

Saudi Arabia's Political System

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Not an introduction:

This paper describes the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's political system, its constitutional layout, the interdependence of political and religious aspects, and current challenges and problems. It is not intended to be a scientific work and, thus, is largely void of citations or footnotes. Rather, it is intended to provide the essentials of the political system in a comprehensive and concise way.

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1. The general set-up: The political system of Saudi Arabia

1.1. The King and the Royal Family

Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy with the King as head of government and state. He also acts as chairman of the Council of Ministers. But his power is restricted by Islamic law: The King does not enact laws; he only issues royal decrees in accord with the *shari'a*. His most difficult duty is to maintain the consensus among the royal family, the *ulama* and powerful parts of the society. This means making decisions in an area of conflict between religious and power interests. Moreover, the King needs to renew the agreement with the tribes due to the tribal structure of the Saudi state. Theoretically, the Royal Family could oust the king.

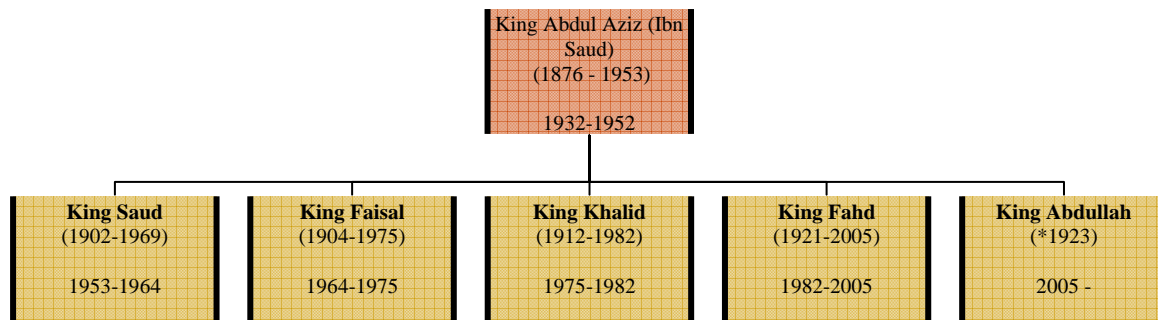
Occupying nearly all the important state positions, the large Al Saud family dominates Saudi-Arabian politics as well as parts of the economy making the desert kingdom a "family firm". The political decision-making is highly personalized making ties to and within the royal family more important than official status. This "firm" is run by a circle of about 15 individuals who decide on the Saudi-Arabian future by consensus. Thus, the decision-making process proceeds slowly.

Since the early 1990s, the royal family faces a stronger opposition which demands not only political reforms, but also to limit royal expenditures. Additionally, the pro-western stance of the old King Fahd aroused the rage of fundamentalists. It will have to be seen if the new King Abdallah possesses the will and the power to continue his predecessor's policies despite (or because of) his agenda of "continuity, integrity, piety". At the beginning of his tenure, he undertook a strategic reorganisation of the government, replacing princes by qualified and loyal experts. In contrast to former King Fahd, King Abdallah is no descendent of the *Sudairis*. Moreover his mother comes from the *Schammar* tribe, which lives in Northern Arab, Syria and Iraq. Thus, King Abdallah follows different interests and has other loyalties.

1.2. Succession

The takeover of the throne by King Abdallah in 2005 proceeded without interruptions (as most of them did in the past). However, the process of succession remains a mystery for outsiders. Succession remains a family internal and the Royal Family seeks to maintain unanimity in public.

King Abd al-Aziz set the principles for the succession process by appointing an heir being titled crown prince and deputy Prime minister. To extend their influence on the succession process, Saudi kings have also appointed a second deputy prime minister, who serves next in line on the unofficial succession slate, since 1975. Usually, the successors are sons of the founder of Saudi-Arabia Abd al-Aziz. Normally, the oldest brother becomes the new king and the second eldest becomes crown prince.



In the future, Saudi Arabia will suffer some **problems** concerning succession: Firstly, there are **no written succession principles**. Secondly, a problem will develop from the pending transfer of the leadership to the **next generation**, which has already been achieved in other Middle Eastern countries. Consequently, Saudi monarchs accede to the throne at more and more advanced age. Current King Abdallah and his half-brother crown prince Sultan are aged 84 and 80, respectively. This holds the risk that both may die at short notice. Therefore, appointing a second deputy prime minister is of high importance, but until now, King Abdallah has left this position vacant. It is uncertain for how long the new generation will accept this situation. Hence, the possibility for an internal family conflict among the generations is growing steadily. Consequently, every shift of power can cause domestic conflicts and threaten the state's stability. The very succession of Crown Prince Sultan is also seen as a trouble spot, as the Prince does not enjoy a good reputation.

According to the Basic Law, the monarch has to descend from the Al Saud family. This simple disposition is complicated by **growing pool of potential candidates**. Today, the number of Saudi princes is estimated at 6,000-10,000!

Moreover, a division between traditionalists and reformists is possible. There are already four clans having greater influence than the rest of the family. Thus, the most welcome qualification as successor will be the ability to protect the unity of the royal family. Saudi succession process will, thus, be one of the most important challenges in the kingdom's future.

1.3. The Basic Law

The Basic Law, released in 1993, contains 83 principles (or articles) and reiterates the basis on which the kingdom has operated since its foundation. Although bearing constitutional resemblance, it is, in fact, not a constitution: The first Article states that the **Koran** and the Prophet's *Sunnah*¹ are **Saudi Arabia's constitution**. Saudi Arabia is an **Arab and Islamic state**. There is no separation of church from the state. Furthermore, in Article 5, the political system is described as **monarchy**. The King chooses his heir, a descendent of King Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, by royal decree and can also relieve him from this position (cf. Article 5 c). Although having nearly unfettered power, the King must respect the Islamic law and tradition. The Basic Law emphasizes the importance of Islamic values. While illustrating the central processes of government, the law does not define the precise

¹ Besides the Koran the *Sunnah* is the most important source of legislation. It's a collection of traditional words and actions made by the prophet as well as remarks made by his followers.

operation and composition of key bodies. An article often concludes with the comment "the law shall specify". Article 44 names **three powers**: judicial authority, executive authority and organizational authority, declaring the King the final arbiter. Despite this, the judiciary is described as an independent power in Article 46, whose members were appointed and relieved by royal decree. The same applies to the deputy Prime Minister, ministers, deputy ministers and senior officials (cf. Article 58). Besides this, the Basic Law contains a large list, specifying the King's rights.

1.4. The Saudi Arabian Government

The monarchy remains the key source of power at every level of the Saudi Arabian government, and the King and senior princes have great authority and considerable freedom of action. However, in practice the King's power is limited and consensual.

1.4.1. The Council of Ministers

Almost all major policy decisions require the input of both princes and senior technocrats. Senior **technocrats** and leading business families have a considerable amount of influence, both as principal advisors to the king and as operational decision makers. The consensus is not simply a matter of pragmatic politics, for tradition and religion are powerful political forces in Saudi Arabia and within the royal family. The King must, hence, observe Islamic law and other Saudi traditions. Saudi Arabia has also a long history of consultative decision making, with an emphasis on reaching consensus.

In 1953, the king appointed a **Council of Ministers** (comparable to western cabinets) which was to draft legislation to be presented to the Monarch.

Saudi **laws** are promulgated by a majority decision of the Council of Ministers upon proposal by the King, senior ruling princes or key ministers. To become official, they must be ratified by Royal Decree and be compatible with the Shari'a.

Since its foundation, the council has advised on the formulation of general policy and helped to direct the activities of the growing bureaucracy. It consists of a prime minister (i.e. the King), the first and second deputy prime ministers, twenty ministers, two ministers of state, and a small number of advisors and heads of major autonomous organizations. King Fahd also appointed a Board of Grievances in 1995. Ministers at the council cannot hold any other public or private positions.

Furthermore, this body has judicial powers and investigates and resolves complaints between Saudi citizens and the government. In 1997 the role of the council was expanded by royal decrees. Under the new decrees the council will approve loan contracts as well as national budget, international treaties, and concessions.

This **Saudi Cabinet** is of considerable practical importance and its composition reflects the distribution of power within the senior ranks of the royal family and Saudi Arabia's technocrats. The Cabinet is a large body headed by the king, with more than twenty members, including six ministers of state. The Cabinet also includes and is supported by a wide range of technocrats who head well organized and relatively modern ministries. Many of them are 'new men' without ties to other

dominant Saudi families or tribal leaders. As a result much of the planning and management of the kingdom are conducted by Western educated experts, who are supported by roughly 250 other senior appointees and a network of approximately 700 senior civil servants.

There has also been an **informal decision making body** whose main function is to legitimise royal succession. This body lacks any official organizational structure but consists of about 100 members, most of whom come from the al Saud family and its allies in the Jilwi, Sudaryri, Thunayan, and alShaykh families.

1.4.2. Ministries and key personnel

Among the twenty-two **separate ministries**, the key ministries are controlled by senior members of the Royal Family: Prince Abdullah is First Deputy Prime Minister and head of National Guard. Prince Sultan is Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and Aviation. Prince Saud alFaisal is Foreign Minister, Prince Nayef is Minister of the Interior, and Prince Mutib is Minister of Public Works and Housing. These appointments give the senior members of the royal family control over the government, defence, internal security, the budget and oil revenues, and other key areas of patronage.

Politics in Saudi Arabia are heavily influenced by two characteristics - Mecca and petrol. Consequently, there exist a Ministries of Hajj and a Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral resources to manage these vital areas. There does not exist, however, a separate ministry for environmental questions.

To combat the development of an institutional resistance in some ministries, the King issued a decree in 1992 declaring that Cabinet ministers could not remain in their posts for more than five years without a special royal decree.

1.4.3. The Majlis alShura (Consultative Assembly)

The issue of creating some kind of assembly first arose due to serious concern during the time of Egypt's president Nasser. In the end it was the complex mix of social and economic pressures erupting during the Second Gulf War that led King Fahd to reorganise his Cabinet in 1990 and announce a series of reforms in 1991. One of these reforms included the formation of a Council of Saudi citizen (Majlis alShura).

The Majlis alShura was originally composed of 61 members, including the speaker of the consultative council. All members are appointed by the Monarch for a four year term. Its **responsibilities** theoretically included examining plans for economic and social development, questioning Cabinet members, examining annual plans submitted by each ministry, and proposing new laws or amendments. However, at the beginning its role was purely advisory and there was no open debate by western standards.

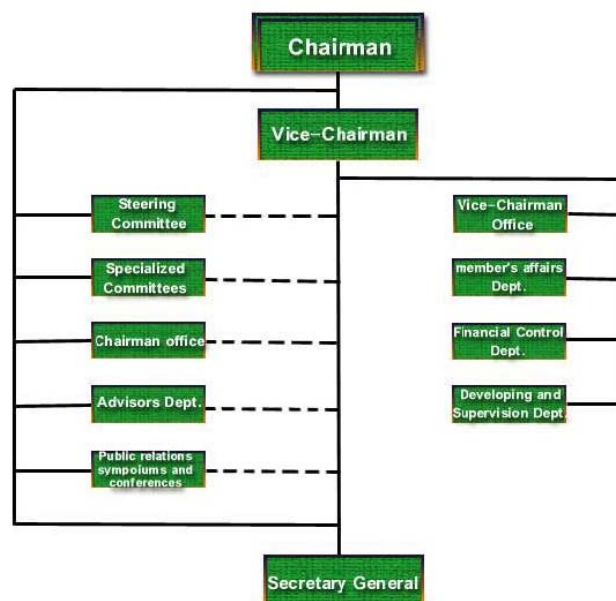
In 1997 eight **ad hoc committees** were founded as result of the increasing activity of the council (currently there are twelve of them). The committees operate along democratic lines with each member having one vote, as did the council as a whole.

Four years later, in 2001, the number of members was increased to 150 and the role of its committees expanded, covering issues such as finance, five-year plan, Islamic and social affairs, and education. The members of the council are now nominated by the provincial governors, each nomination being vetted by the Royal Court.

Since 2002, the Majlis has also the right to ask any members of the Cabinet or Council of Ministers to appear and answer questions. It still does not play a direct role in shaping security and defence policy and reviewing the draft budget, but it does review the Development Plans. Committee review is generally on an article by article basis and the committees sometimes hold extensive hearings. For example, the Finance Committee did this when reviewing a new tax law, and hold follow-on hearings after several key articles were referred back to the committee by Majlis as a whole. The Majlis reviews major foreign policy decisions and holds hearings that include questioning of the foreign minister. The king or crown prince attends some sessions of the Majlis.

According to members, debate is often heated by Saudi standards, criticism of the government is common, and differences do occur with the Council of Ministers. The Majlis does, however, emphasise consensus rather than divided recommendations and adversarial positions, and an effort is made to avoid confronting the king with unresolved debates or recommendations that might force him to cast a veto. Members estimated that this meant the king upheld the decision of Majlis in 99.7 percent of all cases.

The law of the Majlis alShura states that its role shall be defined by royal order, and recognizes the king's paramount role under the Saudi interpretation of Shari'a. At the same time, the Koran does call on the king to consult with his advisors, and there is a potential precedent in Shari'a that the king should not overrule any recommendation where both the Majlis and the Council of Ministers agree. It should also be noted that the Majlis is bound by Shari'a and must defer to the judiciary on Islamic law. The Islamic Committee of the Majlis reviews its actions to ensure that they comply with Shari'a. The Council of Ministers must also review any action by the Majlis if the Islamic Council does not reach a consensus.



2. Religion

2.1. General principles

To understand Islamic Law in general, it is essential to comprehend the Muslim conception of law which differs considerably from our conception. The main difference is that law equals faith in Islam. God dictates the law and this law applies to all Muslims. The Arab word *Muslim* literally means submission or surrender to Allah's will. Since all law is derived from God, a separation of church and government is impossible. Besides, this notion also explains why Muslim countries are somewhat distrustful to international treaties because they base on man-made but not on God-given rules (this does of course not mean that they do not respect them).

The religion of Islam, the government and the law are inseparable and the Saudi theocracy controls all public and private matters. The function of Islamic law is to protect the five indispensables in Islam which are: religion, life, intellect, offspring and property. Therefore, it aims at cultivating religious consciousness in the human soul and to provide for a morally education. In the second place, Islamic law imposes deterrent punishment if these principles are violated. The element of punishment is the basis of the criminal system.

Generally, Islamic law is only applicable to Muslims. In Saudi Arabia, however, it also applies to non-Muslims when he committed a crime in the country.

2.2. Shari'a

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is governed on the basis of Islamic law. The Basic Law in its function as constitution expressively states that the state protects the rights of the people in line with the Islamic Shari'a. The Arab word Shari'a means clear, well-trodden path to water. For soul and mind, the direct guidance of Shari'a is as indispensable for human life as water.

2.2.1. Sources

The primary source of Shari'a is the **Quran**, the Muslim holy book which was revealed to the Prophet Mohammed within 23 years. It consists of 114 suras or chapters which contains 6,236 ayats. However, only 500 of them are of legal importance.

The Quran represents an inseparable ensemble of principles and rules as regards faith and socio-political life. It is definitive and unalterable. The Quran addresses the common people and is not the work of intellectuals. In its pragmatic written form, it facilitates comprehension as well as memorisation. It is the final arbitrator and there is no other appeal.

More detailed information as regards human behaviour can be found in the **Sunna**, that means the traditions of the life of the Prophet which were passed orally after his death. The Sunna is composed of so called Hadiths and completes everything that regards justice and legal questions as well as other issues not mentioned in the Quran and thus being a very important tool of clarification. The life of Mohammed serves as model for all Muslims and should guide them in all daily matters.

If, however, a solution to a legal problem could neither be solved with the help of the Quran nor the Sunnah, new law can be created by *Ijmā*, that means by consensus of the so-called Ulema, the traditional Islamic scholars. *Ijmā* is a flexible tool solve social problems and crimes due to new developments and changes. However, it requires the consensus of the entire Ulema, which represents a high burden and is often the cause of retarded adaptations as regards changes in society.

This forth element is comparable with the notion of case law in common law systems. Judges can consult results of cases that have been decided by a higher judge. In order to create new case law, a judge has to proceed logically and reasonably. *Qiyās* is important to solve specific issues that are not mentioned neither in the Quran nor in the Sunnah and where there is no *Ijmā*. Unlike in common law, there is no such thing as *stare decisis* and the judge is not bound by previous decisions.

Additionally, a judge can take various ideas and concepts into consideration before rendering a decision. Perhaps local customs or norms could help him to find a solution to the case or he could ponder the impact of his decision both to society and the defendant. In his decision, a judge is only accountable to God.

2.2.2. Elements

The Shari'a covers all aspects of public and private behaviour. It distinguishes all actions in five categories: obligatory, recommended, permitted, disliked or forbidden.

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2.3. Crimes and punishments

Hadd crimes:

= crimes against God

- most serious and punishable by punishment as cited in the Quran
- no plea-bargaining or reducing of punishment
- example: murder, apostasy from Islam, zina (= illegal sex), alcohol-drinking, robbery, theft, defamation
- very high level of proof: confession + witnesses

Tazir crimes:

= crimes against society

- equivalent to misdemeanour
- in Saudi Arabia: judge are allowed to set Tazir crimes and punishments
- example: bribery, selling tainted or defective products, treason, usury, selling obscene pictures
- punishment: counselling, fines, public or private censure, family and clan pressure, seizure of property, flogging

Qesas:

- unknown category in common or civil law
- victim has a right to seek retribution and retaliation
- Diya:
 - o paid to victim of family by offender as part of punishment

- must be carried out through governm. and judicial authority
- crimes: murder, premeditated offences against human life, murder by error, offences by error against humanity

Mutaween: religious policemen
committee for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice

2.4. Court System

In Saudi Arabia, the King is at the top of the legal system and acts as the final court of appeal. He is entitled to issue pardons. The King is limited in his powers because he must obey to the Shari'a and other Saudi traditions. The court system in Saudi Arabia is divided into three levels of courts:

The **Shari'a courts** hear cases in traditional areas and are divided into 4 levels: The Minor and a General Court which act as first instance, the Cassation Court and the Supreme Judicial Council. The latter is not a court and has not the right to reverse decisions of other courts but it reviews them and remands them for reconsideration.

Issues as regards commercial or labour law, tax, oil or immigration are dealt with in a number of **specialised tribunals**. They are formed under ministries outside of the Ministry of Justice.

The **Board of Grievance** is responsible for cases that involve the government. It is the highest appellate tribunal and exist independently of the Ministry of Justice. Since 1982, it is directly responsible to the King.

The courts have jurisdiction over civil and criminal suits. Saudi Arabia allows Shi'a Muslims to adjudicate non-criminal cases within their own legal traditions. However, there are no comparable rights for non-Muslims or foreigners.

According to a royal order passed in April 2005, Saudi Arabia plans to reorganise its judicial system and wants to establish specialised courts as well as a Supreme Court.

2.5. Implications for the policial agenda

3. Contemporary Problems and future trends

3.1. Human Rights

The Judiciary system of Saudi Arabia has been criticised by human rights organisations for a long time. There are several aspects for which the country is most heavily ostracised by the West, among them the treatment of women and the cruelty of the Islamic judicial system. Yet, at the same time, the kingdom is signatory of a number of international agreements to protect and aid the development of human rights.

3.1.1. Points of criticism

Although prohibited by Article 36 of the Basic Law, **arbitrary arrests** appear to be relatively common in the Kingdom. This instrument is commonly used against suspected political crimes or potential terrorists.

Other aspects arousing protest in the Western World are related to Saudi Arabia's legal system which is based on the Shari'a (cf. 2.3). Both **corporal and capital punishment** are criticised for being too severe and their imposition for being too arbitrary. Robbery, for example, can be punished by the amputation of hands or feet whereas drunkenness can be penalized with lashings often in front of large audiences. Similarly, executions, either by decapitation or by stoning, are generally carried out publicly. On average, 50 executions take place every year according to Amnesty International². The condemned do not possess the possibility to challenge the sentence and are not even informed about the date of their execution.

Women's rights are also deemed to be improperly recognised. Western observers excoriate the submission and discrimination of women in the kingdom. Sensitive issues are testimonies (women are not allowed to testify in many cases), marriage and dress codes. The discrimination of women is also evident in the work sector, where only 5% of the employees are female, a factual contradiction with article 111 of the ILO-statute. Furthermore, although Saudi Arabia is a member of the *International Labour Organisation* (ILO, cf. 3.1.2), **labour unions and strikes** are illegal. Despite an international engagement, little progress has been made in ensuring fair and equal salaries.

Repression of the freedom of expression and religion is also often criticised. All religions other than the state's Islamic faith, and even other Islamic confessions are not to exercised publicly. Moreover, the judicial rights of non-Muslims are limited. Likewise, oppositional publications or those expressing "un-Islamic" ideas are subject to censorship which also affects the liberty of research at the universities.

In an attempt to thwart public criticism, Saudi Arabia has decreed the **exclusion of NGO** such as Human Rights Watch for a long time, a policy that has changed in the recent past, however.

3.1.2. International Commitments

² Cf. <http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/saudi/briefing/8.html>. In the past 20 years, about 1,100 executions were carried out. By comparison, there were 1,005 executions (2005) in the USA since 1977.

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, Saudi Arabia is signatory to a number of international human rights agreements and conventions: Among the earliest commitments were conventions on employment and forced labour (e.g. ILO). Furthermore, in 1996 the kingdom became party of the *Convention of the Rights of the Child*. The *Convention against Torture* was signed and ratified in 1997 as was the *Convention in Women's Rights* of 2000. Additionally, the *Protocol Against the Trafficking of Human Beings* (2002)³ was ratified (although Saudi Arabia was considered to be a country which did not comply with international standards in this area and did not make significant efforts to do by the US Department of State in 2005).

However, in all of these cases, Saudi Arabia signed with a reservation that no article in these conventions were to be applied if they contradicted the **rules of the Shari'a**. Consequently, a number of Human Rights declarations were not signed at all, for it was believed that their inherent characteristics were in conflict with Islamic rules. Consequently, although being a founding member of the UNO (United Nations Organisation) in 1945, Saudi Arabia **abstained** from signing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), because it did not acknowledge the universality of the values expressed therein. The kingdom is member neither of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, nor of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (both 1966), two very important Human Rights Bills.

3.1.3. Justification, changes

Saudi Arabia endeavoured to justify its demeanour in the past by establishing an alternative, **Islamic conception of Human Rights** which has also been adopted a number of other Islamic countries such as Iran. This conception is based on the idea that Human Rights can be much more effectively guaranteed by the Shari'a. Personal Freedom, considered the essential element of Human Rights, can be achieved by protecting the society from criminals. This is achieved by the **detering effect** of corporal and capital punishments. The Saudi leadership proudly refers to its crime rate which is (officially) among the lowest in the world.

Moreover, by underlining the existence of 1,400 years **legal tradition**, the kingdom has tried another way of justifying its judicial system.

From the 2000 onwards, however, a **change of comportment** could be detected by observers. For example, Saudi Arabia started to defend its position rather than ignoring criticism before the United Nations' (now defunct) Commission on Human Rights. The Saudi delegation expressed its belief that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights allowed the Islamic interpretation undertaken by the kingdom. Furthermore, in 2003, the international NGO Human Rights Watch was formally invited into the kingdom. A year later, in 2004, the King even permitted the creation of a state-sponsored Saudi Human Rights NGO, albeit under the leadership of the archconservative former leader of the Muslim World League.

³ Cf. <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/research/ratification-saudikindom.html> to see all international commitments.

3.2. Political Reform

3.2.1. Causes

The kingdom is in a difficult position, for it currently faces internal and external **pressures for reform** and yet has to accommodate the wishes of the conservative religious establishment which provides legitimacy for the rulers. The external demands arise from Civil and Human Rights Groups as well as from governmental statements (especially since the 9/11 attacks; 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudi citizens). Socio-economic push-factors such as poverty, unemployment and population growth, and the emergence of a militant group dedicated to fighting the current regime, are among the internal pressures. These pressures have led to the emergence of an **informal reform lobby** of liberals and progressive Islamists who want to avoid a violent crackdown by the state and prefer political reform instead. In response to this development, the government began subtle changes and promised its openness to reform. Unfortunately, the reform agenda was inhibited by the menace of a growing violence of the extremists. However, in the long term reforms have to be accomplished in order to **re-establish the legitimacy** which has suffered from an opaque and arbitrary political system and corruption scandals within the Royal Family. In order to achieve this, the government was advised initiate a gradual and transparent reform programme, to strengthen institutions and enhance the distribution of power, as well as accelerating economic and social reform.

3.2.2. Progress

Since 1995, the structure of governance in the kingdom was **subtly changed**. In order to balance the factions within the Royal Family, new advisory groups were created and power diffused (cf. 1.4.1). 2003 saw a reorganisation of the Council of Ministers and various schemes stipulation municipal councils and democratic elections. Scheduled for October 2004, the first municipal elections took place in February 2005, albeit with an extremely low turnout of about 25 percent of eligible male voters (women were not allowed to vote). Some observers interpreted the elections as a sign of progress whereas others stated that the poor turnout reflected dissatisfaction with the limited extent of the political reforms.

4. Literature

N.B. This list is not an exhaustive list of literature used in order to compile this paper but a guide to useful books and articles allowing the interested reader to dig further into the matter.

4.1. The General Set-Up

- Champion, Daryl, 2003: The paradoxical kingdom: Saudi Arabia and the momentum of reform.

Mainly, the book refers to the Saudi economic development and its challenges for state and society. The chapter about the Saudi regime stability is highly recommendable.

- Niblock, Tim, 2006: Saudi Arabia. Power, Legitimacy and Survival.

The book contains chapters about the state's development, King Faisal's leadership, economic reforms and Saudi Arabia's current foreign affairs.

- Steinberg, Guido, 2004: Saudi-Arabien. Politik, Geschichte, Religion, .

Recommendable book to get a general idea of Saudi Arabia. It deals with country and its inhabitants in general, offers an insight in history, politics, economy and society as well as into legislation and religion.

4.2. Religion

- Hallaq, Wael, 2005: The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law.

Provides a profound insight into the Shari'a.

- Wiechman, Denis/Kendall, Jerry/Azarian, Mohammad: Islamic Law: Myths and Realities, available online at: http://muslim-canada.org/Islam_myths.htm (last access: 11.02.2007).

- Mohammad Omar Farooq, 2006: Shariah, Law and Islam: Legalism vs. Value-Orientation, available online at: <http://www.globalwebpost.com/farooqm> (last access: 11.02.2007).

- Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh, Sami, 2006: Introduction à la société musulmane.

- Al-Fiqh, Ilm Ousoul, 1997: Les fondements du droit musulman.

4.3. Contemporary Problems and Future Trends

- Amnesty International Report 2006, available online at: <http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/sau-summary-eng#9> (last access: 11.02.2007)

- Da Lage, Olivier, 2006: Géopolitique de l'Arabie Saoudite.

This French work provides a continental analysis of the kingdom's current situation and further challenges. Highly commended.

- International Crisis Group 2004: Can Saudi Arabia reform itself?, Middle East Report No. 28.

Although not entirely up to date, this report provides plenty of information about the underlying causes for reform as well as making reform recommendations.