How Citizenship Informs Political Authority:

The Case of Kuwait and Bahrain

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Abstract

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Both Bahrain and Kuwait's monarchies use citizenship as a reward and punishment system to maintain political authority. The ability to award or revoke citizenship is perhaps the most important tool for political governance in these two states. At the same time, there is a more nuanced sense of a social – as opposed to political – concept of citizenship that comes into play, which is just as important. Each Persian Gulf nation has undertaken policies to naturalize foreigners and residents (e.g., *bidoon*, the native-born, but stateless population) to different degrees and in different ways, and each nation has its distinct processes of awarding – or revoking – citizenship.

By comparing the historical, social, and political patterns of the integration and exclusion of citizens and non-citizens in Kuwait and Bahrain using an argument that re-evaluates the efficacy of rentier state theory as well as ideas on dynastic monarchism and social and national identity, I

aim to explore the political repercussions of citizenship – both for those governing and those who are governed. I also examine the two governments' laws and practices of naturalization to better understand why and how citizenship is used as a tool for political governance in the Gulf. With Bahrain and Kuwait being such similar states with comparable conditions and welfare benefits to being included, why have their governments followed certain approaches, and why have they differed so extensively in their manipulation of citizenship policies in the past?

I argue that the main factors at play in determining the practices of citizenship manipulation in these two nations are 1. The closeness of relations between the merchant elite and the ruling families in Kuwait, but not Bahrain, 2. the ethno-religious fragmentation in Bahrain between the Shia majority and Sunni ruling family, and 3. the bonding effects of the 1990 Iraqi invasion in Kuwait. The variables of socio-political linkages, religious divides, national identity, external threats, and perceived natural resources have produced different responses and results in Kuwait and Bahrain.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION AND METHODS

a. Background and Explanatory Framework

In 2012, after the Pearl Roundabout protests in Bahrain sent shockwaves throughout the region, King Hamad Al Khalifa of Bahrain released a statement that read, "citizenship, unity, and participation are the pillars of… reform and development" (Bahrain News Agency 2012). However, the Bahraini monarchy and its parliament continue to operate in discriminatory and oppressive ways vis–à–vis their Shia residents. Similarly, Kuwait's Emir and Parliament participate in exclusionary policies regarding the bidoon, some of whom have lived on Kuwaiti territory for generations. Both countries have a low tolerance for citizens who speak out against their respective ruling families and have revoked citizenship for that very reason.

Oil fundamentally changes the theoretical playing field in the Arabian Gulf States.[1] Rentier State Theory (RST) posits that due to the abundance of the natural, extractable resources it sits on, a rentier state will be mainly concerned with distributing its rents to its population in exchange for their quiescence and loyalty. A passport in these welfare states means that one can expect to receive free services such as healthcare, pensions, and scholarships to study overseas. In exchange for these significant economic perks, it is expected that citizens will obey – and stand by – the monarchy. Another effect of these generous social benefits is that citizens are more likely to oppose the expansion of the nation's citizenry, since doing would dilute resources amongst a greater pool of recipients.

[1] Arabs refer to the Gulf and the Peninsula as the 'Arabian' Gulf or Peninsula, while Iranians and most Western mainstream media prefer to call it the 'Persian' Gulf or Peninsula. In this work, both are used interchangeably.

In Kuwait and Bahrain, citizenship is also distinctly gendered, and women married to foreign nationals have yet to be granted the right to pass on Gulf citizenship to their children under the guise of "protecting the national security of the country" (Bahraini Citizenship Act, 1963). Thus, who is (and is not) a citizen matters both financially and politically. Both Kuwait and Bahrain have been criticized by Human Rights Watch (HRW), amongst other organizations, for their flagrant use of exclusionary citizenship policies.

The ability to award or revoke citizenship is perhaps the *most important tool* for political governance used by rulers in the Persian Gulf. In times of domestic instability, leaders feel more vulnerable and tighten laws regarding citizenship rights or apply existing laws more forcefully. As Abdel Hadi Khalaf – a political sociologist who was himself stripped of his citizenship by the government of Bahrain during the Arab Spring – writes, "In these countries, a passport is not [only] a right of citizenship, but rather an honor bestowed by the ruling family, given to whom it wants and taken from whom it wants of its subjects" (Khalaf 2012).

This dissertation is primarily an exploration of Bahrain and Kuwait's state-sanctioned understandings and portrayals of citizenship and national identity, and the motivations and agendas behind them. My research is based on the states' existing citizenship and nationality laws, their practices and patterns of naturalization and citizenship revocation, and available scholarship relating to these considerations. Issues of national identity are also explored through visits to the two countries' national museums and heritage sites to examine what the governments of Bahrain and Kuwait seek to transmit as their states' national narratives.

b. Case Selection

My research is modeled as a comparative case study of Bahrain and Kuwait, from the ruling dynasties' consolidation of power in these two states until the present. A comparative case study allows for an understanding of the different historical and demographic contexts in the two nations, which is crucial to how their rulers view citizenship. Since Kuwait and Bahrain are both extraordinarily centralized, with rulers holding almost all of the power and determining the trajectory of their countries, policies and practices are, more often than not, implemented from the top down. I believe the main variables at play in creating these two nations' citizenship regimes are ethno-religious fragmentation, social identity, and external threats.

The two Arabian Gulf States I explore in this work have both had their legitimacy as independent nation-states challenged; Kuwait directly through invasion and occupation by Iraq, and Bahrain indirectly through 'soft power' by Saudi Arabia and Iran, and territorial claims by Iran. Additionally, though Kuwait and Bahrain both have parliaments imbued with traces of British involvement, Kuwait has a history of having the most open political atmosphere in the Gulf as well as the most stable ruling family, while Bahrain (with the exception of Saudi Arabia, which I believe is too idiosyncratic for comparison, as explained in my research design) has the least open political system and a monarchy that was dangerously close to being deposed in 2011 (Crystal 1995, Herb 1999, Tétreault 2000).

While all the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have fascinating citizenship policies, I do not focus on Saudi Arabia or Oman because of their drastically different demographics, political systems, and social orders. As the bastion of Sunni Islam and the home of Mecca and Medina, the Al Saud's Saudi Arabia has a distinct religious legitimacy that the other Gulf States do not. Oman, with the least oil-oriented economy of any Gulf State and a

cultural outlook and heritage that is focused as much towards Africa in the East as it is towards its Arab neighbors, is also quite unlike the other Gulf States. So as not to sacrifice depth for breadth, I also do not include full case studies on the United Arab Emirates (which is unique in its setup of seven different rulers for each emirate) or Qatar (which is idiosyncratic in its minuscule native population and recent foreign policy maneuverings), with the exception of pertinent examples.

While it is impossible to find two countries where all the variables are the same, Kuwait and Bahrain share many of their fundamental characteristics: they are very small petro-states situated in a geopolitically precarious region with under five million residents each, and both have inherited similar societal and cultural outlooks from their shared tribal past as descendants of the Bani Utub tribe. The Kuwaiti and Bahraini constitutions were even written by the same Egyptian lawyer (Abu Hakima 1983; Onley 2007). Both Kuwaitis and Bahrainis are a minority in their own country and enjoy extensive cradle-to-grave welfare – a landmark of a rentier state. Upon the discovery of oil, both underwent similar trajectories of modernization, starting as politically and bureaucratically undeveloped British protected states, then undergoing sudden and immense development, culminating in independence in the 1960s and 1970s. The most glaring incongruence lies in Bahrain's ethno-religious fragmentation which results in political instability, causing protests that would almost certainly have deposed the monarchy in 2011 if not for external intervention.

Unique in the mostly Sunni Gulf, Bahrain's citizens are about seventy percent Shia, ruled by a minority Sunni dynasty. In addition to this major demographic difference, it is hard to overstate the degree to which Kuwait was permanently altered by the Iraqi invasion, and made stronger in some unforeseen ways. Many of the expatriates who fled never returned, and those

who had the desire to return found it much harder to do so, as Kuwait had tightened its immigration policies. The opposite phenomenon took place in Bahrain; from the early years of independence, Bahraini royalty has naturalized Sunni Muslims to bolster support for their sect.

Today, many in the Bahraini Army are originally from Pakistan, Jordan, and Yemen. To make matters even more precarious, the Al Khalifa has hired mercenaries from its allies, most notably Saudi Arabia. Consequently, Shia Bahrainis, facing soaring unemployment rates, found that they were being turned away from military service due to distrust from the Sunni royal family. This Bahraini approach stood in contrast to the Kuwaiti policy of freely admitting the bidoon into the army when Kuwaiti citizens were unwilling to join – both strategies gave rise to their own sets of problems further down the line, as will be seen in Chapter Three.

Kuwait and Bahrain are both hereditary emirates, where the constitution confirms the Emir – or King, in the case of Bahrain – as the hereditary ruler. So far in Kuwait, the institution of dynastic monarchism appears to be compatible with the gradual rise of a parliament. The Al Sabah have allowed room for political participation, incorporating opposition parties into governmental bodies, and "today [Kuwait] is farthest ahead (of the Arabian Peninsula monarchies) in adapting dynastic monarchism in a more liberal direction" (Herb 1999, 87). Unlike Kuwait, Bahrain has no political parties and few democratic institutions. In 1975, the Bahraini government suspended the National Assembly, only ratified two years earlier in the 1973 Constitution. It was never reinstated. Additionally, in Bahrain, human rights abuses are more flagrant, and impunity remains a problem; security forces are rarely punished for human rights violations.

c. Terms and Measurement

I measure citizenship in terms of several concrete factors: holding a passport, receiving welfare (in these cases, this includes healthcare, pensions, monetary grants, food subsidies, property, fully funded education, and the ability to sponsor foreigners[2]), and being able to vote. Both Kuwait and Bahrain's monarchies use citizenship as a reward and punishment system to achieve political authority. However, social modes of citizenship also come into play. For instance, native citizens may be opposed to non-native born residents driving, wearing the traditional national dress, or marrying female Gulf citizens.

I define the bidoon as stateless people residing within the boundaries of a country who do not have passports from any country. The bidoon are Kuwait's resident stateless population, but they exist in smaller numbers in Bahrain as well (most bidoon residing there have already been naturalized). Kuwait has over a hundred thousand bidoon living within its borders, and with just over a million citizens in Kuwait, this is not an insignificant number. The word comes from the Arabic phrase, '*bidoon jinsiyy*a,' or 'without nationality,' from which the term bidoon (without) derives. The population is defined by its lack of citizenship, though the vast majority of bidoon claim that they are citizens of Kuwait whose ancestors were either illiterate or transient nomads who did not see any use in obtaining nationality upon the state's independence. On the other hand, the monarchy believes that their bidoon population is mostly made up of Arab migrants (e.g. Palestinians, Jordanians, or Iraqis) who destroyed their identification papers in order to receive the more lucrative Arab Gulf passports – Kuwaiti passports being among the most valuable in the world.

[2] This will be explored in Chapter Two.

The term '*bidoon'* is not to be confused with bedouin (or *badu* in Arabic), which refers to nomads who used to reside in the deserts of the Gulf but have since settled down in the cities. Some bedouins may be bidoon, but not all are. The '*hathar'* are Kuwaitis whose forefathers lived in Kuwait City before the launch of the oil era (1946) and worked as sailors, merchants, or pearl-divers. *Hathar* are often seen as 'dichotomous' to the *badu*, a word that ethnographers and scholars of Kuwait, Anh Nga Longva (2006) and Farah Al-Nakib (2014), both use to demonstrate the tension between the two groups.

d. Theoretical Understandings of Citizenship

In the early twentieth century, citizenship was a novel concept in the sheikhdoms of Arabia, which were never destinations of immigration in the sense that this phrase is used in the modern Western convention (i.e., permanent movement from one place to another). However, this quickly changed with the discovery of oil and the rise of the allocative welfare state.

Western conventions project citizenship as a fundamental right. Or, more accurately, citizenship is seen as the right to have access to rights, in that it provides a concrete political status which in turn establishes all other legal rights. In most states, citizenship and its acquisition are typically associated with an increase in one's ability to participate in the political sphere of a given country. However, Kuwaiti and Bahraini leaders distribute citizenship with opposite goals in mind; in a way that bolsters support for their families, religious sects, and political goals, and to silence those who would oppose them and their leadership. It is vital that we come to understand this use of citizenship as a tool for quiescence, as it has played an essential part in keeping Kuwait's House of Sabah and Bahrain's House of Khalifa in power since 1756 and 1783, respectively. Farah Al-Nakib, Benedict Anderson, Anh Nga Longva,

Ahiwa Ong, Mary Ann Tétreault and Haya Al-Mughni, and Neha Vora have all developed and discussed different understandings of citizenship as they may be formulated and experienced in the Gulf Peninsula.

In *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora*, Vora focuses on the ways in which Dubai tries to make migration an impermanent experience through laws, bureaucratic infrastructure, by insisting on temporary renewable work contracts for all (even those who have had long careers in the Emirate), and by making it difficult for second generation immigrants to remain there once they reach adulthood. Non-citizens, Indians included, are framed as temporary when in reality, the history of the Indian diaspora in Dubai is as long as that of any ruling dynasty in the Gulf region. Vora dubs this phenomenon 'permanent temporariness.' Her research is motivated by the long Indian presence in Dubai and its nuances, commonly extending through generations of presence. She finds a plethora of civil societies, traditions, and an entire culture surrounding Indian-ness in the Gulf and existing distinctly from Gulf culture and its attendant barriers. Vora calls this a 'community without citizenship**.'** She mentions the lore of the naturalized Indian who has become Emirati, but she leaves Dubai having never met one. Thus, while the boundaries of citizenship on paper may be determined by one's passport, the Indian population of Dubai belongs to the Emirate in its own distinct way; separate from the native population, but very much present.

Non-citizens in the Gulf are reduced to being necessary economic actors who remain temporary and are never given access to political rights nor the abundant material benefits that come with citizenship. Vora believes that it is from the exceptions to the norm that we can learn the most about the functioning of citizenship and develop more nuanced and critical theories of politics and belonging. Ahiwa Ong similarly writes about the drastic difference in status between

elite ‘astronaut’ migrants who hold multiple passports and can comfortably travel the world and navigate the exclusions and laws of a nation state to their benefit, and the low-wage migrants (and refugees) who are unable to do so. Ong uses the term ‘flexible citizenship’ to explain “the strategies and effects of mobile managers, technocrats, and professionals seeking to both circumvent *and* benefit from different nation-state regimes by selecting different sites for investments, work, and family relocation” (Ong 1999, 112). In Kuwait and Bahrain, these migrants are in the minority. Instead, across the Gulf, the institution of *kafala* has become a tool for the oppression and exploitation of migrant workers by Gulf nationals.

Vora writes that the “Gulf State projects of nation-building and governance are interested in maintaining rigid parameters of citizenship and the exclusion of non-citizens from national imaginaries” (2013, 8). This calls to mind Benedict Anderson’s notion of ‘imagined communities;’ Anderson uses this phrase to describe nations where the members “will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each [citizen] lived the image of their communities” (1983, 6). Anderson’s understanding of citizen belonging as a socially constructed community can be used to describe the type of ethno-centric citizenship observed in the peninsula today. The images of idealized Gulf Arab citizens in spaces where nationalism is promoted (i.e. in the region’s heritage sites, museums, newspapers, and history books) are those of the Sunni *hathar* who are descended from nomadic ancestors. This elides the long South Asian and Persian presence that also exists within Gulf society.

Anh Nga Longva believes that the Gulf States in general and Kuwaitis in particular have created a niche brand of nationalism through what Longva terms an ‘ethnocracy.’ Borrowing a term first used by Ali Mazrui and initially applied to 1970s Uganda under Idi Amin, an ethnocracy is “a political system based on kinship, real or presumed” (Mazrui 1975). The term

perfectly encapsulates the tendency of Gulf elites to "posit their own physical characteristics and cultural norms as the essence of the nation over which they rule, thus narrowing its definition and excluding those within the polity who do not exhibit the same characteristics or embrace the same norms" (Longva 2005, 119).

In this way, an ethnocracy is a nation built on a pure and uniform ethnic community, as opposed to the modern (post-World War II) Western liberal understandings of a nation as an amalgamation of people with equal rights, civic duties, and national obligations. Political participation is inextricably determined by ethnicity in the Gulf, and those who share the ethnicity and same tale of migration and common descent as the ruling family are considered the elite. In an allocative state, where the nation's prime role is to distribute benefits and ensure well-being, expectations from citizens are wholly different.

Citizenship and belonging in the Gulf is also inextricably based on patriarchal conceptualizations of the family, specifically that the nation exists as *Al-Usra Al-Wahida*, the single and united family. Tétreault and Al-Mughni write that this image was first promoted in Kuwait in the early 1970s to bring about national cohesion. The term powerfully invokes "mythic idealizations of the old tribal families of the Arabian Peninsula, in which everyone took care of everyone else, and all lived securely under the protective wing of the family patriarch" (Tétreault and Al-Mughni 1995, 407). Kinship and familial imagery are so prominent in the political sphere that rulers in the Gulf are framed as father figures of the national family unit. In Kuwait, children refer to the Emir as *Baba Sabah* – the father of the Kuwaiti nation and society. In this way, blood ties and pure lineages are seen as indispensable to an ethnocratic monarchy's legitimacy. This also gives rise to a distinctly gendered ideal of citizenship, and of who is allowed to be a citizen. This gendered notion of citizenship is explored in Chapter Three.

Kuwaiti scholar Farah Al-Nakib similarly writes about the importance of national imagery in delineating who should – and who should not – be a citizen. According to her, citizenship "redefined a Kuwaiti national's relationship with the state and with the wider national community. A singular and increasingly exclusive national community was meant to replace and in fact subordinate to the nation-state previous loyalties… this purification of Kuwaiti communal identity significantly undermined Kuwait's cosmopolitan tradition, and disguised its origins as a society of immigrants" (Al-Nakib 2016, 179). Kuwait and Bahrain's cosmopolitan histories will be discussed further in Chapter One, which shows how religious sect, place of origin, class status, and tribe all created multi-layered forms of belonging and an array of loyalties that existed alongside and often clashed with notions of loyalty to one's current homeland.

My own theoretical understanding of citizenship draws from each of these views but is especially focused on melding together Vora and Longva's interpretations. Vora argues that foreign migrants exist in their own distinctly formulated communities, while Longva observes that Gulf societies delineate their citizenry based exclusively on ethnicity and exclude those who do not share their common descent with that of the ruling class. Both interpretations fit together perfectly to create a whole; one can belong to a community within a particular perimeter and yet not be a beneficiary of the geographical nation's bounty. Non-citizens are essential to the functioning and governance of the Gulf but are excluded from the allocative state and collectively subordinated as a distinct class. When the majority of residents in a state are non-citizens with no path to naturalization due to their ethnic lineage, one would expect these ethnicities to form communities and experience forms of belonging that are distinct from the corresponding Gulf Arab spheres thereof.

Citizenship is used as a political device on a global level, and the exploration of this phenomenon has significant implications for the political and social evolution of many countries. The Gulf provides a rich space for the exploration of these multiple forms and conceptions of citizenship and belonging. There also has not been sufficient exploration of the unique and central role of citizenship policies as a tool for political governance in the *rentier* states of the Arabian Peninsula, which are mainly concerned with the collection of rents and their allocation.

e. Driving Questions

The questions I am interested in answering are: 1. What affects these countries' change in policies and laws (or their application) regarding citizenship? 2. How does the ethnic distribution of the resident population affect a country's change in policies and laws regarding citizenship rights? and 3. How do oil revenues factor in in terms of the implementation of policies and laws regarding citizenship rights?

In Kuwait, the external threat of Ba'athist Iraq led to a cohesiveness of the population and an expansion of rights for citizens. At the end of the First Gulf War in 1991, Emir Jaber Al Sabah made significant concessions to the Kuwaiti people by expanding democracy in the aftermath of the Jeddah reconciliation meetings. After the Iraqi invasion, Kuwait's bidoon population stopped being recorded as 'Kuwaiti' in the government's census data and was grouped in the category 'Non-Kuwaiti' instead. This change in classification was indicative of the government's new fears of threats to national security posed by those residing within its borders. Simultaneously, most immigrants fled when the occupation began, leaving behind a small cohort of Kuwaitis who formed strong ties to their nationality and land through their shared experiences of suffering through the invasion. Bahrain, meanwhile, is stuck in a proxy

conflict between Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shia Iran, which has the opposite effect of dividing the country along sectarian lines, rather than uniting it.

Kuwait and Bahrain both have sizeable minority groups, but whereas in Kuwait it is the Shia who are the minority and thus are not perceived as a potential threat by the ruling family, it is the opposite in Bahrain. If the ruling family is a part of the minority religion in the country (i.e. Bahrain's Shia majority and the Sunni Al Khalifa), or if they are not seen as the *hathar* (merchant families who historically lived in the city centers and formed mutually beneficial ties with the ruling elite), then citizenship policy is manipulated by the government to favor and bolster the ruling family's specific faction.

Finally, Kuwait likely has a few decades of profitable oil production left. On the other hand, Bahrain's oil reserves were tapped into before the other Persian Gulf nations and were much smaller in size than those of neighboring states. The island was projected to deplete its oil reserves by as early as 2025, and consequently expected to face an imminent, incredibly disruptive economic restructuring (Ulrichsen 2015, 77). Recent new shale discoveries in the Khaleej Al Bahrain Basin are the largest discovered since the 1930s, and could reportedly delay oil depletion by several decades, helping "trim Bahrain's deficit, [though it likely] wouldn't elevate it into the top ranks of global producers" (Mahdi and Sergie 2018).

While Bahrain waits to see how much of its new reservoir will be available for export, the price of extraction of existing Bahraini oil increases, meaning that the state has fewer welfare handouts readily available for its citizen population. In January of 2016, the Bahraini government cut subsidies on gasoline, raising the price by sixty percent. Another increase of twenty-five percent was implemented in January of 2018. Since subsidies and handouts are a trademark of the rentier system by which monarchies secure quiescence (Beblawi 1987), this will

likely cause the Al Khalifa monarchy to continue – and potentially expand – its trend of revoking the citizenship of those who speak out against the government. After all, the practice of citizenship revocation is not only politically beneficial for the Al Khalifa; it is also cost-effective.

f. Islam as a Source of Legitimacy?

For the purposes of this study, I wish to pursue a different take on Arab and Middle Eastern societies, given the spike of academic interest in Islam following the attacks on September 11th, 2001. While the Gulf States base many of their laws (and punishments for disobeying them) on Sharia, nationality law is a separate issue in which Sharia law is not used as a template. Statecraft in terms of citizenship takes place entirely outside of the religious sphere in these countries. However, religion does come into play as a *political* tool.

Religious discrimination based on sect is vital in Bahrain's citizenship regime, where the religion of the Shia population is constructed as an ethnic difference.[3] By framing Bahrain's Shia as a different ethnic group, the Al Khalifa monarchy taps into memories of the not-so-long-ago past where Persians were seen as a threat, thereby classifying the population as Bahrainis with allegiances to a foreign enemy. Iran lies only 120 miles to the north of the islands, and many Bahrainis trace not only their ancestry, but also their religious loyalty, to Iran. A significant part of the population looks to Iran's Supreme Leader as not only a spiritual guide, but also a political figure.

This issue is exacerbated by the fact that Bahraini royals give residencies to Sunni Muslims disproportionately to bolster support for their sect. By delegitimizing and disenfranchising Shia Bahrainis in this way, the Al Khalifa bolsters its own legitimacy as a Sunni

[3] Religious considerations are also a factor in Kuwait, though not as central as in Bahrain.

royal power, aligned with the other Gulf monarchies. This exclusionary policy is in line with Hobsbawm's assertion that religion is amongst the best tools for creating nationalism. He writes that "the nationalism of Arab countries today is so identified with Islam… this [is not] surprising. Religion is an ancient and well-tried method of establishing communion through common practice and a sort of brotherhood between people who otherwise have nothing much in common" (1990, 68).

The obvious exception to the relative secularism of monarchs and their practical approach to religion is found with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The ruler of Saudi Arabia is also tasked with being 'the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques,' and so enjoys an additional buffer of religious legitimacy to counteract local instability that arises from disapproval of the Saud family's policies and practices. Saudi Arabia's status as a closed, conservative society makes it able to withstand risk factors exceptionally well. By using their idiosyncratic model of political Islam and repressive rule, supplemented by hefty monetary incentives and the legitimacy garnered by activities surrounding the Hajj pilgrimage, the Al Saud have, thus far, been successful in curbing social unrest within their borders, and stand alone as an exception to the relatively religiously moderate Emirs surrounding them.

g. Limitations

> "Many of the nations in the Gulf have a reputation, partly deserved, for being inhospitable to social science research… combined with the fact that few of the Gulf States release basic demographic data concerning the scope and constitution of the foreign populations at work there, the handful of scholars who remain focused on transnationalism in the region have struggled to construct a basic foundation from which research might build." Andrew Gardner, *City of Strangers: Gulf Migration and the Indian Community in Bahrain* (2010, 10)

Accurate data, particularly on expatriate population percentages, was often unavailable or tough to corroborate in this study. There are several interrelated reasons for this: often, the sending – and sometimes the receiving – countries lack the bureaucratic capacity to gather this data. The sending countries are unaware of the exact number of people who depart for employment opportunities in the Gulf since they are usually recruited by private companies.[4] Similarly, once foreigners arrive in the Gulf, there is no guarantee that often understaffed local embassies will be aware of their arrival, since the *kafala* system has privatized the business of hiring and placing domestic workers in Gulf households and laborers on Gulf job-sites.

In the same vein, the existence of formal and informal migration channels in the Gulf means it is often impossible to determine whether a single laborer has arrived to take a job, or whether they have brought their whole family with them. These calculations are further obscured by the practice of Kuwaiti and Bahraini demographic data holders to only release the aggregate numbers of foreign populations. For example, instead of releasing how many Indians or Bangladeshis arrive in the country over the course of one year, data will only be available for how many Asians arrived that year. Thus, although undocumented migration is rare in most of the Gulf countries (Gardner 2010, 165), basic demographic data showing who exactly makes up the majority of the population in these countries does not exist.

[4] In the past decade, labor-sending countries have improved their means of recording their migrating populations.

This vagueness shows the receiving countries' insecurities about the foreign populations outnumbering their own citizenry, and one easily concludes that this inaccuracy is intentional. Just as Kuwait and Bahrain's heritage projects and national museums place foreign migrants firmly in the economic sphere, but lock them out of the social one, statistics do the same; information on remittances and flows of money between migrant workers in the Gulf to their home countries are incredibly well documented.

Another limitation encountered in this work has been the dearth of analysis of historical accounts by native residents of the Gulf when compared to the readily available travel journals of explorers, which are too often colored by orientalist imagery. Fuccaro writes that "historians have often been discouraged by the apparent 'exceptionalism' of the historical experience of the Gulf coast... The scarcity of local records and the seemingly 'obfuscated' historical memory of Arab Gulf societies have undoubtedly played a major role, as if oil modernization had swept away urban history along with the traditional urban landscapes" (2009, 5). Fuccaro blames the modernization paradigm of the fifties and sixties for the lack of interest in the histories of Gulf cities, with prominent writers such as Samuel Huntington suggesting that all modernization follows a similar trajectory (1979). The evolution of the state in these Gulf countries did not fit into the Western model of development, and so this evolution was instead portrayed as a total break with the societies of the pre-oil Gulf.

The existence of the contemporary Gulf is seen as an exception to the norm, not just when Gulf States are placed within the Western model of modernization, but also when they are placed adjacent to the rest of the Middle East. As Gardner notes, "rather than view the contemporary Gulf as an opportunity to redirect Middle East studies, many scholars seem content with the ongoing marginalization of the Gulf States in the literature. Study of the Gulf

States remains overshadowed by work on the Levant and North Africa, and what analyses of the Gulf do exist are dominated by political scientists, economists, and security specialists, all to the exclusion of a robust and detailed analysis of everyday life in the cities of the Gulf" (2010, 11).

Finally, rentierism in its traditional form has also hindered a comprehensive understanding of the Gulf's trajectory. After modernization literature's influence faded in the 1970s, the focus shifted to yet another broad hegemonic template, reframing the developmental process as inextricably linked to external oil revenues. Fuccaro sums this up succinctly in the introduction to her ethnography, writing, "what we often miss… is the historical perspective which should underpin the study of oil development… This has led scholars to view politics and economies through the lens of global processes and thus often to underplay historical and regional securities." (Fuccaro 2009, 6). Today, one cannot fully explore the Gulf States without addressing the monolith of rentier state theory and the political assumptions that are stereotypically associated with oil economies. This study attempts to shift the focus to those historical, regional, and local perspectives, making meaning from them.

CHAPTER ONE: FROM PRE- TO POST- OIL GULF

> "Historical studies in the [Persian Gulf] region have been based almost solely on British records or the often fanciful tales of colorful explorers." Frederick F. Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar* (1997, 1)

In the nineteenth century, the Arabian Peninsula consisted of a complex web of merchants, pearl divers, ship owners, tribesmen, and countless immigrants. Borders were permeable and ever-changing, and bedouins flowed in and out according to weather patterns, settled populations came and left following their fortunes, and transnational relations were fluid. Even today's 'original inhabitants,' including the Bani Utub tribesmen who came to rule in Kuwait and Bahrain, emigrated from the Najd region in what is today Saudi Arabia. The legends and myths of this epic migration have become a part of the exclusionary nature of citizenship in the Gulf, especially in Kuwait. Today, natives whose ancestors were a part of the migrating caravans take pride in this fact while they simultaneously criticize the influx of new migrants, unaware of the dissonance in such statements. It is thus important that one understand the political history of the Gulf as it stood when its inhabitants were migratory and borders were fluid, since it is the backdrop to – and the foundation upon which – the Gulf rulers later based their citizenship policies and bases of inclusion and exclusion.

Sedentary and migratory populations co-existed before, during, and after colonial involvement. The oil booms and foreign assistance that sustained the urban development and advancement of Kuwait and Bahrain are not usually studied as a part of this continuous thread running from the past into our present. Instead, the commercial extraction of oil in the Middle East is identified as a break with the past and the start of an entirely new system in the region. To counteract this, many who research the peninsula go to great lengths to emphasize that the evolution of the Gulf should not be made to fit into an already established template of Western

development patterns. Anderson, for example, urges scholars to delve deeper into the comparative history of the Gulf States, rather than trying to squeeze nations into a pre-existing framework or evolutionary schema (1991). Fuccaro, meanwhile, writes that the longevity of monarchical regimes in the Middle East is "best understood as a reflection of the vagaries of historical accident… and the imperatives of historical process" (2009, 15).

The Gulf is not all that exceptional, but it provides a space for the exploration of multiple forms and conceptions of citizenship and belonging. While national identity later developed in these countries to prioritize and reward the original migrating tribes that arrived with today's ruling dynasties, it is crucial to keep in mind that these tribes were migrants themselves. The myth that migration from Asia and Africa was a product of the discovery of oil is just that – a fabricated legend meant to reinforce the primacy and legitimacy of the ruling families and current elite as the original settlers, and by extension the ones who deserve the largest share of the country's oil wealth. In this chapter, I hope to demonstrate that there were multiple milieus existing side by side in the Arabian Peninsula – most notably, some residents were oriented towards the Indian Ocean, while others looked to the desert. The Gulf Peninsula has been home to South Asians and Persian diasporic communities for centuries, and their presence today is not something that is in danger of undermining the culture of the Arab Gulf States, because, quite simply, these communities have existed there as long as the states themselves.

While the start of the oil era was undoubtedly a significant period which brought about a spike in migration, it did not overhaul established hierarchies by default. In the same vein, colonial intervention did not occur in the absence of indigenous influence, as some may assume. Many of the tribal leaders that British imperialists ultimately funded and backed politically were already prominent figures in the region – for example, in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar, the Al

Sabah, Al Khalifa, and Al Thani were already well-established, wealthy merchant families in their respective regions. Throughout the nineteenth century, all the Gulf ports were brought into the reigning idea of *Pax Britannica* to varying degrees, whereby British policies favored the growth of port settlements, stabilized the boundaries of tribal influence across the region, and lent political support to rulers in exchange for their military quiescence.

Britain's Treaties of Peace in the 1820s gave "international recognition to the rulers and their families, and thereby reinforced their positions as the hereditary leaders of their respective sheikhdoms" (Gardner 2010, 38). Feuding sheikhs gained external recognition as state leaders for the first time, and they pledged to no longer pursue territorial expansion outside of their realms. The Government of India was now tasked with the conduct of the Gulf ports' foreign affairs. In this way, Britain's treaties, and the legitimacy they conferred on the Arab tribes who were ruling at that moment marked the end of the Gulf's long history of geographically fluid tribal and political structures.

With its superior military strength and the vast reach of its empire, Britain indeed could have appointed rulers in the Gulf sheikhdoms had it wished. However, at this early stage of involvement in the peninsula, the British had no desire to rule the region directly; they merely wanted to secure a clear trade route to India and avoid unnecessary conflict while doing so. Thus, the rise of the Gulf's class of political elites was mostly organic. Crucially, as will be shown in this chapter, once Britain's trading companies became involved in the Persian Gulf, territorial claims of the tribal lords and hierarchies of the merchant elites in the region were "essentially frozen" (Neumann 2013). Henceforth, the British colonial administration acted as a stabilizing force to preserve tribal leaders' power.

The imperial relations between Gulf leaders and the British reveal much about the heterogeneity of identities in the pre-oil Gulf. First and foremost, the 'locals' were by no means cohesive and compliant with Britain's presence. Some tribal leaders were anti-colonial and actively resisted the British, others were forced to comply with Indian and British demands, and others still were supportive of and friendly with Indian merchants and colonial officials. There was no united 'Kuwait' or 'Bahrain' to speak of. The pearl diving and merchant trading coastal peoples lived very different lives from the bedouins occupying the interior. Bedouins were often enmeshed in violent skirmishes and conflicts with the settled Gulf Arab merchants who often grew wealthy at the expense of these tribes, many of whom were, in turn, indebted to the money-lending merchant class. Gulf sheikhs had to deal with these populations' competing interests as well as face pressures from outside tribes and governments. However, these longstanding connections are mostly omitted from publicly promoted discourses surrounding Gulf national identity.

Ideas of rupture or continuity characterize interpretations of the Gulf during the advent of the oil era. Gulf specialists strive to connect pre-oil policies and practices with post-oil approaches, while those more interested in political economy focus on oil as a break with the past. While evidence can be found for both schools of thought, changes wrought by oil do indeed have their roots in the pre-oil social hierarchies and political practices of the past. The one exception lies in understandings of citizenship: while ethnicity was hardly a consideration in who could belong to a specific state pre-oil, exclusion based on ethnicity dominated the post-oil environment.

a. Framing the Rise of Dynastic Monarchism in Kuwait and Bahrain

i. Kuwait

> "At one level, nothing was easier to track down and describe in Kuwait than change, because so much of it consisted of external features… At another level, continuity seemed to prevail. I would suggest that, as elsewhere in the world, what we see in Kuwait are, more often than not, situations of *changing continuity.*" Anh Nga Longva, *Walls Built on Sand: Migration, Exclusion, and Society in Kuwait* (1997, 190)

The Al Sabah had the advantage of being a part of the original migrating tribe to Kuwait, the Bani Utub, and thus were also at an advantage to create an epic tale of migration – echoes of which can be found in nationalist Kuwaiti literature today. A common saying in the country is "Kuwait is the Al Sabah, and the Al Sabah is Kuwait," exemplifying how integral the Al Sabah family and its leadership is to the state (Zahlan 1998, 56). Correspondingly, the State of Kuwait's official website's account of how the Al Sabah came to rule the country reads as follows: "the Al Otob tribe [*sic*] fled to Kuwait away from the terrible drought which perished the Arab Peninsula. They chose Sabah Bin Jaber as their governor in 1756… Since 1756, fourteen rulers from the Al Sabah family ruled Kuwait." This account, though simplistic, is factually sound; The Al Sabah were indeed chosen by the people, *but* they were chosen by the other Utub families to administer the affairs of the town while other members of the tribe took care of trade, which at that time was the most prestigious and profitable activity.

Because of their position, the Al Sabah were legally prohibited from participating in maritime trading activities and depended on their merchant constituents for their incomes. This fiscal reliance is what made the Kuwaiti system of checks-and-balances extraordinarily successful and led to genuine accountability. It can be argued that this mutual dependency lies behind Kuwait's unique political stability today, in comparison with the other Gulf States. As Longva writes, in the case of Kuwait this relationship between the ruler and his constituents was

developed before the Western notion of democracy was imported and is "the reason why the idea of parliamentary politics has survived there in spite of the odds" (1997, 22).

Before oil extraction, Kuwait operated and participated in three overlapping cultural and trade spheres. The first was the Northern Gulf sphere that linked Kuwait to Iraq, with the ancient southern city of Basra as its administrative and commercial capital; Basra was Kuwait's most important market center. While the culture of Southern Iraq was almost exclusively sedentary, Central Arabia, the second cultural sphere to which Kuwait belonged, was entirely nomadic. The Bani Utub were members of the larger 'Aneza tribe from what is the city of Najd today, and the Kuwaiti founders maintained close kinship with the Central Arabian bedouins. Finally, Kuwait's position at the top of the Gulf meant that it was a central port in the "world of mercantile exchange organized around the Indian Ocean, with ramifications all the way to Ceylon in the east and Zanzibar in the south" (Longva 1997, 21). In this way, Kuwait straddled the desert and the sea, respectively turning to one for its culture, and the other for its prosperity.

As will be further examined later in this chapter, Bahrain differed from Kuwait in its outlook – Kuwait was deeply tribal and far less cosmopolitan than its island neighbor. Indicative of this is a 1930s British Political Resident in the Gulf's report back to the British Government in India that explains:

> "It may be asked why we should not allow Bahrain to be run as, for instance, Kuwait is, as an Arab city on Arab lines. The answer is that the population of the two cities is wholly dissimilar. The population of Kuwait is largely bedouin: their outlook is towards the desert… the population of Bahrain is heterogeneous and divided by racial and religious difference… Bahrain is a purely commercial center; its outlook is towards Bombay" (Fuccaro 2009, 55).

Local residents and visiting foreigners alike viewed these two antipodal ways of life (sedentary versus nomadic) as involving fundamentally different values. Among the most basic differences was each group's ideas on trade activities; the settled communities viewed the

practices of buying and selling as essential to their economic and social lives, while the bedouins looked upon trade with much contempt and resorted to buying and selling only when they had no other option. Instead, desert raids were at the core of the bedouins' economic structure, and the settled Arabs lived in fear of these onslaughts. In this way, much of the group identification and solidarity among the town dwellers came from a need to protect themselves against the ever-looming dangers of these raids. One such incursion – the memory of which is inscribed in Kuwaitis' memories and history books – is the 1920 Battle of Jahra.

Until the 1990 invasion by Saddam, 1920 was arguably the most significant year in Kuwait's history. Even today, the Battle of Jahra plays a critical role in the way Kuwait classifies its 'original citizens.' In the winter of 1920, amid the Kuwait-Najd War between Kuwaiti townspeople and a loose coalition of Saudi tribal militias, approximately four thousand Ikhwan troops rode to Kuwait, sent by Ibn Saud. The bedouins were stopped just outside of the city walls by a Kuwaiti force less than half their size (Al-Nakib 2016, 24).[5]

Had the fort fallen, Kuwait would likely have been incorporated into what is now Saudi Arabia. After the battle, the town dwellers came together to build a new wall to keep future attackers at bay. This collective effort was memorialized as a heroic tale of the first time Kuwaitis came together in the face of external threats, and created a sense of belonging and membership to their community and, most importantly, to their land – a feeling distinctly at odds with nomadic traditions. This encroachment "saw the birth of an explicit Kuwaiti 'national' awareness by creating a nucleus of hard-core citizenry encompassing those who had taken part in the events and their descendants" (Longva 1997, 24).

[5] Numbers vary depending on the source.

Due to skirmishes similar to the Battle of Jahra, it became apparent as early as the end of the nineteenth century that if the tiny town of Kuwait was to survive, it would have to align itself with either the Ottomans in Iraq or the British, which were increasingly present in the southern Gulf waters. In 1899, Mubarak the Great, the only Emir in Kuwait's history to come to power by force (by killing his two brothers) signed an exclusive agreement with Britain whereby the latter would assist Kuwait in case of any aggression. In exchange, Mubarak pledged not to cede or sell any of his territories without Britain's consent.

The survival of the Al Sabah was perceived as necessary to the preservation of British collaboration with Kuwait. In the early years of involvement, the Foreign Office issued a statement that emphasized, "our best chance of protecting our economic interests lies in the preservation of an independent Kuwait, under the present regime if possible, and the continuance of co-operation" (Smith 1999, 136). Imperial officials thus recognized that installing a ruler against the wishes of his relatives and subjects was asking for trouble, as they would have to protect him against them; a costly commitment. All the empire wanted was peace, which was indeed easier to achieve by consolidating the legitimacy of already well-established notables than by starting from scratch.

In conjunction, Kuwait's position in a natural harbor of the Arabian Gulf was a strategic location which gave the Kuwaiti political elites significant leverage over the British. Perhaps the most discernible example of this is Sheikh Mubarak's exchange of safe anchorage for the British in return for their protection of Kuwait. By giving up a plot of land that was not legally his in 1903, Mubarak successfully received recognition of the state and its boundaries *as well as* British assurance that the nation belonged to him and his heirs. As illustrated by this, "the very

act of soliciting protection suggested that Mubarak was an independent leader" (Dickson 1956, 151), not a puppet chief strategically placed in power by the colonizers, as some would believe.

Later, "by supplying weapons, intruding into tribal politics, and being an example to his peers, Mubarak sharply accelerated the destabilization of the region" (Anscombe 1997, 142). Most notably, Mubarak invaded Najd in 1901 in what was thought to be the first step in a land-grab, and supplied British guns to Ibn Saud to use against the Ottomans in 1905 (Longva 1997, 136). In light of the fact that Britain only desired a peaceful Arabian Peninsula, we can see that Mubarak's acts of aggression actively go against this wish. His independent behavior demonstrates the autonomy and ability of Gulf leaders to pursue their own path to power.

ii. Bahrain

> "One could… take the ebb and flow of peoples and powers across Bahrain's shores – from the Mesopotamian chapter lost to history, through the arrival of the Greeks, of Islam, of the Portuguese, of the Omanis, of the Ottomans, of the Persians, and of the maritime Arab tribes of the Gulf's western shores – as evidence enough that change, rather than stability, was the norm for islands between two seas. Instead, the arrival of the British, the legitimacy they conferred on the Khalifa family, and the continuity of those provisions suggest that it was the constancy of change that came to an end with Britain's Treaty of Peace." Andrew Gardner, *City of Strangers: Gulf Migration and the Indian Community in Bahrain* (2010, 47)

Bahrain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs website states that after being conquered by the Omanis in 1487, the Portuguese in 1521, and then the Persians in 1602, "in 1783, The Al Khalifa family arrived from Kuwait and drove out the Persians. The Al Khalifas [*sic*] rule the land benevolently to this day… [Bahrain has] been blessed with one of the most liberal cultural heritages worldwide, making it, throughout the ages, a safe home for ethnically diverse inhabitants."[6] This official story is misguided at best. In reality, many would argue that the Al

[6] As will be discussed in later chapters, Bahrain has recently been less than a 'safe home' for its diverse inhabitants, despite what its website suggests.

Khalifa were as much outsiders as the Omanis, the Portuguese, or the Persians. In 1782, perceiving weakness in Persia's position in Bahrain, the Khalifa branch of the Sunni Bani Utub descended on the island by sea. The Utub tribe plundered the market town of Manama and took it under their control. Before this, the town was already a "transnational hodgepodge of peoples" (Gardner 2010, 33).

Moreover, the Khalifa did not rule uninterrupted. In 1801, a twelve-year-old boy, the son of Omani ruler Sayyid Sultan, governed Bahrain (Onley 2004, 44). Sheikh Issa, who ruled from 1869 to 1932, was the first of the Khalifa to rule without Persian assistance. Additionally, from the beginning of the Al Khalifa family's reign, there was little harmony between the sons and nephews of the original ruler, Ahmad the Conqueror. The political history of Bahrain in the nineteenth century was primarily a sequence of different attempts of aspiring successors to seize power (Zahlan 1998, 98).

Additionally, due partly to its better agricultural conditions, Manama stood alone in its history of settled populations, different from the other port cities of the Gulf coast which were controlled by nomadic dynasties of bedouin descent. While there were few tribal settlers in what is now Bahrain, there was a centuries-old Shia population with substantial economic and political clout dispersed in the agricultural areas. Kuwait, in contrast, was a new port which had emerged out of the tribal scramble of the tumultuous eighteenth century. In Kuwait and the other Gulf States, "large segments of their populations maintained a clannish tradition and strong loyalties to the ruling families, features which were not so prominent in the socio-political landscape of Manama" (Fuccaro 2009, 70).

That Britain, by way of its imperial headquarters in Bombay, forged what it dubbed a 'special relationship' with Bahrain only served to accentuate the island's cosmopolitanism.

British involvement in Bahrain started early, when the British Resident in Bushehr established official relations with the Al Khalifa clan in 1816. Soon after his visit to the islands, the British appointed the first Indian Native agent in Manama. In 1861 Muhammad Bin Khalifa was recognized as the independent Ruler of Bahrain under British protection.

While the British administration was present elsewhere, the degree of involvement by the British in Bahrain outpaced imperial efforts among the other fledgling states on the coast of the Persian Gulf. British authority in places like Kuwait was superficial, while "in Bahrain, the British became involved in the minutiae of everyday internal affairs" (Gardner 2010, 40). Kuwait did not occupy as important or prominent a place as Bahrain in the political geography of the British empire, and it can be argued that Kuwait's "relatively weak imperial connections had a strong impact on the formation of national identities" (Fuccaro 2009, 222). For example, while Mubarak Al Sabah was able to surreptitiously deal with and manipulate both the Ottoman and British rivals in the early twentieth century, Bahrain's leaders were directly in contact with the British administration and had no such option. The British administration was so involved in Bahraini affairs that they also dealt directly with individual, non-royal actors such as merchants and migrants. The Al Khalifa, effectively sharing their burden of leadership with the British imperialists, were thus never able to centralize to the same degree as the Al Sabah.

The fact that Bahrain was the only principality of the Arab coast to acquire a modern colonial administration before the discovery of oil is also a testament to the strategic and economic significance of the islands during and after World War I. In 1914, the Government of India used Manama as a base for military operations to protect the advance of the British Indian army towards Mesopotamia, a region then under Ottoman control. During the Second World War, the United States established the Fifth Fleet Naval Base in Manama, which is still in use

today, and was crucial in the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. It is important to note that oil interests and the prospects of oil exportation had little to do with these strategic military decisions. In this way, British imperialism and state-building in the broader Gulf region took a mostly administrative, and less political form in the Arabian Peninsula than it did farther east.

Yet, particularly in Bahrain, the exceptional longevity of British informal empire (which lasted for 150 years, until 1971) "was instrumental in maintaining the urban and tribal elites of the pre-oil era in power as the natural leaders of their populations" (Fuccaro 2009, 5). In this way, the political history of these states, and the stability that was ensured and entrusted to the monarchies by their relations with imperial Britain – and later the United States – allowed them to consolidate power and centralize without input from their residents. This was later replicated in the post-oil Gulf States' relationships with their citizens.

Most importantly for the purposes of regional politics today, a significant proportion of the inhabitants of eighteenth-century Bahrain were non-tribal Shia, as opposed to the strongly tribal Khalifa who came to rule them. As Gardner writes, "in many ways, the arrival of the Khalifa seemed merely another chapter in the island's long and tumultuous political history. The arrival of the British, however, brought this era of changing political control to an end" (2010, 33). This statement echoes sentiments put forward by Jill Crystal, Michael Herb, Anh Nga Longva, James Onley, and others that the arrival of Western imperial forces at this particular moment in the Arabian Peninsula's history simply consolidated power with whoever was already a leader, provided they were not hostile to British long-term goals. In Kuwait, this happened to be the Al Sabah portion of the Bani Utub tribe, who were – purely coincidentally – very popular amongst the also Sunni and also indigenous tribal inhabitants. In Bahrain, this was not the case. Thus, the Khalifa were seen initially as occupying forces, rather than rightful rulers.

Bahrain is Arabic for two seas, thought to refer to the bays to the east and west of the island, and also to the salt and fresh water available there. The kingdom has long been a sort of buffer zone between the Arab and Persian spheres of influence, and "the point of intersection between the tribal and agricultural frontiers of the Persian Gulf" (Fuccaro 2009, 16). In recent history, these layered dichotomies have caused a disunity which has displaced loyalty to the Al Khalifa; among all other ruling families in the Gulf, the Al Khalifa are the most likely to be viewed as conquerors, and to this day are more likely to be ruling over residents whose allegiances lie outside of Bahrain's borders.

b. Indigenous Agency and the Dawn of the Oil Era

As mentioned, the British did not arrive in the Arabian Gulf to find a blank slate. Without pearling and the maritime trade, the region's rise to prominence would have been inconceivable. As follows, one cannot grasp the nature of the Gulf States in the contemporary period without first understanding this era in history. Maritime industry was the source of livelihood for most Arabs in the nineteenth century. Shipbuilders, sailors, merchants, and pearl divers all depended on the Gulf's waters for subsistence, as did their families. Kuwaiti historian Abdulmoati remarks, "it seems not exaggerated to state that each family owns a sailing boat" (2004, 20). Villiers, writing in the late 1930s, tells the story of Ahmed Bin Jaber Al Sabah's efforts to organize an elected counsel in the state, noting the leader's frustration when he experienced a lack of enthusiasm, for "the greatest part of the best men in Kuwait were at sea" (2006, 248). One could argue that this lifestyle of habitual, prolonged trade journeys or pearl diving excursions made the absent men less affected by – and so less concerned with – politics, thereby lessening domestic opposition and easing the path to political dominance on the part of the Al Sabah.

In her exhaustive ethnography of Manama, Fuccaro writes that in Bahrain, Dubai, and Kuwait, "the cosmopolitan world of trade gravitated around the Gulf waters" (2009, 2). Day-to-day life in the coastal states was structured around water currents, diving seasons, and global trade patterns; this created a sort of community clock that everyone ran on. Before the pearling season, women assembled to see off their men. When they returned, the entirety of the village rejoiced. The same trend can be seen economically, as "the dive for pearls was structured on a hierarchy of debt and obligation that penetrated deep into Kuwaiti society" (Al-Hijji 2010, 43). This sense of belonging to a national network remained ingrained within the coastal Arabian societies through the years.

In this way, during the pearling industry's prime, the towns of the Arabian Gulf coast shared a similar social system and set of political institutions that were tied to the sea. However, the same was true of the desert towns inland. As follows, "the political supremacy of tribes and the absence of centralized administrations set them apart from the ports… [This divergence was] compounded by infighting among ruling families, accentuating their political disunity" (Fuccaro 2009, 71). We will see that this divide comes into play in later years; the monarchies that were best able to fuse the desert and coastal populations and avoid succumbing to familial power struggles and conflict with the disenfranchised maritime merchants are the ones that are most successful today. In other words, creating a unified national identity was paramount in ensuring these monarchies' survival.

For most of the nineteenth century, ruling tribes in the coastal Gulf towns exerted control over residents by forming political alliances with merchants. The towns along the coast operated in the absence of any centralized administration, unlike other towns under Ottoman control in the peninsula's interior. They shared similar precarious and ever-changing local governmental

systems that were run by desert tribesmen – often the only militarized segment of urban society – while merchants were mainly concerned with affairs at sea. Oil uprooted the lives of these merchants and laborers in the early twentieth century – in some states permanently destroying their unity (Bahrain), in some states collectively decreasing their status while boosting their cooperation (Kuwait), and in others never allowing them to form a network in the first place (Saudi Arabia). Exploring this fragmentation is crucial in understanding variations in the political liberalization and citizenship regimes of the Arabian Gulf States today.

i. Kuwait, Oil, and the Indian Ocean

Once they settled in the harbor area of what is now Kuwait, the Utub Bedouins gave up their migratory pastoral way of life and became fishermen, traders, sailors, and merchants, and other migrants from the region joined and left them at will. As mentioned, Kuwait and the rest of Arabia were never destinations of migration in the sense that this phrase is used in modern Western convention (i.e., permanent movement from one place to another). In the harsh desert climate and the resulting absence of agriculture, people were compelled to migrate regularly in search of work and food for their livestock. "Wherever they could find both, they settled down temporarily or permanently but always retained their ethnic identity" (Longva 1997, 46). For example, sailors from Bahrain self-identified as Bahraini, boat-builders from Oman as Omani, and laborers from Iran as Persian, even though they had lived within a certain country's borders for years. The same was true of Kuwaitis who left Kuwait.

Kuwait doubled in size in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The town outgrew the wall that separated it from the desert, becoming an open settlement until the Kuwaitis built a new wall in 1922, after the Battle of Jahra. Urbanization at the beginning of the twentieth century

brought the merchants of Kuwait a new source of wealth in the form of property ownership, a transformation that created new political identities and new class alliances between the landowners and those who leased from them. Merchants were also the original providers of welfare, services, and philanthropy during that time, providing fresh water and access to mosques in a state that was growing rapidly, but whose city planning was not yet being regulated. These commitments and properties were fixed in place, which meant that merchants were no longer as prone to express political dissent by relocating their business elsewhere.

In Kuwait, the merchants performed their last major "act of secession," as Crystal puts it (1995, 25), in 1910 when they fled to Bahrain as a result of the policies of Emir Mubarak Al Sabah. Right before the pearling season was to begin that summer, the ruler decided he needed the pearl divers to remain on land to serve in an army on standby. Upon this order, three of the most powerful pearl merchants left for Manama in protest, taking their considerable fiscal clout with them. Worried that other merchants – and subsequently the townspeople – may turn against him, Mubarak promptly rescinded his decree and negotiated the merchants' return to the town (Al-Nakib 2016, 31). By 1911 the three pearl traders were back, and along with the rest of the merchant elite, started to organize themselves politically; an unprecedented act which again affirmed their sense of belonging to Kuwait.

When pearls started being manufactured artificially in Japan and oil became the Gulf's main export, ship culture plummeted, taking with it the Gulf's maritime way of life. As one *nakhoda* (ship captain) recalled, "we [the *nakhodas*] never abandoned long-distance trade for lack of profit… we only stopped trading because the sailors stopped coming with us" (Al-Hijji 2010, 76). Before oil, the "relationship between the rulers and the merchants had the character of a protection racket" (Herb 1999, 57) – both appeased one another in exchange for profit and

power. When oil replaced trade as the primary revenue source in the Gulf States, this tacit balance was lost. Oil swiftly took both the pearl divers and the sailors away from the trading elites. Suddenly, the merchants found that they had lost their autonomous political clout (Crystal 1995, 11). Due to the simultaneous tightening of borders, they had also lost their old ability to threaten to leave. Since the exit strategy no longer worked as a protest mechanism against the monarchy, the subordinated group had to work for change *from within* the system.

Because this course taken by the merchant classes worked better in some Gulf States than in others, it is key in understanding the divergence and modern diversity of the Arabian Gulf's political systems, and their resulting policies. Due to their small size and long, strong trading legacies, merchants in Kuwait and Qatar were already well organized into a cohesive network. As a direct result, they were most successful at mobilizing to voice their discontentment. This dissent did not sit well with the rulers. Seeing the merchant elite as the only legitimate threat to their primacy, the monarchs responded by using their most abundant resource: they offered the merchants economic advantages in an implicit trade of wealth for power.

It is key to note, however, that in Kuwait and Qatar, the already highly unified merchant class was bought off *collectively* by the state. Thus, they "maintained some corporate identity, unifying economic interests, and an ongoing internal cohesion related to the economic structure" (Crystal 1995, 9). To this day, though pearl divers and shipbuilders are long gone, the prominent merchant families that were at the top of the debt hierarchy in early twentieth century remain the elite. In Kuwait and Qatar, there was a vocal, vibrant, and firmly entrenched merchant class that was able to exert some influence during the oil era. The merchants ensured that the royal family had checks and balances – there were powerful people to answer to who expected a certain degree of transparency.

In his 1999 study titled *Britain, the Al-Sabah, and Oil*, Smith builds up an argument based on the merchant elite that falls entirely in line with rentierism. In his view, traders – the one social class that traditionally challenged the ruling family for power – renounced their political intent for a share of oil revenues. He argues that the Kuwaiti elite was making too much money to cultivate any dissatisfaction that it could later turn into political passions (Smith 1999, 3).[7]

However, it briefly seemed that the opposite would happen and that the Al Sabah would be entirely beholden to the merchant class. In 1938, the same year that oil extraction was to begin, Kuwaiti merchants successfully secured an elected legislative assembly (*Majlis*). This was the first record of parliamentary activity in the peninsula, and though it only lasted for six months, it was cause for much concern. As was reflected in a letter from the Political Agent in Kuwait to the Political Resident in Bahrain, the British were especially worried about this *Majlis*. Kuwait's Agent writes:

> "It is all to the good that the Sheikh has (by his own action, however reluctantly) consented to a measure of popularization of his government, but on the other hand, there is the risk… we could not in any case agree to the suppression of the Sheikh by his council with whom we deal in regard to Kuwait's foreign relations… we cannot deal with two conflicting authorities in Kuwait. The law on paper gives too much power to the council" (Salih 1992, 78).

Both imperial and regional unease escalated when the council approached Emir Ahmad Al Sabah and asked him to hand over Kuwait's oil revenue. To Britain's shock, though the checks from the Kuwait Oil Company were in the Emir's name as per their 1934 agreement, the ruler agreed to hand over the revenue to the assembly in full. The first check was due in

[7] Peter Lienhardt, a social anthropologist who visited Kuwait and wrote about his impressions in the 1950s includes an anecdote that bolsters this claim; in playing cards at the time, the 'king' card was colloquially referred to as the 'merchant,' who could only be trumped (or outranked) by the 'ace' card, who was the 'Sheikh' (1993, 52). Thus, the merchant upper class was subordinated, but it maintained its relative status within the local pecking order.

December of 1938, when it soon became apparent that Ahmad Al Sabah perhaps never intended to hand over the check; the *Majlis* was dissolved in its entirety that same month. The Emir's decision to dissolve the council was met with congratulations by King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, who believed that the council represented "an ominous encroachment of unrestrained democracy in Arabia" (Salim 1992, 92). The British were similarly reassured to see the ruler wrest power from the council, since they once again knew precisely whom they were to deal with (and since an autocrat is easier to negotiate with than an assembly).

Though the *Majlis* was the first and last experiment with parliamentarianism in the Gulf until Kuwait's independence, "it set a tradition of popular participation and constraint on the ruling family that was formalized in the 1962 constitution and the first elections to the National Assembly in 1963" (Diwan 2018, 3). In her comprehensive ethnography of the social hierarchy in Kuwait and exploration of how its impermeable structure arose, Longva writes that "oil could not have come at a better time for Kuwaitis" (1997, 25). When it was first extracted, oil projected Kuwait out of the worst economic crisis in its history. Pearl oyster stocks in the Gulf had been diminishing rapidly due to overfishing, and the local pearling fleets were facing decreasing prices and demand due to the advent of the Japanese cultured pearl industry. Simultaneously, Ibn Saud, Saudi Arabia's founder, had declared an economic trade blockage against Kuwait in 1923. Combined with the global depression during that decade, this meant that Kuwaitis were destitute. Though oil was discovered in the 1930s, the Second World War held off extraction until 1946.

From then on, "Kuwait's economic situation was secured, and the problems that the emirate had to face were of an altogether different character" (Longva 1997, 25). No longer preoccupied with the plummeting price of pearls, Kuwait's new quandary was its lack of human resources. Though oil itself was "an enclave industry involving few workers" (Crystal 1995, 7),

the massive modernization projects financed by Kuwait's new oil revenues needed a type of expertise and experience that the bedouins, sailors, and pearl divers of the region could not supply. In the early years of oil development, Kuwait did all it could to attract and facilitate the immigration of foreign workers, but it could not keep up with demand. The British-owned Kuwait Oil Company turned to India and Pakistan for the *en masse* recruitment of many of its first workers.

Reasons behind this were twofold: first, there were already active, decades-long linkages between those living on either coast of the Indian Ocean. While Kuwait was officially a part of the Ottoman Empire until the end of World War I, in actuality, the farther one moved from Istanbul, the weaker its authority became – "already tenuous in Basra, Ottoman rule was hardly felt in the Arabian Peninsula" (Longva 1997, 22). Instead, Kuwait operated most heavily within the sphere of the Indian Ocean. Although each ethnic group had its own languages and customs, Longva documents the commonality of the 'creolized' culture that allowed the Indian Ocean traders to communicate with one another; "according to elderly Kuwaitis who had taken part in sea trade before the 1950s, Arabic was commonly understood by all, but it was an Arabic heavily infused with Persian, Urdu, Hindi and African words and phrases" (1997, 21). Indian influences can also be seen by the generalized use of the Indian Rupee as the common currency, with the Gulf only officially switching to the Dinar in the 1960s.[8]

Second, the sedentary Arabs to the West of the Gulf were not eager to brave the perceived heartland of 'uncivilized nomadism' they believed existed in the deserts east of the Suez, and not even the prospect of high wages served to tempt enough qualified workers from the Western hemisphere (Longva 1997, 25). However, when the State of Israel was created in

[8] Similarly, Bahrainis drove on the left side of the road, as the British and Indians did, as late as 1967.

1948, the dispersal of over half a million Palestinians provided a timely solution to Kuwait's workforce deficiency. While most Arab countries were less than enthusiastic about welcoming Palestinian exiles into their territories, Kuwait opened its doors to practically anyone and everyone, whether they were teachers, doctors, administrators, engineers, or peasants. Male Palestinian refugees preferred the opportunities available in Kuwait to the cramped refugee camps of Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. Thus, their uniquely unfortunate circumstances made them eager to enter Kuwait, and the Palestinians' early appearance from the 1940s on played a central role in the development of Kuwait – one not limited solely to the infrastructural realm.

Arguably, the 1950s was Kuwait's formative decade. As oil production escalated and sea trade with the east came to an end, Kuwait definitively closed the door on its history of extensive relations with the Indian Ocean nations. As the presence of Palestinians increased, the simultaneous rise of commercial aviation and desert highways closed the physical gap between Eastern Arabians and the rest of the Middle East. For the first time, the Kuwaitis "could start tending to their Middle Eastern relations at the expense of their previous Indian Ocean connections" (Longva 1997, 40).

Egyptians and Syrians also began to migrate to Kuwait, and cultural and political life centered around the cities of Cairo, Beirut, and Damascus. Naturally, the Arab migrants also brought with them their political ideologies – the Egyptians brought Nasserite socialism and Pan-Arabism, the Palestinians brought their thoughts on the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Syrians and Iraqis each brought their own versions of Ba'athist ideology. Pan-Arabism and Ba'athism were modern, left-leaning ideologies that were *inherently contradictory* to a hereditary emirate (Dawisha 2016). These views were especially appealing to young Kuwaitis, who often received their college educations in the cities listed above (Kuwait University did not open until 1966).

Since Arab migrants were well educated and spoke the language of the locals, they were employed in all areas key to a state's functioning – they were educators, businessmen, administrators, and medical professionals. Thus, each of these political ideologies spread rapidly, unfettered by Kuwait's relatively liberal social policies at the time (Al-Nakib 2016, Crystal 1995). Additionally, the Kuwaiti government was sympathetic to the Palestinian cause and gave Palestinian migrants unique political rights in the country; alone among all non-Kuwaitis, the Palestinians were allowed by the state to have a pseudo-political organization through the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) office in Kuwait. Hazem Beblawi, in his canonical article *The Rentier State in the Arab World* writes, "the fact that the acquisition of citizenship had been limited in the major receiving states of the Gulf, or has not resulted in full political participation where it has occurred, does not mean, however, that political integration of migrants has not taken place" (1987, 306). If any migrant class or group came close to political integration in Kuwait, it was the Palestinians.[9]

After the 1950s, the government became increasingly wary and watchful of the vocal presence of Arab expatriates. The administration's general inclination was to link the political radicalization of the educated Kuwaiti urban elite to the significant presence of Arab migrant workers. In 1965, the government passed several laws aimed at reinforcing internal security, and two groups were targeted: the local press and foreign workers. Some newspapers were suspended, and migrants were rounded up and deported (Crystal 1995). In light of increasing violence, the Emir dismissed the National Assembly in its entirety in 1976.

At this point, it seemed that the only solution was to restrict Arab labor migration into Kuwait, but the merchant class, concerned about its profits, stood staunchly opposed to it. This

[9] As will be explored in Chapter Four, their expulsion after the Iraqi invasion changed this and eliminated any chance of the future integration of migrants in Kuwait.

dilemma was resolved by exponentially increasing the proportion of migrant workers from Asia, once again recruited *en masse* to the Gulf. Kuwait's leaders made a deliberate decision to switch from recruiting Arab workers to Asian workers when they realized what a real political danger Arab expatriates' ideas could represent for their stability. Since there was a more distinct barrier of language, ethnicity, and often religion between Asian workers and native Kuwaitis, their ideologies posed less of a threat and, by definition, virtually eliminated the spread of Pan-Arabism.

ii. Bahrain, Britain, and Persia

> "The case of Manama calls for a reevaluation of the assumption that the oil era constituted a rupture with the urban past of the region… before independence, and in spite of oil, the residents of Manama experienced modernity as a gradual process of change; their experience was not that dissimilar to that of other peoples outside Europe in the age of colonization and decolonization." Nelida Fuccaro, *Histories of City and State in the Persian Gulf: Manama since 1800* (2009, 222)

In this section, I will explore the actual 'exceptionalities' that made Bahrain stand out amongst its neighbors; namely Bahrain's pre-oil cosmopolitanism, its outlook away from the desert and towards the Persian Sea and Indian Ocean, and the resultant special interest that Britain took in the island city-state. Though the impact of oil did not trigger the dawn of a new era, or even an immediately noticeable change in the day-to-day life of most Bahrainis, what were once rural agricultural areas were gradually absorbed into Manama's metropolitan districts over the next several decades. Still, oil revenue, city expansion, and state centralization did not erase the traditional political and socio-economic make-ups and differences between groups in Bahrain, as the rural areas inhabited by the indigenous Shia populations remained the same. Instead, they enforced the same set of inequalities. As Fuccaro writes, "in the oil era, historical

legacies and inequalities continued to be enshrined in built environments and social landscapes, as they had been in pearling" (2009, 191).

In her analysis of Manama, Fuccaro strives to remind her readers that though British colonial administration and the discovery of oil *did* have a stabilizing effect on local politics in the sense that it favored and solidified the reign of the Al Khalifa, this did not occur in a vacuum. Her goal is to expose the "fallacies of the 'exceptionalism' of oil development" (2009, 11). The idiosyncratic history of Manama challenges standard portrayals of modernization based on ideal types of an oil state's urban development (namely rentierism). Onley, like Fuccaro, also challenges the Westward-oriented perspective of Gulf history, exploring the way in which Arab rulers in need of protection collaborated with the Political Residents of *their own volition*. This refutes the idea that leaders in nineteenth-century Arabia were effectively established by the British. They were not "small men of no account" (Levey and Podeh 2008, 153), as many have argued.

In fact, the British frequently submitted to the requests of Bahrain's tribal elite. Britain's collaboration with the Safar family is a striking example of the administration relying on the local elite. In 1893, the Political Resident selected Muhammad Rahim Safar, a well-known merchant and head of the Safar family business, to be the new Bahrain Agent. Due to their affluence and influence, the Safars were "generally the most qualified men to employ as British representatives in Bahrain" (Onley 2007, 162). Thus, we see once again that the Residents worked *within* the indigenous political and social systems of the Gulf, seeking out the support of those who already possessed power and expertise. As Onley aptly notes, "Britain could have appointed rulers in the Gulf sheikhdoms, had it wished. Usually, however, it did not so wish" (2007, 30).

Just as in Kuwait, Bahrain's oil extraction in 1932 happened just in time. The demise of Bahrain's pearling economy in the years after 1927 brought the young state to the verge of collapse. The introduction of Japanese cultured pearls onto the world market impoverished all Gulf societies and had a particularly catastrophic effect on Manama. It is thought that between 1929 and 1931, "Bahrain's pearling entrepreneurs lost two-thirds of their capital as a result of poor returns from the sale of pearls, which was accentuated by the world's economic depression" (Fuccaro 2009, 127).

When oil replaced pearls as Bahrain's main export, not much else changed. As Gardner points out, "like the pearl beds, petroleum provided the basis for an essentially extractive industry; the tributary relations between the Sunni royal family and the captains of the pearling dhows [ships] were in some sense replicated with oil production" (2010, 24). Furthermore, relations between the pearling ship captains and the often debt-ridden divers were replicated in the contracts subsequently made between oil companies and migrant laborers through the contemporary *kafala* system, as will be discussed in later chapters. In short, while the export commodity changed, routine business surrounding oil extraction remained, in essence, quite similar to pearl trading. The same set of inequalities were enforced, and the same populations were disadvantaged.

Perhaps most importantly for Bahrain, the petroleum era, like the pearling boom, drew in diverse groups of foreign traders, merchants, and laborers to the island. As had occurred in Kuwait, to cope with the need for more laborers during the expansion of oil production, the Bahraini government started to encourage the migration of certain nationalities. In the second half of the 1930s, the British Agency started to favor the entry of laborers from South Asia. After 1947, the violence and displacement which followed Indian Partition "played into the hands of

the agency as some two thousand impoverished refugees arrived in Manama from India and Pakistan in 1949 alone" (Fuccaro 2009, 208).

By 1956 approximately forty percent of manual laborers employed in the Bahraini oil industry were foreign, and between 1941 and 1965 the population of the island doubled. Perhaps as a response to this, a significant transformation took place in the 1940s and 1950s as new policies on immigration, nationality, and land ownership brought an end to the "open milieus which characterized the mercantile settlement of the nineteenth century" (Fuccaro 2009, 4). By the early 1950s, the Bahraini Government and the British Agency were forced to encourage migrants from Arab Gulf countries as the non-Arab labor force came increasingly under attack from the nationalist movement; a similar pattern to what was occurring in Kuwait at the same time.

Bahrain was the first state in the Gulf to pass laws to standardize the acquisition of citizenship. Nationality laws, the first of which were passed in 1937, were instrumental in the 'Nationalization' and 'Arabization' of Bahrain, processes which unfolded in parallel with the regional spread of the nationalist movement instigated by Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. This phenomenon was inherently disadvantageous to recent Asian migrants and Bahrain's sizeable Persian population. After 1937, the right to own land became conditional on the acquisition of Bahraini nationality, and the settled Persian communities of Bahrain began to view passports as necessary to maintain their wealth.

Foreigners born in Bahrain who sought Bahraini citizenship could simply register for it within a year of their eighteenth birthday at a British outpost called the 'Government House' (Dresch 2005, 141). Even before the discovery of oil in Bahrain, Persian notables were the largest landowners in the urban areas, as is evident by the large numbers of holdings registered in

the name of Shia merchants after the issue of the First Bahrain Nationality and Property Law (Fuccaro 2009, 103). Interestingly, this is one of the reasons why Bahrain has a far smaller population of bidoon than Kuwait does today: at that time, Kuwait's property ownership laws did not require Kuwaiti nationality in order to own or purchase property, so fewer people were drawn to Kuwaiti passports out of this necessity.

Bahrain's passport office, meanwhile, was inundated with applications for citizenship by the early 1940s, so much so that office started to turn down requests – particularly those of Persians. Between 1948 and 1950, all applications for nationality lodged by Persians were refused, while Arab nationals' applications continued to be processed and approved. With no legal path to residency, and with Iran's shore just ninety miles away, it comes as no surprise that the vast majority of illegal immigrants in Bahrain during the mid-twentieth century were Persian.

The Al Khalifa's efforts to stem the flow of Persians without travel papers or passports seems to have been undermined by the British. Fuccaro writes, "between 1945 and 1947, some three thousand Persians arrived in Manama after a brief stay in Dubai or Sharjah, where they were given local travel papers as British-protected subjects" (2009, 209). This was done despite the restriction enforced by the native government of Bahrain. Large numbers of Persians were routinely rounded up by police during this time and either imprisoned or expelled. Here, we can see hints of the population engineering and preferential treatment along sectarian lines that has become a recurring theme in Bahraini history.

In stark contrast with Kuwait, foreigners in Bahrain were a constant source of contestation and target of strife, both before and after the discovery of oil. It is illustrative to explore how the changing meaning of the term 'foreigner' in the public discourse reflected the concurrent changes taking place in nation-building. For instance, in the early nineteenth century,

'outsiders' were considered to be bedouin tribesmen, the Al Khalifa, and the British-protected migrant communities, most notably South Asians. These alien groups were seen as "instruments of imperial 'intrusion'" (Fuccaro 2009, 10). By the second half of the twentieth century, 'foreigner' had transformed into a word used for all non-Arabs and non-Bahrainis, a sign that natives had a new enemy, and were driven by a new cause: Arab Nationalism.

Bahrain in general – and Manama in particular – experienced significant political turmoil and sporadic violence in the twentieth century due to burgeoning ideas of Arab Nationalism. Nationalistic activism in Bahrain surpassed that of Kuwait, the other Gulf hotbed of Arab nationalism, and politicization peaked in similar years due to tangentially related events. One critical incident in Kuwait that was a source of inspiration and had repercussions of widespread strikes in Bahrain was the aforementioned opening of the *Majlis* in Kuwait. Fuccaro writes that "if 1938 became known in Kuwait as the 'year of the *Majlis,'* in Bahrain it started a new era of political contestation under the aegis of these youth organizations" (2009, 175).

The young Sunni Bahraini, much like the young Sunni Kuwaiti, became conversant in nationalist ideas due to the presence of and exposure to nationalists and their writings from the Levant, Iraq, and Egypt. However, Bahrain's mobilized society also included young Shia militants, who were generally less literate and less interested in remaining relegated to the political sphere when expressing dissent; the "Shi'i [*sic*] militant pursued modern ideas of social justice more pragmatically, and appealed to the sectarian solidarities of the traditional constituencies of merchant patrons" (Fuccaro 2009, 174).

Activism and political participation were in this way often more subversive, volatile and violent in Bahrain, as was highlighted three decades later during the Suez crisis of 1956, where one could see strikingly different reactions of the two urban hotbeds of Arab nationalist

sentiment in the region. In April 1957, the representative of the British Council in the Persian Gulf noted that "Kuwait reacted [to the Suez incursion] with cold and disciplined hostility; Bahrain rioted" (Fuccaro 2009, 228). Echoes of these reactions were again seen decades later during the Arab Spring, where the Al Khalifa were almost ousted, while the Al Sabah were petitioned for reforms *within* the monarchical framework.

Thus, "the processes one might identify as transnational have a long history on the island – long enough that they precede the solidification of the nation-state by many centuries" (Gardner 2010, 24). Manama became the harbinger of Bahrain's modernity as well as that of the entire Persian Gulf in the 1930s. Throughout the peninsula, "Bahrain acquired the reputation of the place where 'all streets are paved with gold'" (Fuccaro 2009, 207). However, this only lasted about three decades. By the 1960s, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait began to import modern goods and services for their populations directly from Europe in the West and Japan in the East. As oil extraction came to fruition in the other Gulf countries, Bahrain relinquished its role at the forefront of regional modernization, and "as early as 1958 the gap between the wealth of Kuwait and the relative poverty of Bahrain was already growing wider as a result of the decreasing oil reserves of the islands" (Fuccaro 2009, 221). As the populations of the Gulf States continue to grow exponentially and oil remains a finite resource, Bahrain and its history, however idiosyncratic, can provide us with a glimpse into what may occur in neighboring Gulf States when the oil begins to run out.

c. Analysis: *Pax Britannica* and the Indian Ocean Trade

State-sponsored myths and narratives of the Gulf States are economically driven. They attribute migration almost entirely to oil discovery and the ensuing boom in infrastructural

development and emphasize colonial involvement pre-oil while erasing the commanding presence of Indian influence in Kuwait and Persian influence in Bahrain before oil's discovery. Such narratives reproduce the concept that oil discovery in the Arabian Peninsula led to a complete break with the past and obscure the multiple forms of governance and belonging that actually existed and continue to exist in the region. These representations propagate the idea that migrants are a relatively new and temporary occurrence – and thus do not belong – when in reality the pre-oil Gulf would be unrecognizable without them. Such depictions fall in line with the typical approach to political economy, one which centers around Western capitalist yardsticks against which the Gulf States are measured. This framework further solidifies the 'pre-oil/ post-oil' periods as distinct eras. When this happens, oil becomes the single primary cause for social, political, and economic changes in the region, and other influential frameworks, timelines, and connections are ignored.

While the start of the oil era was unquestionably a significant period, it did not overhaul established hierarchies. In the same vein, colonial intervention did not occur in a vacuum, as some may assume. Vora notes that "oil discovery and the subsequent fast pace of development in these countries produced what some scholars consider unnatural and often chaotic change" (2013, 9), as reflected in the literature. This 'unnatural' development after oil discovery stands in stark contrast with the more natural evolution as it supposedly occurred in Europe and the United States during the longer, presumably more organic processes of industrialization there. Such issues of Orientalism and Euro-centrism are enmeshed in many existing texts about colonialism and oil state development, a habit that disregards these clashing domestic forces, and marginalizes the long, far-reaching influence of South Asians and Persians in the Gulf.

Treaty agreements between the British Raj and Arabian Gulf Sheikhs were in place as early as the 1820s, and in Dubai, an exclusive treaty was in place by 1892. Foreigners already made up a large proportion of Dubai's population – a quarter of the twenty thousand city residents in 1939 – years before the discovery of oil. Thus, archived "administrative, trade, and travel documents directly challenge the idea that empire and oil were the catalysts for Indian Ocean trade and cosmopolitanism" (Vora 2013, 23). In fact, in the context of the Indian Ocean, Europeans at the time were actually seen as interlopers trying to penetrate an already active and profitable market, and it has even been argued that "the British discourse on 'piracy' in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf was actually a political excuse to cement control over this trade" (Vora 2013, 52).

The key to Vora's argument is that the Gulf in general, and the United Arab Emirates in particular, is not all that exceptional, but exemplifies the existence of multiple forms of belonging and plural forms of citizenship. Contrary to popular thought – and the myth that government-sanctioned social studies books and museum exhibits would have one believe – migration from South Asia and Persia to the Gulf was not solely due to the post-oil boom; as will be explained in the coming chapters, there are multiple players and plots in the making of the modern Gulf States. While Gulf governments consider foreign residents as temporary guest workers, regardless of the extent of their family histories there, South Asian and Persian migrants have been thriving in the Gulf for over a century, and many foreigners are well into their second, third, or even fourth generation in the GCC countries. For example, Saudi Arabia alone is home to more than two million Asian expatriates who were born there and know no other home. In the Kingdom alone, there are now 1.25 million Indians (Dresch 2005, 23). In Kuwait, a fifth of non-citizens were born there (Shah 2013). The fact that migrant workers are having families and

raising their children in the Gulf countries inherently contradicts these economically-driven narratives.

While oil companies and the infrastructural growth following the extraction of oil created a significant spike in migration to the Gulf, the idea that oil is what instigated this migration makes it difficult to understand the multiplicity of economic and political activities occurring in Gulf port cities like Kuwait, Manama and Dubai. These cities "have rich cosmopolitan pre-oil mercantile pasts and entrenched diasporic communities that pre-date European colonialism in the region" (Vora 2013, 10). We should move past the temptation to see a distinct divide between the Arabian Peninsula as it was pre-modernization and the region as it exists after oil wealth flowed in.

d. Conclusion

> "In spite of substantial material transformations over the past half-century, the power structure – both political and social – appears to have changed little since pre-oil days." Anh Nga Longva, *Neither Autocracy nor Democracy but Ethnocracy: Citizens, Expatriates and the Socio-political System in Kuwait* (2005, 114)

The prominence of the sea in the goings-on of the peninsula determined what type of influence the British sought to employ in the Arabian Gulf States. Initially, Great Britain wanted a peaceful region to allow a clear path for trade and access to India. The will to exercise absolute control was a *twentieth-century policy*, whereas, "for much of the nineteenth, London did not want to do more than was necessary to safeguard respectable trade and ensure maritime peace" (Longva 1997, 171). Since the goal of the British in the early years was not the extraction of goods, but the maintenance of stability, British intervention was neither severe nor systematic. It was specified by the London Office that there was to be no direct involvement unless British subjects suffered damages.

Later on, with oil revenue and British support, the Al Khalifa of Bahrain, Al Maktoum of Dubai, Al Saud of Saudi Arabia, and Al Sabah of Kuwait were all able to reconstruct their images from tribal warlords to political elites of economically powerful and prosperous oil states. However, even before the British arrived, some tribal heads and merchant elites had already accumulated leadership and legitimacy. The Ottomans, decades before British intervention, dealt primarily with these individuals as well. In fact, Anscombe finds that "in Qatar and Kuwait, the Ottomans had contact almost exclusively with members of the Al Thani and Al Sabah families" (1997, 55). The same is true of Bahrain, where the Al Khalifa were one of the prominent pearl trading families in the region. All three families rule to this day.

In most classic colonial cases, the local elites who cooperated with the colonial powers were disgraced and removed after independence. This was not so in the Gulf, where leaders had some grassroots support and considerable legitimacy before British involvement. Additionally, it is essential to note in these cases that rather than violent uprisings making way for independence, the British left at their own volition; their empire was disintegrating, and the cost of maintaining the Gulf had been taken on by the United States.

In contrast, when the British left the Yemeni base of Aden in 1967, the British-protected Federation of South Arabia collapsed and was replaced by the Marxist People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. This precedent was not encouraging for the other monarchs in the peninsula, who began to worry about a similar fate. Aden, like Kuwait and Bahrain, had a population composed heavily of immigrants. Though not as wealthy as the two, Aden was the site of a large port and an oil refinery which brought in significant revenue. All three had youth Arab nationalist movements which found their government's association with the British 'humiliating.' However, this is where commonalities ended; Aden was a full-fledged colony

rather than a protected state, and it depended on Britain more than the Gulf did for its economic and political processes – so much so that the British-appointed governor of Aden's consent was required in selecting a ruler.

This different approach could have been because the two were the responsibility of two different British government departments; Kuwait was administered by the Foreign Office, which according to Monroe, had "its finger on the pulse of Arab nationalism," and Aden was administered more directly by the Colonial Office (1964, 72). Thus, the British interacted and proceeded with Aden in a manner "that is the antithesis of that made with Kuwayt [*sic*]… perpetual independence for Kuwayt: perpetual British sovereignty for Aden." (Monroe 1964, 70).

The ideological and geopolitical picture was further complicated by the 1958 coup in Iraq that ended the Hashemite dynasty and brought to power the Ba'athist party of Hassan Al-Bakr and later, Saddam Hussein. Perhaps due to of this unsettling pattern of post-colonial regime disruption, in 1967, when Britain first announced that it planned to withdraw from its commitments to the Gulf Protected States in the early 1970s, a speedy proposal was made by the Emirs of Qatar and Abu Dhabi to pay Britain to keep its forces in the Gulf (Onley 2009, 22). Though this was never realized, the Gulf States continue to have amiable surrogate relationships with Great Britain even after British departure, and there has been no successful anti-elite nationalist movement for independence as there was in Egypt, Libya, Iraq or Aden. As oil revenues started pouring in after the 1973 embargo, the ruling families were all somewhat secure in their positions as the distributors of rent to their native populations, beginning with the merchant class.

CHAPTER TWO: ETHNO-RELIGIOUS FRAGMENTATION

The Al Khalifa and the Al Sabah have both utilized divide-and-rule tactics throughout their reign to consolidate and stabilize their power in times of widespread opposition. In Kuwait, the strategy towards its migrant majority, which has hovered at around seventy percent over the past few decades, has emerged as one of extreme exclusion. Longva writes that in order for a politics of exclusion to evolve successfully, three conditions must be met: "first, there must be an acute sense of *external* threat, which presupposes that there is a sense of *internal* identification; second, there must be a central apparatus with the capacity to provide both the ideological and the administrative means to implement and reproduce exclusion." Finally, there must also be a cultural tradition conducive to the idea of exclusion, which she suggests can be found in Kuwait's tribal ideologies (1997, 43). After the oil boom, exclusion became the standardized domestic doctrine, accompanied by political regulation through the *kafala* sponsorship system, which will be explained in a subsequent section. This process had a specific target: social stability and, in the long term, monarchical supremacy.

Meanwhile in Bahrain, the Sunni Al Khalifa, Bahrain's royal family since the eighteenth century, govern a citizenry which is seventy percent Shia. As a direct result, the monarchy often resorts to repressive authoritarian tactics to manage its 1.5 million residents – especially its Shia majority. The mainly Shia uprising of 2011 was neither isolated nor unexpected – periodical unrest has been expressed since the 1960s, and sectarian divisions dominated local politics long before hostilities erupted during the Arab Spring. The Shia majority faces unequal access to housing, healthcare, and jobs in the public sector (Seznec 2012).

In this chapter, I will explore how discriminatory policies and xenophobia in Kuwait and Bahrain have worked to subordinate significant segments of the population to the benefit and

profit of those friendlier to the monarchies. While I use the case of Bahrain to expound on sectarianism and Kuwait to explore anti-migrant regulation, the two countries experience both phenomena, but to much lesser degrees. For instance, Kuwait has an approximately thirty percent Shia minority that has – with a few notable exceptions – lived in relative harmony with the Sunni majority and has allied themselves with the monarchy. Similarly, Bahrain's largely Sunni migrants have been staunchly pro-monarchy and as a result, have escaped entanglement in the violence that has plagued the country since 2011.

a. <u>The Sunni-Shia Divide</u>

> "[Bahrain's idiosyncrasies], particularly the presence of a middle class increasingly marginalized from the ethnocratic logic of the public sector, are better understood as a glimpse into the future of the wealthier neighboring states. The frictions of Bahrain are not unique or peripheral to the experiences of the other GCC states. Rather, contemporary Bahrain provides us with a portrait of the frictions that occur when the oil runs out." Andrew Gardner, *City of Strangers: Gulf Migration and the Indian Community in Bahrain* (2010, 164)

As mentioned, Bahrain is the only GCC country with a Shia majority. Moreover, Bahrain lacks the "spectacular wealth" from oil exports that is found in the other GCC states (Gardner 2010, 163). Therefore, Bahrain's public sector can no longer accommodate the majority of the working citizenry, and members of the middle-class are increasingly finding themselves in direct competition with the foreigners in their midst. This sets Bahrain apart from the other oil economies in the Gulf where welfare handouts and public sector jobs are indiscriminately doled out, and creates a crisis of legitimacy for the Al Khalifa. In an allocative state, the expectation of employment in the public sector is seen as a core right by citizens.

Like the rest of the Gulf countries, citizenship perks are one of the primary mechanisms through which the monarchy builds and maintains legitimacy. However, in Bahrain, these

benefits are not equally available to all its citizens. Free education, healthcare, and subsidized food and utilities are available equally (perhaps for no other reason than it would be impossible to realistically segregate who has access to these services), but other handouts, such as guaranteed jobs in the public sector, are not. These public-sector jobs, especially in the two ministries which are central to the state's general functioning and *especially* central to the state's repressive apparatus – the Ministries of Defense and the Interior – are staffed almost exclusively by the Sunni members of the citizenry. In this way, the Bahraini government effectively creates new economic classes along sectarian lines. The "unequal distribution of state-controlled wealth complicates theories of the welfare state, for it reveals the sectarian, tribal, and essentially personal logic of patronage at work in the apparatus of the Bahraini state" (Gardner 2010, 144).

Though rentier theory suggests that the Al Khalifa should experience stability and legitimacy and that Bahrainis should be placated by all the external rent, welfare, and other citizenship perks bestowed upon them, if the majority (the Shia) is not receiving sufficient incentives to put up with an authoritarian government, then opposition is unavoidable. As this group becomes more aware of its alienation due to technological modernization and globalization (in this case mainly through social media), it has a greater tendency to take to the streets to air grievances – especially in response to peripheral shock events that may not usually incite as much opposition in more cohesive nations (Skocpol 1979). In Bahrain, the events of the Arab Spring in the greater Middle East served as the shock event that almost toppled the monarchy.

Shia Bahraini men eager to protect their own are banned from participating in the military and security forces, leaving them dangerously unoccupied and dissatisfied with the status quo. The Al Khalifa have instead constructed a minoritarian security apparatus. As Herb writes, "in

the past decades, the Al Khalifa has hired mercenaries from a wide variety of places" (1999, 64), from as far as Jordan in the west and Pakistan in the east. The state actively recruits these largely Sunni expatriates and grants them residencies in Bahrain with uncharacteristic leniency in order to bolster sectarian support for the ruling family.

Another problematic element here is that the Al Khalifa does not disregard *all* Bahrainis, but strives to target a particular group that it sees as a threat. Rentier theory predicts that monarchs should feel secure and stable due to their ability to accommodate their citizens' needs, yet the Bahraini monarchy does not feel comfortable acquiescing and giving their citizens a comparatively insignificant share of their total power, even when they are faced with disruptive protests for relatively modest requests of equality. The Shia – at first – were not asking for the Al Khalifa to abdicate the throne, they were simply asking for the same rights (the ability to join the army or work in high-ranking governmental ministry positions) as the Sunni segment of the population.

This raises a relevant question that Michael Herb posed almost two decades ago: "Why don't monarchs, when faced with threats that might lead to a revolution, attempt to bargain with their people, offering to share their power in government?" (Herb 1999, 257). Rentierism does not address this, and the answer in this case is likely found in Bahrain's foreign ties and alliances, mainly with Saudi Arabia. This chapter will center around domestic fragmentation in Bahrain, and I will focus on the geopolitical repercussions of Bahrain's protests on its relationship with Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf in Chapter Four.

i. The Spread of Discrimination from the Public to the Private

In *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, Hobsbawm writes, "to the extent that [nationalistic] sentiments were not created but only borrowed and fostered by governments, those who did so became a kind of sorcerer's apprentice. At best, they could not entirely control the forces they had released; at worst, they became their prisoners" (1990, 92). This image also rings true for sectarianism. While discrimination began in the public-sector ministries of Bahrain, eventually, it spread to all fields; in the private sector, the Shia tend to be employed in low paying, less skilled jobs, including taxi drivers and wait staff in the customer service industry, something that would be considered beneath other citizens in Gulf countries, whether they were Sunni or Shia (this would be unthinkable for a citizen of Kuwait, for example).

In his book *Sectarian Gulf: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab Spring that Wasn't*, Matthiesen agrees with Hobsbawm and writes that because the media is both implicitly and explicitly state-controlled, "the sectarianism in Gulf media since 2011 can only be attributed to decisions of political elites. However, once sectarianism has become a viable way of tarnishing the image of political adversaries, it moves to all levels of society and becomes as much a bottom-up as a top-down process" (2013, 10). In turn, biases within the population may also affect state-driven discourse, creating a situation where both feed off of and exacerbate each other.

According to a US Department of State's *Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor* report from 2001, policies favoring Sunnis "and others who are assumed to support the government" extended to university hiring and even university admission policies. The report also found that the Bahraini government, while tolerant of religions such as Christianity, Hinduism, and the Baha'i faith, closely monitored travel to Iran (the bastion of Shiism), and

those who choose to pursue religious study there after the 1979 revolution garner special scrutiny. There are no human rights organizations in Bahrain, and despite the country's constitution providing the right "to express and propagate" opinions, restrictions on freedom of association and expression are endemic in Bahrain, and unauthorized public gatherings of more than five persons are prohibited by law. However, several political opposition groups exist in exile and report on the human rights situation, such as the Bahrain Human Rights Organization, which operates out of Denmark.

Since the National Assembly of Bahrain was dissolved permanently in 1975, there have been no formal democratic political institutions. The Prime Minister makes all appointments to the cabinet, and the respective ministries fill all other governmental positions. About one-third of the cabinet ministers are Shia Muslims, which is seen in Bahrain as a symbolic concession, since none of the ministers serve in the aforementioned state security-related offices. The Al Khalifa are renowned for their awareness of political optics and manipulation of public opinion, famously appointing the Jewish and female Houda Nonoo as ambassador to the United States in 2008.

Beginning in the 1980s, urban areas of Bahrain were built up and deliberately defined by the monarchy as a symbol of the progressive agenda of the Sunni-dominated state against the perceived religious and social conservatism and backwardness of the Shia rural areas. Today, "educational, social, and municipal services in most Shia neighborhoods, particularly in rural villages, are inferior to those found in Sunni urban communities" (US Department of State 2001). According to Fuccaro, "the persistence of this domain of sectarian contestation is the most poignant testimony of the legacies of the past and of the contemporary relevance of Bahrain's urban and rural histories" (2009, 225). The Bahrain that is depicted in the state-sponsored and

government-run museums elides these rural histories in favor of Bahrain's progressive urban areas, invoking the idea of a carefully constructed 'imagined community.'

There was a period of sustained protest in Bahrain from 1994 to 2001, ending only when ruler Hamad Al Khalifa allowed opposition groups living in exile back into the country and promised meaningful political reforms following an overwhelmingly passed referendum on February 14th, 2001 (notably ten years to the day before the first protester was shot at the Pearl Roundabout). Hamad promptly broke these promises and promoted a new constitution that was drastically different from the one that had passed by popular vote. The new constitution maintained his dynasty's domination, limiting the elected half of the parliament's powers. This situation escalated further in 2002, when Hamad claimed ultimate primacy by changing the name of the 'State of Bahrain' to the 'Kingdom of Bahrain,' designating himself King rather than the more benign 'Emir,' which simply translates to 'commander' and is a title which may be used by anyone of royal blood.

ii. Sectarianism Spikes in 2011

> "In response to the Arab Spring protests, the Gulf ruling families, above all the Bahraini and Saudi ruling families, have played on and strengthened sectarian divisions between Sunni and Shia to prevent a cross-sectarian opposition front, something that seemed possible in the first days of the uprising in Bahrain, thereby creating a *sectarian Gulf.*" Toby Matthiesen, *Sectarian Gulf: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab Spring That Wasn't* (2013, ix)

As the protests began at the Pearl Roundabout, it was clear that the majority of protesters were Shia, but since the majority of Bahrain's citizens are Shia, this was to be expected. What is significant to note is that the Bahraini people wanted reform from *within* the regime in the early days, not the fall of the monarchy. Their requests were non-sectarian and relatively moderate in nature: they wanted the new constitution they had been promised a decade ago, the release of

political prisoners, the lifting of travel bans, and an improvement in human rights. Many were also calling for the resignation of the unelected Prime Minister Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, who had been in power for almost five decades since Bahrain's independence, making him the world's longest-serving unelected prime minister (Matthiesen 2013, 12).

Almost immediately, media outlets owned by various states in the region went into overdrive to spin the events taking place in Bahrain in a way that preserved the hierarchy of the Gulf Sunni royal families. Saudi-owned media portrayed the protests as a Persian plot carried out with the help of local Shia agents, and Bahrain's state-owned media was quick to agree. Qatari-owned *Al Jazeera Arabia*, which had broadcast an around-the-clock feed of Cairo's Tahrir Square during Egypt's tumult, at first did not cover the Pearl Roundabout rallies at all out of fear that the instability would spread to Qatar's own backyard.

To understand the origins of this 'Shia threat,' and the Gulf monarchs' intense and longstanding paranoia about Persian prying in the domestic affairs of Gulf States, one must first realize that it is not as much about a fundamental religious incongruence between the Sunni and Shia religious beliefs as it is about what Matthiesen calls the "Saudi-Iranian Cold War in the Middle East" (2013, 20), which began decades before the Iranian Revolution.[10] Saudi Arabia and Iran are historically similar in their regional influence and oil wealth, and before 1979, both were key US allies, carefully balanced against each other.[11] Today, they grapple for influence and are both guilty of meddling in the affairs of the small emirates engulfed in between them. The Gulf Cooperation Council was founded in 1981 in part to unite the Sunni Gulf monarchies, led by the Al Saud, against Persian influence in the region. Thus, the contention between the regional

[10] Part of the Ottoman-Persian struggle in the sixteenth century was also over Sunni/Shia influence in the region, and so political conflict for sectarian dominance has been present for centuries.
[11] This policy is explored in detail in Chapter Four.

powers is more about geopolitics and the balance of power than an inherent and insurmountable religious rift.

Nonetheless, both sides have used "religion as rhetoric and a foreign policy tool" for decades (Matthiesen 2013, 29). Since Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf funded Saddam Hussein in his eight-year war against Iran, it was quite easy for the Gulf States to reinvigorate and re-adopt the same sectarian threat narrative that had been used as propaganda just a generation ago. Suspicion was thus easily sowed, and the popular protests were delegitimized at the cost of the GCC's foreign relations with Iran and at the cost of the Bahraini Shia's desires for equality. The dramatically different reactions and experiences of the Bahraini Shia and Sunni citizens will be further explored in the next section.

iii. Alienation of the Sunni Protesters

> "In Bahrain, the civil unrest of early 2011 and the violent government crackdown was framed in terms of sectarian conflict between a Shia majority and a Sunni ruling elite, not in terms of citizen dissatisfaction with the country's history of migration and unemployment." Neha Vora, *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora* (2013, 174)

The protests at the Pearl Roundabout were organized to voice general citizen dissatisfaction, and though the activists who planned the February 14th rally were mostly Shia, demands were distinctly non-sectarian. The protests for better living conditions and more royal accountability were immediately met with tear gas and rubber bullets; thirty Bahrainis were injured, and one was killed. At the funeral of the slain activist, mourners again marched to the Pearl Roundabout. This time, Bahraini security personnel opened fire, killing yet another Bahraini. This second assault prompted thousands of Bahrainis to occupy the roundabout, setting up tents in protest. According to eyewitness reports (Matthiesen 2013), the Pearl Roundabout quickly became a space of community, with people providing food, medical tents, and media

centers where activists and protesters could come together to watch global coverage of their endeavors. The air of solidarity changed when sectarianism was brought into the rhetoric, at first almost inadvertently, and then more directly.

One of the main protest chants at the Pearl Roundabout was "we are the original inhabitants of this island" (Matthiesen 2013, 31). This was a loaded statement, because while the intention was for the slogan to be directed at the Al Khalifa (who, as mentioned previously, were seen by many as occupiers and conquerors of the islands rather than its rightful rulers), it implicitly included many other Sunnis and all of the more recent migrants; most of the Bahraini Sunnis arrived at the islands with the Al Khalifa as a part of the Utub migration in the eighteenth century. The nativist chant was meant to link the Al Khalifa with their ancestral home of Najd in Saudi Arabia, but it also unintentionally made many Sunni citizens feel unwelcome at the Pearl Roundabout. This slogan was arguably what triggered the start of the divisiveness and alienation of Sunnis from the eventual uprising, which quickly spun into a downward spiral, further exacerbated by the Al Khalifa and local and regional media casting the protesters as exclusively Shia (if not Iranian agents as well). It did not help that many of the Bahraini security forces who were engaged policing the roundabout and dispersing protesters were recent Sunni migrants from South and East Asia.

Both the pro-government and anti-government sides were soon blaming foreign infiltrators for the violence in Bahrain. As Matthiesen aptly surmises, these "attempts by regimes to cast critics as 'foreign agents,' are deeply problematic in a region characterized by centuries of seafaring, trade, migration, tribal and imperial conquests, and shifting political alliances. In many ways, they are reactions against attempts by post-independence Gulf States to create homogenous nationalist narratives based on Sunni Arab identity" (2013, 32). Once sectarianism

and nativism were brought into the Pearl Roundabout protests, any hope in bringing about meaningful change from the Al Khalifa was lost. The reasons behind the divisiveness are not found solely in the government's top-down sectarian rhetoric nor in real differences between the two groups on the ground: the arrival of Saudi troops and the ensuing period of martial law and retribution solidified the divisions and made it "socially acceptable to hate the other sect" (Matthiesen 2013, 70).

Quite ironically, the site of the Bahrainis' demands for reform was only nicknamed the Pearl Roundabout – its official name was the Gulf Cooperation Council Roundabout, and the landmark was erected in honor of the third GCC summit in Manama in 1982. Protesters had purposefully chosen this symbol of national and geopolitical unity as a place to rally for freedom. Instead, the GCC and its Peninsula Shield Force became the very mechanism through which the protests were quashed.

Today, the structure at the Pearl Roundabout is long gone, and what the Al Khalifa erected in its place is a clear message from the regime that the Sunni and Shia are at odds; instead of a roundabout, there now stands 'Faruq Junction' in honor of the second Caliph Umar ibn Al-Khattab. Al-Khattab was a Sunni war hero who conquered the Iranian Sassanid Empire (Matthiesen 2013, 71). Shia Muslims do not accept the first three Caliphs as the successors of the Prophet Muhammed. In this way, the Al Khalifa symbolically turned a representation of unity into one of sectarian division and of an idealized Bahraini identity and citizenry based on ethno-nationalism, thereby dealing a final blow to the protesters.

The top-down, heavy-handed partisanship of the monarchy and its regional supporters worked in Bahrain. Many Sunni Bahrainis were in favor of the protests initially, but eventually turned their backs on the cause. Non-citizens in Bahrain, as well as those recently naturalized to

increase the number of Sunnis in the kingdom stayed home; they feared that should the Shia nationalist rhetoric succeed, it would lead to the eventual expulsion of migrants from the island**.**

Today, Bahrainis continue to struggle with the fallout and ramifications of the Pearl Uprisings of 2011. In March, just a month after the uprising began, the GCC collectively pledged twenty billion dollars in aid to Bahrain and Oman, the GCC's poorest members, implicitly to allow their rulers to 'invest' in higher salaries and handouts to buy off the opposition. However, many of the uprising's Shia organizers remain imprisoned, and Shia citizens have faced retribution through attacks from the monarchy's security forces in their rural neighborhoods; they are worse off today than they were before the protests and continue to be targeted.

In a 2018 Human Rights Watch report assessing the status of rights in countries around the world, the organization reported that Bahrain's human rights record continued to worsen in the years after the Arab Spring. In 2017, security forces ordered the country's only independent newspaper to shut down, and *Al-Wefaq*, Bahrain's most popular Shia opposition party still has not been allowed to convene. Furthermore, the government has resumed its use of the death penalty following trials that are known to be unfair and for confessions that are known to be coerced. Nabeel Al-Rajab, the country's most vocal and well-known human rights activist and head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights remains in prison on allegations of "disseminating false news, statements, and rumors about the internal situation in the kingdom that would undermine its prestige and status" (HRW 2018, 63).[12]

Thus, regional sectarianism appears to have protected the Al Khalifa regime in the short term. However, challenges continue to loom large; unemployment and a lack of real political reform are still keeping Bahrain's majority dissatisfied. Thus, "the country's varied opposition

[12] This charge was due to comments Al-Rajab made in televised interviews in 2015.

and the monarchy remain far apart… and none question the lengths to which the Gulf's rulers will go to ensure the Al Khalifa primacy" (Brynen and Zahar 2012, 82). In an era when the ruling families no longer have the power to control what is said about them, and criticism can be anonymized online and demands made in public, the experience of the Arab Spring in the Gulf has shown the latest generation of idealistic youth of the peninsula that if true unity is possible, then "change has to come, be it through reform or, eventually, revolutionary outburst" (Matthiesen 2013, 130).

iv. Kuwait's Arab Spring and Different Cleavages

In Kuwait, between twenty to thirty percent of citizens are Shia.[13] Kuwait's Shia originally migrated from Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia (mainly the Al Ahsa region in the east), and Bahrain, with the most significant group (about seventy percent of Kuwaiti Shia) being of Persian origin. Unlike the Shia in Bahrain or Eastern Saudi Arabia who claim to be the original residents of their areas and therefore see the Sunni leadership as invaders and occupiers, Matthiesen writes that Kuwait was a society of immigrants, and "Kuwaitis of all persuasions hail from somewhere else and mainly settled in the region over the past two centuries, chiefly for economic and political reasons." (2013, 99). Thus, relations between the Sunni and Shia in Kuwait have not traditionally been as problematic as in neighboring Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. In *Kuwait Amid War, Peace and Revolution: 1979-1991*, Boghardt believes that "the case of the Kuwaiti Shia represented the one success story of Shiite communities in the region" (2006, 32).

[13] Matthiesen estimates this based on his fieldwork; no official state statistics distinguish between Sunni and Shia when estimating the number of Muslims in the Gulf. Meanwhile, Barakat and Skelton think the number is closer to between fifteen and twenty-five percent of the country's population (2014, 4).

As early migrants, the Shia allied themselves with the Al Sabah family, and have remained loyal to them for centuries, becoming wealthy through trade along the way. The Al Sabah have significantly benefited from this support, using them as a crucial counterbalance to the nationalist-leaning Sunni elite in the 1950s and 1960s (as mentioned previously, many wealthy Sunnis were inspired by Arab nationalism and leftist ideologies and sought to curtail the power of the ruling family through Nasserite nationalist rhetoric). In addition to the sedentary Shia merchant groups, in their effort counter the nationalist Sunni families' ideologies, the Al Sabah formed new alliances and encouraged the migration and naturalization of tribal groups that had settled at the borders of Kuwait City. Many of these families were also Shia, and nearly all of them were *badu* (Arabic for bedouins), whereas Kuwait's traditional wealthy merchant families were Sunni *hathar* (sedentarized).

This political move exacerbated divisions between the typically wealthy, educated elite and often more impoverished, more religious, and less educated tribesmen. In 2011, both the *hathar* and the *badu* came together for the first time with the Orange Movement's quest for political reform and the removal of the corrupt unelected Prime Minister, Nasser Al Sabah (similar in many ways to Bahrain's unpopular PM). The Orange Movement had its roots in the successful campaign for women's suffrage in 2005, followed by another successful attempt to reduce the number of electoral constituencies from twenty-five to five in 2006 in order to reduce corruption. In 2011, the Western-educated youth traditionally associated with the Orange Movement, along with Salafists and tribesmen, came together to march, representing a wide swath of classes, tribes, and sects.

Overwhelmed by the united front presented by protesters, just as "in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, the ruling family and its allies had to come up with a narrative that divided the protesters

and prevented a possible common opposition front. This narrative was the *badu-hathar* divide" (Matthiesen 2013, 95). The old Shia merchant families stood staunchly with the Al Sabah, including the Prime Minister, and were quick to label the protest movement as a tribal uprising against the sedentary natives of Kuwait. As in Bahrain, the people merely wanted a political voice and enhanced economic equality for all citizens, but the government utilized divide-and-rule tactics instead. Unlike Bahrain, the Shia were on the same side as the monarchy, and so a different type of division was promulgated.

Protests continued to grow in Kuwait throughout 2011, culminating in November of that year, when a group of young protesters stormed the Kuwaiti Parliament. Prime Minister Nasser Al Sabah resigned a few days later under confirmed allegations of vote-buying and extensive corruption. Elections soon took place for a new government, but the newly elected parliament was dissolved in February of 2012 and the pre-protest parliament was reinstated (Kuwait Politics Database). This caused widespread outrage among hopeful Kuwaitis, and a second massive protest took place in October, when over fifty thousand took to the streets in the largest rally in Kuwaiti history. Protesters were tear gassed and shot at with rubber bullets.

Musallam Al Barrak, an opposition figure who had gained the most votes for a single candidate in the February 2012 elections gave a speech titled "We Will Not Let You," challenging the political authority of the Emir in public. The Emir responded by describing the protests as "chaotic sedition that would jeopardize our country and undermine our national unity" (Matthiesen 2013, 105). Al Barrak was arrested and charged with insulting the Emir, but subsequent protests brought around his release.

It is important to note that the Kuwaiti protests during this time were densely populated by the bidoon, whose plight, as Matthiesen writes, "touches upon some of the key issues of

Kuwait politics: political economy, the demonization of tribes in the media, and sectarianism" (2013, 108). Bidoon rights activists claim that about sixty percent of the bidoon are Shia, and it has been posited that any new policies undertaken to naturalize the bidoon population would alter the sectarian balance in Kuwait. Like the Shia in Bahrain, Kuwaiti bidoon commonly live in villages on the outskirts of the city far from downtown Kuwait in makeshift communities with unpaved roads and poor infrastructure.

The bidoon had the most to gain from these protests for equality, but also far more to lose; Kuwait's 1962 constitution protects the right to protest, but it only applies to Kuwaiti citizens. Since the bidoon, by definition, do not have citizenship, they face far harsher punishment if caught protesting. Thus, "the continuing political impasse in Bahrain… and the sectarian double standards evident in the attitude of many politicians to protestors in Bahrain and Kuwait who have made similar demands but who come from different backgrounds, all indicate that social and religious divisions remain a major weakness in opposition bargaining power, and ultimately reduce the ability of citizens to negotiate with the state on the basis of their status as citizens" (Kinnimont 2013, 57).

In the aftermath of the 2012 unrest, new laws have been passed that betray Kuwait's traditionally permissive political atmosphere. Human Rights Watch reported in 2018 that the recently implemented cybercrime law, which went into effect in 2016, "includes far-reaching restrictions on internet-based speech, such as prison sentences, and fines for insulting religion, religious figures, and the emir" (HRW 2018, 326). This shows the monarchy's desire to maintain national and regional unity at all costs.

Interestingly, Kuwait's British Ambassador at the time of the protests remained unfazed throughout the events. In an Op-Ed for the *Kuwait Times*, one of the country's English-language

newspapers, Ambassador Frank Baker wrote that the opposition and parliament essentially agree, and patience is key in order for meaningful reform to materialize. He noted that "it took the UK more than 350 years to arrive at its political settlement. Kuwait's is still evolving" (Baker 2012). Thus, while there was significant destabilization during the unrest, and concurrent political battles have stalled many development initiatives, much of this internal dissent may be a positive indicator of political activism bringing about some desired results for the citizens of Kuwait.

b. Institutionalizing Discrimination through the *Kafala* System

i. *Kafala* in Kuwait

As seen in the previous section, since 2011, the Gulf region has encountered significant protests from citizens about a lack of jobs, media censorship, and limited avenues of legal political participation. Without the presence of an impermeable barrier between citizens and non-citizens, there would have been a significant probability of further – and more intense – civil unrest in the Gulf States. However, there were several reasons why the migrant majority stayed home. One of the most significant was that all foreigners, no matter their status, are wholly subordinated under the *kafala* system. There are well over ten million foreign workers in the Gulf today (Gardner 2010, 12), and all of the immigrants who are in the region legally function within the framework of *kafala*.

In Kuwait, Bahrain, and across the Gulf, the institution of *kafala* has become a tool for the oppression and exploitation of migrant workers by Gulf nationals. Arabic for 'sponsorship,' *kafala* was originally a way for the bureaucratically weak governments to deal with the influx of migrants during the peninsula's oil boom by delegating oversight and legal responsibility for newcomers to private citizens. As Longva writes, "by shouldering these responsibilities, the

native sponsors were actually carrying their share of the collective task of alien surveillance" (1997, 100). In the Gulf, most Arab expatriates are Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese or Palestinian, while non-Arabs are mainly from the Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka). Filipinos and Indonesians are the most common demographic from Southeast Asia, and there is a small minority of Westerners – mostly Europeans and Americans. All foreign residents, from low-wage unskilled workers (such as live-in domestic servants) to highly skilled business executives, engineers, and doctors, enter the Gulf countries today on *kafala*.

Though the state initially developed *kafala* as a security apparatus, it quickly became a control mechanism as well. The system benefits employers disproportionately; by immobilizing workers in their positions and attaching them to their sponsors until or unless the sponsor agrees to let the employee quit, *kafala* laws guarantee that a competitive labor market in which workers participate in setting wages and regulate working conditions remains stunted. This is something that has not faded as the absolute reliance on foreigners for oil extraction has.

It is crucial to note that *kafala* is "only partly codified in law" (Gardner 2010, 59). As with many cultural practices in the Gulf, it developed as an offshoot of the debt and indentured servitude system used by pearl merchants to manage and finance divers on their voyages each year, and there are still some striking similarities in the ways in which modern-day *kafala* and indentured labor in pearl diving are structured. For example, freezing the laborer in his relationship to one employer was reminiscent of pearl divers' relations to their respective ship's owner, and emphasized the laborer's "lack of choice and the employer's paternalist role, and de-emphasized the exploitative aspect of the relationship" (Longva 1997, 106).

In this way, systemic abuse was justified by delegating responsibility to the *kafeel* (sponsor) "for potential moral and cultural transgressions that the sponsored foreigner might

commit, a notion that posits foreign workers as a polluting presence" (Gardner 2010, 29). Citizens were framed as protecting their cultural traditions against foreign aliens, and thus protected from blame. It is crucial to point out here that the Arab citizens' fear of cultural erosion is hardly believable when there has been a twelve-fold increase of migrants in the Gulf over the last forty years without a substantial ensuing change in morals, traditions, or values. [14]

By 1988, Kuwait had a population of almost two million, compared to slightly more than 200,000 in 1957 – the last year Kuwaitis were a majority in their own country until immediately after the Iraqi Invasion in 1990 (Longva 1997, 27). Today, according to the 2011 Kuwait census, there are only slightly more Asian migrant workers than Arab migrant workers in Kuwait (1.4 million Asians and 1.1 million Arabs). However, the advantages of Arab migrants when it comes to the *kafala* system are significant. All contracts and other documentation issued by an employer to employees are written in Arabic by law; translations might be added for the benefit of the non-Arabic speaking employee, but in the case of conflict between the Arabic and the foreign versions, the Arabic text prevailed. Unless they spoke the language, employees could not be entirely sure what they were signing up for. Arab migrants were, of course, less vulnerable to this kind of misunderstanding or manipulation.

Additionally, under *kafala's* racialized hierarchical system, Westerners and Gulf Arabs make the most amount of money in well-placed managerial positions, followed by non-Gulf Arabs, and then finally Asians, who tend to most often work in the service industry. Salaries and

[14] Gulf Arabs are not alone in their fear of the foreign, and debates surrounding immigration policies are heating up globally. Other countries in Southeast and East Asia are also worried about their cultural integrity and ethnic purity in the face of migration, and share similarities in their migration regimes. South Korea, one of the world's most ethnically homogenous societies, has no anti-discrimination laws, and locals-only businesses exist and openly discriminate based on ethnicity. Like Kuwait, South Korea also has a temporary residency system which grants low-wage workers renewable work permits to fill a workforce shortage in fields that native South Koreans shun due to conditions and pay. Just as with the *kafala* system, foreign workers in this program often cannot switch jobs except in conditions of assault or the non-payment of wages. Reminiscent of *kafala*, human rights activists have been calling this migration regime 'modern-day slavery' (Hyun-Ju 2017).

benefits in the Arab Gulf states are set by race and nationality with the justification that migrants are in the Gulf mainly to remit most of their earnings to their home countries; thus, foreigners are paid in accordance with the costs of living in their home countries. This openly discriminatory payment scheme has indubitably created some inter-ethnic animosity between Asian and Arab migrants (Vora 2013, 128), but historical cleavages between locals and foreigners have overall prevented inter-class strife because the *social* hierarchies have also been constructed on the basis of nationality, with Kuwaiti citizens always situated firmly at the top.[15]

Today, for every ten citizens in the State of Kuwait, there are twenty-three non-citizens. The domestic debate about expatriate numbers has become more intense, reflecting both a rising mood of populist nationalism in the country and a budget deficit of fifteen billion dollars in the 2015-16 fiscal year, the first after a seventeen-year run of surpluses (Bandow 2017)). The Kuwaiti government has long considered its high level of non-nationals a problem and has more recently been seeking to rebalance the state's demographics, aiming to reduce the seventy percent expatriate population to below fifty percent. Kuwaitis in positions as powerful as the Ministries of Labor and Kuwait's National Assembly partake in xenophobia regularly. In 2016, Kuwait's Ministry of Interior Affairs announced that about thirty thousand foreigners were deported throughout that year – roughly eighty a day. Deportations can occur for almost any reason, including petty crimes and traffic violations (Migrant Rights 2017).

The perception of migrants as a threat and a polluting presence appears to have become more conspicuous since the election of the new Minister of Labor, Safa Al Hashem, in February of 2013. Al Hashem has become notorious for her biased agenda against foreigners, particularly in her campaigns to ban non-Kuwaiti citizens from driving as a traffic remedy, suggesting that

[15] Proof of this hierarchy based on race and nationality alone is apparent in the seemingly arbitrary law that prevents domestic servants from being of the same nationality as their employers.

gas prices be raised for non-citizens only, and that non-citizens should be deported for minor traffic infractions.[16] In 2015, Al Hashem proposed a policy to reduce the number of expatriates by one million over the next ten years – at the rate of one hundred thousand each year – to tackle the demographic imbalance under the claim that "security, social, and economic concerns" necessitate mass deportation (Migrant Rights 2017).

The objectives of such reductions are ostensibly to "regulate the labor market, curb the phenomenon of marginal labor, and restore the demographic imbalance of the country" (Shah 2013, 46). The fact that Al Hashem is the only female Kuwaiti to be elected to parliament in consecutive elections shows that her stance is popular with many citizens. Meanwhile, pro-government merchant elites in Kuwait who also have a prominent political role benefit from their access to a low-cost labor force and would likely resist any government measure that threatens to jeopardize their supply of cheap foreign labor, just as business elites have resisted the same proposals in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. This creates a fundamental problem where economic interests and socio-political interests (framed as the preservation of a purified Kuwaiti national and social identity) do not align.

Anh Nga Longva describes the consequences of *kafala* on Kuwaitis in detail in her ethnography *Walls Built on Sand: Migration, Exclusion, and Society in Kuwait*. She notes that dependence on 'the other' for their own prosperity has fostered a feeling of marginalization amongst nationals, and she attempts to address the feelings of 'besieged' Kuwaitis to better grasp how the power-holders perceive their own role in the sponsor-sponsored relationship. Though she writes that "to do so does not mean condoning the asymmetry of power relations, or negating its existence" (1997, 102), in her attempt to enhance our understanding of the power dynamic in

[16] Driver's licenses have already been made more difficult for foreigners in Kuwait to acquire over the past several years, and there is now a minimum education and salary level that must be met in order to qualify for one.

this work, Longva relies on culturally deterministic explanations too heavily and gives the Kuwaiti *kafeel* treatment that is jarringly sympathetic. As mentioned, the threat of the migrant class uniting to oppose and somehow overrun the Kuwaiti minority may be an ever-present fear, but it is an entirely unrealistic one, given the total subordination that migrants legally in the country have to ascribe to.

In her interviews, Longva finds that most Kuwaitis agree that being a sponsor is a 'burden,' and tries to make the case that "the fears of the prospective employer were not very different from those of the prospective employee," in the sense that a new servant who arrives in a home and a Kuwaiti who employs a new servant both partake in 'a lottery,' never knowing quite whom they will get (1997, 103). In a particularly poignant interview, Longva quotes an older Kuwaiti woman's justification for withholding her household help's passports. She says: "look at it as an expression of our fears and helplessness. We are few, they are many; we cannot afford to be trusting" (1997, 103). Thus, though Longva is undoubtedly too forgiving of this practice, and overly accepting of Kuwaiti fears at face value, her ethnography does succeed at providing some understanding of how foreigners created a sense of deep suspicion and a constant feeling of being under siege for Kuwaitis.

The policies of extreme exclusion through *kafala* have thus far succeeded in allowing Kuwaitis to function as a unified entity in the face of expatriate majorities. Citizens use the system of *kafala* not just to protect their cultural traditions, or even minimize criminal behavior – they also use it to subordinate foreigners to preserve their own supremacy. In effect, the sudden surge of foreign workers post-oil extraction drew the native population together and inwards. Non-citizens are reduced to being necessary economic actors who remain temporary and are never given access to political rights or the abundant material benefits that come with

citizenship. Thus, the migrant "remains solely a temporary worker, and one whose perceived lack of hygiene, morality, and decorum threatens instead of contributes to the future of the nation" (Vora 2013, 48).

Though it is illegal in all the GCC states for an employer to confiscate their employees' passports, it is a law that remains unenforced. In 1997, Longva found that in Kuwait, as a rule, and regardless of their positions, foreign workers were expected to hand over their passports to their sponsors, who kept them for the rest of the employee's time in the country. At the time, this was done upon the explicit recommendation of the Ministry of Interior as a way to restrict expatriates' mobility and as a deterrent to those who may abscond or commit crimes, since foreigners who did so would not be able to flee the country. Though no longer a practice promoted by national ministries, passports are still withheld for these same reasons today, as Vora found in her ethnography of Indians in Dubai in 2013.

In Kuwait, non-Kuwaitis have the right to legal recourse and there have been cases of domestic servants filing civil or criminal lawsuits against their employers. However, few do this, since unskilled workers are often unaware of their legal rights. Even finding a lawyer may prove daunting, and "many are wary of state institutions. [Domestic workers] may not trust Kuwait's police or judiciary or are unaware of or unable to access these resources" (Ahmad 2017, 61). Thus, court cases where a non-Kuwaiti sues a Kuwaiti (particularly employee-employer lawsuits) are rare, though promisingly, they are usually resolved in favor of the foreign worker.

Longva's more recent work, *Neither Autocracy nor Democracy but Ethnocracy: Citizens, Expatriates and the Socio-Political System in Kuwait*, published in a collection of case studies, does a better job of balancing the structural violence Kuwaitis commit against domestic workers with the cultural fears they may be experiencing. Longva writes that the power of the *kafeel* in

their relationship with domestic workers is "practically limitless," with the only real boundaries on working conditions and hours being set by the *kafeel* themselves – the person who directly profits from the work of the employee. This, of course, is inherently problematic, and while many sponsors do treat their servants fairly and humanely, "there is a disturbing pattern of exploitation and mistreatment" (Longva 2005, 26).

In this more recent work, Longva is successful at illuminating the actual motives for the fear that locals experience – fears that are directly related to conscious choices Gulf households make when they decide to hire domestic workers. She writes that because domestic workers live within the household, they take part in the private world of their employers, "which is also the locus for the reproduction of the most important part of the society's moral system, namely family relations and relations between men and women" (Longva 2005, 125). The hiring of a stranger who may not share the same cultural norms and values into this private space means that taboos are often violated by the very presence of a non-familial member in the household, giving rise to the perception that there is a threat to cultural and moral integrity *within* Kuwaitis' homes. These feelings and transgressions often go unnoticed by domestic workers themselves, as many are unaware of the norms and taboos in the first place. There is neither a training program for these women in their home countries nor once they get to the Gulf to help mitigate such experiences. Regardless, it is vital to remember that it is the employers themselves who willingly submit to this vulnerability.

In a similar vein, the fact that migrant workers are citizens of other states facilitates deportation – or, more precisely, the threat of deportation – as an effective and low-cost method of punishing migrants who break the law; a path that would be much more difficult if the workers were national citizens. Despite the fact that the economies of labor-sending countries

(mainly India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and the Philippines) rely heavily on remittances from workers in the Gulf, until recently, there have been varied levels of formal organization devoted to assisting workers who report abuse, visa problems, or withheld wages. The embassies of these countries are often understaffed and underequipped, and also act as refuges to house absconding domestic servants wishing to be repatriated. It can take months until their passports are returned and they can leave the country.

Today, Kuwait has the highest ratio of domestic workers to citizens in the world. According to the head of the Domestic Sector at the General Residency Affairs Department, Muhammed Al Ajmi, the total number of registered domestic workers in Kuwait was about seven hundred thousand in December of 2017, which equals one domestic worker for every *two* Kuwaiti citizens (Arab Times 2017). Human Rights Watch reported that the embassies of labor-sending countries in Kuwait received more than ten thousand complaints from domestic workers in 2009 alone. The objections included the "nonpayment of wages; withholding of passports; excessively long working hours without rest; and physical, sexual, and psychological abuse" (HRW 2015). Human Rights Watch, the Migrant Rights Organization, the ACLU, and the United Nations are just a few of the international organizations that have spoken out against *kafala*, calling it modern-day slavery. Sadly, this criticism has mostly fallen on deaf ears, and the system is still in place today.

Because vulnerable foreign workers were covered by the *kafala* system, these populations had been excluded from the labor system and its applicable oversight laws until recently. As follows, there were no legal national laws regulating servants' working hours, no government-mandated benefits, and no guarantee of a minimum wage. In July of 2015, Kuwait's National Assembly finally passed a law granting domestic workers the right to a weekly day off, one

month of paid leave annually, and made it illegal for domestic servants to work more than twelve-hour days. In July of 2017, the Interior Ministry issued a decree setting the minimum wage for domestic workers at sixty dinars, or about two hundred dollars a month, making Kuwait the first Arab Gulf state to codify such a law (HRW 2018, 325).

However, the new domestic worker laws fail to set out concrete enforcement mechanisms; since the home is sacrosanct in Gulf society, it is unlikely that the state will ever implement routine or surprise home inspections to evaluate working conditions. This is likely the only way to stop the most egregious cases of abuse. Because they operate in an entirely private sphere outside of the labor system and its regulations, domestic workers also often have little or no physical access to the Ministry of Labor. This reality has been criticized by external advocacy organizations for creating easy opportunities for the exploitation of workers, as employers can abuse their employees with little, if any, legal repercussion. Thus, despite the passing of these promising laws, domestic workers remain vulnerable in many of the same ways.

Most recently in Kuwait, twenty-nine-year-old Joanna Demafelis, a Filipino domestic worker who had been reported missing for a year was found in a freezer, bearing visible signs of torture. Interpol apprehended the woman's sponsors, A Syrian-Lebanese couple who had fled the country. The scandal rocked both Kuwait and the Philippines, and populist President Rodrigo Duterte imposed a total ban on Filipino citizens traveling abroad to work in Kuwait in January 2018. The Philippines also began repatriating hundreds of domestic workers who were already in Kuwait. In May of 2018, after a meeting with the Emir of Kuwait, Duterte lifted the ban, citing that Kuwait has adequately responded to the Philippines' request for a bilateral accord that will ban Kuwaitis from confiscating the passports of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). It has yet to

be seen whether this international crisis will bring about real change in the form of more governmental oversight to Kuwait's *kafala* system.

ii. *Kafala* Amid Unemployment in Bahrain

> "As a system, the *kafala* has emerged as a fulcrum of abuse to which racial, cultural, gender, and religious bigotry cling. By vesting power in individual citizens through the *kafala*, the Bahraini state enables these vectors of abuse." Andrew Gardner, *City of Strangers: Gulf Migration and the Indian Community in Bahrain* (2010, 69)

Today, Bahrain is perhaps the closest state in the GCC to doing away with the *kafala* system. In a public statement from 2009, Bahrain's Labor and Social Affairs Minister announced that the system would be dismantled, and compared *kafala* to slavery (Harmassi 2009), a comparison that groups such as the Migrant Rights Organization and Human Rights Watch have been making for years, but is groundbreaking coming from this high-ranking a governmental appointee. However, years after the initial announcement, details on how this will be done remain scarce. It is thought that Bahrain plans to take a more direct role in giving foreign workers the right to switch their employers, instead of requiring sponsors themselves to give this permission (Gardner 2010, 161).

Bahraini law categorically prohibits the confiscation of foreign workers' passports, yet, as in other Gulf countries, confiscation is still a regular occurrence. Furthermore, as in Kuwait, Bahraini law requires that all business endeavors include at least one Bahraini owner, which gives rise to a peculiar situation where 'silent' or 'sleeping' partners sign onto the registration paperwork of foreign businessmen and then essentially get paid to keep their distance.

As unemployment among the already dissatisfied mainly Shia Bahrainis rises along with the total population, and oil profits begin to ebb, the kingdom's transnational residents will increasingly be regarded as undesirable competition. Foreigners may be more skilled

(particularly linguistically, in that they are more likely to be fluent in English) and willing to work for less pay than a Bahraini citizen. Thus, animosity between the two groups over limited resources is something that is likely to increase faster than the citizenry can adjust its expectations and sense of entitlement to easy, secure work with good pay.

As Gardner so aptly concludes: "After all, there are few places in the world in which a son does not expect to have the same opportunities as his father" (2010, 153).[17] Since non-citizens, residents, and recently naturalized migrants are unable to vote, government officials running for office do not consider their concerns. The vilification of migrants and foreigners is nothing new in today's global political climate, but is particularly severe given the GCC's demographics. This conflict speaks to a broader intrinsic problem, which is that Gulf citizens collectively may feel there are too many non-citizens in their countries, but individually would resist being forced do the menial, low-skilled work that most expatriates do.

c. Conclusion

> "The nation, as the realm of the citizen, rooted in autochthonous understandings of bedouin tribal pasts, requires the elision of 'labor' or other noncitizen politicizations in order to remain purified of foreign elements and to maintain the citizen-noncitizen distinction and perpetuate an ethnocratic hierarchy." Neha Vora, *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora* (2013, 178)

In a rentier state, foreigners are needed solely to provide labor for the country's day-to-day functioning, and thus they are not usually considered beyond their necessary role in the economy. The social, political, and cultural lives, loyalties, and influences of non-citizens are

[17] Though this sentiment is changing globally, perhaps particularly in the United States, Gulf citizens still very much see themselves as an upwardly mobile society as a whole. Middle class adults in the Gulf have grandparents who lived in destitution and parents who provided them with everything. They expect at least an incremental increase in opportunities, if not more, for themselves.

thought to exist outside of life in the Gulf precisely because the population is temporary.[18] Migrants are often relegated to a space that is analogous to belonging in the Gulf cities before one can even explore their narratives of – and effects on – the places where they spend what often turns out to be most (or all) of their lives.

However, despite attempts to erase expatriate experiences and render them rightless, powerless, and voiceless, the effect of millions of migrants in the region is indispensable to the way Gulf citizens "imagine their nations, construct their national identities, and organize their class relations" (Longva 2005, 135). Neglecting to understand the role expatriates play in Arab Gulf consciousness – and subconsciousness – means that one cannot understand Arab Gulf national identity. Total exclusion and invisibility are not the reality, but rather the image that must be successfully broadcast to citizens by the state to produce its legitimacy. In other words, national identity in the Gulf is made meaningful and valuable bec*ause of* the massive migrant presence – and the migrants' categorical exclusion – in the Gulf. National identity is defined as being analogous to the foreign. This definition will be explored further in the next chapter.

[18] In September of 2018, Qatar's Emir issued a decree stating that up to a hundred foreigners a year could be granted permanent residence (Fattah 2018). This move is unprecedented and is likely a result of non-citizens leaving the country in light of the Gulf blockade.

CHAPTER THREE: CONSTRUCTING CITIZENSHIP

> "Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent… political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: *that* is a reality. In short, for the purposes of analysis, nationalism comes before nations. Nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way around." Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1990, 10)

Once borders were demarcated in the early twentieth century, the Arabian Gulf monarchies had to take on the substantive burden of uniting a diverse set of inhabitants and loyalties under a single nation. The ruling dynasties had to do this if they wanted to keep control and survive. One significant challenge in this pursuit was that there was no single common bond that existed between these inhabitants that was unique to the bonds they also shared with other residents of the peninsula, aside from the fact that they all resided within a recently constructed border. Consolidating groups of pearl-divers, traders, bedouins, and migrants was not an easy task, but it had to be done to ensure legitimacy and effective governance.

As Khoury and Kostiner argue in *Tribes and State Formation*, "tribes owe their solidarity not to kinship per se but to 'a myth of common ancestry'" (1990, 5). Some of the Gulf's leaders, all once tribal, but today very much sedentary, found the construction of statehood and national identity easier than others, but in all cases, it required creating legends and histories retroactively (Al-Nakib 2016, 5). The Al Sabah, for example, had in their favor that they were a part of the original migrating tribe to Kuwait, and thus were at an advantage to create an epic tale of migration – echoes which can be seen in nationalist Kuwaiti literature (Abu-Hakima 1983; Lienhardt 1993). In this way, "the name and the legends of the migration gave Kuwaitis the origins of a national identity in a unifying founding myth" (Crystal 1995, 18). Though this was

more lore than reality, it did not necessarily matter, as the very presence of a verifiable shared national narrative has a direct correlation to state stability and solidarity.

Bahrain, meanwhile, lacked the merging effect of a singular tale of migration, civic myth, or state symbols that could be substantiated. On the contrary, the Al Khalifa were seen by many as conquerors. Thus, the Bahraini royal family had to create legends, histories and state symbols retroactively to legitimate their rule. The Al Khalifa's efforts were largely ineffective, if not impossible, since many of the citizens' political allegiances lay with Shia clerics. Bahrain's Shia communities are divided among Shia of Arab origin and those of Persian origin. The latter stood aside during the 1994-1999 uprising in Bahrain for fear of being branded as Iranian 'agents' should they participate in the unrest, so there was also divisiveness *within* the two main segments of Bahraini society.

The integration of Shia Bahrainis into the socio-political framework of the kingdom remains a momentous challenge, and one that is only exacerbated by the fact that Bahraini royals gave residencies to Sunni Muslims from other countries to bolster support for their sect – an act that served to further alienate the Shia and reduce their loyalty to the Al Khalifa. If the Al Khalifa continues in this trend of naturalizing foreigners, Bahrain will eventually become unrecognizable to its citizens. This demographic engineering will inevitably deepen social fissures and heighten political opposition against the royal family and the state in the long term.

The development of a shared history and national narrative that connected citizens directly to their rulers plays a critical role in understanding these regimes' endurance. Because these states are so young – Kuwait gaining independence less than sixty years ago, and Bahrain less than fifty – "the national identities that have been created are [still] directly related to the ruling families… and difference is seen as disloyalty" (Chatham House 2012, 7).

This chapter and the one that follows will explore a similar theme: that states need enemies, both internal and external, in order to reinforce separation and secure their existence as a distinct national entity. This need for enemies is especially salient in small nations whose residents share historical narratives and permeable senses of belonging with other states in their region. In this chapter, I explore how the Gulf dynasties used foreigners and non-citizens as the perfect foil against which they defined nationhood and created a rally-around-the-flag effect. A pivotal added benefit of sowing anti-immigrant, anti-naturalization sentiment in an allocative state is that the beneficiaries of the state have an incentive to keep the population small and loyal. The next chapter will explore how external enemies aid in statecraft, while this one focuses on the internal.

a. Nationality Law in Kuwait and Bahrain

> "The Wilsonian system… demonstrated to no great surprise that the nationalism of small nations was just as impatient of minorities as what Lenin called 'great-nation chauvinism.'" Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1990, 134)

Bahraini Nationality Law specifies that one of the following criteria must be satisfied if one is to become a citizen: that they settled in Bahrain before May 8th, 1937, were born in Bahrain with a father also born in Bahrain, or that they resided in Bahrain for at least fifteen years consecutively if the applicant is of Arab descent, and twenty-five consecutive years if the applicant is not. Those seeking citizenship must be fluent in Arabic, and own real estate in Bahrain. The King may also grant anyone citizenship at his discretion (Bahrain Nationality Law 1963). The details of this exception are broad and vague, and perhaps intentionally may be interpreted in many ways. Unlike anywhere else in the Gulf, non-Arab Asians *are* sometimes naturalized. In this way, Ong's definition of 'flexible citizenship' is attainable in Bahrain, and

the most affluent members of the Asian diaspora can escape some of the vulnerabilities of the *kafala* system by paying for Bahraini citizenship. Gardner reports in *City of Strangers* that some "prominent businessmen who had achieved citizenship did not meet this [twenty-five-year consecutive residency] requirement" (2010, 87). After an application for citizenship is submitted, passport-seekers are expected to demonstrate their knowledge of the Arabic language in a series of interviews. An application fee for citizenship can cost anywhere between fifty thousand dollars to triple that amount (Gardner 2010).

As mentioned, Bahraini Nationality Law was passed in 1937, when Bahrain was under active British control. Kuwait, by contrast, "defined nationality independently of empires, and the Kuwaiti model was [later] widely followed… in practice, a line was drawn at an arbitrary date around an arbitrary grouping" (Dresch 2005, 141). In Kuwait, nationality law specifies that the following criteria must be satisfied if one is to become a citizen: they must have settled in Kuwait prior to 1920, have been born in Kuwait to a Kuwaiti father, or have resided in Kuwait for at least twenty consecutive years. As in Bahrain, those petitioning for citizenship must be fluent in Arabic, with the notable exception of foreign women who marry Kuwaiti men.

Unlike Bahraini Nationality Law, anyone seeking Kuwaiti citizenship *must* be Muslim by birth or conversion. However, if they are Christians or Jews, foreign women married to Kuwaiti men are not obligated to convert. Additionally, there exist several hundred native Christians in Kuwait whose families have resided there for long enough that they need not meet the religious criteria. There are also small native Christian and Jewish communities in Bahrain, though this is less notable because Bahraini nationality law does not have religious pre-conditions in its statutes. In Kuwait, citizenship may be granted by decree upon the recommendation of the Minister of the Interior and, according to the law, citizenship may be revoked if any Kuwaiti

should become a member of an association which intends to undermine "the social or economic structure of Kuwait or where he has been convicted of an offense involving breach of allegiance to Kuwait" (Kuwait Nationality Law 1959).

Despite the intricacies of Kuwait and Bahrain's nationality laws, people mostly employ the traditional custom of classifying people by their birthplaces, rather than "according to their formal subjection to a state" (Longva 1997, 43). In the eyes of Kuwait's 1948 law, those deemed 'originally Kuwaiti,' were members of the ruling family and the accompanying migrating tribes, those permanently residing in Kuwait up to 1899, and children of Kuwaiti men, as well as children of Arabs or Muslim men who were born in Kuwait prior to 1948. Eleven years later in 1959, a new nationality law came into effect and the category of 'originally Kuwaiti' was broadened to include descendants of those who settled in Kuwait up to 1920 rather than 1899. The new law also eliminated the category of children born in Kuwait to Arab or Muslim fathers as potential candidates for citizenship.

In this work, I define citizenship as holding a passport, being able to vote, and – most importantly in the case of the Gulf States – having access to welfare and benefits. Anh Nga Longva and Michael Herb both suggest that Kuwaiti locals feel that they own the oil, and few are grateful for a gift already seen as theirs. Longva writes that Kuwaitis take the social and material benefits they enjoy for granted, explaining that "since oil was the country's natural resource, 'given to the Kuwaiti people by Allah,' it was only natural that the revenues from its exploitation should be used for the benefit of the people" (Longva 1997, 49).[19] As resources dwindle, citizenship is likely to become increasingly constricted.

[19] Ramifications of this conviction will be examined in Chapter Five.

b. Narratives of National Identity

> "To insist on consciousness or choice as the criterion of nationhood is insensibly to subordinate the complex and multiple ways in which human beings define and redefine themselves as members of groups, to a single option: the choice of belonging to a 'nation' or 'nationality.'" Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1990, 8)

In creating a national identity, the new royal families deemed residents like them – Gulf Arab, Sunni inhabitants with nomadic ancestors – the original residents, and thus the real citizens of the region. The Gulf Arabs were placed in juxtaposition with all other residents in the ethnically diverse countries in the Gulf, particularly those from Eastern and Southern Asia, no matter how long ago many of these migrants had made their move to the Gulf Peninsula. Further promoting this experience of exclusion, citizens also played a part by participating in maintaining and reinforcing difference between the migrants and themselves.

Bahrain, Kuwait, and the rest of the Gulf States have created a niche brand of nationalism through what Longva and Mazrui term an 'ethnocracy.' As outlined in the introduction, an ethnocracy is "a political system based on kinship, real or presumed" (Mazrui 1975). Political participation is inextricably determined by ethnicity in the Gulf, and those who share the ethnicity and same tale of migration and common descent as the ruling family are considered the elite. In this way, an ethnocracy is the product of a nation built on a pure and uniform ethnic community, rather than Western liberal understandings of a nation as an amalgamation of people with equal rights, duties, and obligations.

Hobsbawm and Gellner cite nationalism as "primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent" (Gellner 1983, 1). In an effort to achieve this congruence, the state created an altered national narrative in Kuwait and Bahrain, whereby history was rewritten specifically with the exclusion and the "erasure of precolonial and colonial

cosmopolitanisms [in mind]. State discourses represented economic diversity and migrant labor as the necessary evils of oil wealth that were opposed to – and therefore threatening to – the long-standing cultural history of Gulf natives" (Vora 2013, 13). The Gulf States thereby attempt to keep their populations small, homogenous, united, and exclusive.

This mirrors Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community,' which outlines that national identity is imagined precisely "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (1983, 5). Though it is impossible for citizens of a nation to know most of their countrymen, each resident will have a clear picture of what they ought to look like. Anderson, like Hobsbawm and Gellner, believes that statecraft and the creation of a national identity are modern undertakings with economic and political motivations driving their construction. His definition can be used to describe the type of nationalism fostered in the Gulf today, and can shed some light on the motives behind it.

In the early days of Kuwait and Bahrain, as well as the broader Gulf, monarchs had little choice but to adopt these exclusionary policies if they were to keep control of their diverse populations.[20] The modern welfare states of Kuwait and Bahrain today operate in much the same way. If all those who desired citizenship were awarded it, the benefits of being included would not be as generous as they are now, and this could prove fatal for the ruling dynasties' longevity. As British Political Agent Aubrey Halford wrote in 1959, "If the Kuwaiti bandwagon were not a comfortable vehicle for all its passengers, its top-heaviness might have brought it off the road by now" (Joyce 1998, 55).

[20] Lienhardt, while completing his dissertation fieldwork in the early 1950s, reported in his research: "I had set out for Kuwait with the idea of studying a society that was changing, but it proved quite unexpectedly difficult to think of the local population of Kuwait, indigenous and immigrant, as anything coherent enough to be called a society" (1993, 35).

i. Tools to Build a Purified National Identity

> "Naturally, states would use the increasingly powerful machinery for communicating with their inhabitants… to spread the image and heritage of the 'nation' and to inculcate attachment to it and to attach all to country and flag, often 'inventing traditions' or even nations for this purpose." Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1990, 92)

During a workshop sponsored by Chatham House titled *Law and Citizenship in the GCC* (an event held to address issues such as the role of the state, women's rights, censorship, changing cultural values, and concepts of citizenship), the increasing trend towards growing nationalism in the GCC was highlighted. Participants expressed concern about proliferating nationalist sentiments and growing "expression related to national symbols – such as the use of flags and slogans, and displaying favoritism towards prominent national historical figures – and attitudes towards foreign groups including minorities… bordering on xenophobia and McCarthyism" (2013, 8). This localized phenomenon has occurred simultaneously with a global rise in populist nationalism and has both theoretical and political implications for the future of the Gulf States.

As mentioned, nationalism in the Gulf is based on patriarchal conceptualizations of the state as kin, specifically that the nation exists as a single and united family, with the Emir situated firmly at the top as the father figure and patriarch. Tétreault and Al-Mughni posit that this image was first promoted in Kuwait in the early 1970s to bring about national cohesion. In this way, blood ties and pure lineages are seen as indispensable to a monarchy's legitimacy. This patriarchal understanding of citizenship manifests in restrictions on female citizens' rights. In the Gulf Peninsula, citizenship is patrilineal, or passed down through males. This means that female GCC citizens who marry non-nationals are thought to be blurring the boundaries of national

identity and ethnic purity, and are often marginalized along with their families. However, the families of GCC men who marry non-GCC citizens are treated no differently than families in which both spouses are from the same country.

Gulf women who marry outside of national or ethnic lines expose themselves and their children to the denial of economic, political and social rights reserved for 'ethnically pure' citizens. Their non-national children are "unable to benefit from the free schools, healthcare, and, later, job opportunities reserved for nationals" (Kinnimont 2013, 53). Their offspring are also not allowed to own property in Kuwait. In the past, marriages to foreigners have even caused female GCC citizens to lose some of their own privileges; in 1982, Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaiti men lost their right to government-provided housing (Tétreault and Al-Mughni 1995, 408). In Bahrain, the state must approve all foreign marriages, and they are much less likely to be approved for female citizens than for males. These policies, of course, consist of gender discrimination and stand entirely contradictorily to the states' international obligations.

In Kuwait, women who marry foreigners still risk not being able to sponsor their husbands and children, while foreign women married to Kuwaiti men have the exclusive privilege of being the only people born outside the Gulf with a regulated mechanism through which to acquire Kuwaiti citizenship. Finally, public opinion on this issue does not reflect positively on mixed marriages. For example, of almost two thousand Kuwaitis surveyed in 1995, "sixty-two percent supported the passing of laws banning Kuwaitis from marrying non-Kuwaitis" (Longva 2005, 133). It is evident from this that both the Gulf monarchs and their citizens are invested in preserving and promoting a small, ethnically homogenous nation.

The respective governments have taken some steps to resolve this gender discrepancy in Bahrain and the UAE. In 2013, for example, more than three thousand children of Bahraini

female citizens married to non-Bahrainis were granted Bahraini nationality. However, this was done by royal decree; an arbitrary, piecemeal, and irregular process that is currently the only mechanism to grant nationality to these children. In the UAE, a decree was passed in 2011 that children can apply for Emirati citizenship once they turn eighteen. Again, this is an added roadblock that serves to reinforce the societal taboo of female citizens married to foreigners.

However, exploring the different forms of citizenship, belonging, and exclusion within the framework of the Gulf countries demonstrates that even in extreme cases of segregation based on class, ethnicity, skill, and country of origin, categories of citizens are more porous than their leaders and citizenship regimes work to suggest; records of foreign marriages for both male and female citizens are rising despite the Gulf governments' efforts to discourage them. In a section titled *Making Purified Pasts: Heritage, Citizenship and National Identity*, Vora explores other ways the Gulf monarchies promote their ideals of an ethnically homogenous nation, writing that "many Gulf Cooperation Council states have actively undertaken projects to Arabize culture, producing narratives of tradition that are purified of foreign influence and encouraging citizens to distinguish themselves from the West and from migrant workers through markers of traditional identity" (2013, 52). These markers are increasingly visible in the cultural sphere of the Gulf.

There has been a strong push over the past few decades to renew and revive traditional Arab activities such as falconry, camel racing, sword dancing, and other forms of ritual and recreation. New cultural centers, heritage sites, and museums are cropping up in the GCC,[21] and their main motive is to produce an ethnically pure 'imagined community' for these relatively new nations. In these spaces, the arrival of migrants is placed into the timeline of the oil boom (if

[21] A prime example is Kuwait's recently completed Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Complex, a part of the National Cultural District Project, which includes the world's largest museum and spans thirty-two acres.

it is included at all), where foreigners' presence is solely explained by the need for more workers in the oil fields, whereas, as can be seen in Chapter One on the pre-oil Gulf, there was no cohesive national identity in Bahrain – and little in Kuwait – prior to the formation of the Gulf nations just a century ago. The jarring exclusions undertaken in national museums demonstrate how Kuwait and Bahrain have both carefully constructed a selective image of themselves, creating an 'imagined community' of indigenous Sunni Arabs.

Since the dominant narrative is that the Persian, Asian, and Arab migrant only arrived in the Gulf Peninsula for economic gains, they can be easily relegated to the economic sphere and eliminated from any discourse on the inclusiveness of political or national identity. However, this was not always the case. For example, until the sixties, "the contribution of Palestinians to the building of Kuwait was officially and gratefully acknowledged by the authorities. After the 1973 oil boom, however, this public recognition became less frequent, and, by the late 1980s, the ordinary Kuwaiti men and women had an understanding of labor importation by their country as a much-needed boon for the workers rather than anything else" (Longva 1997, 215). Thus, Palestinians, who made up most of the educators and doctors in Kuwait in the years before and after independence, were gradually written out of the narrative. The unique sphere of belonging Palestinians occupied in the country will be further examined in Chapter Four.

Of all the royal families in the Gulf, the Al Maktoum of Dubai have been the most proactive and strategic in creating their national narratives. Only *fifteen* percent of the inhabitants of Dubai are Emirati citizens, and the foreign businesses based there prop up the entire emirate's economy. Sheikh Mohammed Al Maktoum must toe a careful balance between being welcoming to foreigners while also perpetuating an Arabized national narrative. Thus, it might seem counterintuitive that in his *Dubai Strategic Plan for 2015,* he lists its *first* objective as

'Preserving National Identity' (Vora 2013, 44). This is quite ironic for a metropolis that has been tirelessly branded as a 'global city,' but the Sheikh endeavors to encourage foreign investment and to promote protectionist citizenship policies at the same time. As in Kuwait, investors and residents have no path to citizenship, nor can they reside permanently in the country.[22]

Dubai's extensive heritage site projects, the first in the Gulf, create versions of Emirati identity and culture that are palatable to tourists and investors and purified of any foreign-ness. As Vora notes, this allows for selective forms of belonging for elite expatriates, "while continually erasing and denying belonging to migrant laborers, who are rendered both discursively and geographically invisible" (2013, 40). Thus, elite expatriate astronauts who fit into Ong's definition of being in pursuit of flexible forms of citizenship are welcomed with open arms and Arab hospitality if they are thought to be choosing economic forms of belonging that are distinct from belonging to the social and cultural spheres of Emirati society.

As part of my research, I visited these heritage sites and museums in Kuwait and Bahrain to explore how citizenship is constructed literally in terms of that is shown, and what – or who – is omitted.[23] As Neha Vora writes in *Impossible Citizens*, "the establishment of national museums have set in motion a movement of heritage revival which constitutes the most tangible manifestation of state-sponsored nationalism in the region. Historical sites and natural harbors have become recreational, educational, and tourist spaces emphasizing the tribal and Arab character of pre-oil Gulf societies, often to the detriment of their cosmopolitan traditions" (2013, 13). I was particularly interested in what was *not* shown or written about in Kuwait and

[22] In the Gulf, residencies expire once an expatriate retires, and the whole family is required to leave with the former breadwinner.

[23] In Kuwait, I visited Kuwait House of National Works, *Al-Shaheed* Museum, the Amricani Cultural Center, Tareq Rajab Museum, Bait Al Outhman, Sheikh Mubarak Kiosk, Al-Qurain Martyrs' Museum, Kuwait Maritime Museum, Dickson House, Sadu House, and the Kuwait Heritage Museum. In Bahrain, I visited the Bahrain Heritage Museum, the Old Muharraq District, the Abdullah Al Zayed house for Bahraini Press Heritage, and the Bahrain Oil Museum.

Bahrain's heritage sites, museums, and English news media – the omissions, fabrications, and illusions that are intentionally undertaken to create a sense of unity or exclusion, depending on the citizenship status of the viewer.

In Kuwait and Bahrain, as well as elsewhere in the peninsula, heritage sites exist as selectively invented and carefully engineered reproductions of what the region used to look like pre-oil. In the national museums of both Kuwait and Bahrain, among the largest wings are the '*turath'* (i.e. heritage and culture) sections, where life-size mannequins can be seen building boats, selling spices, or getting ready for pearl diving voyages. Foreigners were entirely erased from these vignettes. However, corresponding contemporaneous photos of the reproduced scenes show the occasional South Asian hawking his trade or a darker-skinned pearl diver with a shaved head – slaves were sometimes sent on pearling expeditions and a shaved head symbolized one's status as a slave.[24] Some accounts report that enslaved Africans "accounted for as much as half of the Gulf's diving population, [and] performed labor essential to the Gulf economy" (Hopper 2016, 1). There was no mention of this diversity in any of the museums I visited.

These slaves and other foreigners were thus entirely left out of the museum's dioramas and plaques extolling the bravery that Arab Gulf men displayed in sailing out on pearl diving expeditions. Farah Al-Nakib similarly writes that pearling ships, even more than trading vessels, were populated by men of "mixed social backgrounds… these men spent up to five months together away from their homeport every year… their experiences at sea therefore taught Kuwaitis how to coexist with difference" (Al-Nakib 2016, 76). The long journeys in search of pearls served as experiments in tolerance and as a source of indispensable cultural and ethnic exchange. The state-run national museums could have promulgated these stories as exemplary

[24] See figures a., b., and c. in Appendix II, to be contrasted with figures d. and e..

lessons in egalitarianism and the acceptance of diversity but chose instead to rewrite them and purify them of any foreign elements.

Fuccaro agrees that the revival of pre-oil "traditions and settings and the establishment of national museums have set in motion a movement of heritage revival which constitutes the most tangible manifestation of state-sponsored nationalism in the region" (2009, 3). Historical sites such as the bustling center of Old Muharraq in Bahrain and the Kuwaiti coastline have become both recreational and educational tourist hubs emphasizing the tribal and strictly Arab character of Gulf towns and societies before the first oil well was tapped.

Notably, Kuwait's *Al-Shaheed* ('The Martyr') Memorial Museum visitor's guide brochure opens with the remark that "with each battle, our ancestors came together and grew strong to defend their homeland. The Memorial Museum provides a narrative for the emergence of a Kuwaiti identity, prior to statehood, through the collective action of local tribes who rallied to defend and preserve their geographic resources and cultural values" (Al Shaheed Museums). This 'Arabization' was done intentionally, and again, was to the detriment of cosmopolitan traditions. In Bahrain specifically, the narrative promoted by the ruling family is especially important in fostering and bolstering their legitimacy. These areas and the stories they tell have also become the symbols of loyalty or opposition to contemporary Gulf regimes. For instance, Bahrain's Old Muharraq, the center of the Al Khalifa administration in the early nineteenth century – "still evokes and reinforces allegiance to the ruling family among Bahrain's Sunni population" (Fuccaro 2009, 3).

Though heritage sites are the most visible urban forms of national narratives spun to create 'imagined communities,' written literature, social studies textbooks, and newspapers are equally as important, and often more explicit. As Gardner notes, "the newspaper is not simply

the arm of the state but rather exists at the confluence of folk, regional, and national ideologies" (2010, 124). As part of my research, I looked at local English-language newspapers in Bahrain and Kuwait and examined how migrants were incorporated and portrayed. Articles about crime in the local section of these two countries' newspapers almost always begin with 'an X national committed X crime,' listing the assailant, offender, or suspect's nationality prominently. The newspapers of both states are under the discretion and directives of the Ministries of Information and the Interior, and so the framing of these articles also constitutes a state-sanctioned effort to create a sense of national identity in the face of foreign threats to Sunni Gulf Arab values.

Rarely was anything reported about a Gulf Arab mistreating a migrant, though the reverse seemed to be a daily occurrence. I paid particular attention to the extent to which these local crime reports included or excluded South Asian migrants from their chronologies, and how these identities were represented.[25] I found that most crime reports over-represented and criminalized foreign residents, and were framed in a way that positioned migrants and their actions as a threat that was constantly looming over the cultural integrity and morality of Gulf citizens, echoing sentiments proposed by Longva and Vora.

English language newspapers in Bahrain and Kuwait act as "a central junction in the public discourse… that reveals the interests of the state, the topography of Bahraini [or Kuwaiti] nationalism, and the intricate friction between citizen and foreigner" (Gardner 2010, 119). The connection between newspapers and national identity is well established in the broader literature, as can be seen in Hobsbawm and Gellner's work, and the emphasis placed on nationality and its effects on state-policed morality is clear in the local sections of Kuwait and Bahrain's newspapers.

[25] Examples from English-language newspapers in both Bahrain and Kuwait are included in Appendix III.

In writing about the 'moral threats' or violations of Kuwaiti behavioral norms that are unintentionally posed by Asian domestic servants, Longva was similarly stirred by the local section of the Gulf newspapers. She writes that "reviewing information gathered by the Ministry of the Interior and published daily in the local press, one is struck by the rather large involvement of Asian expatriates in 'sexual' offenses… adultery can be said to have been a constant theme in the Kuwaiti perception of non-Arab expatriates" (2005, 124).[26] Reasons for this include a lack of cultural familiarity, as well as the demographic reality that Arab migrants often arrive with their families, while Asian migrants who come to the Gulf as domestic servants and low-skilled laborers arrive as single women and men without their family units. They are also non-Muslim, and so might view such relations differently.

Similarly, there are few expatriate individuals cited by name in school history books and other records of Kuwaitis' collective memory. Dame Violet Dickson, the wife of a British Colonial Administrator, is one. She was notable because she became fluent in Arabic and adopted Kuwaiti customs. However, recollections of her mostly center around her love of Kuwait rather than the role she played in its history, though she lived in Kuwait from 1929 to 1991. Regardless, as the white and Western wife of a politician, Dickson did not represent most Gulf migrants, who worked alongside the Kuwaitis and Bahrainis for centuries. This erasure of millions of people sent a message; that Kuwait was a nation created by Kuwaitis, for Kuwaitis – the same is true in Bahrain. Thus, "the omission of recording non-Kuwaiti presence at the level of public discourse contributed to making the migrants' social existence a blind spot in the Kuwaitis' perception of their history" (Longva 1997, 239). By excluding the presence of non-

[26] Adultery here means "sexual relations outside of marriage, regardless of the civil status of the partners involved" (Longva 2005, 125).

Kuwaitis in their history, Kuwaitis came to deny the plethora of lived experiences and commonalities between natives and migrants; most recently that of the invasion.

Once Iraq invaded in 1990, the Kuwaitis were faced with a pressing dual task: "first, to build an image of Kuwait and its people for the benefit of the international community, or what one could call 'flag-waving' nation-building; and, secondly, to instill in the citizens a feeling of loyalty to the state and a sense of shared commonality, what one could call 'heart-and-mind' nation building" (Longva 1997, 214). These were two distinct but connected tasks which both relied on Kuwait's affluence. To achieve the prior, Citizens for a Free Kuwait, a group of wealthy Kuwaitis living in exile in the United States, hired Hill & Knowlton Incorporated, one of the largest and most prestigious public relations firms in the United States at the time. The firm was charged with portraying the Kuwaitis as a united and unique ethnic and national group to quell any qualms among US citizens that perhaps a tiny, recently formed, and newly independent nation-state ought not to be saved from its neighbor on the American taxpayer's dollar.

The 'hearts-and-minds' national identity building, meanwhile, took care of itself as Iraqi soldiers arrived and began transferring Kuwait's resources north to Basra.[27] Kuwaitis knew that if the country became Iraq's nineteenth province, it would become impoverished and remain that way. Iraq's effect on Kuwaiti national identity will be further explored in the next chapter on the effects of external threats on Kuwaiti and Bahraini identities.

[27] See figures f. and g. in Appendix II for the pillaging decrees issued by Iraqi command, as preserved in Kuwait's Qurain Martyrs' Museum.

ii. Limited Resources: The Ultimate Tool

> "No matter how liberal a country may be in opening its borders to migration, the very existence of the state by definition requires that criteria be set up to define and differentiate between citizens and non-citizens… far from being an archaic feature of closed societies of the past, this discrimination is particularly salient in modern societies characterized by an advanced system of social welfare since, to be genuinely meaningful, these social goods are necessarily limited, and their enjoyment is therefore contingent on proof of national membership." Anh Nga Longva, *Walls Built on Sand: Migration, Exclusion, and Society in Kuwait* (1997, 7)

The best tool for creating a sense of community and national identity in the Gulf was not engineered by the royal dynasties but was rather thought of by citizens as their God-given right: the access to social and welfare benefits made possible by oil extraction. As Longva found in Kuwait in 1997, the reason citizenship is so meaningful in the region is that it came along with such extensive material privileges. As mentioned, today, Gulf Arabs in general – and Kuwaitis in particular – view oil revenues not as a gift, but as a birthright (Herb 1999). As Longva notes, "if the citizens had any perception of being privileged at all, it was because they compared themselves with the non-Kuwaiti majority to whom these same privileges were denied…. One can thus claim that, even more than the privileges it imparted, what really gave citizenship its significance was the presence of the disproportionally large *non-citizen* population" (1997, 47). Not only would privileges be concretely lessened without the presence and labor of collectively subordinated migrants; their enjoyment and appreciation would not have been the same for lack of comparison.

The presence of the 'have-nots' made the 'haves' more aware of the day-to-day implications of citizenship on their financial and social well-being. Because the majority was excluded, those who were included were determined to protect themselves against the majority and prevent others from accessing these rights. Additionally, because citizens in the Gulf do not

have to participate in the physical aspects of nation-building but can enjoy the multitude of benefits offered by a modernizing nation, they have more to gain by accepting the status quo than by trying to challenge it.

In this way, benefits doled out by the state are more than just state-sponsored bribes, they serve as a fundamental link "that connects citizens to the state" (Potter 2009, 333). Benefits also encourage the patriarchal thinking surrounding citizenship in the Gulf, as it positions the ruler as the provider-in-chief. With this same understanding, Neha Vora aims to loosen and multiply definitions of citizenship and belonging within the urban spaces of Gulf cities, examining what precisely makes it so meaningful to Gulf Arabs. She finds that citizenship is not merely a matter of having or not having legal membership; one does not exist solely within this binary formulation; "rather, the excluded and the impossible need to be brought into the same frame in order to study citizenship as a shifting and dynamic form of legality, membership, state-making and governance" (2013, 5). In other words, in order to understand what having Gulf citizenship means, we must also discern what *not* having citizenship would entail in these states.

iii. Approaching Challenges: Populism, Taxation, and the Public Sector

In *After the Sheiks: The Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies*, Davidson agrees with Potter that there is a 'ruling bargain' between Gulf monarchs and the citizenry that is reminiscent of a social contract and ensures citizen acquiescence in exchange for financial and social benefits. Acquiring nationality in the Gulf is understood as a means to gain access to these social services. Whereas *all* residents can benefit from free or low-cost utilities and cheap gas, only privileged citizens can enjoy free healthcare, education, and housing. While subsidized fuel,

electricity, water, and food staples are still prevalent throughout the Gulf, these benefits are diminishing over time – particularly in Bahrain, arguably the most impoverished GCC state.

Benefits for citizens often take the form of royal decrees, such as one in 2011 where Emir Sabah Al Sabah gave each Kuwaiti citizen one thousand Kuwaiti dinars (roughly three thousand dollars) to mark the fifth anniversary of his coming to power, the twentieth anniversary of Kuwait's liberation, and the fiftieth anniversary of independence. Non-citizen residents, of course, received nothing, and it is unlikely that this monetary 'gift' would have been so large if it was to be doled out to Kuwait's entire population instead of one third of it. In reality, not only were expatriates left out of such a tremendous boon, they were also directly economically disadvantaged by it; these lump sum bonuses lead to an immediate corollary rise in inflation and therefore higher prices. While the Kuwaitis in this example had the extra funds to cope with the resultant price increases, expatriates found themselves worse off than before the bonuses were doled out.

The Gulf monarchies' reluctance to remove benefits from their citizens as they become less sustainable is an insecurity that is pronounced and palpable, and can be seen in many of their current policies. After a crash in oil prices in 2014, the Gulf Cooperation Council came together to decide that the imposition of a value-added tax (VAT) on their residents was unavoidable if they were to continue to afford their massive expenditures on welfare and salaries for their citizens. The member states agreed that they would impose the VAT starting in 2018. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates successfully imposed the five percent tax on most goods and services in January of that year, as promised. However, Saudi Arabia simultaneously announced that it would also increase "stipends and benefits for citizens to cushion the impact of economic reforms." King Salman ordered a new one thousand riyal ($267) monthly allowance

for all citizens employed in the military and in the Saudi government and increased all student stipends by ten percent (Arab Times 2018). As with the Kuwaiti lump sum, this allowance put non-citizens at a further disadvantage.

Similarly, on January 8th, 2018, Bahrain increased the price of gas by twenty-five percent. This was the second time in two years that the kingdom had increased fuel prices (before 2016, the last increase was thirty-five years ago). When the National Oil and Gas Authority announced the gas price increase, it came into effect immediately. An opinion piece by J. Mohammed published in Bahrain's English-language newspaper that same day lamented this strategy, pointing out that Members of Parliament have demanded compensation for citizens due to the recent increase. He writes that when a subsidy is removed, too often "it is returned in another form to the very same citizens from whom it was taken… the purpose is only to take from one hand and give back in another form to the other hand… from day one, make subsidy increase or withdrawal applicable to expatriates only. At the end of the day, they are left to bear the brunt of it" (Gulf Daily News 2018). Once more, citizens emerge from these changes unscathed with their sense of loyalty to the state and monarchy reinvigorated, while non-citizens, who already earn less than Bahrainis, are left to cope with these sudden price increases.

Kuwait's Parliament, meanwhile, asked for a delay in the implementation of the VAT until 2019, showing just how fearful those in elected positions were of the wrath of Kuwaiti citizens should their economic benefits be adjusted. The parliament much preferred to levy the increased costs onto the non-citizen population instead. As Diwan notes, "indeed, the populist Parliament has often worked to push any austerity measure onto Kuwait's foreign worker population, increasing their health care fees and rationing public services by limiting their time to visit hospitals and even their use of public roads" (2018, 7). However, as oil prices started to

climb again, and with Kuwait's Sovereign Wealth Fund (the world's oldest and largest) doing well, the parliament has since backed away from the imposition of the VAT. Kuwait's politicians, who are genuinely accountable to public opinion, are reluctant to revoke economic concessions under their watch. These different reactions are telling, and give one a rare glimpse into how the GCC may proceed in a future without the buffer of oil rents.

Another imminent challenge in Kuwait and Bahrain will be in providing jobs to citizens without creating massive budget deficits. The bureaucracy-laden and inflated public sectors in the Gulf, as they stand today, are entirely unsustainable. Initiatives all over the Gulf dubbed 'Saudization,' 'Bahrainization,' 'Kuwaitization,' and so forth have been met with limited success. Recent graduates are finding that the public sector is already employing its capacity of citizens and cannot accommodate new workers.

Public sector jobs in the Gulf are desirable because they are seen as simply another mechanism through which the state allocates funds to its citizens – compared to jobs in the private sector, public sector jobs are easy, hours are short, and salaries are both high and stable. In an op-ed published anonymously in Kuwait's *Arab Times*, a writer complains that "Kuwaitis are observing a dangerous phenomenon… in view of recent official statistics indicating some 17,000 citizens are currently unemployed; not counting an average of 30,000 fresh graduates produced annually… new graduates now battle the reality of queuing up for jobs coupled with the [fact] that government no longer opens employment doors as it did in the past" (2017). The private sector is looked upon with disdain by many Kuwaitis, who do not see a need to work longer hours and generally do not like to compete with often highly-experienced expatriates, or expatriates who are less costly to maintain.

In the same vein, Shaikh Nasser Al Ahmad, a minister and member of the royal family, writes that in Kuwait, "a job that can be done by two people is done by two hundred. This is how we get rid of unemployment, and therefore a Kuwaiti has no opportunity to become creative" (Al-Sarraf 2017). The State of Kuwait spends thirty-five billion dollars annually on salaries for its employees, in addition to an equivalent of half of that amount in the form of subsidies for basic commodities and utilities (Al-Sarraf 2017). Unfortunately, this bloated budget is showing no sign of slowing down. At the end of 2017, the state asked the Ministry of Finance for an increased budget limit to cover the costs of replacing expatriate employees with Kuwaitis. It requested tens of millions of dollars in order to cover indemnity payments for expatriates who had served in the department for decades (Arab Times 2017). This is indicative of the negative side-effects of Kuwaitization policy and others like it across the Gulf.

Should Kuwait's government succeed in its Kuwaitization policy, the state is projected to need three billion dollars to cover the differences in salary between a citizen and a non-citizen. Expatriate employees are paid less than half of what a citizen is paid in the same job position (Kuwait's *Arab Times* reports that the average monthly salary of an expatriate employee in the public sector is less than seven hundred dinars, while a citizen gets 1500 dinars for the same job). Clearly, this policy is not improving efficiency, nor is it decreasing state spending.

Furthermore, in 2016, Kuwait built its first public nationals-only hospital. The Jaber Al Sabah Hospital is currently the largest medical center in the Middle East, and the first of its kind in terms of its restrictive, citizen-only services. According to the hospital's website, it is the latest step in the Kuwait Ministry of Health's "long-term strategy to provide the highest quality of health care to the people of Kuwait." However, the Minister of Health, Dr. Al Obaidi, confirmed that the hospital would be run by an international administration (Saleh 2016). The hospital will

undoubtedly also employ foreign nationals, all of whom would not be allowed to seek treatment there.

These examples of the patron-client model between the citizen and the state indicate that the Gulf "has accommodated rather than replaced the tribal tradition" (Gardner 2010, 145). Thus, the presence of expatriates has crystalized the significance Gulf national identity as belonging to an exclusive and privileged group that is entitled to such benefits and rewards for membership. In Kuwait specifically, "'Kuwaitiness' is thrown into relief through contradistinction to 'expatriateness,' measured in terms of social and legal status and externalized through the dress code and demeanor" (Longva 1997, 189). The unspoken categorizations relayed by the Gulf's code of national dress is explored in the next section.

iv. Designating Difference in Dress Code

> "The ethnic-racial homogeneity of one's own 'nationality' is taken for granted… even when the most superficial inspection might throw doubt on it. For to 'us' it seems obvious that the members of our 'nationality' cover a wide range of sizes, shapes, and appearances, even when all of them share certain physical characteristics, such as a certain type of black hair. It is only to 'them' that we all look alike." Eric Hobsbawm *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1990, 66)

As mentioned, Kuwait owed its early survival to maritime trade, which meant that its people lived amongst and traded with others from as far as Sri Lanka in the east to Zanzibar in the south from the early 1720s to the mid-1940s. Due to these centuries-long patterns of trade, it is perhaps not so surprising that there is no single phenotypical difference between the native population of Kuwait and most of the expatriate population. Although the "northern Arabians, especially bedouin nomads, have sometimes been described in the literature as distinct from most other Arabs ('taller' and 'more resilient') these descriptions hardly apply to the native population today" (Longva 1997, 114).

There are no set physical traits that distinguish a Kuwaiti from any other Arab, nor from any Asian expatriate, and any efforts to propagate such differences are likely either a relic of Orientalist writings or an attempt by the state itself to propagate the myth of a distinct nation with one distinct national race. Group stratification and 'ethnic divides' developed based on wholly constructed socio-cultural factors. In fact, stories are often told of how Kuwaitis notoriously dressed up as Asian and Arab migrants to escape through Kuwait's borders into Saudi Arabia during Saddam's invasion. Hence, the paramount importance of an exclusively Kuwaiti dress code is to artificially create difference and reinforce hierarchy.

For example, non-Arab men seldom wear the traditional white gown (*dishdasha*) in public; neither do non-Gulf Arabs. There are no explicit laws or codes that prohibited the wearing of the *dishdasha* by people originating from outside the Gulf, nor are there laws that enforce its use for Kuwaitis. However, inevitably at some point in most Kuwaiti men's lives (usually around their high school graduation) they switch over permanently from Western dress to *dishdashas*. This rite of passage falls perfectly in line with Longva's definition of an ethnocracy, where membership has to be artificially delineated. Since "in Kuwait and the rest of the Gulf, the defining feature is not race, language or religion, but citizenship conceived in terms of shared descent… all expatriates, being non-Kuwaiti citizens, are excluded from the ruling ethnie, even if they are Arabs or Muslims or both" (Longva 2005, 119).

Thus, the national dress – a *dishdasha* and a headdress for men, and *thobe* or *abaya* for women – is the perfect tool. It distinguishes not only a Gulf Arab from a migrant or expat, but also a Gulf Arab from a non-Gulf Arab and even a Kuwaiti from a Bahraini (for *dishdashas,* this depends on their color, collar, and sleeves). Sartorial choices are a more reliable predictor of national origin than skin color, facial features, language or mannerisms, which vary widely in the

region due to the presence of immigrants, who for generations, ascribed to different ethnic, linguistic, and cultural realms. National dress, like national identity, is a modern formation; it was only in the seventies that citizens began to mark themselves as distinct from non-citizens in this way.

Longva writes that the long white robes were symbolically very significant. She recounts how Arab migrants viewed the robes as hopelessly impractical and impossible to keep clean unless one worked an office job in an air-conditioned building, and observes that "in their eyes, this immaculately white robe stood for a lifestyle associated with idleness and luxury" (1997, 118). Vora also notes the impracticality of the national dress, and that "certain jobs were physically impossible to perform in the white *dishdasha* that men wear today" (2013, 59). Picturing one doing manual labor in a long gown is hard. Thus, we can see that national clothes are not only a symbol of identity, but class status as well. The fact that most contemporary Gulf Arab men in the workforce wear *dishdashas* to work every day also serves to ease prior distinctions between citizens themselves. Longva recounts a story of a Kuwaiti male who was stopped by a Kuwaiti policeman for a routine – but arbitrary – check of his residence papers. When the officer saw the man's Kuwaiti ID, he reportedly apologized and said "next time, save yourself unnecessary trouble. Wear the dishdasha" (1997, 117). This example shows how group identification in Kuwait is a state-sanctioned, state-policed affair, backed up by unwritten norms.

Thus, Gulf Arabs developed a clear way to signify their group belonging through their use of the dress code, which silently emphasized the daily practices of exclusion and was glorified by the ideological building of a national narrative steeped in the retroactive creation of tradition. The immaculate white *dishdasha* would never have suited many of the pre-oil occupations Kuwaitis had at the time, let alone any actual work in an oil field. Thus, in the

absence of real racial distinction, Kuwaitis signaled their identity through dress. National dress became especially important as Kuwait's Asian community grew in the 1970s – this population was less able to read the more subtle signaling systems, such as the different Arabic dialects and surname patterns, to identify a Kuwaiti from a non-Kuwaiti.

c. Exclusion and the Plight of the Bidoon

> "States, including democratic ones, use the legal tool of citizenship deprivation to shape national identities." Claire Beaugrand, *Torn Citizenship in Kuwait: Commodification versus Rights-Based Approaches* (2015, 20)

Kuwait's use of exclusionary citizenship policy for state stability played almost no role in the pre-World War II colonial situation. Even after Kuwait's first and second nationality laws were passed, bidoon nomads were permitted to enter and exit Kuwait's borders as they pleased until well into the 1960s. As mentioned, Kuwait prided itself on being a nation built on a culture of migration, whose ruling family voyaged in the early eighteenth century to what is now Kuwait, fleeing drought and searching for a better life. Throughout most of its history, Kuwait, like the rest of the peninsula, was characterized by a tradition of migration, trade, and open networks up to the dominance of the oil industry in the mid-twentieth century. Trade and nomadism are synonymous with migration, and the national narrative of Kuwait is one of an epic diasporic journey. The fact that there exists a group in Kuwait marginalized for these same practices of migration is an unfortunate irony that is too often overlooked by those who espouse the state-sponsored national narrative.

As mentioned, bidoon are stateless people residing within the boundaries of a country, but without passports from any country. Kuwait has the largest resident stateless population in the peninsula, though it is thought that up to half a million bidoon exist across all the Gulf

countries. Kuwait has about one hundred thousand bidoon living within its borders. With 1.1 million citizens in Kuwait, the bidoon, if naturalized, would make up ten percent of the total population. Naturalizing these thousands of citizens could shift the delicate religious and economic balance of the small local population.

A Human Rights Watch Report from 1995 titled *Citizens without Citizenship* is thought to be the first discussing discrimination and anti-bidoon policies in Kuwait. At that time, there were three hundred thousand bidoon, making up approximately *a third* of Kuwait's population (1995). Examples of bidoon included in the report show just how broad the category of the bidoon can be, and how deeply ingrained its members often are in Kuwaiti society. One man, Ibrahim Al Athari, was an eighty-year-old former slave brought to Kuwait in his youth to serve his former masters. He possessed a document to prove his emancipation from slavery in 1961, but that was not one of the accepted documents required by the government to prove one's citizenship. He was threatened with deportation but did not remember which African country he had been brought from (1995).

Another citizen was born in Kuwait in 1940 and married a Kuwaiti citizen in 1969. All ten of their children were born into statelessness, and because he was dismissed from the police force during the invasion, his family lived in self-imposed house arrest without a pension or driver's license (HRW 1995). In her research in Kuwait in 2011, Claire Beaugrand learned that a bidoon man was found guilty of false information for his registration as a bidoon, since Kuwaiti authorities believed he had Egyptian ancestral roots. Though authorities found no proof of his registration as an Egyptian national upon checking with the Egyptian Ministry of Interior, they still convicted him of forgery; a crime that is punishable by to up to nine years in jail (2011, 242).

Because they are neither citizens nor legal foreign residents, the bidoon have no recourse to secure their rights through the judicial system. As Kuwait's Deputy Minister of Interior, Yousif Al Kharafi, proclaimed, "a Bedoon's [*sic*] name is written in pencil; it can be easily erased" (HRW 1995). His comment illustrates the ephemeral nature of Kuwait's bidoon policies and how the bidoon's fate is often decided based on the whims of ministry officials through bureaucratic amendments.

It appears that there was no real need – nor a real effort made – to exclude bidoon until 1985, when there was a crash in oil prices that seems to have made the Kuwaiti government worried about its ability to dole out government benefits in the future. Kuwaitis had already lost significant amounts of money in 1982, when the informal stock market, *Souk Al Manakh*, crashed, causing the economy to falter (Tétreault and Al-Mughni 2005, 207). At the same time, the Iran-Iraq war had led to an influx of refugees. Suddenly, bidoon whose citizenship cases had been pending with the state for decades became associated with "Iraqi refugees, draft dodgers, and infiltrators, as well as absconding workers and illegal aliens who could easily blend in after getting rid of their identity papers" (Longva 1997, 52).

Due to this amalgamation of factors, sometime in 1985, the Kuwaiti government decided behind closed doors to actively comply with its Alien Residence Law of 1959 in regard to the bidoon. They were systematically stripped of all the rights and benefits they had been given access to over the years. In 1986, the bidoon's eligibility for travel documents was restricted, and government employees outside of the army and police force were dismissed in droves. Private sector employers were also asked to comply with this practice. In 1987, the right to free movement was further restricted when the Kuwaiti government made it harder for the bidoon to renew their driver's licenses or car registrations. Free public secondary school also became

increasingly restrictive, and private schools were told to require valid residency permits for non-citizens, which bidoon did not possess. In 1988, a total ban on free public education for bidoon was imposed on all universities at a time when there were no private institutions of higher learning in Kuwait. Finally, bidoon were transferred on the national census from the 'Kuwaiti' category to the 'Alien Population' category (WikiLeaks 2009).

i. Kuwait's Migrant Military

Kuwait's pre-1991 military, as is the case in Bahrain today, had always been made up of non-citizens. As Longva notes, "in any country, there are basic functions that need to be fulfilled, and not all of them can be entrusted to foreign workers" (1997, 50). Tasks relating to internal security and the armed forces are prime examples of such functions. However, citizens who could have their choice of high-paying government jobs in Kuwait's inflated public sector were seldom willing to give that up for a more dangerous career in law enforcement or in the military (outside of jobs as high-ranking officers or administrators). Instead, from independence in 1961 until August of 1990 – the eve of the Iraqi invasion – Kuwait's bidoon acted as the rank-and-file for the state's security needs. Until 1986, they could enjoy the free health and education services offered by the state, and in exchange, they were expected to provide the country with its recruits for the army and police under the command of officers who were Kuwaiti nationals.

With their ancestors' nomadic background and experience in desert raids, the bidoon were quite well-equipped to take on this task. In Kuwait, the bidoon have a long history of serving the royal family, starting from their traditional roles as royal guards during tribal times. They were also willing to serve because military service was considered the fastest way of gaining access to citizenship. It is important to note that this applied only to the bidoon of Sunni

bedouin background. Those who were Shia (i.e. nomads originally from Iran) were not allowed to serve in the army nor the police force. For these men, the possibility of naturalization was practically nonexistent.

Service in the armed forces also eased the discrepancies between nationals and bidoon because while the bidoon had access to health benefits and education services until the mid-1980s, they did not have access to free housing, as Kuwaiti citizens did. Military service allowed bidoon troops to benefit from the free housing scheme that was otherwise an exclusive privilege reserved for citizens. In 1986, when new legislation restricted bidoon passports to individuals with official permission to travel abroad for medical treatment, religious purposes, or to bidoon serving in the army and police, bidoon males signed up for the military in droves. By the mid-1980s approximately *eighty percent* of the armed forces and police were bidoon (HRW 2011).

Another large percentage of Kuwait's troops and police officers before the 1990 invasion were mercenaries. Unlike the bidoon, who claimed never to have had any formal citizenship, the mercenaries were citizens from the surrounding Arab States (mainly Iraq, Syria, and Jordan). No country was willing to admit to having a mercenary army, and so to avoid the embarrassment and negative associations of such an admission, the Ministry of Defense listed these men as stateless, lumping together two very different groups of people who provided the same essential service for the nation's survival and legitimacy. This administrative decision caused *massive* issues for the government down the line, when these non-citizens could no longer be distinguished from the nomadic bidoon, and the entirety of the non-citizen military population began to demand citizenship and equal access to Kuwaiti rights and benefits.

From an outsider's perspective, it appeared that the bidoon lived among the Kuwaitis in relative harmony before the 1980s, and most foreigners residing in Kuwait during that time may

not even have been aware that so many Kuwaitis without citizenship lived and existed as a separate social category from the Kuwaitis. However, as the Iraq-Iran war worsened conditions for Iraqis throughout the 1980s, rumors spread that many Iraqis were trying to pass as 'Kuwaiti stateless.' By some accounts, 'bidoon' and 'Iraqi' were even used interchangeably in Kuwait during that time. After liberation in 1991, this caused a serious predicament, "since they were [collectively] automatically suspected of sympathy, if not actual collaboration, with the occupying forces" (Longva 1997, 73). Because bidoon made up much of the rank-and-file of the army, they were the primary targets of Iraqi occupiers, and hundreds were taken to Iraq as prisoners of war. Those who went into hiding to escape torture at the hands of the occupiers or defected to the Iraqi army led the Kuwaitis to accuse the whole group of betrayal and collusion with Saddam Hussein. This will be further explored in Chapter Four.

Originally, suffrage in Kuwait was far from universal – in fact, until 1991, only male citizens who were over twenty-one years old and who were among the so-called 'original' or 'first category' Kuwaitis – i.e. those whose forefathers were residents in Kuwait during the Battle of Jahra – could vote. Longva estimates that before the Iraqi invasion, the proportion of men with full political rights totaled less than five percent of the total population (1997, 48). Even these five percent were not guaranteed to have an election they could participate in. Although Kuwait officially adopted a constitutional regime after independence in 1961, the elected National Assembly was suspended twice before 1990; once in 1976, and again in 1986. The first suspension lasted five years, and the second six years (its reinstitution was one of the conditions that Emir Jaber Al Sabah had to agree to before he was allowed back into Kuwait to resume his rule after Kuwait's liberation in 1991).

As mentioned, the bidoon's status as stateless was only noticeable to the trained eye. The bidoon who dwell in the Arabian Peninsula know no other place, so there is significant social integration. Vora calls this 'community without citizenship.' They were similar to Gulf Arabs in their traditions and dialect since they knew no other home and were – for all practical purposes – native. Before the Iran-Iraq War, intermarriage between Kuwaitis and bidoon was also socially acceptable and quite common.

Most importantly, the official census counted the bidoon as Kuwaitis. Thus, the bidoon were not only a solution to Kuwait's military problems regarding their scant armed forces; they were also useful in helping to artificially inflate Kuwait's demographic data, bolstering the population without receiving full socio-economic and political rights. This categorization was important because it kept up the image that Kuwaitis were near to the majority in their own country, thereby placating and reassuring the native population. The bidoon abruptly lost access to the services they were dependent on, and in 1988 were fully disenfranchised and lumped with non-Kuwaiti expatriates. Years later, in 1994, the Ministry of Planning released a new census that contained the statistic of 'real' Kuwaitis for the first time: twenty-eight percent, as opposed to the forty percent that was recorded previously (Longva 1997, 117).

ii. The Bidoon Today

> "Those who constitute exceptions to citizenship…. are, by virtue of exclusion, necessary to defining the parameters of citizenship and the legitimacy of the state." Neha Vora, *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora* (2013, 5)

The decision in 1985 to apply the Alien Residence Act was a massive and sudden blow to the security and safety of the bidoon, but it was one that existed mostly on paper for years. Though formally deprived of many rights in the second half of the eighties, the state still acceded

to the bidoon presence in the workforce and at schools. It was only after the Iraqi invasion and the ensuing blow it gave the bidoon's reputations that the process began to be fully implemented. It helped that all of Kuwait's ministries had to rebuild their workforces from the ground up after the Iraqis left. Thus "the invasion provided a suitable opportunity for such a drastic move" (Beaugrand, 2011, 236), and mass layoffs were finally implemented as outlined in 1986.

After liberation in February of 1991, bidoon, who had made up about eighty-five percent of Kuwait's army, were all indiscriminately fired. In five years from 1986 to 1991, the bidoon had become "jobless, rightless and reduced to the status of 'illegal foreigners'" (Constantine 2017). In this way, the invasion brought the plight of the bidoon to the forefront, and dramatically worsened their conditions. Over twenty years ago, Longva concluded in her ethnography of Kuwait that the bidoon "epitomize the dilemmas of demography, national security, and national identity which confront not only Kuwait but all Arabian Gulf States today. The Iraqi invasion in Kuwait has shown citizenship to be one of the most crucial problems these states urgently need to address… there is still much to be done" (1997, 245). Not much has changed since then.

In the spring of 2011, as protests all over the greater Middle East were underway, Kuwait's stateless bidoon organized to call for equal rights and citizenship. They were suppressed almost immediately, but damage to the Al Sabah regime's reputation was done. The Al Sabah tried offering the bidoon wage bonuses, but this did not placate the protesters – the bidoon wanted meaningful concessions in the form of citizenship, not financial welfare benefits. The Kuwaiti government has long admitted that there are thirty-four thousand bidoon that are deserving of Kuwaiti citizenship and have the necessary paperwork to qualify for it, but the state

has been lethargic in moving to supply them with nationality papers. There are also eighty thousand pending applications for the right to Kuwaiti nationality.

On September 27th, 2012, the directors of the relevant Middle East Programs of Refugees International, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch wrote an open letter addressed to Emir Sabah, objecting that the Central System for Resolving Illegal Residents' Status, or 'The Bidoon Committee,' created solely to solve the bidoon issue, had only made matters worse by proposing a new ranking system to group the population into four different categories. Additionally, the organizations petitioned for bidoon children's rights to free primary and secondary education to be reinstated, calling these violations "particularly egregious… [and] a problem that is exacerbated by a recent government ban on charitable contributions, including tuition, to bidun [*sic*] individuals and organizations" (HRW 2012).

A decade earlier, in 2000, the National Assembly passed Nationality Law Twenty, which permitted the naturalization of up to two thousand bidoon individuals per year. This might seem like a step in the right direction, however small, but the annual maximum of two thousand naturalizations has yet to be met. Thus, beyond appeasement, there is neither a real desire nor a commitment on the part of the state to incorporate the group into the citizenry of Kuwait – even though many share the same ethnicity, religious sect, and social ancestry as their rulers and domestic population majority. Exclusion is easier – and much cheaper – for welfare states, and the countries of the Gulf can only continue to afford their current welfare provisions through the exclusion of those seeking naturalization (Al-Nakib 2016, 8).

In a November 30, 2017 article in the *Kuwait Times*, the Interior Ministry Undersecretary for Citizenship and Passports Affairs, Mazen Al Jarrah Al Sabah's statements show the extent of the anti-bidoon rhetoric that is commonplace amongst those whose job it is to see that the rights

of the stateless are secured. Al Jarrah comments that though thirty-four thousand bidoon have a claim to citizenship through their registration in a 1965 census, "it is not mandatory to grant them citizenship." He goes on to stress that the term 'bidoon' was scrapped from the government's records in 1987 because though it was used for tribes that used to enter Kuwait to graze their cattle and sheep, Gulf Arabs are no longer nomadic. He exclaims: "after the Iraq-Iran war, some Iranians claimed to be bedoons [*sic*] from the desert. How is that possible?!" Al-Jarrah then concludes that Kuwaiti citizenship is more valuable than citizenship from the United States, because US citizenship "does not guarantee a decent job, housing, and marriage loans. Remove those privileges, and no one will demand Kuwaiti citizenship" (Kuwait Times 2017). Thus, the minister relays his understanding of citizenship as solely a mechanism through which to acquire financial gain.

Rather than incorporating these indigenous populations, the monarchies of Kuwait and the UAE – which also has a significant bidoon population – found a unique, distinctly modern way to silence them: by making them citizens of another country, the Comoros Islands. Located off the eastern coast of Africa, the majority-Muslim Comoros Islands is one of the world's poorest countries and has experienced twenty coups since gaining independence from France in 1975 (Beaugrand, 2015, 29). After what appeared to be a fact-finding mission that also included bribes – WikiLeaks reported that "the deputies received laptops and other gifts; upon their return to the Comoros they all supported the law" (2009) – a deal was struck between the Comorians and Emiratis, and later the Kuwaitis as well, whereby bidoon would be given Comoros passports, allowing them to start business ventures there and eventually settle permanently.

The UAE and Kuwait Comoros deals were appropriately dubbed 'nationality offshoring' and described as a "market solution to the 'problem' of migrant incorporation" (Beaugrand 2015,

27). Interestingly, this exemplifies the inverse of Ong's elite astronauts. While the wealthy are able to manipulate policies and secure citizenship as best fits their investments and needs, the impoverished stateless are relegated by their governments to similarly impoverished states with little say in the matter. When first introduced in 2006, the propositions for resettlement were stalled due to public outcry, but fear of more destabilizing events in the region after the Arab uprisings created a sense of urgency conducive to more authoritarian and more daring policies, and the deals were reintroduced, and legislation passed. As of today, only the UAE has given out Comorian passports to its stateless population, promising that this was a step that would eventually allow them to access social and economic services in the UAE. In Kuwait, the ratified Comoros deal remains as a statement of intent and a signal of the lengths to which the government is willing to go to rather than expand citizenship policy to include the bidoon (Salisbury 2015).

Thus, the bidoon continue to petition for their rights, their voices, and their citizenship, all while living in what those with Gulf passports would consider unthinkable, abject poverty. As Beaugrand aptly notes, poverty is relative, and while expatriate laborers may be worse off financially than the bidoon (because of the arbitrary demarcations of citizenship, bidoon often have close relatives who are nationals and are able to benefit from their assistance), expatriates use a different benchmark against which to compare their well-being. As for the bidoon, they "assess their lot in comparison with that of the Kuwaitis. They suffer from the process of discrimination and stigmatization induced by the administrative procedures that, by emphasizing their destitution, estranges them from the Kuwaiti population" (Beaugrand 2011, 242). While foreign expatriates can commiserate with their countrymen and compare their welfare with the

relative poverty in their home countries, the bidoon can do neither. In an ethnocracy, one measures one's success against others in their ethnic group.

iii. Bidoon in Bahrain

The stateless of Bahrain are distinctly divided into two groups – traditional bidoon who have always been stateless, and opposition members who were once Bahraini but have had their passports revoked. Statelessness in Bahrain was a massive issue, as it is in Kuwait today, until King Hamad became Emir after the death of his father in 1999. In an unprecedented move, Hamad released activists and journalists from prison and gave citizenship to between nine thousand to fifteen thousand stateless residents originating from Iran. Though this was a positive step in the right direction, "the state has recently demonstrated its willingness to revoke citizenship and return residents to bidoon status if necessary" (Davidson 2012, 139). Later in 2008, seven thousand bidoon were again naturalized in a sweeping royal decree. However, naturalization does not make a stateless person 'Bahraini' in all senses. For instance, a naturalized Bahraini is far more likely to be reduced to statelessness again in the event of minor criminal offenses, and, as stipulated by the nationality law, a naturalized citizen "does not have access to political rights for the first ten years after naturalization" (Hamada 2008).

Today, there appear to be several thousand bidoon residing in Bahrain, to whom the Bahraini government issues temporary passports which are valid for one trip a year. These travelers require a visa to re-enter their own country. Bidoon are also unable to buy land, start a business or access government loans (US Department of State, 2001). In Bahrain, the issue of the bidoon is rarely spoken of in public forums. There is thus little research on the status and context of the group, and unlike Kuwait, where countless committees exist to oversee the issue (though

mostly by name only), there are no governmental organizations devoted to the Bahraini bidoon cause. As found by the Institute of Statelessness, "in Bahrain there is no statelessness determination procedure to perform identification nor has there been an attempt to collect information on the remaining cases" (2016).

Though the stateless bidoon are the most glaring demographic problem in Kuwait, they exist elsewhere in the Gulf. Saudi Arabia's stateless population is mainly made up of those who originally arrived as pilgrims in Mecca and then decided to stay. Of this population, hundreds of thousands are Rohingya Muslims fleeing ethnic and religious persecution in Myanmar. They have since been given permanent residence, but not citizenship.

As mentioned previously, Kuwait and Bahrain do not allow their female nationals to confer nationality to their husbands nor to their children. As a result of this, a Kuwaiti or Bahraini woman married to a bidoon man gives birth to stateless children. Only in extenuating circumstances – such as situations where the father is 'certifiably unknown,' has passed away, or if the couple is irrevocably divorced – are exceptions made to allow mothers to pass their citizenship onto their offspring.[28] This means that the problem of statelessness is only getting worse. Across the Gulf, children born to bidoon men and citizen women are increasing the total bidoon population.

[28] Qatar is a recent exception, allowing female citizens to pass on their nationality to their children as of September 5th, 2018 (Fattah 2018).

d. Discouraging Dissent and Revoking Citizenship

> "Citizenship isn't treated as an automatic right – rather, it's a reward for political loyalty with a string of benefits." Lyad El-Baghdadi, as quoted in *Inside the $100 Million Scheme to Send the Middle East's Most Unwanted People to Africa* (Salisbury 2015)

With the exceptions of Oman and Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States are unusual in that their citizens constitute a minority in their own country. This fosters fellowship among those who perceive themselves lucky enough to claim citizenship and gain access to welfare benefits and makes those with Gulf nationalities more likely to concede to and cooperate with the sovereign state's divide-and-rule tactics (Chatham House 2013). A passport in the welfare states of the Gulf means that one can expect to receive free services such as healthcare, pensions, housing and food subsidies, and scholarships to study overseas. In exchange for these significant economic perks, it is expected that citizens will remain loyal and quiescent. Thus, the ability to award or revoke citizenship is perhaps the most indispensable tool for political governance amongst rulers in the Gulf. In times of domestic instability, leaders feel more vulnerable and tighten laws regarding citizenship rights to suit them and their desired demographics.

The phrasing of Kuwait and Bahrain's revocation clauses in their nationality laws are glaring examples of an intentional lack of transparency; both make use of generic and vague wording to leave citizenship revocation up to the interpretation and discretion of the state. For instance, Bahrain's nationality law permits passport revocation if one is "causing harm to the interests of the kingdom," without any elaboration on what may qualify as such harm (1963). Kuwait's nationality law similarly specifies that citizenship can be revoked "if it is in the best interests of the state or its external security, or if it… [is] undermining the well-being of the country" (1959). Both laws allow for mandated exile and the revocation of citizenship even if the victim has no other passport, running against international conventions and agreements.

In Bahrain in 2001, a prominent cleric and former bidoon who had criticized the government was promptly stripped of his passport on the grounds that he and his family had not obtained citizenship via legal means. The revocation was a warning to other former bidoon. Hundreds of Bahrainis are currently prohibited from reentering the kingdom and continue to live in exile, mostly in Europe. While the exact number is unknown, the exiled population skyrocketed after the 2011 uprising.

In January of 2015, Bahrain revoked the nationality of seventy-two people it saw as posing a threat to national security and violating its newly implemented anti-terrorism law. About fifty were journalists, researchers and human rights activists of Shia backgrounds (i.e. regular Bahrainis with no direct role in politics), while the other twenty were members of the Sunni extremist Islamic State (ISIS). The Al Khalifa issued this revocation without regard to whether the accused had passports from other countries, again directly against international conventions. The Al Khalifa wanted to lend legitimacy to the government's claims that these Shia were a threat to the national security of the kingdom, and thus used a "terrorism law created as a tool to silence the people" to undertake a smear campaign against the Shia named on the list (Journeyman Pictures, 2015).

Dissent can lead to the revocation of citizenship and can translate into tangible financial losses; therefore, dissent is rare. Since 2011, four of the coastal Gulf States have revoked the citizenship of hundreds of people for speaking out against their monarchies – and even for posting negative comments about neighboring monarchies on social media. According to the London-based Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, 105 people were deprived of Bahraini citizenship in 2017 alone, bringing the total from 2012 up to 455 (HRW 2018, 61). Kuwait rendered about thirty-three of its citizens stateless in 2014 (HRW 2014), and the UAE

stripped seven of its citizens of their nationality in 2011 (Salisbury 2015). In 2005, Qatar seriously considered the revocation of the citizenship of a whole tribe of over six thousand when the Al Ghafran were vocal in their opposition of Shaikh Hamad's coup to depose his father in 1995.[29] Thus, passport stripping is perhaps the most direct tactic to minimize dissent.

e. Conclusion

Both Kuwait and Bahrain are reluctant to expand citizenship to include stateless populations. In Kuwait, it appears that this is mainly because naturalizing the bidoon population would increase the total Kuwaiti population by ten percent. Since welfare benefits are so hefty in the country, and Kuwait has already been dealing with its first set of budget deficits in decades due to lower oil prices on the global market, this would put enormous, unsustainable, and potentially destabilizing pressure on Kuwait's economy. In Bahrain, the refusal seems to be due to a fear of unfavorable demographics vis-à-vis the ruling family. Though the Al Khalifa are issuing more passports than they are revoking, a closer look shows that they are issuing passports to the wrong people, in that they are not naturalizing their native disenfranchised populations, but rather Sunni mercenaries and migrants from other countries. Therefore, in Kuwait, bidoon exclusion is due mainly to economic purposes, while in Bahrain it has to do with political coalitions.

In *Impossible Citizens*, Vora delves into how the 'migrant,' mainly from South and East Asia, must be portrayed as existing entirely outside of society in order to maintain the illusion of

[29] Qatari authorities claimed that the Ghafran's nationalities could be legally revoked because the tribe already had Saudi citizenship. Members of the Al Ghafran approached the United Nations Human Rights Council accusing the government of Qatar of carrying out a "systematic repression and injustice campaign" (Gulf News Report 2017). After the scandal brought about international consternation and negative publicity, the revocation attempt was rolled back.

a purified national identity. In this way, they "must be placed historically into a timeline where the presence of the foreign coincides with oil" (2013, 63). If one accepts the long history of not only South Asians, but also Shia Persians in the Gulf as traders, political agents, and landowners, one would also have to accept exchanges, cultural and otherwise, that may lead to a crisis of legitimacy in a system where ethnicity and nationalism are intertwined.

At the same time, if one acknowledges the reality that Sunni tribesmen were nomads by nature and traveled in search of water, safety, and peace, one must come to terms with the fact that the national narrative of these Gulf States is one that espouses diaspora and migration. The bidoon are simply a symptom of the sudden and rapid tightening of borders, and the fact that they are persecuted for the same practices of migration that brought the ruling elite's ancestors to power is incongruent at best.

Throughout this chapter, we can see that a theme emerges: nations, particularly small ones, need internal and external enemies in order to create the borders which are so vital to nationhood. In foreign migrants, the Gulf dynasties have found the perfect internal enemy; by sowing ethno-national sentiments, the welfare state ensures that its pool of beneficiaries remains small and manageable. By threatening citizenship revocation, which entails massive personal economic loss, rulers ensure quiescence. Thus, for the monarchs of the Gulf States, restrictive citizenship policy is key in creating their self-image, securing their national legitimacy, preserving their dynasty's sovereignty, and sustaining their people's economic well-being. Therefore, citizenship policy – and successfully delineating who belongs and who does not – is critical.

CHAPTER FOUR: EXTERNAL AND REGIONAL THREATS

Both Kuwait and Bahrain routinely face coercion and conflict from larger neighbors. Iranian media, particularly right-wing sources, regularly speak of Bahrain as the fourteenth province of Iran, and Kuwait has long been referred to as the nineteenth province of Iraq, not just by Saddam Hussein, but also by his predecessors in Ba'athist Iraq. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, the Al Sabah's pleas for help were met with multi-national mobilization to liberate the nation. Bahrain's monarchs, on the other hand, regularly struggle to shrug off top-down Saudi interference in the state's administration, and bottom-up Iranian influence on popular opinion. Both are minuscule oil states in precarious positions, and both have strong ties to Western superpowers.

The central difference between the two cases lies in state cohesion and the strength of national identity – Kuwait experiences increased state solidarity as a direct result of fears of Iraqi aggression, which manifested in the massing of Iraqi troops on the border within a week of Kuwait's independence in 1961, persistent border skirmishes in the 1970s, the actual invasion of 1990, and a renewed military buildup at the border in 1994. After Saddam was deposed in 2003, the threat transformed from one of direct aggression by a foreign state to the threat of violence spillover from non-state actors.

Longva addresses the politics of exclusion that have allowed for Kuwaitis to function as a unified entity. She writes that Kuwaitis derive their feeling of being a community from "a common history in which the sense of being threatened – previously by desert raids, nowadays by alien migrants and predatory neighbors – has always been one of the major recurring themes" (1999, 237). In effect, the enduring Iraqi threat in the twentieth century drew the native population together and inwards – a phenomenon inherently favorable for loyalty to the

monarchy. With the threat of Iraq right over the border, the Al Sabah family, by default, has benefited from lower levels of opposition. After all, being subjects of a regime that is indigenous (if less than democratic) is certainly preferable to being subject to governance by a foreign and hostile administration.

Bahrain, meanwhile, is in a precarious position, both geographically and demographically. The island lies between the conservative Muslim strongholds of Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shia Iran, the two of which exert a politically destabilizing influence on the state. Throughout its history, Bahrain has been in danger of devolving into the site of a proxy conflict between the two. This polarization exacerbates already existing divisions between Shia and the Sunni citizens and makes implementing policy much harder for the monarchy. Under current King Hamad Al Khalifa, the Bahraini government has been criticized for responding to calls for citizenship and representation with repression.

As mentioned earlier, because they discovered it first, the Bahrainis also will lose their oil first. In fact, Bahrain's levels of oil production have been decreasing for the past decade and according to the kingdom's Finance Ministry, between 2013 and 2016, Bahrain's revenue from oil and gas dropped forty-three percent. Bahrain is trying to diversify its economy and has been gradually removing gas subsidies to add to its public finances.[30] Given the centrality of oil reserves in maintaining the social contract and regime legitimacy in this petro-state, such a

[30] At the time of writing, this is still true. However, a massive new oil field was discovered in the Khaleej Al Bahrain basin on April 1st, 2018. Though still in the evaluation phase, the field looks like it may be profitably extractible in about five years' time. The discovery will likely provide a major new source of export earnings and renewed energy security for the country. Therefore, it is less likely that Bahrain will shift away from its overwhelming dependence on petroleum. More drilling and geologic evaluation are necessary to understand the true size of the discovery and how much of it will be recoverable, which will, in itself, take at least a year. The rock holding the oil is 'tight,' meaning oil recovery rates will likely be lower than usual levels. However, estimates of the resource are predicted at eighty billion barrels, so even a ten percent recovery would mean *eight billion* extra barrels for Bahrain, a staggering increase from the 125 million barrels of reserves previously projected by the kingdom (Dudley 2018).

change will likely pose significant challenges to any regime, but especially to one facing such a large opposition population, as the Al Khalifa does. Today, with the least oil production of any GCC state and oil and gas sales accounting for eighty-seven percent of the government's total income for 2016 (Sergie 2018), the Al Khalifa finds itself floundering financially, and "relies on Saudi subventions to shore up its economy" (Herb 1999, 177).

The Al Saud routinely interfere in Bahrain's domestic affairs in exchange for these contributions and are at once a threat and nuisance to the Al Khalifa. For instance, the Bahraini monarchy has tried opening up parliaments in the past, only to shut them down upon the orders of the Al Saud. This suppression breeds opposition and animosity for the ruling family amongst citizens. Therefore, unlike Kuwait, Bahrain's national solidarity and political progressiveness are *undermined* by the outside threat, not bolstered by it. To maintain its monarchy, the Al Khalifa will likely continue to naturalize Sunni residents and keep its current discriminatory citizenship regime in place.

a. Regional Territorial Politics: Iraq in Kuwait

> "Through the late 1950s, Kuwait was not exceptional among the Gulf Shaykhdoms [*sic*] in its level of political participation; it was an undiluted family autocracy… Kuwaiti exceptionalism emerged in 1961 as a result of the confluence of two factors: a liberal Emir and a serious threat from Iraq… it took an Iraqi invasion to save the 1962 constitution. The constitutional restoration after liberation set Kuwait on a different path, making it more difficult over time for the ruling family to revert to absolutism." Michael Herb, *The Wages of Oil*: *Parliaments and Economic Development in Kuwait and the UAE* (2014, 105)

Kuwaitis often joke that in exchange for being situated on massive oil fields, they received challenging neighbors. There is much truth in this statement: by virtue of being sandwiched between Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, three comparatively vast nations with extensive military forces, strong ideologies, and powerful leaders, Kuwait cannot escape being affected by

political developments in these countries. Kuwaitis were all too aware of the threats posed by their neighbors. In fact, as late as May of 1979, "Emir Jaber stated that Kuwait was considering joining the UAE to protect itself against security threats" (Boghardt 2006, 53).

After the Iranian Revolution, a bombing campaign held by Shia activists in Kuwait in the early 1980s fueled sectarian tensions in the country. Combined with the Saudi-Iranian rivalry and the Iran-Iraq war, the Shia-Sunni power struggle in Kuwait was further exacerbated and escalated during the decade. However, while Bahrain became entirely ensnared in partisan politics in the 1980s, Kuwaitis quickly turned their attention to the larger-looming, more immediate threat of Iraq.

The scale of the Iraqi invasion on August 2nd, 1990 was something few political leaders could have predicted or expected and as Abdulkhaleq Abdulla writes, it "shattered the political innocence of the Arab Gulf States. It raised immediate concerns and lasting questions regarding the territorial integrity and political viability of small states in the region, exposing the vulnerability of not just Kuwait but other Arab Gulf States" (2010, 9). Many outside of the Middle East wondered whether coming to the rescue of Kuwait was even a worthy endeavor – Kuwait's borders had existed for just six decades (since 1932), and so it was easy to wonder whether this was not just a case of geopolitics organically reformulating themselves.

Ostensibly, Kuwait's provocation of Iraq was cited as the overproduction of oil past levels that OPEC had collectively agreed upon. Interestingly, the Al Sabah thought they had to commit to overproduction because pro-democracy opposition in Kuwait was peaking and the royals needed more revenue to appease and silence citizens with financial concessions (oil prices had dropped drastically in the eighties). Kuwait and the other Gulf countries were also asking

Iraq to repay the hefty debts it had incurred during the Iran-Iraq war, and Saddam Hussein was in no position to do so.

After the initial invasion and quickly achieved occupation of the country, Kuwaitis had to come together immediately to put together a persuasive case for their own existence.[31] If they wanted to survive, both the monarchy and the citizenry had a pressing interest in reaching a compromise that would allow the Kuwaitis, "united in their statelessness, to present a single front to the world" (Herb 1999, 166). As will be seen in this chapter, this united front was a distinctly pro-Al Sabah one. The role of the ruling family was put to the test when Kuwait was occupied; the Emir had promptly fled the country, and the Kuwaitis *chose* to reinstate him as the head of state. As Tétreault writes, "the portraits of the Emir and his heir apparent were as much in evidence amongst Kuwaiti exiles during the seven months of occupation as the national flag. The Emir had undoubtedly become a symbol of the country and the hope of its citizens" (2000, 97). The Emir's portrait was prevalent despite pointed warnings from the occupying forces that residents in possession of such posters would be arrested and homes displaying any signs of allegiance to the "now defunct Al Sabah dynasty" would be burned down and destroyed.[32]

[31] It took less than two days for all the bases in Kuwait to fall to Iraqi troops.
[32] See Appendix II figure h. for an English translation of the order.

i. What the Invasion Taught Kuwaitis about Democracy

> "The takeover of a county by a foreign power is hardly recommended as a recipe for expanding freedom and human rights. Yet one outcome of the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait was to increase the political capital of Kuwaiti opponents of domestic autocracy… these changes helped to shift the balance between the regime and its opponents in favor of pro-democracy elements." Mary Ann Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy: Politics and Society in Contemporary Kuwait* (2000, 76)

While it is undeniable that the invasion demonstrated the Kuwaitis' loyalty to the Al Sabah, it is even more consequential that the invasion deepened Kuwaitis' democratic understanding and taught them that they could display displeasure to those in charge – and how best to display it. Most importantly, the invasion definitively answered an eternal question that had been plaguing the post-oil generation of Kuwait: '*What if all the foreigners left one day? Would we be able to survive?*' During the invasion, Kuwaitis proved to themselves that the country could still run without foreign labor. Kuwaitis became the trash collectors, imams, food sellers, medical aides and protectors of their families.[33] This is indispensable knowledge that strengthened Kuwaiti national identity. Though things returned mostly to normal quickly after the last Iraqi troops left, the generation that lived through the invasion is arguably among the proudest to be Kuwaiti.

Kuwaitis inside of Kuwait when Iraqi troops crossed the border mobilized to maintain their society's functioning as best they could for the seven months of the invasion. Though about a third of the citizens were abroad on summer vacation when the invasion occurred, many returned, smuggling resources from abroad in with them to aid the Kuwaiti resistance. Business owners of shops that were still functioning provided safe spaces from which resistance activities

[33] Scholars in Kuwait are currently undertaking revisionist research that scrutinizes whether invasion's resistance was actually exclusively Kuwaiti or whether foreigners were removed from these chronicles retroactively during the uptick in nationalism after Kuwait's liberation. There are indeed reports of non-citizens taking part in the Kuwaiti resistance. This is explored in subsequent sections of this chapter.

could take place, and local merchants began to learn about the weaknesses of the Iraqi occupation by doing business with the soldiers. It soon became apparent that the poverty of the rank-and-file members of the invading forces could be manipulated, and Kuwaitis regularly bribed soldiers and officers and gave the Iraqi occupiers radios so that they could listen to news about the impending arrival of UN forces on international broadcasting.

As unlikely as it may seem, some Kuwaitis remained in their homeland by choice. Tétreault recounts one Kuwaiti's view of the occupied society: "it was very nice during the occupation… we became the real genuine Kuwaiti society once again… everyone know how was the neighbor, did he need anything. We became the old fishermen society like the old days [*sic*]" (2000, 96). Arguably, occupied Kuwait was more democratic than pre-war or liberated Kuwait. With the unelected leadership, political elites, and most of the foreigners having fled the country, the remaining Kuwaitis were left to undergo a common transformative experience. Group identification based on sect, sex, tribe, and social class were erased. The Iraqi troops under the command of Saddam Hussein did not discriminate against Sunni or Shia; they treated all Kuwaitis as prisoners and subjects.[34] In this way, "Kuwaitis under occupation saw themselves as a unified national community, one very like what they imagined Kuwait had been in a past none of them had experienced directly" (Tétreault 2000, 10).

Those who stayed back in Kuwait, whether willingly or not, learned that it was possible to fight back against an autocratic regime.[35] They learned how much they were capable of enduring, and as a result, became less intimidated by their own government than they had been in

[34] This indiscriminate attitude was applied with one exception: Human Rights Watch recounts reports of how bidoon were treated differently from citizens by Iraqis. Iraqi jailers tried to separate the bidoon and treat them better than citizen prisoners of war, but bidoon largely refused the preferential treatment. According to one captive bidoon, "we could have escaped or received better treatment if we had said that we were not Kuwaiti. Before we were taken to Iraq… the Iraqis asked who was Bedoon [*sic*]; they would have let them go. They [the bidoon] wouldn't say it; they wanted the same fate as the rest of the Kuwaitis" (HRW 1995).

[35] See figures i. and j. in Appendix II for examples of non-violent resistance.

the past. It is less likely that one would fear going head-to-head with the powerful but mostly benevolent Al Sabah when one had survived Saddam Hussein's malevolent atrocities.

Since many of the leadership figures and political and economic elite had fled the country, new management for existing industries such as Kuwait Petroleum and new social and resistance organizations formed by Kuwaitis inside of Kuwait were overwhelmingly run democratically. Additionally, adopting a horizontal infrastructure of personnel as opposed to a vertical one made it harder for Iraqi troops to find out who was in charge and imprison or execute them.

Kuwaitis who were outside of Kuwait (again, willingly or otherwise) also received practical lessons in democracy, whether it was through lobbying, public speaking, or public relations as they set about petitioning for the restoration of their country. Groups formed by Kuwaitis outside of Kuwait were also broadly democratic, since they were ad-hoc and overwhelmingly staffed by volunteers. Tétreault aptly compares the two largest Kuwaiti resistance groups functioning outside of Kuwait to draw a fascinating conclusion. She looks at the all-volunteer Free Kuwait Campaign (FKC), which worked across Europe, and the Citizens for a Free Kuwait group (CFK), which lobbied and organized in the United States. As mentioned, the CFK in the US hired Hill & Knowlton Incorporated, a prominent public relations firm.

Hill & Knowlton coached and coaxed the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the USA, a member of the royal family, who gave untrue testimony to a US congressional committee in November 1990 about premature babies being ripped out of incubators and left on the hospital floors in Kuwaiti hospitals. Her status and position as a royal was found out, as well as the fact that it was highly unlikely that she was in Kuwait at the time she alleged the atrocities

took place. This orchestrated gaffe deeply damaged the Kuwaiti cause in the United States, causing Westerners to doubt the genuine cases of atrocity and war crimes that *were* occurring.[36] In contrast, the FKC, which communicated directly with news media across Europe, was untainted by accusations of media manipulation. Tétreault uses this case study to illustrate the agency and success of Kuwaitis and their capacity to mobilize people and resources to meet their own needs. She finds that results were better when Kuwaitis committed themselves to the cause, as opposed to when they paid and delegated outsiders to do the job.

ii. Parliamentary Politics After 1990

> "While Bahrainis in the first half of the 1990s lived in fear that their most innocent statements might be construed as criticism of the regime, and, as a result, always preferred to discuss society and politics within the four walls of their homes, Kuwaitis openly criticized their government in public places and never worried much about being heard and seen doing so." Anh Nga Longva, *Neither Autocracy nor Democracy but Ethnocracy: Citizens, Expatriates and the Socio-Political System in Kuwait* (2005, 114)

It would be a stretch to claim that liberation revealed an entirely new Kuwait. The pre-invasion struggle between Kuwaitis and their government over whether – and how much – to revise the social contract governing state-society relations quietly resumed, but with a new set of strengths and weaknesses being brought to the table by each side. As mentioned, the Kuwaitis who had remained found a new voice and purpose, while those who left found out what it was like to lose one's country and home. In turn, the Al Sabah learned that they may enjoy adulation and respect from their subjects, but they are also accountable to them. Thus, though the battle for

[36] Saddam's troops took over sprawling villas in many of the suburbs and turned them into torture chambers for anyone thought to be a member of the former Kuwaiti military or the new Kuwaiti resistance. Electrocution and fingernail-pulling were the most common methods of extracting information. Fingernails were also pulled out as a punishment for displaying the Emir's portrait (Newsweek 1991). Iraqi troops also routinely fired at Kuwaitis who talked back to them or those who tried to stop them from pillaging schools, stores, and vacated homes.

Kuwait's existence was fought on an entirely international stage, the reconciliation process would depend on the actions and positions of those in the internal environment.

The rebuilding of Kuwait started in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in October of 1990, where twelve hundred members from notable Kuwaiti families (the merchant elite) met with the exiled Emir and prominent members of the Kuwaiti royal family. The Kuwaitis demanded an expansion of democratic processes and essentially renegotiated the ruling bargain post-invasion. The conference, "held in the unique circumstances of exile at the hands of an existential and external threat to the country… appeared to offer the opportunity for the government and opposition groups to renegotiate basic governance arrangements in a rare, relatively neutral setting" (Barakat and Skelton 2014, 10). Emir Jaber Al Sabah agreed to a set of new terms, and the Al Sabah were reinstated as the rulers of a newly free Kuwait. The exiled ruling family reached a deal with the opposition that turned Kuwait into a liberalized autocracy with the most progressive political system in the peninsula. In his compromised position, Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah, the Crown Prince, announced that "the people of Kuwait can only be rewarded for their trust and loyalty by further trust. National unity will be the groundwork to build our future Kuwait." (Gulf Newsletter 1990, 8).

Ahmed Khatib, who was a leader of the opposition movement before the Iraqi invasion and a key negotiator with the Al Sabah during the invasion and liberation period, summed up the Kuwaitis' insistence on a democratic post-war environment pertinently at a press conference during the Jeddah meetings. He stated that Kuwaiti opposition members had "always recognized the legitimacy of the Sabah family, both before and after the invasion. We are tied to the constitution of 1962 which says in black and white that the ruler [of Kuwait] must belong to the Sabah family" (Gulf Newsletter 1990, 8). This comment reiterated the opposition's fealty to the

royal family, while also using the constitution as the document that firmly places them in their position of power. Since the constitution also clearly mandates the presence of a parliament to govern Kuwait alongside the Al Sabah, this was an adeptly veiled reminder of the necessity of restoring both the Al Sabah and the parliament to a liberated Kuwait.

The Emir, in no position to refuse the compromise at the time, promised that elections would take place for a new parliament as soon as possible after liberation. However, Jaber Al Sabah postponed these elections for several months, instead adopting his familiar pre-war paternalistic stance by retroactively canceling utility bills for the past eighteen months and buying back twenty billion dollars' worth of debts from Kuwaiti banks. A newly reinvigorated opposition refused to be placated by the monetary perks, hungry for the democratic values they had experienced over the past few months – something they had achieved without much help from the Al Sabah.

Luckily, Kuwaiti activists were joined in their expectation of a new parliament by a global audience. Following liberation, all the coalition countries, non-governmental bodies, and United States taxpayers were eagerly awaiting a new postwar Kuwait – one worthy of the effort and expenditure it had taken to end the occupation. The cost of liberation meant that all over the world, people were waiting to see "a Kuwait that was more than just an improvement over Iraq; post-liberation Kuwait was expected to show an improvement over its own pre-invasion period" (Tétreault 2000, 87). The United States' ambassador was also active in this endeavor, and "the US government openly sponsored activities in Kuwait to promote the restoration of democracy. These included a series of seminars of which some of the participants were US congressmen and Republican party members" (Zahlan 1998, 55). This pressure to resume parliamentary life eventually pushed Jaber Al Sabah to concede. Thus, while Kuwait has always relied on

international powers for its territorial protection, the state's political development has also benefited from its close ties to foreign powers in the past.

Today, Kuwait's parliament is by far the most influential non-royal governmental body amongst the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The assembly can block legislation and interrogate ministers who are selected by a Prime Minister chosen by the Emir. Though parliament has not been suspended as a whole in recent years, relations between the elected assembly and royals in government have often been fraught, and dissolving the parliament is seen as a regular occurrence, done sporadically at the Emir's discretion and followed by snap elections. Only *six* parliaments have been able to serve to their full terms since the constitution was ratified in 1962. Since 1992, Kuwait has witnessed the formation of nineteen cabinets and the resignation of forty-eight ministers (Kuwait Politics Database). There has been a total of thirty-five governments since Kuwait's independence fifty-five years ago. This means that the average lifespan of a Kuwaiti government is only about eighteen months (Taleb 2018).

The situation is so dynamic that Gulf specialist Michael Herb independently maintains the *Kuwait Politics Database*, a comprehensive directory on parliamentary and government figures in Kuwait which includes election results and records of the National Assembly to keep track of who has been elected to what position. In this way, the relative political cohesion among the Kuwaitis is, "a cohesion that has, at times, been subjected to some difficult tests, but has, on the whole, proved to be remarkably resilient" (Longva 1997, 22). Though the revolving door of parliamentarians undoubtedly stalls countless development initiatives, it is also a sign that Kuwait's domestic civil and political society is independent and vibrant in the aftermath of the invasion.

After the country's liberation, many Kuwaitis organized extra-governmental advocacy associations in support of victims of war trauma, families of prisoners of war, and other vulnerable groups. The new post-invasion parliament also created a Committee for the Defense of Human Rights when it first convened in 1992 (Beaugrand 2011, 246). Unfortunately, this organization did not step in to assist the bidoon or protect the Palestinians in the targeted human rights violations that occurred during Kuwait's martial law period in the months after February of 1991.

iii. Demographic Redistribution after Liberation

Just as the occupation itself was secured swiftly, taking less than forty-eight hours to complete, the allied forces similarly liberated Kuwait in under a hundred hours. As Saddam Hussein's forces withdrew, they continued to loot private residences, state buildings, hotels, and schools. About five thousand Kuwaitis were dead, and thousands more were taken to Iraq as prisoners of war. Retreating Iraqis were under orders to set fire to oil wells, causing an environmental crisis and months of darkness in newly freed Kuwait. Iraqi troops flooded the Persian Sea with over 350 million gallons of oil, triggering what became the largest offshore spill in history (Associated Press 2016).

Many migrants fled after the Gulf War began and never returned, if not of their own volition, then due to Kuwaiti animosity towards Saddam's perceived supporters – most notably the Palestinian diaspora and the bidoon. Kuwaitis were particularly shocked by the Palestinian administration's pro-Saddam stance during the invasion. Many of the original founders of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) had worked in Kuwait in the 1950s – Yasser Arafat included. Kuwait was especially sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, and even extracted

remittances from Palestinians working in government jobs in Kuwait, transferring them directly to the PLO. According to *Time Magazine,* it was "Kuwait that coughed up millions whenever Yasser Arafat cried bankruptcy – at least $60 million over… six years alone" (Taif 2001). Thus, though there were more than three hundred thousand Palestinians in Kuwait before August 2nd, they were not welcome back after the invasion due to their administration's perceived betrayal.

It is important to note here that the legends that have emerged following the invasion ought to be understood within the context of soaring national pride after Kuwait's liberation. As mentioned, scholars in Kuwait are now undertaking research that scrutinizes the widely held but little-substantiated claims that the invasion's resistance was entirely Kuwaiti. Although all foreigners were ordered to leave Kuwait immediately by the Iraqi puppet regime, we now know that not all did. Non-citizens were involved in the resistance, and experienced war trauma as well. Foreigners who stayed had to remain especially well hidden, as they were, along with former Kuwaiti military members, actively sought out and targeted by Iraqi invaders. The foreigners' presence was increasingly overlooked and glossed over as nationalist narratives and heroic sagas started to develop around the invasion. It is perhaps due to this surge in nationalism that there are not as many tales of foreigners' involvement in the resistance.

In his article *The PLO in Kuwait*, published just months after Kuwait's liberation in 1991, Shafeeq Ghabra (a Kuwaiti citizen with Palestinian roots and a professor at Kuwait University) wrote about the Palestinian experience in perhaps more candid ways than other works published longer after liberation that have become imbued with nationalist sentiments. Ghabra points out that while the PLO supported Iraq in the invasion, *Fatah*, another Palestinian liberation group, did not. *Fatah* in Kuwait was so staunchly in opposition to the invasion that the leader of the Kuwaiti branch was assassinated in January of 1991. According to Ghabra, Palestinians also

"helped keep the electricity and water systems running and, with their Kuwaiti colleagues, [maintained] essential medical services. They also worked as volunteers alongside Kuwaitis in bakeries and other services. Dozens of Palestinians took part in the Kuwaiti resistance" (1991).

Ghabra also notes that there is evidence of Palestinians taking more direct roles, smuggling and transporting weapons in Palestinian-Kuwaiti resistance cells which contained members of both nationalities. Finally, Ghabra observes that there were no pro-Iraq demonstrations held by Palestinians *in* Kuwait (though the ones in Gaza were widely televised), and that the only demonstration that took place in the majority Palestinian neighborhood of Hawalli was pro-Al Sabah. While Kuwaitis who had remained during the invasion were aware of these complicated realities, those who returned upon Kuwait's liberation were not – there were reports of armed militias and even members of the Kuwaiti army indiscriminately arresting Palestinians upon their return to Kuwait.

This mass exodus, combined with surging national pride and relief, certainly gave Kuwaitis a more homogeneous and heightened sense of national identity. For a short time immediately after Kuwait's liberation in February 1991, Kuwaitis were once again the largest ethnic group in the country; the last time this had been recorded was in 1961, at the start of Kuwait's independence. However, just a year later, the ethnic composition of the population had reverted to its pre-invasion state, with the number of expatriates once again higher than that of the Kuwaitis – "the initial relief which the Kuwaitis felt at being the majority in their own country was quickly swept away by the realization that the enormous tasks of tidying up and rebuilding Kuwait… could simply not be carried out without the expatriates. The gates to labor migration were consequently flung wide open again" (Longva 1997, 243). The caveat here is that

Palestinians were unwelcome in Kuwait during the reconstruction years, and many who had businesses and investments in Kuwait never returned.

National solidarity lingered after Kuwait's emancipation, and remarkable progress was made in the aftermath of the Gulf War, progress that was not only relegated to recovery. The boost in unity, combined with the relief of victory, propelled the country towards liberalization, modernization, and increased governmental accountability. Thus, "since independence, Kuwaiti politics have displayed a civility, absence of violence, and relative openness that is – or ought to be – the envy of its neighbors" (Herb 1999, 158). However, all of this took place at the expense of the bidoon. As mentioned, popular thought in Kuwait is that the bidoon collaborated with Saddam Hussein's forces in the 1990 invasion, even though they made up most of the Kuwaiti police and military forces pre-war. The government promulgated this generally false idea after Kuwait's liberation as a part of the efforts to improve the Al Sabah's damaged political legitimacy through a post-war reconstruction vision.

As shown in Chapter Three, it appears that at some time in 1985, the Kuwaiti government consciously decided to sideline the bidoon, who had been living in comparative peace and stability as non-citizens amongst citizens. The invasion could have provided the perfect opportunity to remedy relations with the stateless. Since so much infrastructural reconstruction had to take place, and the nation essentially had to be rebuilt, government officials and city planners could easily have factored the bidoon population into their capacity calculations. However, the opposite happened: reconstruction in 1991 was dominated by notions of improving regime security, which "necessitated renewed post-war business-as-usual authoritarianism, exclusionary nationalist policies and the recreation of the pre-war power-for-welfare political trade-off" (Barakat and Skelton 2014, 1). Those who had experienced the occupation together

cultivated a social cohesion that could have been utilized to build a more inclusive, cooperative Kuwait. Instead of capitalizing on this moment, society was once again consciously segregated into distinct groupings of citizens and non-citizens.

Discrimination against – and restrictions imposed upon – the bidoon escalated after the Iraqi occupation. According to one bidoon interviewed by Human Rights Watch, "when the [Iraqi] invasion happened, that's when everything changed for the Bidun [*sic*]. People started looking at the Bidun suspiciously. There are families back in the day who were friends, then suddenly … there was this lack of trust and … overall xenophobia" (HRW 2011). Since they made up most of the Kuwaiti military, Kuwaitis blamed the bidoon for their failure to stop the occupiers. However, as noted earlier, bidoon were almost exclusively the rank-and-file members of the army – they had received orders from the military elite and the Al Sabah family to surrender and retreat.

Additionally, one month after Saddam's troops crossed the border, the occupying forces issued an order, under penalty of death, that all non-citizens in Kuwait must join the 'Popular Army,' a militia branch of the Iraqi military. Of course, not having a choice, a few bidoon complied. Kuwaitis were not asked to register, so it is unknown how many would have succumbed to that same pressure. This was disastrous for the bidoon's public image, and the whole group was branded as collaborators – even though at least as many bidoon joined the Kuwaiti resistance. The aforementioned 1995 Human Rights Watch report (*Citizens without Citizenship*) notes that "out of 320 people known to have been killed in resistance acts, eighty-two were Bedoon [*sic*]" (1995).

During the occupation, most non-citizen residents who were in Kuwait fled to Saudi Arabia to escape the rule of the Iraqis and the subsequent airstrikes of Operation Desert Storm.

From there, they left to their home countries. However, without the necessary documentation required to enter Saudi Arabia, the bidoon's only option for refuge was to enter Iraq. Since Kuwait was declared the nineteenth province of Iraq on the eve of the invasion, passports to enter were not necessary. Once the war was over, bidoon who had fled to Iraq, as well as those who had been captured and taken to Iraq before Saddam's surrender, became stranded in the desert between the two states, forming sprawling refugee camps when the Kuwaiti government refused them entry. According to Human Rights Watch, the camp's population included women and small children, and at its peak population held up to five thousand refugees (1995). The Kuwaiti government took the fact that these bidoon fled to Iraq to mean that they had family members there. This was proof enough for the government that the bidoon were originally Iraqi.

In the martial law trials held in the months after liberation, extreme retribution was taken against anyone who was thought to have committed even minor infractions. Non-citizens and citizens who had merely complied with the Iraqi occupiers for self-preservation were prosecuted. For example, Human Rights Watch reported that nurses who worked during the occupation were charged with association with the enemy. Even in the environment of heightened fear and suspicion, the government was unable to prove that the bidoon as a group were collaborators with Saddam: "only twenty Bedoons [*sic*] were convicted, a minuscule fraction of the community and a figure comparable to that of the twenty Kuwaiti citizens also convicted of collaboration" (HRW 1995).

Furthermore, any bidoon who were lucky enough to still be employed by the Kuwaiti government before the invasion were retroactively dismissed *en masse* from August 2nd, 1990. Very few were ever rehired. The mass layoffs included soldiers and police officers, despite the reality that many in the military had continued to resist the invasion or were taken prisoner at the

start of the occupation. By contrast, Kuwaiti passport-holders who had stayed for the duration of the invasion were financially supported once the war was over and lauded as heroes. The bidoon were thus marginalized and used as scapegoats to unite Kuwaitis under the Emir in the name of national security.

In recent years, a minority opposition group made up of a coalition of disenfranchised bidoon, tribal members, and Islamists has been gaining traction (Tétreault 2006). This coalition's rise can partly be attributed to the fact that Saddam is no longer in power. Under Saddam, Kuwait and its sovereignty were directly threatened, which had the aforementioned unifying effect on national identity. Though today's tumultuous Iraq still poses a threat to Kuwait, it is more insidious and de-centralized, and has lost the rallying aspect it once had for the Kuwaiti people. In the end, citizenship laws did *not* change. Kuwait became more democratic, but only for its citizens. After the invasion, bidoon were still politically disenfranchised, and far more socially ostracized.

In the realm of international relations, the invasion of Kuwait is meaningful because it was the first time in two hundred years of *Pax Britannica* that a state's borders were so directly violated. The way countries acted in the aftermath of the invasion is thus illustrative.[37] The Gulf Cooperation Council countries which quickly found out in 1990 that they could not come to their member states' aid began to invest in their joint military forces – forces that were next used in 2011 to secure stability in Bahrain. Quite notably, though the UN coalition forces who emancipated Kuwait were overwhelmingly Western, an Al Saud prince was second in command

[37] An example which encapsulates the before-and-after break in thinking concerning the invasion can be found in this statement from an Emirati government official in 1990: "The area has lost its innocence. Citizens will have to work and probably go into the army. More will be demanded of them, and as a result, they will seek to have a say politically. The sheikh now listens more attentively than before. The old system of ruler and people waiting for the bounty of the ruler is obviously not going to work anymore. That doesn't mean suddenly a Western parliament [*sic*], but the ruling families will want to have their legitimacy reinforced" (Gulf Newsletter October 1990, 12).

under Norman Schwarzkopf in leading the coalition forces. The unique regional influence of the Al Saud will be discussed in the next section.

b. Regional Religious Politics: Iran and Saudi Arabia in Bahrain

> "It is more useful to look at how religion is used and manipulated by elites to political ends, rather than explain the conflicts plaguing the region solely through references to an age-old schism at the heart of Islam." Toby Matthiesen, *Sectarian Gulf: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab Spring that Wasn't* (2013, 20)

As described in the first chapter, Bahrain, Kuwait, and the surrounding areas were characterized by centuries of trade, travel, and migration that escaped easy categorizations. However, local political rhetoric and media outlets in these countries constantly equate Saudi Arabia to 'Sunni' and Iran to 'Shia' powers, placing them in direct opposition to each other. Any nuance or commonality is overlooked in favor of portraying Iran as the infidel rival of Saudi Arabia, and vice versa.

Throughout the protests at the Pearl Roundabout, Bahraini officials responded to calls for accountability and democratization by accusing the opposition of being Iranian troublemakers working in Bahrain at the behest of the Iranian government. This notion is a recurring accusation and one that was vehemently promoted by Bahrain's neighboring GCC countries as well – since Iran lies so close to the north of the islands, many Bahrainis trace not only their ancestry but also their religious loyalty to Iran. A significant part of the population looks to Iran's Supreme Leader not only as a spiritual guide, but also a political leader. This has also caused longstanding worry among high-ranking US State Department officials, who fear that military conflict with Iran would, by default, destabilize the Al Khalifa – longtime allies of the United States (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor 2017).

The Al Khalifa are also longtime allies of the Al Saud, and the Bahraini royals rely on Saudi aid to shore up the state's economy. In turn, the Al Saud have routinely interfered in Bahrain's domestic affairs over the years. For instance, Saudi pressure played a significant role in the decision by the Emir of Bahrain to suspend his country's elected National Assembly in 1975, as King Khalid Al Saud feared a democratic government just across the border would be problematic. A generation later, one of the Pearl Roundabout protesters' main demands was to instate a more autonomous parliament. An expert on Iranian security commented soon after the 2011 crisis that "the situation in Bahrain started as a nonsectarian movement for freedom and turned into the hottest battlefield in the Iranian-Saudi regional war" (Mekhennet, 2012).

The battlefield has since cooled down, but the embers are still there. Iran and Saudi Arabia's continued tugging at opposing sides of the Shia-Sunni feud means that a meaningful resolution is unlikely to take place. Bahrain's monarchy lost much of its legitimacy, but never lost its sovereignty; instead, it made a conscious, autonomous choice to call on Saudi and GCC intervention to quash the uprising. King Hamad, who at first appeared willing to compromise with the opposition, declared a state of emergency and sanctioned the deployment of twelve hundred troops from the GCC's Peninsula Shield Force to the islands when this option was provided to him by the Saudi King.

Though Saudi Arabia was the main Sunni regional power involved in creating the tense international environment surrounding the 2011 uprisings, the other GCC countries soon also became entangled. As mentioned in Chapter Two, after a series of emergency meetings, the GCC foreign ministers announced a ten-year, twenty billion dollar pledge to the governments of Bahrain and Oman to support 'socioeconomic development' and issued a statement simultaneously alluding to their suspicions that Iran was meddling with the Bahraini opposition.

This pledge was fundamentally a regional Marshall Plan designed to give the Al Khalifa the funds they needed to win over their dissenters and preserve their monarchical supremacy – by whatever means necessary. What had happened in the Kingdom of Bahrain was unprecedented and understandably terrifying to neighboring kings, and all rallied around Saudi Arabia to preserve the status quo in the region.

i. Saudi Arabia as a Regional Powerbroker

Bahrain's uprising was a homegrown movement to procure equal rights for all Bahrainis. The issues at play in the uprising are ones that we would expect to take place entirely within the domestic realm, yet the events did not unfold on such a local level. Both a regional dimension and a global one were involved in reconciliation. Bahrain retained its monarchy, despite all the odds stacked against it domestically. Without external intervention, however, it is unlikely that domestic Bahraini security forces could have taken control of the situation on their own. This case shows the power of international intervention in regime sustainability, *regardless* of the national cohesion within a given state.

As mentioned, the Al Saud saw the conflict as an extension of intensifying competition between Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shia Iran (Chatham House 2012, 5). Saudi Arabia was militarily supporting the minoritarian monarchy to preserve its own regime longevity, and the other Gulf monarchies followed suit to different degrees, worried about the precedent an overthrow in a small Sheikhdom would set. Meanwhile, the United States pressed for compromise and stability in Bahrain, worried about its oil interests in the region and the security of the American Fifth Fleet Naval Base on the islands.

The Al Saud family is virtually independent of – and blatantly unaccountable to – any single local group. Upon the discovery of oil, one major disruption that had severe political ramifications for generations was ARAMCO's (formerly the Arabian American Oil Company, and today the Saudi Arabian Oil Company) policy of settling royal debts to merchants. Once ARAMCO undertook this responsibility, any dependence of the ruling family on the Saudi trading elite dissipated, and the Al Saud became largely autonomous of any single group in their realm. Any loyalties that once existed were transferred from the merchant families to ARAMCO (Vitalis 2006). This lack of accountability is what allows the Al Saud to live in luxury while ruling with an iron fist today.

As in Bahrain, the discovery of oil permanently destroyed the merchants' coherence. This resonates with the actions and practices of the Al Saud and Al Khalifa in overseeing their citizenry to this very day. Since the royal family does not need the active support of its subjects in oil extraction and governance, it has been known to undermine its own citizens, pitting them against each other to deflect opposition. In this way, "the Al Saud… continue to treat their country as their own private property without, thus far, any serious risk of revolution" (Herb 1999, 5).

The Al Saud's relationship with ARAMCO has been characterized as collaboration between "a King who thinks like an oil company and an oil company that thinks like a King" (Vitalis 2006, 35). When it was founded, ARAMCO did not just extract oil from Saudi soil, it also acted as a political institution, implementing Jim Crow segregation along national and ethnic lines that dug permanent divisions between oil workers which can still be seen in Saudi society today. ARAMCO had different and unequal housing, recreational spaces, and even drinking fountains relegated to different nationalities. In Vitalis' view, this was done to eliminate any

potential for the unionization of oil workers, thereby eliminating demands for better working conditions. The company also pursued means of subversion and control that were remarkably advanced for a corporation at the time, such as developing their own propaganda-ridden radio station.

The Al Saud were the only ones who escaped ARAMCO's intrusive policies unscathed and were in effect the only tribe to prosper. While ARAMCO customized royal Cadillacs and installed air conditioners in the multiplying Saud palaces, Ibn Saud left his people "without, say, running water… decent food, and the like" (Vitalis 2006, 91). By modernizing and leaving the rest of their people behind, the Al Saud shattered any image they may have possessed as benevolent rulers and protectors of their people – the family allowed their resources and their residents to be exploited in exchange for material reimbursement.

By securing their primacy by acting as a corporate monopoly, the Al Saud also stunted the nation in terms of political development, social cohesion, economic accountability, and structural modernization (Al-Hijji 2010, 134). From the start of the oil era, the Al Saud were seen as a patron of Big Oil and Western materialism. It is vital to note that this is an exception among the oil states – broadly speaking, no other nation indulged in the same degree of despotism. This diversity in the behavior of Gulf monarchs as oil revenues flowed in is a testament to the fact that they experienced autonomy and acted as they pleased, not entirely as imperial (or corporate) forces preferred.

The Al Saud also enjoy a considerable buffer to counteract any local instability that arises from any disapproval of their practices. Saudi Arabia's status as a closed and conservative society makes it able to withstand risk factors exceptionally well. The Al Saud's territorial monopoly on Mecca and Medina and their policy of promoting Saudi Arabia as the birthplace of

modern Sunni Islam cannot be underestimated. The *hajj* pilgrimage itself is invaluable as an "opportunity to demonstrate [the Al Saud's] paramount commitment to Islam and thus to certify its legitimacy" (Piscatori 2005, 222). By using their idiosyncratic model of Islam and repressive rule, supplemented with hefty monetary incentives, the Al Saud have been successful in curbing social unrest within their borders thus far.

Matthiesen writes that "to the Al Saud ruling family, Bahrain had always been like a part of Saudi Arabia" (2013, 19). The Al Saud and Al Khalifa shared the belief that opposition in Bahrain was orchestrated by Iran to gain a political foothold in the Gulf. Furthermore, rather than fearing a constitutional monarchy, a national assembly, or a democracy in Bahrain, the Al Saud were instead particularly concerned that the opposition in Bahrain would encourage the Shia living in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia – directly adjacent to Bahrain – to similarly coordinate a movement for more rights and better access to services. It is these fears that prompted Saudi Arabia to mobilize its military forces as a warning and a threat to the Saudi Shia and all Saudi citizens who may have been planning on following suit. A tell-tale sign of this is that King Abdulla Al Saud announced massive new social security programs, including job opportunities, housing loans, and healthcare access at the same time as the discontent in Bahrain in 2011. The total value of these new social programs was cited at over $120 billion (Matthiesen 2013, 26).

Saudi Arabia also has significant economic leverage in Bahrain. The Bahraini economy and state budget depend heavily on their neighbor and surrogate. Most of Bahrain's oil production today comes from the shared Abu Safa offshore field, profits from which the Al Saud shares equally with the Al Khalifa. Additionally, Bahraini refineries are supplied with crude oil from Saudi Arabia at a discounted rate. If Saudi Arabia were to halt these collaborative practices,

Bahrain's economy would be in ruins. Finally, the Bahraini tourism and banking sectors depend heavily on Saudi visitors and deposits, respectively. Investment in tourism is a large part of Bahrain's plan for its eventual post-oil economy, and in the years leading up to the Pearl Uprisings, Bahrain's official slogan was 'Business-friendly Bahrain.' Citizens of Western countries could buy visas at the airport upon arrival. After the uprisings, too many NGO officials and journalists arrived for the Al Khalifa's liking, and they rescinded this policy. The 2011 uprising also led to many banks and tourists to look elsewhere for safer places to invest and spend their money, and so the Saudis became even more influential in the banking and tourism sectors.

The King Fahd Causeway connecting Bahrain to Saudi Arabia is crossed by eighteen million each year (Matthiesen 2013, 30). Many of the motorists are young Saudis looking to spend their weekends and earnings somewhere with more permissive laws and better entertainment options. At the height of the uprisings in Bahrain, the Saudi government urged its citizens to stay away from Bahrain for their own safety. One group of Saudis that the Saudi and Bahraini security services were particularly worried about – the Saudi Shia – were outright banned from entering Bahrain and were turned back by border guards (Matthiesen 2013, 30).

There is much meaning to be found in the fact that the construction of the causeway was singlehandedly funded by Saudi Arabia after the Iranian Revolution in 1979. The Al Saud were worried about Iranian revolutionaries infiltrating the Gulf Peninsula and wanted to increase their connectivity with their neighbors. While the causeway has indeed facilitated trade, business, and tourism, one of the ostensible reasons for its construction was also to allow troops from Saudi Arabia to quickly access Bahrain in case of a crisis of legitimacy or authority.

This is precisely what took place on March 14th, 2011, exactly one month after the Pearl Roundabout protests. The GCC's Peninsula Shield Force, the military reserves formed as a part of the Gulf Cooperation Council, had hardly been used before. One thousand Saudi troops and five hundred Emiratis arrived to 'restore the peace.' The reactions of the Shia Bahrainis in comparison with the Sunni Bahrainis to this incursion are indicative of the deep fissures that existed between the two populations at that time. For many Shia, Bahrain has been under occupation since that day. Many Sunnis, meanwhile, saw the foreign troops as liberators. Saudi flags and posters of King Abdullah Al Saud were put up, and "T-shirts and pins describing Saudi Arabia as the 'Kingdom of Humanitarianism' were sold at street corners" (Matthiesen 2013, 51). Interestingly, these accounts are reminiscent of reports by Kuwaitis of how the United States and President George HW Bush were celebrated when the state was freed from Iraqi occupation. These contradictory perceptions show the depth of the sectarian divide in the aftermath of the restoration of order in Bahrain.

The case of Bahrain is theoretically significant because it stands out as an exception in the domino effect of regime change in the Middle East during the tumultuous Arab Spring period. It is vital that one understand how and why Bahrain retained its monarchy, despite all the odds stacked against it domestically, *particularly* in terms of its weak national identity; The Al Khalifa dynasty, in power since 1783, rules the kingdom to this day. This sequence of events stands to show the power of international intervention, through both regional pressures and singular nations' intrusions. In this case, Iran was bolstering the seventy percent Shia majority opposition, Sunni Saudi Arabia was militarily supporting the minority monarchy, while the United States pressed for compromise between the two sides to retain stability, worried about its

massive naval base there. The seemingly swift quashing of the rebellion in Bahrain is a testament to the degree of influence foreign interests can have in a conflict of clashing national identities.

ii. Kuwait's Involvement in Bahrain's Sectarianism

In Kuwait, Sunni protesters and pro-government Shia alike were inspired by the Bahraini dissidents, viewing them with excitement and anticipation at first, then dismay when the crackdown began. Reflecting the importance of – and close ties with – the Shia merchant families, Kuwaiti Emir Sabah Al Sabah tried to put his decades of experience in foreign policy as Kuwait's former foreign minister to use and offered to personally mediate between the Bahraini opposition and the ruling family at several points in February and March of 2011. However, his offers were wholeheartedly rebuked by the Al Khalifa, and as a result, Kuwait stayed largely out of the situation in Bahrain. Kuwaiti Shia soldiers refused to participate in the GCC intervention in Bahrain through the Peninsula Shield Force, and the extent of Kuwait's military involvement was limited to a symbolic detachment of naval units to the waters around Bahrain, thereby appeasing the GCC while ensuring that Kuwait's military could not come into contact with the Bahraini protesters at the heart of downtown Manama.

Additionally, as the Al Khalifa crackdown on the media intensified, many opposition media outlets began functioning out of Kuwait due to its relative political and religious openness. "Regional political and religious movements had used Kuwait to establish media outlets over the past decade" (Matthiesen 2013, 97), and new opposition TV channels began to move their bases there in earnest after 2011. However, Kuwait, along with the rest of the GCC, clamped down on social media opposition after the uprisings.

Given the relative wealth of the Gulf, social media is even more widespread than in Egypt and Tunisia, where Facebook played an essential part in planning popular protests anonymously. Protest announcements, online political discussions, and *especially* public criticism of GCC royalty have become particularly closely monitored in recent years, with year-long jail sentences being handed out to those who insult Gulf rulers or commit blasphemy. A Shia Kuwaiti was sentenced to a decade in prison for tweets that criticized the rulers of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia in 2012 (Matthiesen 2013, 98). In 2015, Kuwaiti Member of Parliament Abdul Hamid Dashti was stripped of his political immunity and then his nationality over tweets that the parliament saw as offensive to Bahrain. Other members of parliament responded with a chilling public statement that read, "We want people to support unity, and we lawmakers in Kuwait should assume our responsibilities fully in representing Kuwaitis who are known for their love for their Gulf and Arab brothers" (Toumi 2016).

iii. Human Rights as a Transnational Norm?

The Bahraini leadership and government received much public criticism for its heavy-handed treatment of protesters after the uprising, and pressure was especially felt from the United States' Obama administration, which had just signed an extended military contract with the King. The year after the uprisings, Human Rights Watch described Bahrain's situation as 'dismal,' noting that torture and tear gas were used indiscriminately during protests (HRW 2012). It is cogent that only once Bahrain's humanitarian issues became a threat to the state's international image, political standing, and military contracts did King Hamad begin to concede to demands for justice. In an August 2011 Op-Ed for the Middle East Institute titled *Washington's Uneasy Alliance with Bahrain*, Thomas Lippman wrote that "Bahrain's

government [was] seeking a balance that will keep the regime in power, mollify its opponents and sanitize its human rights record… It is in the interests of both Washington and Manama to encourage this quest and hope for success" (2011).

It is fortunate for the Bahraini ruling family that their interests aligned with those of the United States, a world superpower and major trading partner, and that all the Al Khalifa had to do was work on repairing its image regarding blatant human rights violations by taking a few symbolic reconciliatory steps after the crackdown. In September of 2011, six months after the Pearl Uprisings, the Kingdom of Bahrain appointed an independent commission to investigate reports of torture. The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) initiated a 'national dialogue,' and promised to introduce reforms. These endeavors were widely seen as a concession to international pressures: the BICI was paid for by – and ordered to report to – King Hamad Al Khalifa. The national dialogue took place as promised, but the main lawful opposition groups (*Al-Wefaq* and *Wa'ad*) soon pulled out of the talks when it became clear that the event was a public relations endeavor and no real result would come of it. Those who doubted that these reconciliatory undertakings were genuine efforts on the part of the monarchy were ultimately proven correct.

Today, the Bahraini government continues to impose severe restrictions on access for international rights groups. Even though Bahrain denies any systemic human rights abuses, in June 2017, Amnesty International released a report that found that the same violations were still taking place and that any claim hinting otherwise was a disingenuous effort at international appeasement. According to the report, between June 2016 and June 2017, the State of Bahrain tortured, arrested or confiscated the travel papers of almost 200 activists and opposition members. President Trump appears far less willing than his predecessor to put pressure on the Al

Khalifa family, instead strengthening them by singing their praises in the media and at meetings, and by selling them arms. Amnesty International reports that in March 2017, President Trump told Bahrain's King Hamad that "there won't be strain with this administration" (HRW 2018). Thus, Bahrain continues with its repression and retribution, unhindered by any substantial international outrage.

c. The Priorities of the United States in the Peninsula

> "From the perspective of the United States… the main enemies in the contemporary Middle East are Iran and Al Qaeda. All policies are tailored around these two enemies, and the Gulf States, particularly Saudi Arabia, are given free rein in their internal affairs and their regional policies because they are in line with the United States on these two issues, and because of the steady supply of oil they provide… Sectarianism, therefore, seems to be a short-term solution initiated by Gulf rulers and at least tacitly backed by the West to weather the storm of the Arab Spring and to further isolate Iran." Toby Matthiesen, *Sectarian Gulf: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab Spring that Wasn't* (2013, 126)

As far back as the 1950s, one of Kuwait's former colonial administrators wrote that Kuwait's ties with Britain are "a necessary precaution indeed, for does not this midget state own the finest and most strategically favored harbor on the whole Arabian seaboard of the Persian Gulf?" (Dickson 1956). As shown in this chapter, he was ultimately correct. Even in its very first week of independence, Kuwait faced aggression when Iraq announced its intention to annex the country on historical claims.

In the 1960s, Britain found that it could not sustain spending on its Gulf protectorates and had to abandon its traditional role as an imperial powerbroker in the Middle East. In 1966, London publicly announced it would be forced to end its military commitments in the region by 1971. Britain had already ceded primacy in Saudi Arabia to the United States during the Second World War, in Iran in the aftermath of the 1953 coup against the Mossadegh regime, and in Iraq

after the 1958 Ba'athist coup. However, the nation was still militarily and politically committed to the smaller coastal Arab sheikhdoms. This commitment waned in 1964 when the newly elected Labor Party was faced with financial pressures that made overseas military expenditures unsustainable. The new administration also faced political pressures from within the party to end Britain's colonial role in Asia. This opened the Arabian Gulf to regional contestation, and the United States stepped in to fill the vacuum that was left behind.

However, the US similarly did not wish to invest the time nor the funds required by this endeavor – instead, the 'Twin Pillars Policy' was developed under Nixon in 1969. Bogged down in Vietnam and facing a disenchanted public and a war-weary Congress, Nixon aimed to minimize expenditure in Asia while still securing stability (Bell 1990). His administration went about this by bringing Saudi Arabia and Iran together to cooperate on Gulf security issues. Though the Saudis and Iranians remained wary of each other's ambitions, both were pro-American monarchies that were content with the existing geopolitical status quo in the Gulf States. In contrast, Iraq – an increasingly bellicose Soviet ally – was not.

Nixon won the presidency partly on the premise that he would end the drain of American lives and funds overseas. On July 25th, 1969, the very day that the United States began its retreat from Vietnam, Nixon spoke in Guam calling on Asian nations to assume responsibility for their own security, thus relieving the United States of direct and costly control in the region. It was at this engagement where the Twin Pillars doctrine was first unveiled; in exchange for their assistance in protecting US regional security interests, Iran and Saudi Arabia were to be supported politically and sold considerable arms. It was also hoped that this would give regional actors the confidence and clout to assert themselves more actively in Gulf politics. Under this strategy, American allies Iran and Saudi Arabia effectively took on the role of US surrogates in

the region. For a decade, the policy was regarded as a success and heralded an era of comparative peace and stability in the region while simultaneously safeguarding the United States' main priority of oil security.

As a result of the policy, American goods imported into Iran and Saudi Arabia skyrocketed, and thousands of Iranian and Saudi students arrived at American campuses for higher education in the 1970s. The proposed strategy was motivated by balance-of-power concerns, both regionally and globally. British withdrawal came during the height of the Cold War; consequently, Soviet intrusion in Iran and the possible presence of a Marxist Persian Gulf State was not to be tolerated. Thus, arms sales were based on the key element of balancing Iraq at the regional level and Moscow at the global level (Bell 1990).

Iran and Saudi Arabia thus remained close to the United States, and Iraq to the Soviet Union. The pre-British withdrawal balance continued as was hoped, although with much higher levels of weaponization. This parity was only disrupted after the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which destabilized the geopolitical balance and called for a more serious US role in regional security. It brought down the Shah, the most important US ally in the Gulf and the anchor of the Twin Pillars Policy and left Saudi Arabia as the United States' only significant partner in the region. Thus, the Carter administration decided that the only course of action available was to pursue a more direct military role in the Gulf, a policy course that would accelerate over the next three decades.

This rise in involvement and investment only subsided again during the Obama administration, during which the US watched from afar but did not get involved in the Arab Gulf protesters' calls for democratization in 2011. When it became clear that the Al Khalifa were facing an existential threat and the United States would not become militarily entangled, it was

Saudi Arabia that stepped in and took an active stance as the region's main power broker. The United States, however, stood firmly with the Al Saud, implicitly consenting to their behavior by signing a thirty billion dollar F-15 fighter jet arms deal on December 24th 2011, just weeks after tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets in the Eastern Province. According to Matthiesen, "this was yet another sign that the United States sees the Saudi ruling family as a key to the two main American interests in the Gulf – oil security and containing Iran" (2013, 26). In this way, the Gulf monarchs, with the Al Saud at the forefront, came to be key partners of the West regarding security concerns and economic links.

The United States, like Britain in the 1960s, had been rolling back its commitments in the Arab Gulf due to financial constraints and domestic public pressure during the Obama administration. The US's policy standpoint as of late is to advocate for stability in the region, both geopolitically and in terms of the oil markets – implicitly consenting to and permitting the Gulf monarchies to sustain their grip on power. President Trump's relationship with the Al Saud is the closest and most permissive between a Gulf monarchy and an American president in recent history, as is indicated by Trump's decision to visit Saudi Arabia on his maiden trip abroad as president. The US's focus is still on economic ties, with political stability being seen a necessity to maintain them. One key factor in understanding this approach lies in the US's fear of the unknown: with the conspicuous exception of Saudi Arabia, the authoritarian monarchs of the Arab Gulf are fairly secular Muslims and who are mostly cooperative with American efforts to end religious extremism and fight the Islamic State. The United States thus prefers these pro-Western and religiously moderate – albeit repressive and undemocratic – regimes over the Islamist revolutionaries who might replace the Gulf Sheikhs.

Thus, the United States has been historically friendly with the Gulf monarchs, too frequently overlooking flagrant violations of international norms regarding their treatment of migrants and women under their reign. Because the Gulf sovereigns' wealth exists side by side with their track record of brazen human rights abuse, Western leaders are extremely risk-averse in the Middle East. On one hand, the West is vulnerable to pressure by its allies in the Gulf because of their resources, but on the other hand, too close of an association with the Arab Sheikhs can damage Western leaders' reputations. One instance of this was the public outcry throughout the United Kingdom when Queen Elizabeth invited King Hamad to sit in her box at a horse show during his Arab Spring crackdown.

d. Conclusion

> "A common principle in the dynamics of groups relations is that of fission and fusion. As a rule, most communities, when confronted with an external threat, disregard their internal divisions and close ranks, but when the perception of danger recedes then internal divisions reassert themselves. In an ethnocratic system, the perception of external threat is constant… conflicts within the group tend therefore to be underemphasized and their treatment postponed. External threats, in other words, ensure group solidarity." Anh Nga Longva, *Neither Autocracy nor Democracy but Ethnocracy: Citizens, Expatriates and the Socio-Political System in Kuwait* (2005, 127)

As seen in this chapter, the Iraqi invasion had the unintended effect of forcing Kuwait to become a more nationalistic entity and built up a rare air of unity, resilience, and patriotism among Kuwaitis. It also effectively compelled the monarchy to solidify ties with allies who would protect them. By proving its right to national self-determination out of necessity, the Kuwaiti state found its own path to sovereignty. Meanwhile, Bahrain was at an inherent, geostrategic disadvantage; the country is made up of dozens of islands in the narrow Persian Sea, only a short boat ride away from Iran. On the other side of the Bahraini coast lies Saudi Arabia, which has shown tendencies to exert pressure on the islands ever since Bahrain's independence

in 1971. Like Kuwait, the Kingdom of Bahrain has actively cultivated close ties with the United States, and both are home to thousands of American troops.

Longva's assessment at the beginning of this section helps shed light on why Kuwait and Bahrain had such different experiences after their crises of legitimacy and sovereignty. In Kuwait, citizens who were already more ethnically homogenous than those in Bahrain had stood united over fears of Ba'athist Iraq for decades. Meanwhile, different groupings of Bahrainis have different enemies depending upon their ancestry and sect: Shia Bahrainis stand in opposition to the Al Saud's top-down meddling in their domestic affairs and their struggle for recognition, while Sunni Bahrainis fear the foreign actors and infiltrators whom they perceive are radicalizing their Shia Bahraini compatriots. The two groups thus 'close ranks' amongst themselves in times of struggle, making sectarian affiliation even more prominent than their other identifiers – most importantly for the purpose of this analysis, sectarian identity arguably surpassed national identity as the primary label by which Bahrainis identified themselves during the Arab Uprising and its immediate aftermath.

As has been discussed, Arabian Gulf tribesmen actively sought out ties to the British, and the two were often in collaboration. When oil was discovered, the merchant class maneuvered to procure a share of the revenues with varying degrees of success. In light of the close quarters and symbiotic relationships shared by the oil conglomerates, monarchs, and the economic elites of the oil states, nations of the Gulf developed closer diplomatic ties with Britain or the United States than with their neighbors (Potter 2009, 236). Gulf rulers were often torn between Arab loyalties and the desire for Western patrons, and so the countries of the Arabian Peninsula never had the chance to form a bond with each other organically. This brought about complications in

regional politics; it is plausible to argue that since a monarch's fidelity to their biggest Western trading partner often came first, inter-Arabian allegiances were always suspect.

As a consequence, the development of an effective, independent and autonomous security regime in the region never truly came to fruition. Today, due to the isolationist tendencies of the international climate, countries at odds with each other in the Arabian Gulf find that they can no longer depend on the superpowers to intervene and resolve their conflicts. Thus, regional politics are, more often than not, turbulent and treacherous and "questions concerning border security remain at the heart of regional relations" (Potter 2009, 338). This is especially true of the smaller nations that are, by default, more prone to hostility from larger regional powers.

One cannot fully grasp the nuances of the domestic politics of small countries, nor their national identities and ensuing citizenship regimes without taking the bigger picture into account. To understand Kuwait and Bahrain, one must understand the global environment, the regional power struggles, and the anxieties and insecurities of resource-based states. States which depend so heavily on external rents, international trade, and Western allies, as Kuwait and Bahrain do, have a unique set of priorities when dealing with high levels of domestic opposition.

Though the dust is now settled, and the Gulf States have escaped the Arab Spring mostly unscathed, autocratic rulers, particularly those of Bahrain, may only have delayed their downfall. The fundamental issues raised by protesters persist, threatening monarchical stability in the region, and now exist alongside deep-rooted sectarian allegiances. This examination of the Gulf States' improbable survival is important: by tracking the behaviors of these leaders, we can see how the monarchs base nationality and its accompanying benefits solely on fealty and kinship to the ruling dynasty to reduce domestic opposition. With Saudi Arabia's new *active* role as a staunch supporter of monarchical order in the region, the Arab Gulf monarchs will likely

continue to feel free to exclude, divide, and rule as they see fit, with only the occasional symbolic reprimand from international actors.

CHAPTER FIVE: OIL ECONOMIES AND RENTIER THEORY

While changes instigated by oil extraction were colossal, it is helpful to trace current systems back to their historical roots, as Longva does in her ethnography by drawing parallels between systems of oversight used with indentured pearl divers pre-oil and foreign domestic workers post-oil (*kafala*). Oil reinforced nuanced political, social, and spatial divisions that already existed between the Shia and Sunni, *badu* and *hathar*, and citizens and non-citizens. At the same time, oil – and the distribution of its rent – is arguably the most significant consideration in the making of laws, the dispatching of citizenship and its attendant rights, and rulers' methods of governance in the Arab Gulf States. Thus, it is crucial that one understand the strengths and weaknesses of Rentier State Theory (RST), the main theoretical template currently applied to oil economies.

The states of the Middle East in general, and the Arabian Gulf in particular, have often posed a conundrum for scholars interested in the validity of broad theoretical frameworks. The trajectory of modernization theories like Huntington's, for example, did not apply – traditional monarchy has yet to give way to Western conceptions of democratization in these states. Rentier theory came along after the popular modernization theories of the mid-twentieth century as the dominant lens through which to view the Gulf States.

First developed by Hossein Mahdavy in 1970 and applied to the case of Iran, rentier theory became an all-encompassing theoretical framework for understanding resource-rich but democratically-deficient states. Though RST was a definite improvement from the too-broad brush and Western lens of modernization theory, it shared a similar shortcoming; the theory did not account for the socio-political peculiarities and diverging modernization trajectories of the Gulf States. Matthew Gray's more recent work on 'late rentierism' critiques, reworks, and

advances RST in a way that allows for a better understanding of the intricacies of rentier governments and saves the theory from falling into disuse due to its deficiencies. Just as scholars of democracy applied original rentier state theory to the puzzling outlier states of the Arab Gulf, the more nuanced theoretical framework of late rentierism and similar critiques can be used to account for many of the gaps of original RST.

In a rentier state, only a small segment of the citizenry is involved in the generation of revenues, while the rest are involved only in the use of the wealth produced by the state. Conventionally, about two to three percent of the labor force in a rentier state is engaged in the production and distribution of oil wealth, which ought to amount to more than half of the state's GDP (Beblawi 1987, 386). Only *one* percent of the workforce is employed in the oil and gas sector among the Gulf Cooperation Council members (Lori 2012, 12). Thus, one can see why rentier theory has gained so much traction in explaining the politics of the region. However, the very idea of rentier regimes being sustainable solely through resource revenues is questioned in academia.

Rentier theory is most often used to explain two phenomena common – but not endemic to – the Arabian Gulf: the lag in development and democratization, and the states' relative resilience and durability despite government inefficiency. Unfortunately, though it is the most prevalent explanation used by political theorists to explain the economic and political environment in the Arab Gulf States today, it is less than comprehensive. Many have propagated the hypothesis that these resource-rich states are inherently more stable because their regimes' expenditures come from external rents that are easily obtained, as opposed to methods such as taxation, which require governmental accountability.

If democracy's motto is 'taxation for representation,' rentierism's is something along the lines of 'no taxation for no expectation of representation.' However, I argue that the rentier state also requires that citizens have a certain degree of trust in their rulers, because they – and the bureaucracies they run with their families – are responsible for how oil rents are invested and distributed. Sustaining the Gulf's wealth for future generations is at the forefront of these societies' priorities, and this obligation plays a major part in legitimizing the Gulf monarchies. For example, during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, a citizen made the following comment to *Time Magazine*: "Our rulers, the Sabahs [*sic*], have earned our loyalty by providing for our grandchildren. That foresight, I am sure, is one of the reasons why Saddam has failed to find a Kuwaiti quisling to govern Kuwait in his name" (Taif, 2001). This sentiment highlights how citizens' perception of the Al Sabah's successful management of the state's oil wealth is directly correlated with their legitimacy and longevity.

The ways in which rentier kings spend their rents, and whether they choose to invest and liberalize – or hoard and repress – is critical in understanding how citizens view their rulers. As Brynen and Zahar sum up, "no one claims that oil or state-controlled rents are unimportant to outcomes like political liberalization. Yet rents alone can explain very little" (2012, 208). Understanding the oil state as an allocative entity is essential to understanding its citizenship regime because the two are intrinsically related; one must have citizenship to have access to the bounty of the oil state, and in the Gulf, oil rents are the primary reason that citizenship is so valuable and sought-after. As mentioned, citizenship policy is more than just a tangential issue for the Gulf oil monarchies. It is at the very heart of their functioning. For the rulers, citizenship is the ultimate tool, working hand-in-hand with oil profits to keep dynasties in power. For citizens, oil – and its management for future generations – is amongst their utmost priorities.

Here, I will examine different thoughts on how oil may or may not secure state sovereignty and stability, and how oil affects a citizen's relationship to their state and their rulers.

a. Development, Democratization, and Citizen Apathy in Rentier States

> "The history of democracy owes its beginnings, it is well known, to some fiscal association." Hazem Beblawi, *The Rentier State in the Arab World* (1987, 387)

The first states emerged about six thousand years ago, as large political groupings that were governed by kings and protected by their own armies. The kings taxed their subjects, in return for which they provided security from hostile tribes or neighboring states. Subjects, as time went on, placed demands on their leaders to have their voices heard in exchange for their taxes and loyalty. As agrarian societies transformed into modern states, their leaders wanted and expected much more from their subjects, and simultaneously, "subject populations also [demanded] more services, opportunities and direct help from their states" (Chirot 2011, 45). In rentier states, there have historically been few, if any, taxes to tie a state's leaders to its citizens – this is key in understanding rentierism and its effects on autocracy.

In *Does Oil Hinder Democracy?* Michael L. Ross makes the convincing assertion that "oil has some very odd properties" (2001, 325). By applying a regression analysis across 113 states, Ross finds that oil (along with minerals and other natural resources) is an exception to the political rule-of-thumb that when incomes rise, governments will become more democratic. Oil essentially changes the theoretical playing field in the Arabian Gulf States; RST posits that due to the abundance of the natural and extractable resources it sits on, a rentier state will be mainly concerned with distributing its rents to its population in exchange for their quiescence and loyalty. 'Rent,' clearly key in a *rent*ier state, differs from wages or profits in that high wages and

profit are the causes of high prices; high rent, on the other hand, is the *effect* of it – i.e. "the term 'rent' is reserved for income derived from the gift of nature" (Beblawi 1987, 383).

A commonly cited disadvantage of the rentier-state syndrome is that its institutions are distributive rather than extractive. As a result, the public sector grows to massive proportions while the private sector is left behind, effectively stunting a state's efficiency, progress, and innovation while their trade surplus allows them to thrive regardless. In these states, the 'social contract' between regimes and their citizens is an exchange of subsidies and public sector employment for political non-participation. Citizenship thus becomes a source of economic benefit, and the tribal-era links of patronage in these states are emphasized. As a result, "citizenship is not only an effective relation between man and his homeland, it is also, or primarily, a pecuniary relation" (Beblawi and Luciani 1987, 56). This perfectly encapsulates what is seen in the public sectors of Kuwait and Bahrain, as outlined in Chapter Three.

This relationship is controversial by modern standards, and the Western or Westphalian world, with its ideal of democratic governance as proof of positive progress, would arguably look upon this as an illegitimate form of governance. While inefficiencies may have negatively affected technological and educational development in the region, it may be too simple to attribute these deficiencies to rentierism – after all, each country of the six in the Gulf Cooperation Council have taken on independent programs to encourage innovation and combat stagnation, with varying results. Furthermore, one need only look at the cities of Dubai and Doha to see that parts of the region have entirely transformed since rentier theory was first developed.

The original wave of rentier state theory occurred during a time when scholars were focused on trying to understand democratization and gauge whether it was the inevitable companion of modernization. The development of the Arab Gulf governments cannot and should

not be made to fit into an already established template of Western secular development patterns, as "the belief that modernity comes from one single universally applicable operation imposes a falsely uniform pattern on the multiple encounters of non-Western cultures" (Taylor 1995, 5).

Similarly, tradition is not an obstacle that is paradoxical to modernity and progress – there are many paths and processes to socio-political change. In the Arabian Gulf, there is still a robust traditional and distinctly non-secular society in each of the countries, and varying levels of stability, ruler accountability, and democratization. Oil rent has triggered massive economic growth but by and large has repressed social mobilization. Thus, modernization theory's central assertion – that development (particularly economic) and democracy are highly correlated – is turned on its head in the Arabian Gulf region.

Some of the appeal of first-wave RST was that the theory managed to avoid being construed as offensive, controversial, or intolerant in that it ruled out any Orientalist-tinged arguments of cultural, political, or religious (Islamic) exceptionalism in the region. However, RST lacked nuance as well. For instance, one shortcoming – and perhaps the most egregious – was that rentier theory did not allow for or explicate any variations in political activism, nor degrees of political openness in the Gulf.

Rentierism predicts that since only a small percentage of the local population is mobilized in the production, generation, and distribution of rent, citizens are effectively 'bought off' and placated by a sprawling welfare system and economic concessions, encouraging the population to remain disengaged from the political sphere. Historians and political scientists alike have long believed that "the demand for representation in government arose in response to the sovereign's attempts to raise taxes" (Ross 2001, 333). A rentier state's government, by contrast, will forge an entirely different social contract with its citizenry than what is the norm in

democratic states, whereby citizens will "forego demands for political participation in return for social provisions" (Dresch, Piscatori, and Al-Rasheed 2002, 2).

Resource-rich governments also use their export rents towards funding their internal security apparatus. Dubbed the 'repression effect' in rentier literature, this serves as the 'stick' to the 'carrot' of economic incentives. This double-sided fiscal pacification is more effective than other non-democratic states' approaches which are often solely focused on repression. In this way, oil-rich states also block the formation of independent social groups – a necessary precondition of democracy. Throughout the Gulf, political parties in their traditional form, or even large gatherings of a political nature, are usually considered illegal. The distribution of oil revenues can also be used as a policing tool in the denial of welfare through deportations or revocations of citizenship, as can be seen in the attempt to disenfranchise thousands of Qataris after they attempted to stop the coup of Emir Hamad Al Thani in 1996, or in the passport-stripping of human rights activists in Bahrain after 2011. Thus, "although securing popular endorsement through efficient allocation of oil revenues may well demonstrate higher likelihood of maintaining state stability, it undoubtedly does not assure the absence of revolution or its probability" (Machowski 2010).

Rentier theory does not account for the instabilities that *do* result from the dissatisfaction of marginalized domestic groups; in fact, the whole theory rests on a prediction of domestic social and political *stability* due to the welfare and handouts from governments with high external rents, made possible by the presence of natural resources (Beblawi 1987, Smith 1999). Classical rentier theory assumes that the distribution of resource rents effectively ends political opposition, but this assumption holds little weight when it comes to my two cases of Kuwait and Bahrain. In both countries, the opposite has happened after the discovery of oil, and "the state's

financial autonomy did not translate into immunity from civil pressures or societal contestation" (Ulrichsen 2016, 30). Quite the contrary, as oil revenues increased, so did the demand for political rights and a say in how revenues were to be allocated.

Thus, rentier theory in its classical form is inadequate when it comes to explaining the rise of dissent and opposition. As Onley and Khalaf conclude, "oil wealth has not changed everything… [it] may have enabled the rulers to fulfill these traditional obligations more completely, but it has created new obligations and challenges for them" (2006, 206). Oil wealth alone cannot shield the rulers from rivals or from a displeased citizenry. Since the discovery of oil, there has been one coup in Abu Dhabi in 1966, two coups in Qatar in 1972 and 1995, and one coup in Sharjah in 1986 (Onley and Khalaf 2006).

Moreover, classical rentier state theory has not adapted enough to explain the dramatic changes in the political environment of the Arab Gulf States in the past few years. Most notably, it does not account for – and did not predict – the events of the Arab Spring, nor new challenges arising from ensuing regional regime change. At the same time, there is still a general validity to RST in the sense that the Arab Gulf States would not be classified as 'democratic,' and the economies and governments of the region are still highly centralized. This is where Gray's *A Theory of 'Late Rentierism' in the Arab States of the Gulf* comes in. Setting out with the explicit goal of remedying the "shortcomings or oversimplification of other rentier approaches" (2011, 1), Gray argues that rentierism is a word and framework that has been overused, often over-simplified, and insufficiently understood over the years.

While Gray accepts the broad validity of the principles behind the theory, he recognizes that domestic demands and external influences have definitively changed the political, if not the economic environments in the Arabian Peninsula. Though there has been no real or profound

change in the distribution of power, the region continues to evolve, and one sees ever-increasing incongruities in the degree to which different states have democratized or embraced political openness. For instance, oil rents, evaluated on their own, cannot explain why Kuwait has a very active parliament while Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have a dearth of democratic institutions – basic RST simply states that rents correlate with an absence of democracy.

Late rentierism does not seek to explain the entire nature and structure of the state but rather posits that rents provide an additional mechanism of control for rulers to maintain their legitimacy. Late rentierism allows for both domestic imperatives and external influences to have impacted the Gulf States. Oil rents are only a *feature* of their political dynamics, not an explanation of their overall political structure. Gray postulates that one must also take into account state maturity at the time of oil discovery, globalization, population, and employment pressures. In his words, "late rentierism provides a framework through which to understand the Gulf 's regimes, and their dynamics and policies, given the circumstances in which they have found themselves at the different stages of their development" (2011, 37).

Rentierism has become a catch-all phrase when no single model can explain the political developments of six states. The inclusion of historical dynamics or exceptional experiences into the analysis makes Gray's approach to RST a more convincing one. For example, he argues that in states that were already democracies when oil was discovered, like Norway and Jamaica, the extra external rents have had a positive impact in the states' willingness and ability to provide services and welfare, creating a larger middle class and driving up measures of development (i.e. education, literacy, and GDP).

Another critical shortcoming of RST in its traditional form is that it rests on the hypothetical prediction that a state might eventually become truly autonomous from its citizens

and society under the rentier structure; in the sense that government accountability may decrease until it is neither a cause of concern for the regime, nor for its citizens. If this were indeed a possibility, then we could assume that the state apparatus would feel secure enough politically to be entirely irresponsive to its people. However, reality does not back up this reasoning; states that fit into the rentier framework are often also heavily engaged in reactionary policymaking in response to societal pressures – whether actual or anticipated.

For example, the timing of the distribution of aforementioned lump sums of payment in Kuwait and the imprisonment or release of activists in Bahrain can usually be traced to some political or economic rift in the region. After the Arab Awakening, Qatar's Al Thani raised public sector salaries by sixty percent in September 2011, just months after the Pearl Roundabout protests. Kuwait's Al Sabah gave the $3500 gift to every citizen and free staple foodstuffs for a year, and the Al Saud poured $120 billion into job creation, salary increases, and development projects. Even Oman's Sultan Al Qaboos nipped opposition in the bud by holding elections and announcing a new port and updated tourism facilities to provide much-needed job opportunities. Notably, Al Qaboos' development-focused drive was unlike the lump sums and salary increases provided by Gulf rulers – who are far richer in oil – but it was motivated by similar fears.

b. <u>Rentier State Theory, Dynastic Monarchism, and Demography</u>

> "Dynastic monarchies are strong because the family monopolizes positions that otherwise would confer structural advantages and legitimacy on non-family members. This system allows some intra-elite competition for positions of power and authority while it also maintains a basic level of ruler competence, adding directly to the regime's security and indirectly to its legitimacy." Tétreault and Al-Mughni, *Political Actors Without the Franchise: Women and Politics in Kuwait* (2005, 209)

The Arab Gulf monarchies are the most concentrated and conspicuous cluster of actual (as opposed to symbolic or ceremonial) ruling royals in the modern world. Before the Arab

Spring, there was a dearth of research and discussion on this exceptionality, but the monarchical regimes' resilience throughout the widespread unrest in 2011's uprisings was cause for more analysis. Michael Herb, a critic of rentier state theory writing in 1999, argues against the idea that all the Gulf regimes are sustainable solely through resource revenues. He makes the case that it is the early consolidation and distribution of power among the minor sheikhs, rather than oil profits, that is the main basis for the Gulf monarchies' resilience. In his view, the cohesive familial dynasties keep outsiders from perceiving that there are any political rifts within the family and keep minor princes happy by awarding them some political power (1999, 4).

In a comprehensive sweep of Middle Eastern states, Herb shows that the oil dynasties where extended families ruled had never had a successful democratic revolution – Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain's rulers have all kept their grip firmly on power since the beginning of the oil era. On the other hand, monarchs in oil-rich states who barred family members from power and succession such as Iraq and Libya are no longer autocratic states due to revolution (in 1958 and 1969, respectively).[38]

In his book on oil politics, *Hard Times in the Lands of Plenty*, Benjamin Smith claims that "the ability of the state to placate important social groups by paying them off with oil revenues should allow regimes to survive long after they would otherwise be able to" (2007, 87). While there is certainly truth to this, there is little corroboratory evidence in the cultural environment of the Persian Gulf to reinforce the claim that oil is granted *in exchange* for citizen cooperation – as mentioned in previous chapters, locals feel that their oil resources are a blessing given to them by God, and that they have willingly delegated its management to their respective monarchies. As Herb sums up, "the Gulf Arabs think that they themselves, as citizens own the

[38] Herb's wrote this book in 1999, so he refers to the revolutions in Iraq in 1958 and Libya in 1969, not the more recent US interventions.

oil, *not* the ruling families… Few are particularly grateful on receipt of something they think is theirs in the first place" (Herb 1999, 129). A Chatham House study finds that citizens still agree with this sentiment: "citizens have become accustomed to state handouts and are increasingly likely to see them as a right, not as a gift" (2013, 7). The laws of Gulf States also uniformly concede that funds derived from oil belong to the citizens and dictate that it is the duty of the state and its institutions to preserve and allocate them.

As follows, benefits doled out by the state are more than just state-sponsored bribery; they serve as a fundamental link between rulers and citizens. As Crystal notes, "political kinship, normally considered a traditional vestige was, in fact, a response to the oil-induced bureaucratic state" (1995, 12). By ensuring that their people receive cradle-to-grave welfare, rulers create a relationship where the well-being of their citizenry is *directly* dependent upon their successful distribution of oil revenues. Thus, nationals' apathy as framed in the rentier argument is hard to believe – though public protest comes at a great price in Kuwait and Bahrain (as mentioned, even social media posts seen as offensive to Gulf monarchs have been met with imprisonment and deportation in both countries), citizens of rentier states are just as aware as their rulers that natural resources are finite and will run out in the future, and so it is only natural that there be some political accountability.

Additionally, the fact that oil profits have made citizens better off post-oil than they were before its extraction is undeniable, but has limited effects today. Gulf Arabs do not compare their well-being with the poverty of their ancestors in the first half of the twentieth century, but with the relative well-being of the ruling elite (Longva 2005). As time elapses, citizens expect more to meet their increasing perceptions of what is deserved. Similarly, opposition that is bought off will likely continue, and will gradually demand more for its silence. Herb phrases it concisely in

writing that "when squeaking wheels get grease, all wheels have an incentive to squeak. A consistent policy of buying off opposition tends to breed more of it" (1999, 243). Opposition and support are always wavering, and there is much to lose for citizens of rentier states. The only guaranteed way for citizens to secure their oil wealth is to petition their rulers, and the only guaranteed way for rulers to stay in power is to remain relatively in touch with their citizens' demands. Thus, in order "for the citizens of these countries to ensure that they get their share of the oil revenue, and that they and their children will avoid a precipitous fall in living standards in the future, [the only way forward] is to impose political accountability on their ruling families" (Herb 1999, 259).

The Gulf regimes' mix of repression, welfare handouts, and heightened sectarianism at the start of the Arab Spring meant that the majority of their citizens did not participate in protests. However, rentier state theory has been challenged in the Gulf States by those who *did* protest.

c. Variation Amongst Rentier States

> "[In Kuwait especially,] common to all opposition deputies… is the view that the government must be watched closely, not least because of its tendency to appropriate resources which rightfully belong to Kuwait's people… Although Kuwait's rulers make use of political privileges that to most Westerners seem unacceptable, they are not in a position to disregard the *vox populi*. The present-day regime in Kuwait may be flawed in several ways, but it cannot be described as a conventional autocracy, and the government is known to have bowed to the majority's decision." Anh Nga Longva, *Neither Autocracy nor Democracy but Ethnocracy: Citizens, Expatriates and the Socio-Political System in Kuwait* (2005, 116)

In discussions of rentier states, Kuwait is categorized as a quintessential, typical case. It has neither the most substantial oil revenues, nor the least; it is not the most nor the least secular, and it is neither the largest nor the smallest. Like the other oil states, "within one generation,

Kuwait went from being one of the world's poorest countries to being one of the richest" (Longva 2005, 128). However, it is often singled out by rentier state theorists and area studies specialists alike as the Arab Gulf State with the most open political environment (Barakat and Skelton 2014; Gray 2011; Tétreault 2000).

This poses a conundrum, as "explanations for the Kuwaiti parliament, within the framework of the rentier state theory, require that we explain how it is that in some cases rentierism can lead to a result in which the rulers appear quite well connected to their societies, a situation that runs frontally against the chief theoretic claim of the theory itself" (Herb 1999, 259). As Gray surmises, the answer lies in the specificities of the state's history and national identity. Kuwait, despite its long history of rentierism – which should, in theory, prevent social and political mobilization – held on to "a shared social origin among key elites that may account for its parliamentary activism" (Gray 2011, 24). Noora Lori concurs, writing that "Kuwait has had the most powerful independent merchant class and now the strongest parliament in the region" (2012, 11). Fears of Iraq, as mentioned earlier, have also come into play. This combination of factors gave rise to a unique environment that was comparatively accommodating to political accountability, as well as collaboration and competition with other power-holders, all of which is uncharacteristic of traditional RST. In fact, as seen in Longva's statement, the very same oil profits that are said to lead to rentierism also lead to accountability in Kuwait.

Furthermore, Kuwait's rulers arguably demonstrate one of the best examples of the 'rentierist mentality,' as proposed by Beblawi, in their approaches to charity. Beblawi believes that oil wealth is used to secure regional and international peace in the same way that it is used to secure quiescence domestically. Of course, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait stands as an instance

when this policy failed, but there is much evidence showing that Kuwait's extensive humanitarianism is at once "real and self-serving" (Taif 2001). In other words, it is both a byproduct of Kuwaitis being just a generation removed from when they were amongst the poorest peoples in the world, and of the government of Kuwait knowing they will always be comparatively defenseless; Kuwait will never have an army massive or well-equipped enough to defeat aggressors itself.

Though Kuwait's strategy did not produce the desired results in preventing the invasion in the first place, as a Kuwaiti diplomat interviewed for *Time Magazine* revealed: "we interpret the willingness of so many Arab states to join the coalition against Saddam as a kind of payback to us for so many years of our helping them. In any event… we will always be weak militarily, and Saddam isn't the only despot around" (Taif 2001). Thus, as Herb notes, "opportunism is a problem money cannot eliminate" (Herb 1999, 243). Rather than rentier charity alone, it was a combination of affluence *and* Kuwait's ability to come together and present itself on the global stage as a national entity with a clear delineation of what its citizens wanted (the restoration of the Al Sabah) that led to Kuwait's liberation. The presence of oil rents as well as a distinct national identity were thus both necessary components in restoring Kuwait's sovereignty.

As mentioned, the Al Sabah have allowed room for political participation starting with the *Majlis*' short run in 1938. In return, the opposition petitions for change *within* the framework of the constitution, the parliament, and the undisputed reign of the existing dynasty. Herb argues that by replacing merchants in high ranking bureaucracy positions with members of the Al Sabah, family domination of the state secured the early Emirs' survival. Today, most of the Gulf governments have followed suit, appointing royals to serve in the positions of Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Defense, and Minister of the Interior. These positions

are handed out as 'consolation prizes' to members of the royal family who might otherwise support a revolution that would depose the Emir. Since the positions most critical to the sovereignty of the regime are in the hands of friendly relatives, it becomes almost impossible to put together a revolution. Additionally, "the sheer profusion of sheikhs and princes with important roles in the regimes makes it immensely difficult to launch a coup, for there are too many of them to reliably capture or kill in one blow" (Herb 1999, 237). In this way, the Emirs build consensus and secure regime stability.[39]

Longva also wonders at the 'economic explanation,' and rentierism's saliency in justifying the current stagnation of the Gulf's socio-political hierarchies. She speculates on why the social hierarchy in Kuwait has remained relatively unchanged and structurally impermeable since the pre-oil era, writing "with the ruling family and the big merchants controlling access to political and economic power respectively, the rest of the population is kept in the role of clients to these patrons. Kuwaitis talk with considerable insight and self-irony about their predicament… Yet, surprisingly few are ready to question seriously the continued reproduction of the pre-oil power structure" (Longva, 2005, 129). Here, I have tried to question, as Longva does, the continuation of political traditions and hierarchies largely as they stood pre-oil.

Like Longva, I find that interpretations based on rentierism, revenue, and the social contract are, by and large, "views from afar" (2005, 134), produced by those outside of the aforementioned structures as they evaluate momentous historical events, statistics, and measures of development, and exclude the lived experiences of citizens amongst a majority of non-citizens. Longva proposes an alternative understanding, one based on the experiences of citizens

[39] This need for familial consensus is precisely why many inside and outside of Saudi Arabia were so taken aback by the potentially destabilizing repercussions of Mohammed Bin Salman's imprisonment of high-ranking family members at the Riyadh Ritz Carlton in 2017.

of the Gulf in their daily lives. She writes that "the economic explanation in particular, which strikes most outside observers as particularly to the point, may exaggerate the role of oil money at the expense of human reactions" (2005, 134).

As explained in this chapter, these economic explanations overlook the fact that once benefits from oil rents are distributed, they quickly become taken for granted and lose their power as a tool to secure quiescence in the face of absolutism. Instead, "more than oil prosperity, per se, it is the presence of non-Kuwaiti workers and their legal, social and political subjection to Kuwaiti citizens that allows for the reproduction of a political structure with quasi- autocratic features" (Longva 2005, 117). The presence of non-citizens is precisely what creates the contrast in standards of living for citizens, and makes them likely to accept the status quo, thereby reproducing and reinforcing political hierarchies that place the ruling families firmly at the top.

In Libya in 1969, by contrast, the monarchical regime's resilience lapsed with King Idris's death. Libya was one of the few states that resembled the Gulf monarchies in the twentieth century and makes for a good comparison; like the Gulf Arabs, Libyans had a tribal heritage, a small population, and a lot of oil. Libyans also developed similar expectations from their rulers – that they deserved a share of the state's oil wealth. King Idris lived for eight decades without producing or delegating any heirs and entirely excluded his family members from any roles in the state's running. When he died, no members of the ruling class were interested in defending a monarchy that they had no part or stake in. In this way, the exclusion of family members and the failure to implement succession protocols led to the end of the Libyan monarchy. Libya is one of Herb's primary examples of how monarchies fail, along with Iran and Iraq. Herb aptly notes that "the Shah and Kings of Iran, Iraq and Libya lost their thrones only a handful of years after dramatic leaps in rent incomes" (1999, 11). All three regimes were

experiencing what an RST proponent would consider a time of great strength, where more welfare privileges could be afforded to placate the citizenry and buy off the opposition.

Though *All in the Family* was published fifteen years before the Arab Spring, and Herb could not have predicted the US military interventions in Libya or Iraq, he expresses the gravest concern about Bahrain's monarchy when considering impending regime change in the Middle East, writing that "in Bahrain the refusal of the Al Khalifa to compromise with the opposition threatens to strip dynastic monachism of the softening accouterments by which those who exercise power can make it tolerable… and silence from Washington only encourages it" (Herb 1999, 266). The uprising at Pearl Roundabout in February 2011 was indeed a culmination of serious societal fissures giving rise to an opposition that was not being meaningfully addressed by the repressive Al Khalifa regime. Citizen protesters in Bahrain simply sought democratization and political equality within the existing framework of a constitutional monarchy. Meanwhile, the King and his followers wanted to preserve peace and legitimacy. The two are not mutually exclusive, but the Al Khalifa regime was not willing to acknowledge and share authority with other domestic actors, choosing instead to quash all dissenting voices using regional forces and benefiting from Washington's implicit consent.

As mentioned in the first chapter, there was little harmony between the sons and nephews of the first Bahraini ruler, Ahmad the Conqueror, at the beginning of the Al Khalifa family's reign. The tumultuous political history of Bahrain in the nineteenth century was a consequence of a sequence of different attempts by successors to seize power (Zahlan 1998, 98). This scramble only came to an end when a law of primogeniture was written as the first article of the constitution in 1975, designating the eldest son of the king as the successor.

Though this was done to sidestep infighting and conflict, it added a new obstacle to the dynasty's stability – since the throne was not available to whoever was the most qualified member of the Al Khalifa clan, it rendered dozens of power-hungry and possibly capable princes unfit for rule. The ability of the ruling elites of the Arabian monarchies to solve internal disputes without showing weakness is one of the most crucial factors in maintaining control over the state (Herb 1999, 253). A smooth and successful consolidation and distribution of power among the minor sheikhs is key in the region's stability, as it keeps outsiders from perceiving that there are political rifts within the family. In Bahrain, weakness by way of family fragmentation is displayed to the public and pressure from outside the line of succession destabilizes and delegitimizes the ruling monarch.

Today, government subsidies have created artificially low energy prices in the Gulf which has given rise to wastefulness. Combined with a simultaneous population explosion, domestic energy consumption has skyrocketed in the region. Air conditioning is seen as a requirement in the peninsula, and water waste is an especially contentious subject for these arid states. Since it is politically savvy for the Gulf monarchs to conceal how much oil they actually have (to ensure they remain important to their allies), the oil-producing countries of the Gulf never adjusted their projected oil reserves between the 1990s to 2004 – even though they were constantly exporting oil during the period. Though it is impossible to know just how much oil is left, it will likely remain the Arab Gulf's main export, and thus the main tool for maintaining power in the foreseeable future.

Oil is so important in lending the Gulf rulers leverage and security that the region's leaders now know it is problematic to use their main export as a source of electricity and to fuel their desalination plants. They are thus gradually diversifying and deferring to nuclear power as a

domestic energy source. The UAE is at the forefront of this venture, which will likely lead to the longevity of the Arabian monarchs and their attendant forms of governance for some time. However, if there *does* come a time where dynastic monarchies cannot provide their citizens with the subsidized energy and welfare handouts these societies have grown accustomed to, rulers will experience destabilizing opposition. Concurrently, if these rulers succumb to ever-increasing demands for handouts, subsidies and lump sum gifts, they will eventually run out of money to throw at the problem. It seems that the only secure path forward is to allow some space for political liberalization and participation in the Gulf governments.

d. Conclusion

> "The oil wealth of these societies has, it seems, prevented a theoretical understanding of the governing institutions of these states as anything other than oil rich. The theory of the rentier state – the hegemonic theoretic framework in writings on the Gulf – predicts that rentier states will be authoritarian, but not *how* they will be authoritarian. Perhaps for this reason, questions about the differences among these regimes… do not receive adequate theoretical treatment." Michael Herb, *All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies* (1999, 3)

Most Gulf specialists (Crystal 1995; Fuccaro 2009; Herb 1999; Longva 2005) refute the arguments of rentier theory, preferring instead to look closer at the heterogeneity of tribal politics existing in the region before the discovery of oil as well as the skewed demographics of citizens to non-citizens in their attempts to explain the rise of dissent and the remedies undertaken to quell it. I conclude that it is not a case of either oil profits, tribal histories, *or* the presence of foreigners, but a mix of all three that leads to stability in the region. The combination of oil interests motivating British and American support, as well the West's fear that revolution in these states would bring about more religiously conservative regimes also play a part in accounting for regime stability in the face of citizen dissatisfaction.

Proponents of rentier state theory should move past the temptation to see a distinct divide between the Arabian Gulf as it stood pre-oil and post-oil. As many scholars have stated, and as is demonstrated in this work, the rentier framework seems to easily predict that states will be authoritarian, but not to what degree, nor how. Thus, rentierism is often inadequate or inaccurate when used on its own to explain stability and authoritarianism. One must also take into account the political institutions, historical roots, cultural trends, and societal traditions of a nation. Conflicts such as those within ruling families, and between them (as per the current Qatari boycott) also weaken a family's authority.

It is due to power-sharing, and not oil rents alone, that Kuwait came to be the most democratized Arab Gulf State. This assertion backs up Herb's logic that dynastic solidarity breeds stability, Longva's belief that 'views from afar' often paint a misleading picture, and Gray's claim that rentier state theory has suffered from overextension and does little to account for idiosyncrasies. All three come together to provide the best general framework through which to understand the Gulf's regimes and their citizenship dynamics given their unique circumstances and different stages of development when oil was discovered. A state can only buy a certain degree of autonomy and afford certain levels of autarchy, even with the most extravagant oil rents. A patriarchal state that is responsible for its society's fiscal well-being cannot achieve legitimacy without its citizens' approval – or at least their tacit permission.

There is a valuable lesson here that applies to history in general – to take precautions to avoid the conception "that the past is another world that had been obliterated, transformed… [and] overcome" (Vitalis 2006, 36). We cannot understand the current political situation in the Gulf – nor can we predict potential upheavals – if we paint the whole region with the broad brush of rentierism. Rentier state theory is still the default theoretical framework used to explain the

political nature of resource-rich states, yet they are unique in many ways. In order to examine citizenship in the Gulf, one needs to rethink common assumptions about rentier states and their attendant forms of citizenship, governance, demography, and even energy consumption.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

> "It is precisely from the site of exception that we can learn the most about the workings of citizenship and develop more nuanced and critical theories of politics and belonging. As such… it is the Gulf itself – as exception to Western liberal democracy – that provides a lens through which to reflect on the taken-for-granted ways in which [we] approach state-making, civil society, and the political." Neha Vora, *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora* (2013, 18)

Christopher M. Davidson boldly predicts in his 2012 preface to *After the Sheiks: The Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies*, that "most of these regimes – at least in their present form – will be gone *within the next two to five years*" (vii, emphasis in original). Time has proven him wrong thus far. However, just how has it been possible for the small, relatively politically weak Arab Gulf States to survive as hereditary monarchies for this long in the modern world? They sit on valuable natural resources coveted by others more powerful than them, are inhabited by substantial numbers of non-citizens, and exist in what is arguably the most unstable geopolitical region in the world.

I argue that these monarchical regimes endure due to three main factors. First, these nations, upon their creation, constructed a national identity and political hierarchy centered entirely around the primacy of the royal family – for example, Saudi Arabia is an entire nation literally named after its rulers. Second, these states partake in massive demographic manipulation of their citizenry to maintain control, whether it is stripping dissenting locals of their citizenship (which happens in all of these states), naturalizing foreigners depending on their religious sect (especially prevalent in Bahrain), or disenfranchising undesirable residents by offering them passports to other countries (in the case of the UAE and Kuwait). Finally, there is a distinct regional and international external environment which is conducive to monarchies in the Gulf; regional superpower Saudi Arabia, which possesses by far the strongest and largest military in

the Gulf Cooperation Council, does not want its neighboring regimes to falter. On a larger scale, the United States' priority in the region is oil security and geopolitical stability – regardless of regime type. Thus, these monarchies and their internal security forces control dissent through divide-and-rule tactics with little international consternation. While the Arab Spring overthrew many of the broader Middle East's autocracies, the monarchies of the Gulf Peninsula, unique in their regime type, have sustained their grasp on power.

Non-citizens are the majority in every GCC country besides the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Oman, and expatriates remit a significant amount of money to their home countries. Simultaneously, they are absolutely essential in the smooth functioning of daily life in the Gulf States. In Kuwait particularly, the issue of the bidoon is seen as the most prominent problem, causing political, economic and humanitarian difficulties. Countless residents live their whole lives in the Arabian Peninsula and identify with its inhabitants, yet are never able to achieve political integration or societal assimilation. This puzzle applies to millions of disenfranchised people. Citizenship is used as a political device on a global level, and the exploration of this phenomenon has significant implications for the political and social evolution of many countries. As Gardner aptly concludes, "the violence levied against these [non-citizen] men and women is a reason for – and a product of – the silence concerning the lives of foreigners in the Gulf" (2010, 165). This silence must be addressed.

There also has not been sufficient exploration of the unique role of citizenship policy as a tool for political governance in *rentier* states. In most states, citizenship is generally seen as a mechanism that provides individuals with rights, and its acquisition is typically associated with an increase in one's abilities to participate in the political sphere of a given country. However, Kuwaiti and Bahraini leaders distribute citizenship with opposite goals in mind – in a way that

bolsters support for their families, religious sects, and political goals. They also revoke citizenships and void passports of those they see as a threat – mainly those who vocalize their opposition to the leadership of their native, or even neighboring countries. It is vital that we come to understand this use of citizenship as a tool for quiescence, as it has played an essential role in keeping Kuwait's House of Sabah and Bahrain's House of Khalifa in power since 1756 and 1783, respectively.

It is known that when political and economic institutions are inclusive of minorities, nations are better able to weather risk. My research aims to contribute to our understanding of minority politics in nations built under very different circumstances than our own. States which do not depend on a more traditional relationship of taxation between the state and citizenry survive due to the tactical restriction of citizenship rights and the marginalization of large swaths of their already minuscule domestic populations. As mentioned, rentier theory does not account for instabilities resulting from the dissatisfactions of these marginalized groups: the whole theory rests on a prediction of domestic social and political *stability* due to the welfare and handouts from governments with high external rents due to the presence of natural resources.

More broadly, I hope that my work will also show that one cannot understand the complexities of domestic governance in small countries without taking the bigger picture into account. To understand Kuwait and Bahrain, one must understand the global environment, regional power struggles, and the anxieties and insecurities of resource-based states. States which depend so heavily on external rents, international trade, and Western allies, as Kuwait and Bahrain do, have a unique set of priorities when dealing with high levels of domestic opposition.

Exploring the real trends behind repression and opposition in Bahrain and Kuwait is evermore imperative in light of recent, escalating instability in the two countries. Because

comfortable living standards are guaranteed by the monarchies, a population boom has distorted the Arabian Peninsula's age pyramid; *half* of all Gulf citizens are under twenty-five (according to a 2012 Kuwait Finance Center report). Simultaneously, the inflow of external oil rents has led to an improvement in the quality and accessibility of education. Combined with the recent social media explosion, this amalgamation of factors means that growing numbers of young people are becoming frustrated, both with the lack of opportunities and the irresponsiveness to the problem amongst the ruling families. Today, it is not merely misleading, but also risky, to rely too heavily on rentier theory as an explanation for the current tumult in the Middle East and other political hotspots.

Both Bahrain and Kuwait aim to manipulate their citizenry using oil profits, but each state experiences disparate results in terms of curbing opposition. Does this disprove the popular theory of rentierism as a valid explanation of oil states' endurance? I find that rentierism is not, by definition, always conducive to stability. Moreover, the connection between high external rents and autocracy does not stand well on its own; pre-existing authoritarian tendencies are more than likely to be embedded in the governmental bodies. In other words, colonizers and corporations played a role in molding the modern peninsula, but their effect was primarily limited to institutionalizing whatever situation was in place when they entered the scene.

In Kuwait, oil enhanced cohesion, but in Bahrain, it served to exacerbate already contentious divisions. Oil and its accompanying effects are critical to understanding the idiosyncrasies of citizenship regimes in resource-rich states, but they are not the only components. Many factors – including the strength of a state's political tradition, national identity, religious unity, regional enemies, and colonial legacies – can influence and impede the passing of fair citizenship policies and their execution. The nature of state formation and

domestic alliances already established before the discovery of oil played a part in consolidating stability or instability. Differences in the strengths of key regional powers and the establishment of the socio-political and economic environments in both countries determined the balance of power and patterns that emerged there. There are many factors to account for, but perhaps the most significant of those lies in the foundations – both historic and economic – upon which a nation's political elite stand, and whom they choose to include as countrymen and citizens under their respective legends and jurisdictions.

Indigenous agency, ethno-religious fragmentation, national identity, regional and international geopolitics, and oil rents all contribute to the Gulf rulers' understanding of citizenship and their respective policies. Citizenship policy is at the very heart of the Gulf States' self-image, their legitimacy, their political stability, and their role in the world. Therefore, understanding citizenship laws and practices in Kuwait, Bahrain, and the rest of the Gulf is critical if one is to comprehend these states. For the Gulf monarchies, citizenship is the ultimate tool, working hand-in-hand with oil profits to secure stability.

APPENDIX I

Kuwait Timeline[40]

1610s-1710s - Settlers from the Bani Utub tribe arrive at the site of present-day Kuwait City from Najd in the interior of the Arabian Peninsula. The settlement grows into a maritime trading hub over the next century.

1756 - Although Kuwait is still under Ottoman rule, the Al Sabah family gains semi-autonomy.

1899 - Mubarak the Great of the Al Sabah family signs an agreement with Britain making Kuwait a protected state. Under the agreement, Mubarak cedes his city-state's foreign policy to Britain in exchange for British naval protection of the gated town.

1920 - Kuwait's First Nationality Law is codified.

1922 - The Treaty of Uqair defines the boundaries between Iraq and Najd, and Kuwait and Najd. The Saudis and British decide Kuwait's modern-day boundaries. Kuwait loses more than two-thirds of its former territory in the agreement.

1937 - After the US-British Kuwait Oil Company discovers vast oil reserves, an extraction agreement is signed with the Emir. Extraction is delayed until 1946 by World War II.

1959 - Kuwait's second nationality law is passed, starting a trend toward exclusionary policies. The law ruled that only those who resided within the demarcated borders of Kuwait in 1920 and their descendants were considered Kuwaiti. This is the root cause of why there is a substantial stateless population in Kuwait; many did not think it worthwhile to notify the state of their presence or were unaware of the new law.

1961 June - Kuwait becomes independent and is no longer a British protectorate. Almost immediately, Iraq resumes its claims that Kuwait is Iraq's nineteenth province. Britain sends naval deterrence.

1962 November - Kuwait's constitution is ratified, making it the first Arab state in the Gulf Peninsula to have an elected legislature. The first elections are held the next year.

1976 - The Emir suspends Kuwait's National Assembly under the guise that it is not acting in the country's interests. Parliament resumes five years later.

1980 - The Iran-Iraq War begins, and Kuwait supports Iraq financially. The eight-year war caused governmental concern and popular discrimination towards the bidoon due to their perceived support of Shia Iran against (then friendly) neighbor, Iraq. Bidoon in the military are later outlawed.

[40] Loosely based on "Kuwait Profile - Timeline." 2018. *BBC News*. April 24. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14647211.

1981 - The National Assembly reconvenes, only to be suspended again five years later.

1982 - An amendment is made to the Kuwaiti Constitution stipulating that only Muslims or Muslim converts can obtain citizenship through naturalization.

1983-86 - After several bombings (including at the American and French embassies) and a Kuwait Airways hijacking, Kuwait deports of thousands of expatriates, many of them Iranian. Bidoon begin to lose their rights.

1990 August 2 - Saddam Hussein invades and annexes Kuwait after accusing the country of slant drilling into Iraqi oil fields and overproducing past OPEC-set limits. The Emir narrowly escapes, fleeing to Saudi Arabia.

1991 February - Kuwait is liberated after Operation Desert Storm, when UN allied forces, led by the United States, reach Kuwait City.

1992 - Under international and domestic pressure, most notably from the private meeting held in Jeddah during the invasion, the Emir allows democratic National Assembly elections to resume for the first time since 1986.

1999 - The Emir suspends the National Assembly once again.

2005 May - Women are allowed to vote and run for elected office for the first time.

2010 November - *The Central System to Resolve Illegal Residents' Status*, also known as *The Bidoon Committee*, is established and made responsible for solving the problem of statelessness.

2011 December - The Emir dissolves parliament and nominates a new Prime Minister after protests over corruption.

2011 December - Kuwaiti riot police use tear gas and water cannons to disperse hundreds of bidoon protesters. Under Kuwaiti law, only citizens have the right to hold public gatherings.

2012 October - More than two thousand protesters demand that the Emir set a date for parliamentary elections. The Emir responds by banning public gatherings of more than twenty people.

2013 April - Musallam Al Barrak, a leading member of the opposition, is sentenced to five years' imprisonment for insulting the Emir in a speech during the 2012 protests.

2014 November - The controversial Comoros Island deal is made public by the Kuwaiti Undersecretary. The proposal outlined that Kuwait's bidoon would be made citizens of the under-populated and impoverished island. Action on this is yet to be taken.

2015 January - A Kuwaiti Member of Parliament, Abdul Hamid Dashti, is stripped of his political immunity and nationality over tweets the parliament saw as offensive to Bahrain.

2015 June - A Sunni extremist carries out a suicide attack in a Shia mosque in Kuwait City, killing twenty-seven and injuring hundreds. This is the deadliest attack on Kuwaiti soil since the 1990 invasion.

2018 January - Philippines' President Duterte enacts a law banning citizens from working in Kuwait after the murder of a Filipino domestic servant there. The scandal plays out for several months before relations are smoothed over.

Bahrain Timeline[41]

1783 - After Portuguese rule in the sixteenth century and Persian rule in the seventeenth century, the Al Khalifa family comes to power.

1861 - Britain signs a treaty with the Al Khalifa, agreeing to defend the islands in exchange for British control over foreign relations.

1931 - Standard Oil of California (today's Chevron) discovers oil in Bahrain. Bahrain's oil reserves were the first in the peninsula to be discovered by an American company. Extraction begins the next year.

1967 - After unrest in Aden, Britain moves its main naval base in the region to Bahrain. This base later becomes the United States' base for its Fifth Fleet.

1970 May - Iran renounces its claim to sovereignty over Bahrain after a United Nations fact-finding mission and plebiscite shows that Bahrainis (both Sunni and Shia) overwhelmingly favor independence as an Arab state over any relationship with Iran. The Shah recognizes this ruling, but when the Islamic Republic of Iran is created nine years later, the new administration does not.

1971 - Bahrain proclaims and gains formal independence from Britain. Sheikh Isa becomes the first Emir of Bahrain (as opposed to 'Ruler').

1973 December - After the constitution is ratified, elections are held for a National Assembly.

1975 August - The Emir dissolves the National Assembly, claiming it is hindering the effectiveness of the government.

1981 December - Seventy-three Shia members of a Tehran-based liberation movement headed by an Iranian cleric are arrested for trying to overthrow the Bahraini monarchy.

1986 November - Construction of the King Fahd Causeway is completed, making Bahrain accessible to Saudis by vehicle, and vice versa.

1992 December - A Consultative Council is set up by the Emir to serve in four-year term cycles.

1994 December - Bahraini Shia protest after the arrest of cleric Ali Salman. Salman is arrested for calling for the restoration of the National Assembly and is subsequently deported to Britain.

[41] Loosely based on "Bahrain Profile - Timeline." 2018. *BBC News*. June 4. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14541322.

1996 June - Bahrain recalls its Iranian ambassador after uncovering a coup plot by a Bahraini branch of Hezbollah.

2000 September - Emir Hamad Al Khalifa appoints non-Muslims and women to the Consultative Council for the first time. This move is seen as an attempt to smooth over resentment amongst citizens that the National Assembly will not be democratically elected, as was promised in the constitution, but selected by the ruler.

2002 - After a referendum held the year prior, Bahrain becomes a constitutional monarchy and allows for an elected lower chamber of parliament. Women are also allowed to stand for office and vote for the first time. Elections are held for the first time in thirty years.

2006 November - The largest Shia opposition group chooses to take part in the general elections and wins forty percent of the vote. A Shia Muslim is named Bahrain's first Deputy Prime Minister.

2007 - Government-sanctioned amnesty is announced, and thousands of illegal immigrants residing in Bahrain apply.

2008 May - Houda Nonoo, a Jewish woman, is appointed Bahrain's ambassador to the USA. As the first Jewish ambassador from an Arab state, Nonoo stood as an example of the Al Khalifa's understanding of political optics and the benefits of appearing progressive to the Western world.

2011 - Ads for Pakistani military recruits begin to appear in local Pakistani papers, offering Bahraini citizenship in exchange for military service. Simultaneously, several Shia Bahraini opposition members are stripped of their nationality.

2011 February 14 - Tens of thousands of protesters gather at the Pearl Roundabout in Manama, inspired by protests that toppled rulers in northern Africa. Bahraini security authorities respond with lethal force, killing a protester.

2011 March - Saudi and Emirati troops enter Bahrain as unrest escalates. Martial law is declared, but protests continue despite the ban on public demonstrations. The Pearl Monument, central and symbolic to the pro-democracy movement, is demolished. In following months, many Shia MPs resign to object to the violent crackdown on protesters.

2012 April - The Formula 1 Grand Prix takes place in Bahrain despite domestic turmoil and activist arrests. The event's slogan is ironically: 'UniF1ed: One Nation in Celebration.'

2013 February - Bahrain's national dialogue begins in an effort to promote reconciliation.

2013 September - A leading figure of the Shia *Al-Wefaq* opposition party is arrested on charges of inciting terrorism. *Al-Wefaq,* along with a coalition of opposition parties, boycotts parliamentary elections held the next year.

2016 January - After a sustained slump in oil prices, the Bahraini government cuts subsidies on gasoline, raising the price by sixty percent.

2016 August - A panel appointed by the United Nations finds that the Bahraini government and its security forces continue to systematically target the country's Shia population.

2018 January - Gasoline prices are raised once again, this time by twenty-five percent.

2018 April - Bahrain reports it has discovered the kingdom's largest oilfield since oil was first found there in 1931.

2018 November - The leader of the outlawed *Al-Wefaq* opposition party is sentenced to life imprisonment on allegations that he spied on behalf of the Qatari government.

APPENDIX II[42]

Figure a.
Kuwait Maritime Museum, Kuwait City

Figure b.
Bahrain National Museum, Manama

Note the diversity of the pearl divers in figures a., b., and c.

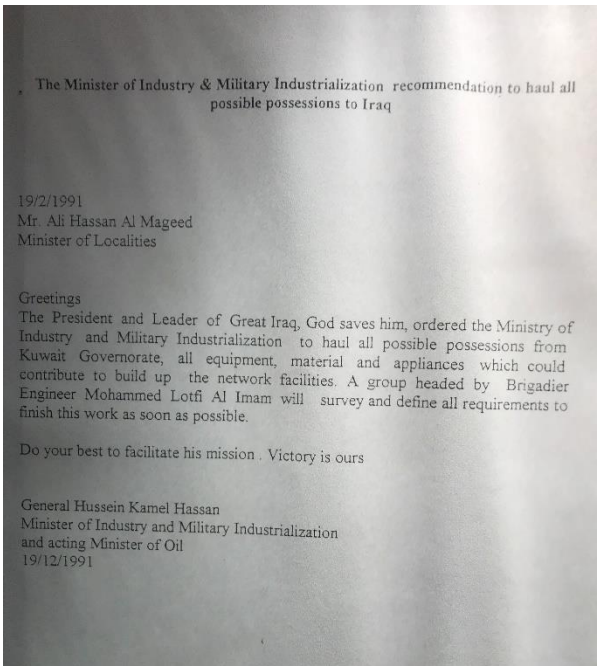
Figure c.
Bahrain Oil Museum, Jebel Dukhan

[42] All photos are author's own

Figure d.

Figure e.

Corresponding representations of the pearl divers as ethnically homogenous
Bahrain National Museum, Manama.



The Minister of Industry & Military Industrialization recommendation to haul all possible possessions to Iraq

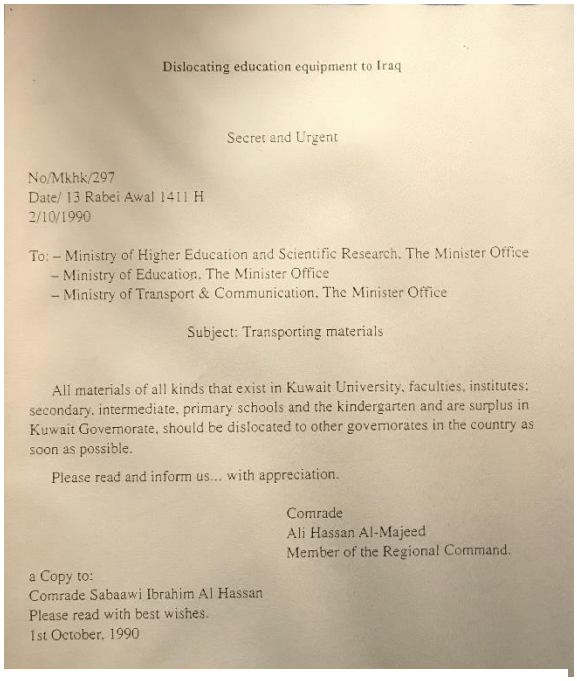
19/2/1991
Mr. Ali Hassan Al Mageed
Minister of Localities

Greetings
The President and Leader of Great Iraq, God saves him, ordered the Ministry of Industry and Military Industrialization to haul all possible possessions from Kuwait Governorate, all equipment, material and appliances which could contribute to build up the network facilities. A group headed by Brigadier Engineer Mohammed Lotfi Al Imam will survey and define all requirements to finish this work as soon as possible.

Do your best to facilitate his mission . Victory is ours

General Hussein Kamel Hassan
Minister of Industry and Military Industrialization
and acting Minister of Oil
19/12/1991

Figure f.



Dislocating education equipment to Iraq

Secret and Urgent

No/Mkhk/297
Date/ 13 Rabei Awal 1411 H
2/10/1990

To: – Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, The Minister Office
– Ministry of Education, The Minister Office
– Ministry of Transport & Communication, The Minister Office

Subject: Transporting materials

All materials of all kinds that exist in Kuwait University, faculties, institutes; secondary, intermediate, primary schools and the kindergarten and are surplus in Kuwait Governorate, should be dislocated to other governorates in the country as soon as possible.

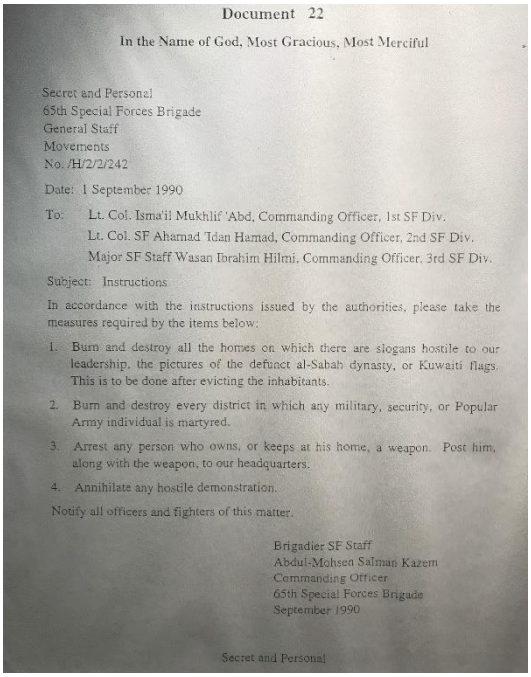
Please read and inform us... with appreciation.

Comrade
Ali Hassan Al-Majeed
Member of the Regional Command.

a Copy to:
Comrade Sabaawi Ibrahim Al Hassan
Please read with best wishes.
1st October, 1990

Figure g.

Pillaging orders from the Iraqi authorities to their forces in Kuwait
Qurain Martyrs' Museum, Kuwait City



Document 22

In the Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Secret and Personal
65th Special Forces Brigade
General Staff
Movements
No. /H/2/2/242

Date: 1 September 1990

To: Lt. Col. Isma'il Mukhlif 'Abd, Commanding Officer, 1st SF Div.
Lt. Col. SF Ahamad 'Idan Hamad, Commanding Officer, 2nd SF Div.
Major SF Staff Wasan Ibrahim Hilmi, Commanding Officer, 3rd SF Div.

Subject: Instructions

In accordance with the instructions issued by the authorities, please take the measures required by the items below:

1. Burn and destroy all the homes on which there are slogans hostile to our leadership, the pictures of the defunct al-Sabah dynasty, or Kuwaiti flags. This is to be done after evicting the inhabitants.
2. Burn and destroy every district in which any military, security, or Popular Army individual is martyred.
3. Arrest any person who owns, or keeps at his home, a weapon. Post him, along with the weapon, to our headquarters.
4. Annihilate any hostile demonstration.

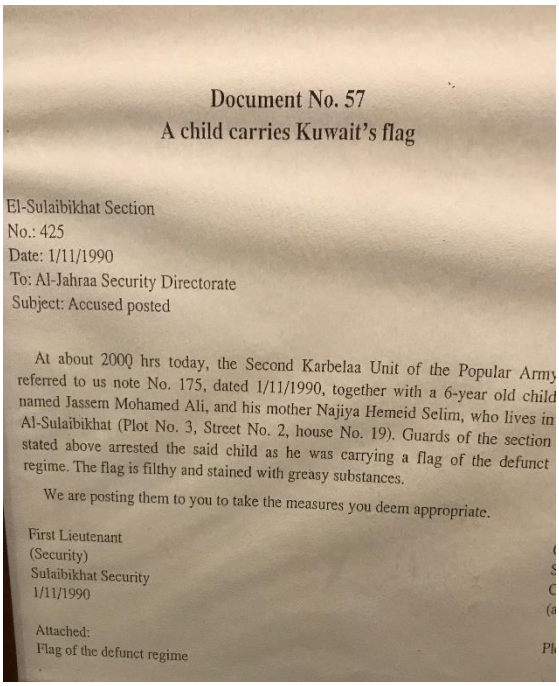
Notify all officers and fighters of this matter.

Brigadier SF Staff
Abdul-Mohsen Salman Kazem
Commanding Officer
65th Special Forces Brigade
September 1990

Secret and Personal

Figure h.

Orders to destroy homes displaying portraits of the Emir or Kuwaiti flags
Qurain Martyrs' Museum, Kuwait City



Document No. 57
A child carries Kuwait's flag

El-Sulaibikhat Section
No.: 425
Date: 1/11/1990
To: Al-Jahraa Security Directorate
Subject: Accused posted

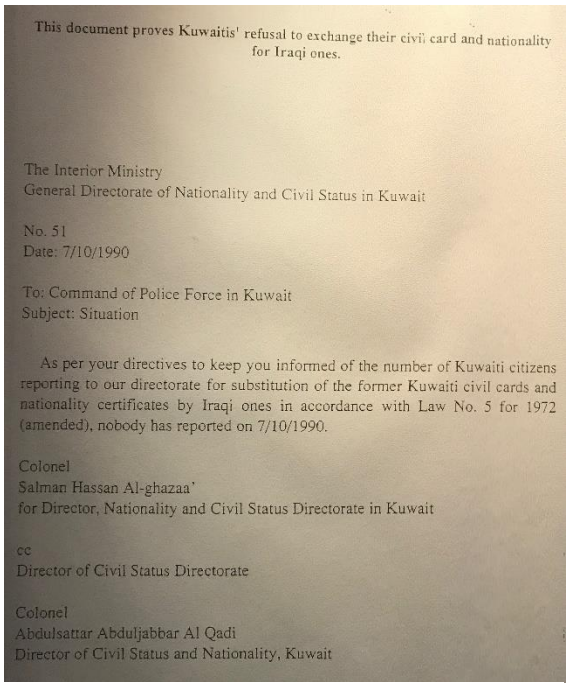
At about 2000 hrs today, the Second Karbelaa Unit of the Popular Army referred to us note No. 175, dated 1/11/1990, together with a 6-year old child named Jassem Mohamed Ali, and his mother Najiya Hemeid Selim, who lives in Al-Sulaibikhat (Plot No. 3, Street No. 2, house No. 19). Guards of the section stated above arrested the said child as he was carrying a flag of the defunct regime. The flag is filthy and stained with greasy substances.

We are posting them to you to take the measures you deem appropriate.

First Lieutenant
(Security)
Sulaibikhat Security
1/11/1990

Attached:
Flag of the defunct regime

Figure i.



This document proves Kuwaitis' refusal to exchange their civil card and nationality for Iraqi ones.

The Interior Ministry
General Directorate of Nationality and Civil Status in Kuwait

No. 51
Date: 7/10/1990

To: Command of Police Force in Kuwait
Subject: Situation

As per your directives to keep you informed of the number of Kuwaiti citizens reporting to our directorate for substitution of the former Kuwaiti civil cards and nationality certificates by Iraqi ones in accordance with Law No. 5 for 1972 (amended), nobody has reported on 7/10/1990.

Colonel
Salman Hassan Al-ghazaa'
for Director, Nationality and Civil Status Directorate in Kuwait

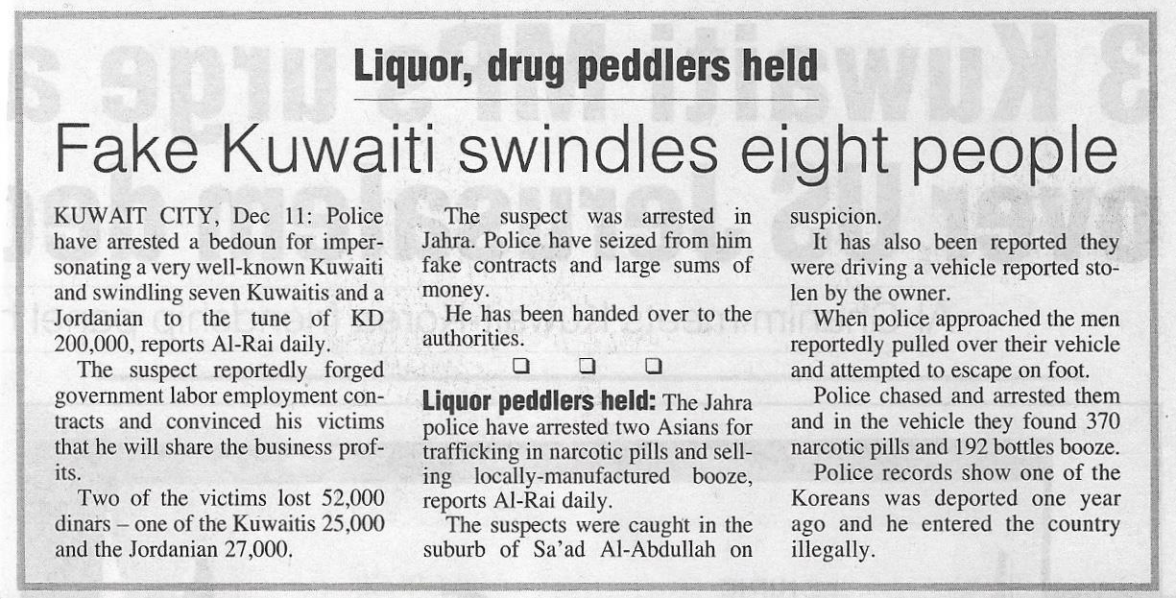
cc
Director of Civil Status Directorate

Colonel
Abdulsattar Abduljabbar Al Qadi
Director of Civil Status and Nationality, Kuwait

Figure j.

Examples of non-violent resistance during the Iraqi invasion
Qurain Martyrs' Museum, Kuwait City

APPENDIX III



Liquor, drug peddlers held

Fake Kuwaiti swindles eight people

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 11: Police have arrested a bedoun for impersonating a very well-known Kuwaiti and swindling seven Kuwaitis and a Jordanian to the tune of KD 200,000, reports Al-Rai daily.

The suspect reportedly forged government labor employment contracts and convinced his victims that he will share the business profits.

Two of the victims lost 52,000 dinars – one of the Kuwaitis 25,000 and the Jordanian 27,000.

The suspect was arrested in Jahra. Police have seized from him fake contracts and large sums of money.

He has been handed over to the authorities.

❑ ❑ ❑

Liquor peddlers held: The Jahra police have arrested two Asians for trafficking in narcotic pills and selling locally-manufactured booze, reports Al-Rai daily.

The suspects were caught in the suburb of Sa'ad Al-Abdullah on suspicion.

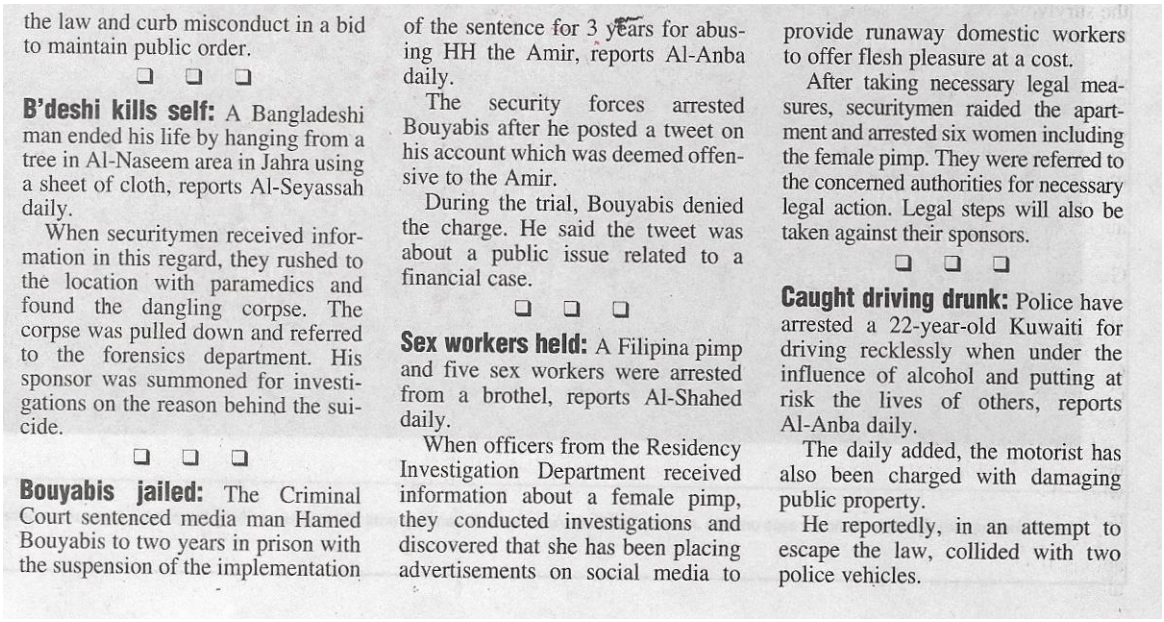
It has also been reported they were driving a vehicle reported stolen by the owner.

When police approached the men reportedly pulled over their vehicle and attempted to escape on foot.

Police chased and arrested them and in the vehicle they found 370 narcotic pills and 192 bottles booze.

Police records show one of the Koreans was deported one year ago and he entered the country illegally.

Arab Times. 2017. "Fake Kuwaiti Swindles Eight People," December 12.



the law and curb misconduct in a bid to maintain public order.

❑ ❑ ❑

B'deshi kills self: A Bangladeshi man ended his life by hanging from a tree in Al-Naseem area in Jahra using a sheet of cloth, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

When securitymen received information in this regard, they rushed to the location with paramedics and found the dangling corpse. The corpse was pulled down and referred to the forensics department. His sponsor was summoned for investigations on the reason behind the suicide.

❑ ❑ ❑

Bouyabis jailed: The Criminal Court sentenced media man Hamed Bouyabis to two years in prison with the suspension of the implementation of the sentence for 3 years for abusing HH the Amir, reports Al-Anba daily.

The security forces arrested Bouyabis after he posted a tweet on his account which was deemed offensive to the Amir.

During the trial, Bouyabis denied the charge. He said the tweet was about a public issue related to a financial case.

❑ ❑ ❑

Sex workers held: A Filipina pimp and five sex workers were arrested from a brothel, reports Al-Shahed daily.

When officers from the Residency Investigation Department received information about a female pimp, they conducted investigations and discovered that she has been placing advertisements on social media to provide runaway domestic workers to offer flesh pleasure at a cost.

After taking necessary legal measures, securitymen raided the apartment and arrested six women including the female pimp. They were referred to the concerned authorities for necessary legal action. Legal steps will also be taken against their sponsors.

❑ ❑ ❑

Caught driving drunk: Police have arrested a 22-year-old Kuwaiti for driving recklessly when under the influence of alcohol and putting at risk the lives of others, reports Al-Anba daily.

The daily added, the motorist has also been charged with damaging public property.

He reportedly, in an attempt to escape the law, collided with two police vehicles.

Arab Times. 2018. "B'deshi Kills Self, Bouyabis Jailed, Sex Workers Held, Caught Driving Drunk," January 10.

Newspaper clippings from Kuwait's *Arab Times* showing the focus on nationality when reporting local crime. These accounts are state sanctioned. Information is distributed by Kuwait's Ministry of the Interior and is published in all local newspapers.

Murder attempt: Three Nepalese expatriates were arrested for attempting to kill a compatriot by throwing him from the fifth floor of a building in Fintas area, reports Al-Anba daily.

Securitymen rushed to the location with paramedics after receiving information about the incident.

They arrested the three suspects while paramedics referred the injured Nepalese man to Adan Hospital where he was admitted in the Intensive Care Unit in critical condition.

During interrogations, the three suspects admitted to having a fight with the victim but insisted that they did not throw him.

Securitymen took necessary action.

❑ ❑ ❑

Suicide bid foiled: A Filipino who tried in vain to end his life inside his room in Fintas by hanging himself with a rope, has been referred to the intensive care unit of the Adan Hospital, reports Al-Anba daily.

The Filipino was carried to hospital by his friends who rescued him and he will be interrogated after his health condition gets better why he wanted to end his life.

❑ ❑ ❑

Killing sponsor's baby: An Indian housemaid tried to strangle her Kuwaiti sponsor's daughter, reports Al-Rai daily.

A security source said the Kuwaiti sponsor lodged a complaint with officers at Ahmadi police station, saying his wife caught their maid red-handed holding the neck of their daughter. He alleged the maid ran away upon sighting his wife. A case was registered for investigation.

Drugs with Indian

Liquor with illegal expat

By Meshal Al-Sanousi
Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 6: An Asian expatriate was arrested for violating the residency law and possessing two bottles of locally manufactured liquor.

According to security sources, Ahmadi securitymen were patrolling Mahboula area when they noticed a man walking in the area and carrying a black plastic bag. They approached him and asked him for his civil ID but he dumped his bag and began to run. Securitymen chased him and eventually caught him. They checked the bag to find two liquor bottles. They checked his details and discovered he is an Asian expatriate who was in violation of the residency law.

When questioned, he revealed that he bought the liquor from a compatriot and was heading to his friends' place to drink the liquor.

He was referred with the liquor bottles to the concerned authorities for necessary legal action.

Meanwhile, Ahmadi securitymen also arrested a drunken Asian expatriate in Abu Halifa area.

❑ ❑ ❑

Drugs with Indian: An Indian expatriate was apprehended in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh area in possession of Shabu and hashish.

A security source said security operatives attached to the Farwaniya Command were on a round of the area based on instructions issued by the Director General Major General Saleh Al-Enezi to pursue and arrest law violators when they spotted a car parked in a suspicion location and approached the driver to verify his identity. Precautionary search on the suspect led to the discovery of transparent sachets believed to be illicit drugs.

He admitted peddling in narcotics after a drill on the spot.

Meanwhile, the officers nabbed an Asian expatriate in Farwaniya area for possessing 12 bottles of local liquor. He has since been referred to the concerned authority.

By Mishal Al-Sanousi
Al-Seyassah Staff and
Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 5: An Asian woman committed suicide by using a piece of cloth to hang herself inside her sponsor's house in Sabahiya.

Police officers were dispatched to the location immediately after the Operations Unit in the Ministry of Interior received a call from a citizen who reported the incident.

The Asian woman's sponsor told the officers that when he opened the door of her room, he found the woman hanging from the ceiling. When the paramedics arrived at the scene, they examined her and pronounced her dead.

The sponsor also informed the officers that his wife saw the deceased crying in the past three days due to family issues.

The Asian woman's body was referred to Forensics and a suicide case has been registered.

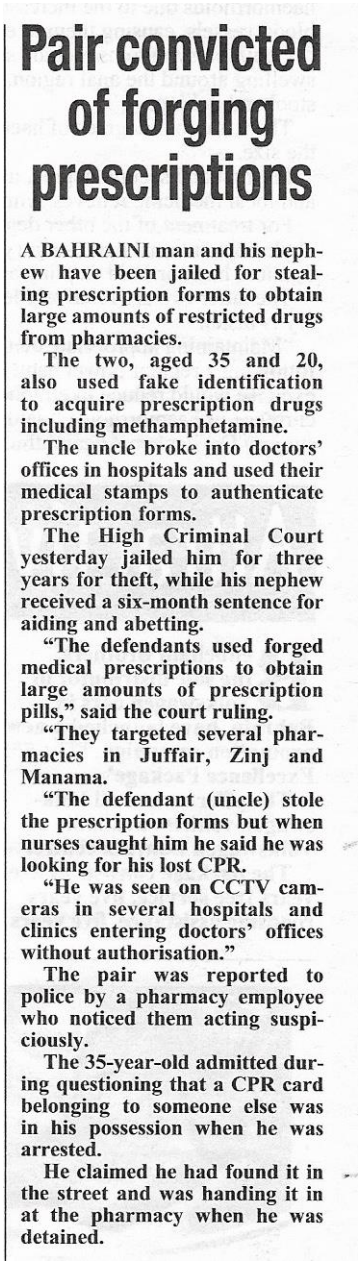
❑ ❑ ❑

Nearly 1400 held: Under the supervision of Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Public Security Affairs at the Ministry of Interior Major General Ibrahim Al-Tarrah, the security directorates carried out surprise security campaigns which resulted in the arrest of 300 people wanted by law in connection with criminal and civil offences, reports Al-Anba daily.

The campaigns also resulted in the arrest of 950 expatriate violators of residence law and 103 cases of drug and alcohol abuse and raided an apartment which had been turned into a factory to manufacture alcohol.

The Public Relations and Media Security Department said security campaigns will be organized around the clock in all areas.

From Left:
Arab Times. 2017. "Murder Attempt, Suicide Bid Foiled, Killing Sponsor's Baby," December 7.
Al-Sanousi, Meshal. 2017. "Liquor with Illegal Expat, Drugs with Indian." *Arab Times*, December 7.
Al-Sanousi, Meshal. 2017. "Asian Commits Suicide, Nearly 1400 Held." *Arab Times*, December 5.



Pair convicted of forging prescriptions

A BAHRAINI man and his nephew have been jailed for stealing prescription forms to obtain large amounts of restricted drugs from pharmacies.

The two, aged 35 and 20, also used fake identification to acquire prescription drugs including methamphetamine.

The uncle broke into doctors' offices in hospitals and used their medical stamps to authenticate prescription forms.

The High Criminal Court yesterday jailed him for three years for theft, while his nephew received a six-month sentence for aiding and abetting.

"The defendants used forged medical prescriptions to obtain large amounts of prescription pills," said the court ruling.

"They targeted several pharmacies in Juffair, Zinj and Manama.

"The defendant (uncle) stole the prescription forms but when nurses caught him he said he was looking for his lost CPR.

"He was seen on CCTV cameras in several hospitals and clinics entering doctors' offices without authorisation."

The pair was reported to police by a pharmacy employee who noticed them acting suspiciously.

The 35-year-old admitted during questioning that a CPR card belonging to someone else was in his possession when he was arrested.

He claimed he had found it in the street and was handing it in at the pharmacy when he was detained.

Businessman threatened to kill judge

By NOOR ZAHRA

MANAMA: A Bahraini businessman has been jailed for three years for threatening to kill a High Civil Court judge on social media.

The 52-year-old was found guilty of insulting the judge by the Lower Criminal Court yesterday.

He was convicted based on 27 defamatory and threatening posts he made on Twitter.

The defendant, who owns an electrical appliance company, had taken to social media to vent his frustration after the High Civil Court judge ordered him to pay one of his employees BD402.

He had been taken to court by the Asian employee for non-payment of wages.

Mugger is jailed for knife attack

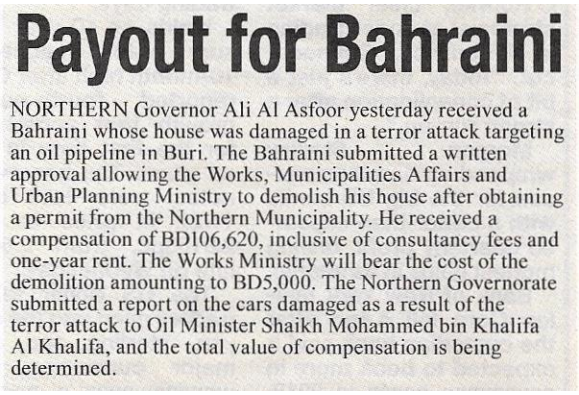
A MAN who mugged a woman at knife-point minutes after walking out of a mosque has been jailed for three years.

Surveillance cameras caught the 31-year-old Bangladeshi national holding the knife to the woman's neck near Shaikh Isa Al Kabeer Avenue in Manama on June 11 last year.

The High Criminal Court yesterday found the defendant guilty of assault and theft as he also stole the victim's purse.

The Bahraini woman, a 42-year-old teacher, previously described fearing for her life when the knife-wielding man threatened to stab her. She later identified him from a police line-up.

He will be deported after completing his sentence.



Payout for Bahraini

NORTHERN Governor Ali Al Asfoor yesterday received a Bahraini whose house was damaged in a terror attack targeting an oil pipeline in Buri. The Bahraini submitted a written approval allowing the Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning Ministry to demolish his house after obtaining a permit from the Northern Municipality. He received a compensation of BD106,620, inclusive of consultancy fees and one-year rent. The Works Ministry will bear the cost of the demolition amounting to BD5,000. The Northern Governorate submitted a report on the cars damaged as a result of the terror attack to Oil Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, and the total value of compensation is being determined.

Clockwise from left:
Gulf Daily News. 2018. "Pair Convicted Forging Prescriptions," January 18.
Zahra, Noor. 2018. "Businessman Threatened to Kill Judge." *Gulf Daily News,* January 18.
Gulf Daily News. 2018. "Mugger Is Jailed for Knife Attack," January 18.
Gulf Daily News. 2018. "Payout for Bahraini," January 19.

Newspaper clippings from Bahrain's *Gulf Daily News* showing the focus on nationality when reporting local crime.

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