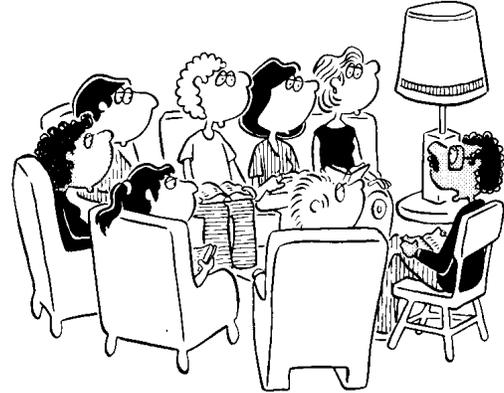


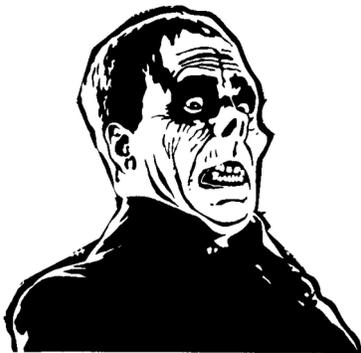
When we plan, we tend to follow a certain pattern. When the need to make a decision occurs, the decision-maker coordinates with his staff and with experts. Once the decision is made, preparation begins on paper with schedules and phases, the precise dates being important to us. If the date of 1 June begins the implementation date, we expect to start then and no later--but earlier may be good. Then on 1 June the pieces are in place and minor adjustments are made. Precision in time and measurements is important here.

When many Arabs make decisions, little action is taken until somewhere around the specified date, about a week or so before--if circumstances still seem good. The planning we do on paper they do in the situation. After the machinery comes the situation is observed and if another piece is needed it is ordered then, if experts, trainers, or staff are needed they are then requested.



In the actual situation the operation is formed and shaped. Actually, if the starting date were earlier than for an American approach, the finish date might well end up the same.

Adjustment is required when coping with tendencies toward passivity. The attaché will inevitably observe Saudis who constantly assert their eagerness to press on with new programs or ventures, yet at the same time procrastinate in implementing them.



From the Western perspective, there appears to be too much talk and too little action. Americans who work as advisors or contractors may react to such impasses by taking matters into their own hands.

Linguists cannot normally influence events this way, but they may at least feel impelled to berate the person(s) involved. Neither reaction is good for rapport, since both threaten the native sense of dignity. The situation demands patience and belief that "things will get done"-- albeit, by some hidden schedule.

The Arabs' tendency toward subjectivity complements their preference for idealism over realism, and that pattern is further manifested in the abstraction of words from intent and meaning. As Patai has noted, "the verbal utterance, which expresses such mental functions as feelings, aspirations, ideals, wishes, and thoughts, is quite divorced from the level of action." Thus, when a plan or proposal is well-stated, it is deemed "perfect" for that reason, regardless of whether it is complete or feasible. Implementation, or action, more directly involves the world of reality, which with all its uncertainty, unpleasantness, and disorder, daunts the Arab mind. The attaché will find that Saudis often seem reluctant to implement plans, regardless of their supposed importance. The same syndrome is reflected in situations of conflict, whereby Arabs convey threats in very explicitly and dramatic terms, even though they lack means and desire to follow through.

Both patterns have their advantages and weaknesses, but in the Arab world you will find yourself working their way. Anticipating this can save a great deal of frustration as well as avoiding major capital losses.

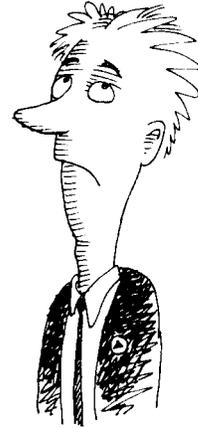


**c. Potential for Hidden Agendas** The attaché may find himself in meetings where discussions progress quite well but then break down for no apparent reason. In such cases, the underlying, hidden reason could be clan rivalry, conflict of interest, or expectation of monetary kickbacks (when procurement is involved). As Saudis are very reticent

and respectful of each other's private concerns, they will not surface such issues at the meeting. Instead, they will suspend all deliberations until private matters can be resolved. In situations which involve "side deals," the attaché should neither criticize nor attempt to obstruct them. He may wish, however, to note for future reference the persons, offices, and agencies involved.

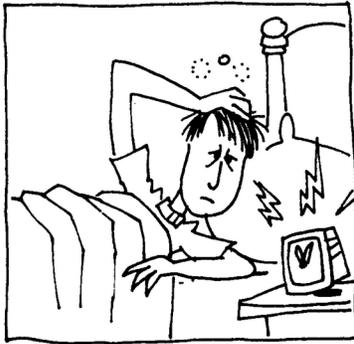
#### **d. Exaggeration in Discourse**

Apart from hidden agendas, the attaché has to be wary of exaggeration, especially when quantities are concerned. "An impending purchase of a hundred new APCs" may in reality amount to fifty or less. "The availability of one thousand recruits" may realistically equate to a few hundred. In making such statements, Saudis do not normally intend to deceive.



They merely wish to convey a relative degree of magnitude--albeit a very subjective one. In other words, the accrual number, if known, is irrelevant to them unless they are signing contracts, official orders, or requisitions.

**e. Indifference to Official Duties** Another difficult aspect of conducting business in Saudi Arabia is the lax attitude toward work. Because of their determinist mindset, Many Arabs usually cannot see that certain matters require urgent attention. At the subconscious level, man's doings do not matter much in the divinely ordained scheme of things. Moreover, their subjectivism sometimes prevents them from seeing the relevance of events, i.e., as affecting the military's image, strategic alliances, or other national interests. One consequence is that requests for clearances (for joint exercises or ship visits) are placed in stacks of routine correspondence which get processed rather slowly.



Saudi military and civil service personnel do not work a compulsory eight hour day, nor do they work toward any stated or implicit standards of efficiency. Lower ranking functionaries do not usually hold themselves accountable. In their view, full responsibility rests with the man-in-charge--the commander, commandant, or director.

If he wants something done expeditiously, he will make his desires known. Such attitudes and behavior are likely to frustrate anyone seeking to ensure timely compliance with official requests.

When operations are on-going, the attaché may notice a serious lack of cooperation on the part of organizations which answer to the same authority. In such situations the problem is, once again, often due to traditional clan rivalry; although the principals involved will probably be reluctant to admit it. The attaché may judge that loyalties are misplaced. However, the fact remains that in many cases loyalty to the clan overrides loyalty to the service (or state). Any resultant problems are best left to the higher authorities of the Kingdom. The attaché would do well just to avoid the ill effects of clan rivalry in his personal relations. The mere show of kindness or attention to one associate might suffice to antagonize another, if their respective kin groups happen to be bitter rivals. After this initial "affront," it would be difficult for the attaché to make amends. Unfortunately, the traditional rivalries are not matters of public record. One learns of them through inadvertent mistakes or "shop talk."

As with traditional rivalries, the inveterate pecking order of Saudi society also determines attitudes in the work place. An individual who consistently excels in his job may never receive recognition or reward if he belongs to a tribe of inferior status.

Praise is reserved for the members of noble tribes or families. It is not necessarily associated with personal achievement. For Americans, who generally value merit above status, Saudi practices may seem unfair.

Even so, there is not much one can do about them. Efforts to commend or to have someone commended will not be well received if they contravene native norms.



### f. Patron-Client Associations

Friendly associations between persons who are not relatives usually amount to patron-client relationships. One of the parties has wealth or influence; the other has commercial contacts, technical skill, managerial competence, or some other talent of value. Such associations are induced by mutual interest; they are sustained by mutual dependence.

In certain cases, the patron will treat his clients almost as members of his family. He will provide them accommodations near his own dwelling and pay their travel expenses as they accompany him on trips. Many Lebanese and Palestinian émigrés have thus become part of the entourage of certain Saudi princes. Such sustenance of clients may appear to be extreme generosity. However, self interest is also involved--at least subconsciously. Historically, the conventional generosity of most Arabs derives not from humanitarianism, but rather from desire to strengthen the family or kin group. The generosity of one party becomes the indebtedness of another, and indebtedness can ultimately affect loyalty.

Because of his official status and temporary stay in the Kingdom, the attaché has very little, if any, potential as a client. He may therefore find that Saudis are reluctant to be "friends." In contrast, some American businessmen have become clients of sorts of Saudi princes and other important men.

