In a society like that of the Arab Gulf, King's or Emir's body is not a metaphor but a political reality. Its physical presence is necessary for the functioning of a monarchy. And it is the body of monarch which needs to be protected in a juridical-political sense. With a purpose to protect the monarch, the Arab Gulf States are engaged in certain political exercises which can appropriately be explained with the concept of *art of government* that refers to the introduction of different forms security, surveillance and control exercising towards its citizens to govern a state or to gain legitimacy. This paper's concern revolves around various means of art of government that collectively characterize the transformation of Gulf monarchic states from the tribal structure to a centralized and largely ‘secular exercise’ of power over populations. How these measures are being perceived by the local population is also a concern of this paper.

As the modernization and secularization of the state does not occur at the open political domain, the role of traditional Islam as a legitimating ideology of the Arab Gulf states is still operative. But at the same time, traditional ways of conceiving state and society in religious and tribal terms on the one hand and the new transformations on the other do create tensions both in the way states function in the region and the manners in which societies interact with them. There are, therefore, new methods for state legitimacy and control. Family, clan and religious ideology which were some of the symbolic languages through which the state used to gather legitimacy, are now being replaced by the new mechanisms.

The elimination of hostile elements by the punishment and execution has been replaced by the methods of exception and surveillance. Within the context of increased international pressure of terrorism, security measures receive undue acceptance in the society. Through various measures of surveillance, Governments in the Gulf have made ‘fear’ as a civil deterrence. The fear of moral police *Mutaween* as the deterrence in Saudi Arabia is given way to a common feeling of insecurity administered through surveillance. In places like the UAE, application of ‘the art of government’ extends “beyond the state” to the media as the latter play a significant role in the administration of fear.

In a more security obsessed situation, the functions of state become more hegemonic than just being repressive. The role of state and its apparatus in the ordinary life is far more increased. Unlike the concept of tribal membership, which carries the ethical connotation of participation in the governance and sovereignty of the state, the concept of ‘citizenship’ makes available to government functionaries in the Gulf a set of rationally ‘manipulable’ instruments for controlling a large section of population.