in private conversation. There are few counterparts of Western research institutes and 'think tanks', and almost all of those that do exist are controlled by governments. As a result, publication and other dissemination of information and ideas deals with only acceptable subjects and takes place along regime-sanctioned lines. A freer environment for debate and discussion in Saudi Arabia might well produce a concept of Saudi and Gulf security dramatically different from the present one.

