

Saudi Arabia has always attempted to remain part of a broad Arab consensus. Within Arab councils, it continues to play a vital role. Its moderate, basically pro-Western influence has been used effectively to promote regional stability within the Arab world.

The Kingdom has taken the lead in welding the oil-producing states of the Gulf into a military/economic alliance, called the the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which provides a measure of security against domestic unrest and regional revolutionary forces.

Oil wealth has led to domestic prosperity and rapid economic development, especially since the oil boom of the 1970's. Although the royal family along with members of a number of trading houses have accumulated considerable wealth, all members of Saudi society have enjoyed substantially greater economic well-being. For example:

- the average Saudi enjoys access to a wide range of social benefits, ranging from free health care and education (including at foreign universities) to subsidized housing and interest-free loans;
- young Saudis have, until recently, found prestigious and well-paying jobs readily available; most of the manual work has been reserved for imported labour;
- the creation of a vast new infrastructure (including roads, airports, water desalination plants, factories and whole new cities) has given the populace a high quality of life;
- the beginnings of industrialization and on-going efforts to diversify the economy have helped create challenging job opportunities for young Saudis.