



Introduction

Monarchy: Nostalgia vs. Resurgence

The death of Prince Philip, fast on the heels of controversy over Prince Harry's marriage and resignation from royal status and duties, has focused attention not only on the future of the British monarchy, but also on the legacy of its empire, given its enduring vestiges among the many nations and cultures touched by its dominion, tutelage and continuing influence.

While as in so many other matters political the chasm between apologists and critics of empire remains broad, many will agree that [The Times They Are A-Changin'](#), and that the future remains opaque.

Vapors of Empire

While many former colonies and protectorates were inspired upon emancipation by the British model, the elements adopted varied widely; dominions such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand retained their monarchy (albeit often nominally), India adopted only parliamentary democracy.

In the Middle East, vapors of British influence linger more in monarchy, not only the ceremony on display at Windsor Castle but rather on an earlier model reflected in a regional trend towards consolidation rather than abdication of political and economic power.

King Salman's decision to elevate his son Mohammed over more senior and distant relatives echoed elsewhere, including

- Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa's appointing his son Salman as head of government upon the death of his uncle Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa;
- Omani Sultan Haitham bin Tariq al-Said's amending the country's basic law to appoint his 31-year-old son Theyazin as crown prince and heir; and
- UAE Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan's grooming of his son Khalid as a possible successor.

Gulf monarchies' earlier transition from the Ottoman model of consolidating power by removing potential rivals towards family consensus, based on distribution of political spoils as consolation prizes for potential rivals, has been interpreted as [progress towards modernity](#); whereas the new breed of royals favors technocrats and loyalists over relatives, while radically culling lines of succession.

Primogeniture, while not unusual among presidents of Arab republics such as in Egypt but unusual for regional monarchies, has seemingly replaced succession by consensus of family seniors from among the wisest and best.

Is it a coincidence that consolidation of power has become the norm not only in the Gulf, but also in China and elsewhere, or is there a logic to concentrating power and streamlining decision-making in an era of strategic multipolarity and late-stage global capitalism?

Qatar: Succession or Shell Game?

After seizing power from his father in 2004, Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani decided that succession would flow through male descendants of his choosing; and in relinquishing power in 2013, in the context of political stresses with its much bigger neighbors Saudi Arabia and the UAE, designated his son Tamim as successor, while remaining influential in the background.

Saudi Arabia: Will of the Prince

The exhaustion of a deep bench of sons of the founder has forced Saudi Arabia to embrace new models, based on a natural temptation to trust one's own descendants.

When King Salman appointed his son Mohammed as crown prince in 2017, he suggested that others' turns would come later; given Prince Mohammed's broad powers query whether his word will be determinative.

Bahrain: Gathering Reins

While Bahrain formerly embraced primogeniture subject only to the monarch's prerogative to choose among his sons, Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad operated in the shadow of his great uncle and long-serving and powerful prime minister Khalifa

bin Salman, whose death in 2020 secured Salman's future.

Oman: Blood vs. Character

In January, the newly installed Sultan Haitham appointed his son Theyazin as successor, in defiance of local tradition against consanguinity as a rule of succession and in favor of selection for character and piety.

UAE: Rising Star

In the UAE, Mohammed bin Zayed's has favored his son Khalid by appointment in late 2019 to Abu Dhabi's Executive Council, in December 2020 to the [board of directors](#) of the Supreme Council for Financial and Economic Affairs, and in March to the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) board.

Discussion

Monarchs wielding concentrated powers who embody the virtues of Plato's philosopher-king and command relatives' and public support could help transition to more sustainable cultural, social, and economic foundations, while assuring stability and moderating succession risks.

Prince Mohammed's ambitious and far-reaching reforms recall John Kennedy's 1961 promise of progress, change, imagination, youth, and vigor, fueling hunger for personal and communal self-realization.

The shift from succession through brothers or cousins to intergenerational torch-passing has accelerated long-blocked reform, with younger and more imaginative

rulers feeding the hunger of generational peers for new identities and opportunities.

Will their success in leveraging turbocharged decision-making powers while addressing the aspirations of youth determine Gulf monarchs' and princes' long-term legitimacy and success; and as Prince Philip's funeral rings out reminders of the fading of empires, will monarchical principles find new life in this once remote Levantine imperial backwater?

Upcoming Events, Webinars, and Conferences

- **Ramadan:** April 13-May 12

COVID-19 Status, Restrictions, Aid, and Enforcement

- **Status:** Saudi Arabia [reports](#) as of April 20, 2021, a leveling-off of COVID cases, with:
 - 970 new coronavirus cases daily, led by Riyadh, Jeddah, and Makkah;
 - 405,940 cumulative cases, 9,508 active;
 - 896 recoveries daily, 389,598 cumulative (>98% recovery rate);
 - 11 deaths daily, 6,834 cumulative (<2% fatality rate);
 - 62,069 daily tests, 16,293,609 cumulative;
 - 7,404,061 vaccines administered.
- **Vaccine:** Saudi Arabia has approved both the Pfizer and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines for [import and use](#). Inoculation will [not be compulsory](#). Health

authorities have initiated a major vaccination campaign, which consists of [several phases](#) scheduled to be completed by late 2021. The stated goal is to reach [80% population immunity](#).

- **Registration:** Registration for the vaccine is now available for [citizens and residents](#). To register, visit [here](#) or use the [iOS](#) or [Android](#) “Sehanty” apps. Within 24 hours applicants will receive a message providing a date for receiving [vaccine doses](#).
- **Vaccine Resumptions:** Residents aged 60 years and above will continue to receive their second dose of the vaccine against COVID-19 as scheduled despite an earlier decision to [postpone administering the second jab](#).

Public Sector Updates

- **Housing Subsidy Cuts:** The Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and Housing has announced a reduction in the maximum period of subsidized housing finance from 25 years to 20 years [for new applications](#).
- **Anti-Corruption:** The Kingdom’s anti-corruption initiatives are continuing, with authorities recently initiating 11 new criminal cases [against government employees](#).
- **Crown Prince’s New Son:** Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman has a new baby boy whom he named Abdulaziz [after his grandfather](#).

Corporate / Employment

- **Industrial Wage Subsidies:** Saudi Arabia has launched a wage subsidy programme to encourage hiring Saudis [in the industrial sector](#).

Legal

- **Al Tamimi Legal Magazine:** For Al Tamimi Law's latest magazine issue (March 2021, focus is on Africa), see [here](#).
- **Potential Anti-Obesity Law:** Saudi Arabia is exploring legal measures [to combat obesity](#).
- **Potential Moves Against Keeping Wild Animals:** Authorities have urged people to hand over wild animals they may be keeping as pets, warning against illegal rearing of predators after a lion [mauled its keeper to death](#).

Visas, Travel, and Repatriation

- **New Travel Ban:** Saudi Arabia banned expatriates from entering the Kingdom from 20 countries, including the UAE, Egypt, Lebanon, and Turkey, as well as the US, UK, Germany, France, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden, Brazil, Argentina, South Africa, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Japan. Exceptions will be made for diplomats, medical staff, and their families. The ban also applies to travelers who transited through any of the 20 countries [within 14 days of arrival](#). The Kingdom's travel ban for citizens and the closure of its borders will remain in place until [May 17, 2021](#).
 - **Travel Guidelines:** For Saudia's travel guidelines, see [here](#).

- **Visa Extensions:** The General Directorate of Passports (Jawazat) has clarified that exit and reentry visas of expatriates who are outside the Kingdom can be extended electronically through the employer's Absher or Muqeem platform, after paying fees through the [SADAD payment system](#).
- **Flight Resumptions:** The General Authority of Civil Aviation of Saudi Arabia (GACA) has outlined plans to resume international flights [beginning May 17](#).
 - **Potential Decision Changes:** Saudi Arabia has not ruled out surprise decisions regarding the resumption of [international flight services](#).
 - **Saudia Plans:** Saudia is preparing for a full-capacity operation ahead of the international travel ban [lifting on May 17](#).

Economy

- **General:**
 - **Inflation Rate Eased:** Saudi Arabia's inflation rate fell to 4.9% in March from 5.2% [the previous month](#).
- **Finance, Insurance, Investment, and Sovereign Wealth:**
 - **Emirates NBD Expansion:** Emirates NBD, Dubai's largest lender, reported a 12% increase in Q1 net profit as it expanded its [branches in the Kingdom](#).
- **Retail, Luxury, and E-Commerce:**
 - *No significant recent developments.*

- **Real Estate, Construction, Infrastructure, and Megaprojects:**
 - **Red Sea Project Funding:** The Red Sea Development Co.'s SAR 14 (\$3.7 billion) loan is set to close with a small group of local banks including Saudi National Bank, Banque Saudi Fransi, Riyad Bank, and [Saudi British Bank](#).
 - **Riyadh Land Development:** The Royal Commission for Riyadh City has announced the lifting of the embargo placed on large areas of unused land north of King Salman Road, opening them up for [sale and development](#).
- **Defense:**
 - *No significant recent developments.*
- **Tourism, Hospitality, Culture, and Entertainment:**
 - **Louvre Hotels Expansion:** French group Louvre Hotels has announced plans to open 31 new properties across the Kingdom [by 2025](#).
 - **Reel Cinemas Expansion:** UAE-based Emaar Entertainment has reached an agreement with GOSI Investment Ventures to [expand into the Kingdom](#).
- **Religion:**
 - **Regulations for Foreign Pilgrims:** The Ministry of Haj and Umrah has announced five mechanisms and regulations for [foreign Umrah pilgrims](#).

- **Education:**
 - *No significant recent developments.*
- **Healthcare:**
 - *No significant recent developments.*
- **Technology:**
 - **Prexle Funding:** Saudi Arabia-based Cloud-enabled Point-Of-Sale (POS) startup Prexle has reportedly finalized its seed funding round which is valued at [SAR 2.5 million](#).
- **Food and Agriculture:**
 - *No significant recent developments.*
- **Industry, Utilities, and Transportation:**
 - **Makkah Transportation Improvements:** The Royal Commission for Makkah City and Holy Sites has launched the Unified Center for Transport in Makkah to [enhance transportation in the city](#).
- **Natural Resources, Mining, and Environment:**
 - *No significant recent developments.*
- **Oil and Energy:** Oil prices [stand](#) on April 20 at \$67.04 pbb for Saudi oil (Arab Light) and \$63.70 pbb for West Texas Intermediate (WTI).
 - **Arabian Sun:** For Aramco's most recent weekly newsletter April 14) see [here](#).

- **OSC Center:** Oilfields Supply Center Limited (OSC) will invest \$570 million building a center at the [King Salman Energy Park \(SPARK\)](#).

Geopolitical

- **Talks with Iran:** Saudi and Iranian officials reportedly held direct talks this month in a bid [to ease tensions](#).
- **United States:**
 - **Bond Reduction:** Saudi Arabia reduced its holdings of US Treasury bonds to \$132.9 billion by the end of February, down by [\\$2.2 billion on a monthly basis](#).
- **Yemen:** Houthi forces continue to target Saudi Arabia with [drones and missiles](#).
 - **Jazan Attack:** Houthi rebels have claimed responsibility for a drone and missile [attack on Jazan](#).

GCC

- **GCC Construction Market:** The GCC construction market for Q1 2021 is estimated at \$2.2 trillion, with over 22,000 active projects. \$35.6 billion worth of new schemes were announced in Q1, with 54% of the new projects [taking place in Saudi Arabia](#).
- **UAE:**
 - **US Treasury Boycott Removed:** US Department of the Treasury has removed the UAE from its quarterly list of countries that require, or

may require, participation in, or cooperation with, [an international boycott](#).

- **Dubai Stimulus:** Sheikh Maktoum has approved a financing portfolio of Dhs 30 billion to [support businesses and startups](#).

- **Qatar:**

- **Foreign Ownership:** The Qatari cabinet has approved a draft law that would allow non-Qataris to own up to 100% of the capital of companies listed on the [Qatar Stock Exchange](#).

- **Kuwait:**

- **Parliamentary Tensions:** A parliamentary session was cut short and guards were called in to prevent clashes between MPs as tensions between opposition lawmakers [and the government continued](#).
- **Detention of Ex-Prime Minister:** Kuwait's ministerial court ordered the pre-trial detention of former prime minister [Sheikh Jaber al-Mubarak al-Sabah](#).

- **Bahrain:**

- **Flights to Israel:** Gulf Air has begun selling [tickets to Israel](#).
- **Ramadan Penalties:** Bahrain has imposed strict penalties for those caught eating in public during [Ramadan fasting hours](#).

- **Oman:**

- **VAT Introduced:** Oman has officially introduced a planned 5% VAT after a [six-month transitional period](#).

Other

- **Miscellaneous:** For earlier developments, see [here](#).
- **Royal Family Donations:** King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have donated \$8.1 million for charitable and not-for-profit activities [via the Ehsan Platform](#).

Resources

- [Previous Newsletters](#)
- [Ministry of Health Dashboard](#)
- [Ministry of Health Coronavirus Guidance](#)
- [New Companies Law](#)
- [Chamber of Commerce Global Policy Dashboard](#)
- [Ministry of Investment Guide to Business Continuity](#)
- [US Embassy in Saudi Arabia](#)
- [US State Department Travel Information](#)

We will be happy to provide more specific advice in the context of particular circumstances, concerns, and priorities; please let us know.

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Disclaimer: While the above information was gathered from sources believed to be accurate at the time, we cannot be responsible for errors due to human or technical error.

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