Saudi Arabia and the King's Dilemma

JOSHUA TEITELBAUM | MARCH 16, 2011 | 9:58 AM

Bottom Line: Saudi Arabia has the tools to weather the current storm. Its internal security forces are numerous and loyal, it is flush with oil wealth, the King is popular (although infirm), and the majority of Saudis are far from likely to take to the streets. As it has always done, it will adjust the pace of its reforms in an attempt to satisfy reformists while balancing the dominant conservative trend in society.

Saudi Arabia's royal family (The Al Saud) faced major – but not unprecedented – challenges in February and early March.

The year had already started out poorly for Riyadh, when in January the Lebanese government it had backed along with the US fell due to pressure from Hizballah. It's ally Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, was thrown out of office by a popular rebellion in mid-January, to be followed on February 11 by the ignominious departure from power of kindred spirit Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The demonstration effect was clearly evident as eruptions occurred in Morocco, Jordan, Libya, Yemen, Oman, Kuwait, and most ominously for Riyadh – Bahrain.

In foreign affairs, Saudi Arabia lost a close and strong partner against Iranian influence with the departure of Mubarak. It's ally, the Sunni Al Khalifa family of Bahrain, was roiled by mass demonstrations of the Shiite majority. The situation in Bahrain had implications for Saudi Arabia's own restive Shiite population, located in the oil-rich Eastern Province.

Not immune at home, a few, small demonstrations took place and petitions (three petitions, at latest count) were circulated. A day of rage was called for March 11. While the petitions demanded more participation in decision-making, better governance and an end to corruption, they do not call for an end to the regime. The slogan heard in Tahrir Square, "The People Demand an End to the Regime," has yet to be heard in the streets of Riyadh and Jeddah.

DEALING WITH DISSENT: SAUDI ARABIA AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Saudi Arabia has gone through tremendous social change since it was established in 1932. The discovery of oil, economic growth, and major population increases all put strain on a very traditional country. Other political systems might have cracked under the strain, but the Al Saud put a system in place that has so far met these challenges, and seemed well positioned to weather the current one as well.

First, the founding fathers harnessed the tribalistic nature of Saudi society to the state formation enterprise. Tribes were used as a military force and tribal values such as kinship played a key role in the state's development. Founder Ibn Saud made it a point to marry many times, and he did so strategically, taking wives from the regional and tribal elites. His sons and grandsons hold all-important cabinet posts and are governors of the most important provinces. Using classic coup-proofing methods, King Faysal divided military forces between family factions, and drew internal security forces from the most loyal tribes of the Najdi heartland.

The Wahhabi religious establishment, so important for the Al Saud's ruling legitimacy, was co-opted to support slow, careful modernization in the form of economic and social development, while

protecting conservative values. King Faysal was the master of this approach, instituting women's education, television, and expanding a government bureaucracy many-fold to handle the new oil wealth and provide jobs for a growing population. He challenged the conservative Wahhabi religious establishment, and won.

An alliance was made between the Al Saud and U.S. Presidents in which the United States promised to protect oil installations in exchange for American oil company access and assuring the free flow of oil.

As oil income began to become significant, the Al Saud used a distributive model to develop the country. Huge infrastructure projects, educational institutions, hospitals, and an enlarged military benefited many. Housing projects for previously nomadic or semi-nomadic Bedouin brought modern conveniences along with closer control by the central government. Huge subsidies for fuel and other goods, along with a stock market that the government occasionally propped up when it dropped, saw to it that the wealth was distributed to a large swath of people.

But as the population grew, it became harder to distribute the wealth. Nor was it distributed equally. People in the Hijaz complained that Najdis were favored, and the Shiites of the Eastern Province suffered both economic and religious discrimination.

Corruption and nepotism of the royal family became a common complaint. While residents born during the early years were quite aware of the tremendous progress the Al Saud had brought the country through oil wealth in their lifetimes, younger generations know only the Al Saud, and are less appreciative than their elders. Through the technology so readily available to them, they can see what is available in other places, and share it with their friends. The government no longer monopolizes information.

There has always been political dissent in Saudi Arabia. The 1950s and 1960s saw the influence of Nasserism, communism, socialism and Ba'thism. The religious establishment helped combat these challenges from the left. Where violence occurred, such as amongst the disenfranchised Shiites in the Eastern Province in the 1950s and in 1979-80), the government did not hesitate to send in the Saudi Arabian National Guard to restore order with a heavy hand.

Since the 1990s, two waves of political challenges have swept the country, each resulting in some reforms. The first, catalyzed by opposition to the presence of US troops in the country during the 1990-1991 Gulf War, resulted in the announcement of an Al Saud appointed Consultative Council. The second wave came after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US by a mostly Saudi al-Qaeda cell, when reformers took advantage of the event to press their demands. The Consultative Council was expanded, municipal elections (for half the seats of the municipal councils – the others would remain Al Saud appointees) were announced, and National Dialogues were held. Often referred to as the "Riyadh Spring of 2003," this period came to an end with a series of al-Qaeda terrorist attacks in May and the arrest of several reformers in March 2004.[1]

The al-Qaeda insurrection allowed the government to crack down on the reformists. But the ascension of King Abdullah to the throne in 2005 gave reformers hope, as did the municipal elections, which were finally held that year. The al-Qaeda insurrection was essentially suppressed by 2007, although sporadic attacks still occur. But the suppression of al-Qaeda has contributed to the reopening of political space for the resurgence of the reformist activity we are witnessing today.

RIYADH'S WINTER OF DISCONTENT: POPULAR REACTION AND REGIME RESPONSE

The revolt in Tunisia caught the Saudi Royal Family at an awkward moment. The 87-year-old King Abdullah had been out of the country since November, when he flew to the US for an operation on what was publicized as a herniated disk. The Crown Prince, Sultan, nearly as old and also known to be ill, had flown back from Morocco to stand in for Abdullah, but day-to-day matters were actually being run by Prince Nayif, Minister of Interior, potential crown prince to Sultan, and widely considered to be quite conservative and close to the religious establishment. Conservatives may have been satisfied with this line of succession, but it did not portend well for younger reformers influenced by the revolts sweeping the Arab world.

For many years now, the Saudi government has been fighting a losing battle to control the flow of information into the Kingdom. It can no longer do that. It censors the Internet, but not completely, and Al-Jazeera is beamed into every Saudi home. Just as Tunisia's "Jasmine Revolution" was gaining steam in late December and early January, the government announced that all blogs and news sites would now need to apply for a license.[2] The new regulations had been discussed for a while, but the Al Saud saw fit to announce them exactly when social media was gaining prominence as a tool of the Tunisian revolt.

Unequal wealth distribution, corruption, inflation, unemployment and lack of freedoms have bothered Saudis for many years. Demonstrations are rare – and illegal – in Saudi Arabia, but the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association requested to stage a sit in protest in late December 2010. It was denied, and publicly demanded the firing and prosecution of Interior Minister Prince Nayif in early January.[3] Unemployed teachers had already demonstrated in August 2010, and did so again on January 8.[4] In mid-January several Saudi women began a Facebook campaign to allow women to vote for municipal councils.[5] Clearly, grievances were becoming more public, with events in Tunisia having a demonstration effect, still small, in Saudi Arabia.

While bloggers were discussing events in Tunisia and then in Egypt, two events put a damper on possible contagion from those countries. First, top leaders condemned the uprisings. The widely respected King Abdullah, from his sickbed in Morocco, came out strongly against the demonstrations in Egypt and in support of President Mubarak. Demonstrators were inciting *fitna*, or discord, and therefore going against the traditional Islamic order.[6] The General Mufti, Shaykh Abd al-Aziz bin Abdullah Al al-Shaykh, echoed the king, accusing the demonstrators of sowing discord between the people and the rulers.[7] Such strong statements by these two pillars of Saudi rule – the Al Saud and the religious establishment – signaled strongly that the Kingdom would not tolerate similar acts at home, thus raising the stakes for anyone contemplating demonstrations.

But the main event occupying Saudis in late January was the disastrous flooding in Jeddah, which killed at least ten people. People were trapped in cars and in office buildings. Similar flooding in November 2009 killed 123 people.[8] At that time, the government had imposed a news blackout on the floods, but outraged Jeddah residents posted images on Facebook and YouTube. The government took notice, and fired 50 officials deemed responsible. For Saudis, this was an example of what the Internet could do.[9] And now, once again, the government's incompetence was on display for all to see. On January 28 police arrested dozens of protesters in Jeddah who were outraged by the floods.[10] Their attention had temporarily been distracted from Egypt and Tunisia, but people were

making connections between their own government's lack of accountability and what was going on in Tahrir Square.

Attention moved back to the local implications of what was going on in Egypt as events became more dramatic there in February. Taking their cue from Tahrir's main slogan, a Facebook page was opened under the title: "The People Demand Reform of the Regime," stopping just short of Tahrir's call for toppling the regime. The group, perhaps connected to Islamist exile's Sa'd al-Faqih's Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia, called for an elected parliament, political freedoms and the right to organize political parties, women's rights, and a constitutional monarchy.[11]

On February 10, Islamists announced the formation of the Islamic Umma Party (IUP- *Hizb al-Umma al-Islami*). Most of the founders seemed to be clerics not connected to the religious establishment. They sent a letter notifying the Royal Court that the party had been established. Speaking in an Islamic idiom, the party demanded political freedoms, elections to the legislature, and the right to engage in advocacy of peaceful political reform.[12] Political parties are illegal in Saudi Arabia. The regime therefore did not take kindly to the establishment of the IUP, arresting several of its leaders on the night of February 16.[13]

While on the one hand taking swift action against those who crossed the line by forming a political party, the regime acted in the traditional manner by demonstrating that it was willing to lend an ear. Prince Khalid Al Faysal, a contender for the throne and governor of Mecca Province, where Jeddah is located, invited five media personalities to a televised briefing on the situation following the floods. Among the invitees was Fuad al-Farhan, a blogger who had once been arrested and banned from traveling. Khalid asked Farhan to send his regards to the "young people on Twitter."[14] A slightly more pathetic step was a Facebook page apparently set up by Khalid bin Abd al-Aziz al-Tuwayjri, the Chief of the Royal Court, where people were invited to fax in their complaints – something they could already do.[15]

This was all occurring while King Abdullah was still recuperating in Morocco. There seemed to be a sense of "no one at the helm." Abdullah was the most reformist minded of the key family figures, yet was unavailable. The people were assured that his health was excellent and on February 18 that he would return home soon.[16]

But while still in Morocco, the King responded to protests in a time-tested manner: he offered government aid. The first installment was the announcement that the King would write off $156 million in housing loans.[17] The governor of Riyadh Province, Prince Salman, announced the expansion of a Food Bank, which he named for the King.[18]

But the biggest announcement was timed for the King's return on February 23. With oil prices at over $100 a barrel filling his coffers, the King opened the Privy Purse. Saudi Arabia would introduce 19 new measures at an estimated cost of over $36 billion. The measures were aimed primarily at the unemployed youth, to help them with unemployment benefits and ameliorate trouble in finding affordable housing. According to the chief economist for Bank Saudi Fransi, John Sfakianakis, joblessness for Saudis under 30 was 27% in 2009, including about 39% of those between 20 and 24. Huge sums were also allocated for students in higher income brackets studying abroad at their own expense. Grants were to be made for household expenses and renovations (the latter a gesture to those with homes damaged by the Jeddah floods); a temporary 15% salary increase for state employees was made permanent.

Those in lower income brackets would "certainly benefit tremendously," Sfakianakis stressed, but long-term solutions would still require extensive "Saudization" of the private sector, where only one out of 10 employees was a Saudi citizen.[19] The private sector preferred to hire cheaper, non-Saudi labor.

In the meantime, events in the Kingdom and the region as a whole began a slide in the Saudi stock market, where millions of Saudis gambled their fortunes. On March 1st the Tadawul All Share Index saw its biggest drop in more than two years. But, true to form, it was reported that government funds had bought stock in all sectors, causing a recovery. On March 9, Saudi royal billionaire Prince al-Walid bin Talal gave the market a boost by announcing that he was buying $133 million in Saudi stocks, and was considering another investment on the same scale. "The Saudi economy is solid," he said in an e-mailed statement.[20] Once again, the Saudi state had come to the financial rescue of its citizens.

While the Al Saud timed the aid package for the King's return and mass welcome by a grateful population, Saudi dissidents riding the wave of protests in the Arab world were preparing another kind of welcome. This was in the form of a "Letter from Saudi Youth" calling for a national dialogue conference with binding recommendations and massive governmental reforms that would allow young people a more active role in decision-making.[21] A few days later, another petition appeared with a bit more gravitas. Signed initially by more than 100 leading liberal Saudi academics, businessmen, and activists, the "Declaration of National Reform" called for the people to be the source of legitimacy, for the country to move in the direction of a constitutional monarchy, and for oversight of government spending to assure equitable distribution of wealth. Prominent Shiite activists were signatories as well. By March 10 the document had nearly 900 signatures.[22]Other petitions were also issued. According to contacts in Saudi Arabia, the government was blocking the websites carrying the petitions. These petitions were reminiscent of previous ones issues in 1990-1991 and 2003, but this was now the age of the Internet, and the new petitions echoed much more widely.

The Shiites and the Bahrain Effect

The Sunnis are the majority in Saudi Arabia, and they do not have a historical tradition of mass political activity, such as in Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. This is not the case with the Shiite population, comprising 10-15% of Saudi citizens and concentrated in the oil-rich Eastern Province, just across the King Fahd Causeway from majority Shiite Bahrain. They have often demonstrated, including violently, and have been put down with equal violence. Throughout Saudi history, they have protested discrimination and persecution by their Al Saud rulers, who draw their inspiration from the viscerally anti-Shiite Wahhabi trend of Sunni Islam. Many Saudis do not trust the Shiites, believing them to be agents of Iranian influence.

It was no surprise, therefore, that the first serious signs of public unrest would come from the Shiites. Following demonstrations by fellow Shiites in Bahrain in mid-February, a small but vocal demonstration was held in Awwamiya to protest the detention of Saudi Shiite activists. The government responded by releasing them, but this only drew another demonstration in Qatif the next week for more prisoners to be released.[23] On or about February 27, the authorities arrested a Shiite cleric, Shaykh Tawfiq al-'Amir, for calling for a constitutional monarchy. Yet true to its carrot and stick approach, at the same time the regime allowed the reopening of several Shiite mosques in al-Khobar city.[24] Further small demonstrations in early March raised only the issue of prisoners.

Demonstrators could be heard chanting "no violence, no violence" (*silmiyya, silmiyya*) as had protesters in Bahrain and Egypt.[25]

The Saudi regime sees itself as a patron of the Bahrain's Al Khalifa ruling family. Should the Bahraini Al Khalifa ruling family fall, it would be a very bad sign for the Al Saud. It might signal the downfall of the Gulf rulers, and would certainly encourage Saudi Arabia own Shiites. Residents of Saudi Arabia reported that YouTube videos of the Bahraini demonstrations were being blocked in the Kingdom. Riyadh was understandably anxious – even desperate – to make sure that the Al Khalifa survived its most serious challenge to date. The Saudis called a meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council foreign ministers in Manama on February 17, who pledged full political, economic, security and defense support for the Al Khalifa.[26] Together with the US, Riyadh was trying to move the Bahrainis towards talks and some compromise with the opposition.[27] The GCC countries also were reported to be offering financial aid to Bahrain and Oman (which had also seen demonstrations).[28]

The main message was clear: "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stands will all its capabilities behind the state and the brotherly people of Bahrain," read an official statement.[29] On March 14, around 1,000 troops from the Gulf Cooperation Council "Peninsula Shield" forces crossed over into Bahrain to protect the Al Khalifa. Easing the way for Saudi partygoers was not the only reason for building the King Fahd Causeway between Saudi Arabia and the island nation.

Day of Rage? Not Yet.

The calls for a "Day of Rage" on March 11 after Friday prayers seems to have emerged from the Shiite activists influence by similar calls in Bahrain and Egypt. Several Facebook pages were established for the event, but did not seem to gather more than a few thousand "Likes."[30] The low number could be attributed to Saudi blocking, but just as easily could be a result of most Saudis not willing to cross the line.

But the stakes had been raised. Could Saudi dissidents mobilize enough people? Would people take to the streets? Would it be mostly Shiites, whom the regime could dismiss, or would significant numbers of Sunnis join as well? With organizing and popular mobilization was being closely monitored, the regime made it clear that no demonstrations would be tolerated. It mobilized close to 10,000 troops to be ready for protests in the Eastern Province, and went through another round of arrests and releases in the region.[31]

A moment of reckoning was on the horizon. A Day of Rage was a level of magnitude much greater than the previous demonstrations. And the Al Saud were not backing down. The Interior Ministry warned on March 5 in no uncertain terms that no demonstrations would be tolerated. Surely in the back of the rulers' minds were the violent Iranian inspired demonstrations in 1979-1980, known by the locals as the "Intifada of the Eastern Province." The Council of Senior Scholars, representing the religious establishment, published a paean to the regime as a rock of stability and unity based on Islamic principles, hinting at outside influences that had caused discord and crisis. The council stressed the necessity of unanimity of opinion under the benevolent rulers, and warned darkly against following deviant unnamed intellectual and partisan trends. The reference appeared to be aimed at the liberal petitions and the banned Islamic Umma Party. As it had on previous occasions in the 1990s, it stated that the proper Islamic way to redress grievances was through (silently offered) advice, and not through proclamations and demonstration.[32]

To many young people, the statement must have sounded like anachronistic and hackneyed palliatives that were out of touch with the Internet age. Yet the massing of troops and the warnings from the highest authorities were designed to deter street protesters. The regime hoped that it would not be forced to use violence and open itself up to the kind of condemnation heaped upon Ben Ali and Mubarak. But it seemed clear that it would not hesitate to do so.

As expected, the Saudis were working their tribal and regional ties before March 11. Leaders came to the King's palace in Riyadh to proclaim their loyalty. The head of a clan from the Dawasir tribe disowned one of their dissident sons as a renegade.[33]

All mosque preachers and imams received orders from the Ministry of Islamic Affairs instructing them to read out the warning against demonstrations issued by the Minister of Interior, stressing that demonstrations were forbidden and sinful.[34] On the night of March 10, Shiites in the Eastern Province city of Qatif demonstrated for the release of prisoners arrested for the al-Khobar Towers bombing, which had occurred 1996. The authorities opened fire, wounding three protesters.[35]

With this warning visible to all, the March 11 Day of Rage did not materialize. Saudi police flooded areas in Riyadh where demonstrators were urged to congregate. Friday prayers ended with no Sunni protests as worshippers left the mosques peacefully.[36]

US-Saudi Relations: It's Complicated

As the US searched for a clear and meaningful response to the events in Egypt, Bahrain, and eventually Saudi Arabia itself, the Al Saud were puzzled and eventually angered by Washington's direction. In the Saudi view, it had treated Mubarak shabbily, and it was reported that King Abdullah had upbraided President Obama about it.[37] The family was asking, "Is this any way to treat a US ally?" The head of al-Arabiyya satellite channel, prominent journalist 'Abd al-Rahman al-Rashid, wrote that Obama was encouraging Iran and meddling in Egyptian affairs; the Egyptians in the street would not requite the US love.[38] The veteran Foreign Minister, Saud Al Faysal, spoke sharply of "interference in the internal affairs of Egypt by some countries."[39]

Towards the end of February, Obama sent the chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, Adm. Michael Mullen, to calm the Saudis and others in the region.[40] But On March 7, the State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said that the US supported the right of peaceful assembly, "including [in] Saudi Arabia." Saud Al Faysal was livid. The Saudis supported dialogue, he said. "Change will come through the citizens of this kingdom and not through foreign fingers, we don't need them. We will cut any finger that crosses into the kingdom." The last phrase may have referred to Iran as well.[41] Relations appeared to be under strain. An unnamed US official sought to calm the Saudis in an interview with *al-Haya*, stressing that relations were firm and based on principles and mutual interests.[42]Still, it was clear that the US now believed that democracy in Egypt and reform in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia were the key to stability. The Al Saud would probably have to give, somewhere.

Do the Saudis Have Any Options? The King's Dilemma

But it is sure to be a tough sell. While the influence of the young has grown, Saudi Arabia remains a very traditional society. Too much reform, too fast, and the Al Saud will undermine the support of its conservative base. King Abdullah will have to continue the balancing act of reform and tradition that he has been carrying out since his influence began to be felt in 2000 while still Crown Prince.

The Al Saud have several steps they can take without undermining the current order. For instance, they can allow long-delayed municipal elections, last held in 2005. They can consider letting women participate in them. Women could also be allowed, finally, to drive, which is a symbol of modernity that many Saudis want. This was a concrete step proposed by Prince al-Walid bin Talal in an interview with Reuters on March 9. According to Walid, it would immediately send over 750,000 foreign drives home.[43] The government could step up Saudization of the private sector to counter unemployment. Other possibilities for reform include allowing elections for the appointed Consultative Council, as demanded by the reformers. The Al Saud could initially monitor candidates by vetting them, as is done in Iran, with a promise to allow entirely free elections in four years.

Meanwhile, the steps the regime has been taking to defuse the current crisis seem to be working. For the present, the Sunni majority is not culturally accustomed to mass demonstrations; the violence in Libya has reminded many of the consequences of chaos. Tribal and family connections remain very strong in the Kingdom and militate against an organized opposition in such a large and heavily populated country. But it will be fascinating to watch this current young generation. It is too early to assess the effects of social networking, but it will be interesting to see if connections made online someday compete with traditional social ties.[44] The jury is still out. After all, tribes also have websites.[45]

Columnist Maureen Dowd once remarked that observing change in Saudi Arabia was like watching a snail on Ambien. The Saudis will have to consider picking up the pace, but no doubt are painfully away of what Samuel Huntington once termed the King's Dilemma, meaning that "limited reforms introduced from the top often increase rather than decrease bottom-up demand for more radical change." The Shah of Iran's "white revolution" was a case in point, as was Gorbachev's perestroika.[46] It is therefore likely that Ambien will remain the preferred medication of the Al Saud snail.

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[1] For the first wave of political challenges and demands for reform, see Joshua Teitelbaum, *Saudi Arabia's Islamic Opposition* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001). For the other movements and government response see Paul Aarts, "Maintaining Authoritarianism: The Jerky Path of Political Reform in Saudi Arabia,"*Orient* (2011), pp. 29-42.
[2] Joshua Teitelbaum, "Saudi Arabia Contends with the Social Media Challenge,"*Jerusalem Issue Briefs*, February 8, 2011, online at http://goo.gl/lO08M.
[3] "Saudi pro-democracy group's protest banned;" "Saudi rights group: Put interior minister on trial."
[4] "Unemployed Saudi teachers stage rare Riyadh protest."
[5] "Saudi women want to run in municipal elections," Saudi Arabia General News – Maktoob News http://bit.ly/fCokGf; *Arab News*, February 7, 2011.
[6] "King condemns violence in Egypt," *Saudi Gazette*, January 30, 2011.
[7] "Saudi religious head slams Arab uprisings."
[8] AFP, January 28, 2011; "Jeddah flood."
[9] "Saudi bloggers back Egypt uprising, don't want their own."
[10] "Egypt-Inspired Protests Across Middle East Meet Violent Clampdown."
[11] "People want system reform." This page had about 4,000 Likes in early March; it was most probably blocked in Saudi Arabia. Many similar pages followed.

[12] AP, February 11, 2011; Founding proclamation available at "Founding statement of the Islamic Ummah Party;" "'Moderate Islamist' Saudi professionals form political party." Official website at www.islamicommaparty.com.
[13] "Saudi Arabia detains founders of new activist party;" "Saudi Arabia: Free Political Activists."
[14] "Saudis wary of new kids on the blog."
[15] "Saudis, Fax in your Grievances."
[16] AFP, February 10, 2011; Reuters, February 18, 2011
[17] *Arab News*, February 6, 2011.
[18] Saudi Press Agency, February 19, 2011.
[19] *Arab News*, February 24, 2011; "Saudi King unveils string of social benefits, debt write-offs." In another decree issued a few days later, all those on temporary employment contracts with the government were given permanent jobs. Nearly 180,000 employees stood to benefit from this largesse. *Wall Street Journal*, February 27, 2011; *Arab News*, February 28, 2011.
[20] "Cleric arrest spooks Saudi markets, oil;" *Financial Times*, February 28, 2011; "Weekly Economic Briefing (Riyad Bank);" "Alwaleed Invests $133 Million in 'Attractive' Saudi Stocks."
[21] http://hasantalk.com/; *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 24 February 2011.
[22] "A Declaration of National Reform."
[23] "Saudi Shi'ites hold small eastern province protest;" "Three Saudi Shi'ites released after rare protest;" "Saudi Shi'ites stage another protest in oil province."
[24] "Saudi authorities arrest Sheikh Amer after his call for a constitutional monarchy;"Saudi authorities to ease restrictions on Shiite mosques in the news; "Saudi Arabia: Free Cleric Who Backs Change." Al-'Amir went through several arrests and releases in February and March.
[25] "Shi'ites stage small protest in Saudi oil province."
[26] Emirates News Agency, February 18, 2011.
[27] "Clinton, Saudi minister support Bahrain dialogue."
[28] "Gulf States Plan Aid Package for Bahrain, Oman."
[29] *Washington Post*, February 20, 2011.
[30] See, for example, "Day of rage in Saudi Arabia."
[31] *Independent*, March 5, 2011;*Washington Post*, March 7, 2011; "Saudi Authorities Free 25 Shiites Detained During Demonstrations."
[32] "Saudi Arabia says won't tolerate protests." Saudi Press Agency, March 6, 2011;http://www.alifta.net/BayanNew.aspx?NewsID=56.
[33] *Arab News*, March 9, 2011.
[34] http://yfrog.com/z/h2xdnyuj.
[35] "Saudi police open fire at protest;" further demonstrations occurred in the Eastern Province on March 11.
[36] "Saudi Capital Calm On Day Protests Called."
[37] "Report: Saudis Warned Obama Not to 'Humiliate' Mubarak."
[38] *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, February 5, 2011.
[39] "Mubarak's Departure Deals Blow to Saudis."
[40] "Mullen Meets Saudi Military Officials."
[41] "U.S. says Saudis have right to peaceful protests;" "Saudi minister says dialogue needed, not protest."
[42] *Al-Haya*, March 9, 2011.
[43] "Saudi prince questions ban on women driving."
[44] It may be that online social networking by the younger generation may bring about the formation of greater "social capital" which would facilitate a new kind of national cohesion that

could be an effective force for reform. On social capital, see Robert Putnam,*Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (Simon and Schuster, 2000).

45 For example, http://www.alduwasser.org/.

46 See Marina Ottoway and Michele Dunne, "Incumbent Regime's and the 'King's Dilemma' in the Arab World: Promise and Threat of Managed Reform," *Carnegie Papers*, December 2007, pp. 4-5.