EMERGING SOCIO-POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Direct and Indirect Consequences of the Saudi Arabia National Dialogue Process

Submitted by Mark Colin Thompson, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arab and Islamic Studies, January 2012.

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

(Signature) Mark Colin Thompson
ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to assess the extent to which the Saudi Arabia National Dialogue and activities of King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue (KACND) represent a viable attempt to address socio-political issues; whether the ongoing National Dialogue process accurately reflects the aspirations and concerns of contemporary Saudi society; what its impact on socio-political development may be; and how it relates to wider regime strategies and to the evolution of the Saudi polity.

The thesis examines KACND’s institutions, practices and impacts, as well as Saudis’ perceptions of all these. It does so by embedding the analysis in a survey of the evolution of broader Saudi socio-political dynamics; drawing in particular on Gramsci, it asks whether the system is moving from a form of patrimonial state to one of ideological hegemony, and whether the KACND is a catalyst in this transition or may even be part of the apparatus that is driving this transition, including its indirect or unintended effects.

To that end, the thesis examines the mutual relationship between KACND and the key Saudi social constituencies, with their attendant issues. In particular, it explores the extent to which the KACND’s activities directly and indirectly impact on internal cross-constituency communication and discourse in the Kingdom.

The thesis explores the legitimisation of state-society dialogue in Saudi Arabia, focusing on the direct and indirect consequences of the National Dialogue process with reference to the role and activities of KACND. It examines the expanding activities of KACND, including the evolving range of issues discussed as part of the institution’s activities, and the scope of participants. It highlights the shift from ideology-based National Dialogue Meetings such as on national unity and women’s rights, to service-based National Dialogues such as on employment and health. It also examines the newly established Cultural Discourse and assesses the impact of this initiative as a space for ideological debate.

The study is based on extensive fieldwork in Saudi Arabia from 2009 to 2011, referencing information and official documentation not previously available, and
drawing on findings from a wide range of focus groups, interviews, and participant observation with National Dialogue participants, KACND officials, government ministers, lawyers, journalists, scholars and members of minority constituencies
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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACPRA:</td>
<td>Saudi Political Rights Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARAMCO:</td>
<td>Saudi Arabian Oil Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASDA’A:</td>
<td>ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC:</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO:</td>
<td>chief executive officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CfBT:</td>
<td>Centre for British Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGI:</td>
<td>Directorate of General Investigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EST:</td>
<td>estimated</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU:</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCC:</td>
<td>Gulf Cooperation Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GID:</td>
<td>General Intelligence Directorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSN:</td>
<td>Gulf States Newsletter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRW:</td>
<td>Human Rights Watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISI:</td>
<td>Institute for Scientific Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAAU:</td>
<td>King Abdulaziz University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KACND:</td>
<td>King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAUST:</td>
<td>King Abdullah University for Science and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFCRIS:</td>
<td>King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFU:</td>
<td>King Faisal University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFUPM:</td>
<td>King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPI:</td>
<td>Key Performance Indicators</td>
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<td>KSU:</td>
<td>King Saud University</td>
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<tr>
<td>MBC:</td>
<td>Middle East Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEMRI:</td>
<td>The Middle East Media Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENA:</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
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MP: Member of Parliament
NCAAA: Saudi Stages in Accreditation for New Institutions Responsible to the Ministry of Higher Education
NGO: non-governmental organisation
SAR: Saudi Arabian Riyal
NSC: Saudi National Security Council
NSHR: National Society for Human Rights
OIR: The Organisation of the Islamic Revolution
PMU: Prince Mohammed bin Fahd University
PSU: Prince Sultan University
RCCI: Riyadh Chamber of Commerce and Industry
SABIC: Saudi Basic Industries Corporation
SANG: Saudi Arabian National Guard
SCCI: Saudi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture
SHRC: Saudi Human Rights Commission
SUSRIS: Saudi-US Relations Information Service
SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TQM: Total quality management
UAE: United Arab Emirates
UK: United Kingdom
USA: United States of America
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WTO: World Trade Organisation