

## Succession in the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council

The Middle East is one of the last areas in the world where hereditary monarchs flourish. In particular, the six member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—are all hereditary monarchies. In fact, the GCC contains 12 hereditary rulers, because the UAE is composed of 7 constituent monarchies. Indeed, the shared factor of inherited rule and ruling families was fundamental to the six countries forming the strategic, military, political, social, and economic alliance.

The rest of the world has abandoned the notion of functioning monarchs for entirely sensible reasons, such as the adoption of democratic ideals and institutions, the difficulty of ensuring smooth continuity of leadership, the danger of leadership passing to inferior and/or incompetent rulers, and the belief in egalitarian social and economic, as well as political, norms. The Persian Gulf states, along with Jordan and Morocco, are the only remaining monarchies in the Middle East.<sup>1</sup> Important differences exist, however, between monarchs in Jordan and Morocco and monarchs in the Gulf states. Generally, in the past as well as the present, hereditary rulers and families in the Gulf have evolved naturally from a traditional and harmonious environment and did not acquire or reacquire their positions with external assistance.

The societal evolution of the Gulf states has been dramatic and rapid. Just a few short decades ago, the area was characterized by poverty; isolation from the outside world; and simpler communities based on trade, fishing, pearling, farming, and pastoralism. The initial period of transformation precipitated by increasing oil income upset the balance between social groups,

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strengthened the control of ruling families over the emerging states, and introduced the insidious effects of wealth and privilege to rulers, their families, and their political and economic allies.

Although many pillars of the modern Gulf states were in place by the time of the oil price revolution in 1973, the following decade was marked by a mad dash to materialism, hyperenthusiastic development dreams, and the consolidation of rulers and their families as monarchs. Inevitably, a period of retrenchment caused by the falling price of oil—the main source of government incomes—superseded this unparalleled experience. Some Gulf states

**Successors will come with formative experiences in the ‘post-oil’ periods.**

remain mired in this uncomfortable stage, but others have found themselves pushed unwillingly into the post-oil phase. Sooner or later, all the Gulf states must find themselves in this situation, where economies must be self-sustaining without recourse to oil income, and governments and their leaders must acquire new foundations of legitimacy to survive.

For the most part, the current GCC rulers are members of the “oil wealth” generation. They were born before the discovery and exploitation of oil, their formative experiences occurred in the initial “oil era,” and they came to power during or just after the “oil decade.” Now, they preside over rapidly changing societies in an era of retrenchment and adjusted expectations.

Their instincts are to introduce change only insofar as pressures require but essentially to preserve the systems that evolved through the course of the twentieth century. Among the great shocks that have confronted them in the last half-century: the rise of radical Arab nationalism, manifested in the threat posed by Egyptian troops in Yemen; the emergence of Islamic radicalism via the Iranian revolution and the Iran-Iraq War; and the fear of being swallowed up by larger neighbors, typified by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Yet their responses have been largely to hold fast to traditional values as much as possible and to cling to the alliances with Western powers that have proved successful in the past.

Their successors—sooner or later—must come from a generation with formative experiences in the “retrenchment” or even “post-oil” periods. They must be ready to install new post-rentier economies and to embrace political participation by educated, sophisticated, and heavily middle-class societies. The essential question is whether this “passing of the generational torch” will come in time to preserve the core of these regimes or whether it will be too late as a consequence of doubtful succession patterns—as in Saudi Arabia.

The prospect of a Gulf-wide transition in leadership in the coming years raises a multitude of important questions with implications far beyond the Gulf.

- How legitimate are hereditary monarchies?
- How long will their legitimacy last in the face of changing societies, economies, and politics?
- How long can the ruling families sustain their privileged position amid economic constraints?
- What are the prospects for the constitutionalization of monarchies—and consequently for political participation?

Many of the dilemmas present in these questions are well illustrated in Saudi Arabia, the largest and most important of these monarchies, and so a closer look at that kingdom is useful.

### **Succession in Saudi Arabia**

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Succession in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia comprises four related parts. The first point is the succession to King Fahd, who is about 80 years old and has been in poor health for a number of years. The heir apparent, 'Abdullah bin 'Abd al-'Aziz, will undoubtedly succeed his half-brother Fahd as king; the only question is when. Prince 'Abdullah gradually and increasingly has taken over the reins of government, but as long as Fahd remains king, which he has been since 1982, 'Abdullah will not be able to undertake any major policy shifts. Furthermore, although he enjoys considerably better health, 'Abdullah is only a year or two younger than Fahd.

The second succession issue involves the decision on who should succeed 'Abdullah. King 'Abd al-'Aziz (commonly known in the West as Ibn Sa'ud) founded the Third Saudi State after recapturing the ancestral home of Riyadh in 1902. He ruled it until his death in 1953 and made his eldest surviving son, Sa'ud, heir apparent, instead of his most capable son, Faysal. This decision produced two related phenomena. First, the principle was established of succession through the sons of 'Abd al-'Aziz in chronological order, albeit with some exceptions. Second, because these sons displayed varying qualities as rulers, rivalry among the sons has been a feature over the last sixty years. The ruling family ousted Sa'ud in 1964, and Faysal reigned until his assassination in 1975. He was succeeded by another son of 'Abd al-'Aziz, Khalid, who held the office of king while his younger brother Fahd handled most of the affairs of government until succeeding to the throne after Khalid's death.

The numerous remaining sons of 'Abd al-'Aziz will unquestionably produce the next king, if not the next two or three. The sons are growing old, however, and their capabilities diminish as one nears the end of the line. In part because every additional year of Fahd is likely to mean one less year for 'Abdullah, Fahd's six full brothers, the Al Fahd (or as they—plus the king—are sometimes called in the West, the Sudayri Seven, after the family of their mother) undoubtedly wish Fahd to remain on the throne as long as possible. This desire is a double-edged sword because the next in line is Sultan, presently minister of defense and aviation and the next oldest of the Al Fahd, at about 76, who may not long outlive 'Abdullah.

**Will the next generation come in time to preserve the core of these regimes?**

The longer 'Abdullah rules, once he becomes king, the more opportunity he will have to put his stamp on the kingdom. This effort undoubtedly will include replacing Fahd's men with his own and possibly even altering the succession away from the Al Fahd. Observers generally assume that Nayif (age 67, presently the minister of the interior) and then Salman (age 64, presently the governor of Riyadh Province) will follow af-

ter Sultan. The longer these individuals wait for their turns, the less time will be left to them to rule, if indeed they do succeed.

The third issue of succession is generational change. The introduction of a Basic Law as the kingdom's rough equivalent of a constitution in 1992 laid down some principles regarding succession but did not answer all outstanding questions. The Basic Law stipulated that succession must go to the next oldest *and* most fit candidate (emphasis added). By requiring that succession remain in the line of the descendants of 'Abd al-'Aziz, the way is paved for the grandsons to assume the throne in due course. The Basic Law, probably deliberately, does not explain what methods should be chosen, however, when succession reaches that point.

That succession will move beyond the sons of 'Abd al-'Aziz to another generation within the first two decades of the twenty-first century is a safe prediction. Conceivably, another spell with an unsuitable king (as with Sa'ud, Khalid, and lately Fahd) will speed up the change and deny Salman his turn. A principal factor in persisting with the present line is the dilemma of agreeing where any change in the procedure will lead. With the number of males from the Al Sa'ud running into the thousands, potential candidates abound. The option of primogeniture, which most of the other GCC states seem increasingly to prefer, does not appear viable in Saudi Arabia, as none of the sons of Fahd and 'Abdullah are feasible candidates.

A fourth succession issue centers on the suspicion that 'Abdullah may be the last—or perhaps the penultimate—of the Al Sa'ud to rule the country. To paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of the imminent death of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have been greatly exaggerated. Outsiders were speaking of the fall of the House of Sa'ud in the early 1950s before the death of 'Abd al-'Aziz. The talk surfaced again in the early 1960s when the country suffered the incompetence of Sa'ud at a time of external aggression by radical Arab regimes. Dire prognostications reappeared at the end of the 1970s with the Iranian revolution and fears of spillover from events in Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa. A decade later, the threat from Saddam Hussein's Iraq and an apparently rising tide of Islamic discontent in the kingdom revived discussion of Saudi Arabia's vulnerability and instability. Meanwhile, the kingdom has evolved through 50 years of socioeconomic development and political adaptation.

Despite economic difficulties and regional uncertainties, the state of Saudi Arabia apparently is fundamentally solid. The country and its government confront serious challenges; but none are more threatening to the regime than earlier challenges, and the state's ability to respond effectively has improved, rather than deteriorated, over the decades. What has changed, however, is Saudi society, which is more urbanized, more middle-class, younger, and more critical. The favored status of the Al Sa'ud and their monopoly of power have come under growing scrutiny from many sectors of the Saudi citizenry. Uncertainties over succession may lead, in the not-too-distant future, to speculation over greater popular participation in the process or even alternative forms of governance.

### **Factors of Succession**

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Most of the uncertainties of succession in the Saudi example are found in the other Gulf monarchies as well. For the most part, these uncertainties seem to arise from the relatively recent transition of a "may the best man win" type of succession to a more orderly process involving the selection of heirs apparent beforehand. During the first several decades of 'Abd al-'Aziz's rule, he insisted that he would be succeeded in the traditional manner: the family would confirm the strongest and most capable candidate upon his death. By the 1930s, however, the king had clearly indicated that his eldest son, Sa'ud, would succeed him.

As already shown, the result was not a new and straightforward procedure of primogeniture. The system of progressing through a line of brothers can only be a provisional solution. For similar reasons of historical anomaly, the rules of succession in Kuwait apparently are even more muddled. For

most of the twentieth century, the rulers of Kuwait were drawn from the ruling Al Sabah family by an ad hoc system of alternation between two rival branches. Thus, the present amir, Jabir al-Ahmad al-Jabir, comes from one branch while the heir apparent and prime minister, Sa'd al-'Abdullah, belongs to the other. Because the branch of the heir apparent has become significantly weaker than the amir's, commentators hold considerable doubt that the system of alternation will outlast this amir. Much depends on developments within the next generation.

### **THE OPTION OF PRIMOGENITURE**

Seemingly the most logical system of succession for monarchies is primogeniture. In such a process, the successor is known well in advance, no last-minute crisis of succession (or worry over who will be next) arises, intrafamily rivalries do not appear, and the heir apparent will likely have plenty of time to gain experience in governing and make himself known to his people. Many Gulf states may be drifting in this direction, even in such cases where primogeniture is not mandated by constitution.

The accession of Shaykh Hamad bin 'Isa Al Khalifah as amir of Bahrain in 1999 marked the fourth consecutive occasion that primogeniture dictated the line of succession in Bahrain. The appointment of Hamad's eldest son, Salman, as heir apparent, in conformity with the country's 1973 constitution, dispelled any lingering doubts that Bahrain had opted for primogeniture. Qatar drifted from a system of alternation to primogeniture. Shaykh Khalifah bin Hamad Al Thani became amir in 1972 by deposing his cousin. By all rights, Khalifah should have succeeded in 1960 instead of his cousin (who was the son of the previous amir) because Khalifah had been handling most government affairs anyway. Khalifah worked hard over several decades to centralize his authority over his fractious Al Thani family and to engineer the country's development, but he seemed to lose energy and, by the 1990s, was increasingly turning matters over to his eldest son and heir apparent. In June 1995, that son, Hamad bin Khalifah, seized power and subsequently named his third son, Jasim, as heir apparent—technically not primogeniture but the effect is much the same.

The trend toward primogeniture is very recent in most states and not well rooted. Primogeniture prevails at the moment in Abu Dhabi, the largest and richest state in the UAE, where Shaykh Zayid has named his eldest son, Khalifah, as heir apparent, even though Zayid came to power by deposing his brother. Khalifah in turn is grooming his eldest son for succession, but the succession of one of Khalifah's many brothers is more likely. Shaykh Maktum in Dubai succeeded his father (who succeeded his father) but he has named his next younger brother as deputy ruler and the third brother as

heir apparent. Succession to the office of sultan in Oman has been through an unbroken sequence of primogeniture (albeit qualified as the eldest son of a suitable Arab mother) for 130 years. That pattern will end, however, with the death of Sultan Qabus bin Sa'id as he has no offspring. Oman is the only Gulf state without an heir apparent.

### **THE ROLE OF STRONG, CAPABLE PERSONALITIES**

Much of the quandary regarding primogeniture, as well as any other method of hereditary succession, is the requirement for strong, capable leadership. These characteristics are a particular necessity in new states with weak institutionalization. Saudi Arabia's lack of a strong leader following the death of 'Abd al-'Aziz led to the debacle of Sa'ud. Only the subsequent strong leadership of Faysal rescued the kingdom. Similarly, the present dilemma in Bahrain involves a young, dynamic ruler seeking to wrest control from his uncle, the powerful prime minister who ran most affairs of state during the long reign of his popular but indifferent late brother.

The Sultanate of Oman's problem of succession is the opposite of its fellow Gulf monarchies and reflects other pitfalls in hereditary rule. Qabus has been the architect of Oman's modern renaissance but the question of who or what will succeed him has prompted widespread concern inside and outside the country. Unlike the ruling families of the other Gulf states, the Al Sa'id in Oman constitute a small and relatively weak ruling family. The ruler cannot rely on a strong son or brother to take over the day-to-day reins of the state (conversely, of course, the sultan is free from threats from close relations). The family is small and, for historical reasons, has no influence on the ruler, as no inner circle of family members that must be consulted on significant decisions exists.

Indeed, the sultan rules with few constraints from any quarter. Naturally, he must appear just and rule according to Islamic norms, but otherwise he is free from domestic challenge. No key national families occupy the next rungs of power. All senior members of the government, as well as all other important political figures such as tribal leaders, are fully dependent on the sultan's blessing for the retention of their positions. Traditional religious leadership remains in the background, and popular Islamic dissent is not evident.

The lack of a direct heir and a paucity of reliable close family members mean that succession to Qabus is dramatically problematic. For years, the

**P**rimogeniture does not appear to be a viable option in Saudi Arabia.

sultan seemed oblivious to these concerns. Not only did he fail to groom an heir, he refused to give up the formal post of prime minister and denied would-be contenders the opportunity to prove their suitability. The only indication he had even considered the matter remains the Basic Law, promulgated in 1996, but its provisions on succession are convoluted and impracticable. Undoubtedly, succession will remain within the Al Sa'id by default, but probably not from the ranking members in terms of protocol.

### **THE UAE'S SPECIAL SITUATION**

The importance of the role of personalities is particularly evident in the unique federal experience of the UAE. A federation of seven small, hereditary monarchies, the constitution vests the leadership of the national state in the Council of Rulers, which selects the president of the country from its membership for a five-year term. The only president the state has known since its founding in 1971 has been Zayid. Strong and clear leadership in this office is vital because the president is the actual as well as titular head of state. The UAE does have a prime minister, but this position has always been a consolation prize for the ruler of Dubai, who also holds the title of vice president.

The UAE would possibly not have been formed if Zayid had not acceded in Abu Dhabi; therefore, his continued leadership may be essential for the future health of the union. Under the present system, anyone other than the ruler of Abu Dhabi holding the office of UAE president is inconceivable, a situation which produces a sort of quasi-king of the country. The process would require a radical change in the mix of rulers' personalities and considerably more political participation for the most capable of the seven rulers to be selected as president. The next set of UAE rulers is likely to pit Zayid's weaker successor against Shaykh Muhammad bin Rashid, the heir apparent in Dubai and the strongest and most capable personality of the lot. That Muhammad entertains wider ambitions than Dubai is widely believed, but until he becomes amir, he can enjoy no greater federal role than his present position as minister of defense.

### **EXTRACONSTITUTIONAL SUCCESSION: ARE COUPS D'ÉTAT PASSÉ?**

One of the most popular strategies for succession in the past was by *coup d'état*—more accurately, by palace coups. Generally, a brother overthrew a brother or occasionally a son replaced a father. Violent takeovers were not unknown. Unsurprisingly, by the mid-twentieth century, the custom had largely died due to international disapproval, familial and moral injunctions against it, the need for more orderly transfers of power in burgeoning nation-states, and a growing emphasis on family solidarity.



Can coups in the Gulf be ruled out entirely? Plotters attempted three coups in the last 30 years. In 1972, Khalifah of Qatar overthrew his cousin, which was apparently a popular move because his cousin spent much of his time outside Qatar (and had even failed to return from Switzerland for independence ceremonies in 1971) and Khalifah had been the day-to-day head of government for a number of years. In Sharjah (a member state of the UAE) in 1987, Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz bin Muhammad tried to overthrow his brother. His attempt failed in large part because of the staunch support given to the incumbent ruler by the ruling family of Dubai and the apparent opinion of Zayid in Abu Dhabi and Fahd in Riyadh that *coups d'état* were no longer acceptable political options. In June 1995, however, the last successful coup-maker in the Gulf was himself overthrown when Shaykh Hamad seized power in Qatar during his father's absence abroad. The other Gulf states hesitated initially but then recognized the new ruler, thereby appearing to relegitimize the principle of extraconstitutional succession.

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### THE IMPACT OF GENERATIONAL CHANGE

The monarchs of the GCC can more or less be divided into two age camps: the aging rulers of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE; and the two younger Hamads of Bahrain and Qatar (Qabus of Oman is something of a bridge between the two groups). The older rulers were traditionally educated with earlier careers in administrative appointments. Their guiding principles may be summed up as building and maintaining consensus, both within their families and throughout society. The two Hamads, on the other hand, are products of British military education, have served in or supervised their countries' military establishments, and came to maturity in the years after the oil price revolution of the 1970s. They have shown themselves to be reformists rather than maintainers.

The new Amir Hamad in Qatar swiftly moved to stamp his unique impression on regional politics by, inter alia, accusing his neighbors of supporting his father's alleged counter-coup in early 1996, retaining the Israeli trade office in the capital of Doha—the opening of which he had permitted while serving as prime minister under his father—and strengthening relations with both the United States and Iran. Domestic developments were even more dramatic, with the abolition of the Ministry of Information, the first municipal elections in 1999, and the creation of al-Jazeera, a controversial satellite television channel.

The Amir Hamad in Bahrain faced more difficult underlying problems than his neighbor in Qatar. The consequence of the large ruling family's unbridled power and the country's relative poverty (Bahrain has exported nearly all of its meager oil reserves while Dubai has captured much of the envisioned post-oil service economy) has been the polarization of Bahraini society to a degree unmatched elsewhere in the Gulf. The unrest displayed through much of the 1990s by the state's Arab Shi'a majority was only the latest in a long litany of active opposition to the government throughout the twentieth century. Hamad has nonetheless surprised many observers in his first two years by his boldness of action in defusing the opposition and promises of political liberalization.

Generational change elsewhere in the Gulf is not likely to be as clear-cut as in Bahrain and Qatar. The specifics of the jump to the next generation in Saudi Arabia are as yet undetermined and, as in the case of Faysal's sons, the next generation does not necessarily mean appreciably younger rulers. Likely candidates in Kuwait are still unclear. One can best surmise at present that one of the first cousins of the sultan in Oman will succeed him.

The UAE, in particular, is not likely to experience progressive changes with a new generation of rulers because, among other things, the next set of new rulers will not necessarily come from a new generation. The eldest son will undoubtedly succeed the father in Abu Dhabi but a spirited struggle among some of the large number of half-brothers may take place in the following succession. In Dubai the eldest son, Shaykh Maktum, may reign but his younger brother Muhammad is the actual ruler, as well as heir apparent. Will succession fall to a son of Maktum or a son of Muhammad? Another emirate, Sharjah, has similar quandaries about generational change in succession. Yet another, Ra's al-Khaymah, will experience generational change but the heir apparent is already near 60 years old.

### **Is There a Role for the Hereditary Principle Today?**

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The fundamental legitimacy of ruling families in the Gulf for roughly the past two hundred years has derived from a combination of tribal authority and Islamic precepts. The Gulf states emerged from tribally based societies wherein leadership of the individual tribe was vested in a shaykh. In theory, the tribe at large chose the shaykh. In practice, however, the role often was hereditary within the ranks of a prominent tribal family. Strong leaders enabled this family to consolidate its control over the tribe, and particularly strong leaders were able to extend the tribe's influence over neighboring tribes. The success of ruling families in the twentieth century depended in

large part on exceptional leaders who appeared at the propitious moment when tribal societies began to coalesce into quasi nation-states.

The leadership of the Gulf monarchies derives from ruling families that have been at the forefront of tribal coalitions for several centuries. The role of the British in recognizing the heads of these families as the rulers of the territories within their spheres of influence, and then the payment of oil income to the rulers and their families, reinforced their traditional tribal legitimacy. Their adherence to Islamic precepts of rule—prohibiting what was forbidden in Islam and enabling that which was permitted—further strengthened their position. This method was carried a step further in the case of the Al Sa'ud, who assumed the mantle of champions of the ascetic al-Muwahhidun persuasion of Islam (known in the West as Wahhabism).

Curiously, the combination of the traditional roots of legitimacy and the oil-based transformation of the region worked to enhance the position and strength of ruling families. Just as the shaykh holds a paternal responsibility for the welfare of his constituents, so the Gulf rulers act figuratively as the fathers of their countries. The creation of welfare states in the Gulf was not only an obligation under tribal and Islamic norms, but it fulfilled the basic requirements of a more modern legitimacy. Among these conditions were the introduction of laws and regulations to govern the behavior of the state and its citizens; the creation of a bureaucracy and government structure to carry out the requirements of the state and to provide services to the population; the construction of a physical infrastructure throughout the country; and the provision of a socioeconomic welfare net for all citizens, including free education and health care and an implied commitment to gainful employment. Only after the collapse of oil prices in the 1980s did rulers find themselves under increasing pressure because of their inability to provide the same level of material benefits that this new relationship (or “social contract”) demanded.

Does the grumbling over higher costs of living and diminishing economic opportunities mean that the legitimacy of ruling families has eroded fatally? More to the point, does the gradual transition from traditional bases of legitimacy to modern ones require an accompanying expansion of political participation? Only two of the six Gulf states—Kuwait and Bahrain—have permitted elected national assemblies, although Qatar has promised a new elected assembly in the near future and Bahrain may return to a partially

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elected body. Kuwait's National Assembly has been suspended three times and teeters on a knife-edge between keeping the government accountable and providing a forum for nonconstructive polemics. Bahrain's government suspended the National Assembly in 1975, only two years after its inauguration, because of its refusal to submit to governmental control. At present, consultative councils with appointed members exist in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, and Oman. Their roles are

limited, however, by practice even more than regulation, and their citizenry perceives their legitimacy as marginal. Although formal participation is truly negligible, a significant measure of informal participation, and political and social expression, does exist.

Evidence of widespread demand for Western-style democracies is scant. First, much of the population remains faithful to traditional values and concepts. The paternalistic nature of the state fits the traditional

model of the tribal shaykh as father of the community, a father against whom one does not rebel. Furthermore, there is the long-held, learned opinion within Sunni Islam that the community suffers less harm by accepting an unjust government than it does by revolting against it. Recent Islamist opposition in the region, however, does not accept this precept. Second, much of the renewed emphasis on Islam in the Gulf region tends to reinforce the legitimacy of the systems, even if individual regimes are criticized as failing their Islamic obligations. Third, the Gulf regimes have long highlighted that life under their leadership, even if imperfect and restricted, is far better than the alternatives posed in Iran, Iraq, and Syria (this argument is admittedly more persuasive to the wealthy, tribal notables, and the older generation). Fourth, the model presented by those Arab states that exhibit formal democratic institutions is not encouraging. One need look no farther than nearby Yemen, which has an elected parliament and recently held a popular election for its president. There, President 'Ali 'Abdullah Salih has engineered an electoral system to disenfranchise opposition parties and rule out rival presidential candidates. He pays little heed to parliament and, for the last 21 years, has monopolized power by effectively controlling the security apparatus and manipulating tribes.

The population demands that rulers and their cohorts provide order, prosperity, and opportunity, but popular definitions of these requirements are changing. As a consequence, the necessity of meeting both old and new demands from their citizenry and the increasingly austere economic circumstances will confront a new generation of rulers. The difficult process of diversifying income away from oil will require rulers who delegate more, who

loosen the stranglehold of family consensus and privilege, who tighten the privy purse, and who offer their people greater opportunities to debate and participate in the decisionmaking process. Yet, these rulers must also have the strength to speak honestly to their people and make the hard decisions to restructure economies for the post-oil future.

## **Implications for the Region and the West**

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The West has cause for concern in the Persian Gulf. Various sectors of Gulf populations hold somewhat paradoxical views of the West. Gulf citizens deeply resent unequivocal U.S. support for Israel, and the U.S. image in the Gulf is bound to suffer as long as fighting between Israelis and Palestinians continues. Similarly, U.S. and British insistence on a continued quarantine of Iraq will strengthen Gulf perceptions that the West's fundamental goal is to keep Iraq—and the Arabs—weak and the GCC states dependent on the West for their political and economic security. As Washington pressures GCC leaders and ruling families to endorse and cooperate with unpopular Western policies, the legitimacy of these rulers and families erodes. Already, criticism of the regimes' dependence on the West is considerable, although muted. At the same time, many educated Gulf citizens seeking greater participation in their political systems regard the West as hypocritical because it appears to do little or nothing to encourage political liberalization, even as it presses states to liberalize economically.

In the past, many in the Gulf felt that better education and more familiarity with the world would bring younger generations of ruling families closer to the people. Now, however, the opposite view is often held. Citizens had ready access to older rulers such as Zayid but few of the younger members are interested. The lack of established rules for succession, as in Kuwait, leads to uncertainty and even malaise. Reliance on primogeniture may eliminate uncertainty but may also result in unsuitable leaders, as happened in Saudi Arabia. The ascension of the dynamic two Hamads in Qatar and Bahrain gives cause for optimism but the extraconstitutional means of Hamad's succession in Qatar is an unwelcome regression. Everywhere, increasing distance between the ruling families and the general population is evident.

Those in the West who optimistically believe that a successor generation may be more democratic, closer to the people, and pro-Western may have a surprise in store for them. Although the next generation may be more liberal, it may not be willing to countenance the changes and reforms required by changing circumstances—including more appropriate rules of succession. Thus, the West, particularly the United States and Great Britain because of

their influential standings in these states, should strongly encourage regimes to liberalize politically as well as economically before the reputations of Western countries in the region fade into alienation.

## **Note**

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1. Although strictly speaking, “monarch” implies a king and “monarchy” a kingdom, the terms have been used here more generally to refer to hereditary rulers and their states, including king(dom), sultan(ate), amir(ate), and shaykh(dom).