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**Rentier Islamism: Muslim Brotherhood Affiliates in Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates**

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## **Abstract**

This study, using contemporary history and empirical research, updates traditional rentier state theory, which largely fails to account for the existence of opposition movements, by demonstrating the political capital held by Muslim Brotherhood affiliates in Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This study thus also fills a critical gap in existing literature on political Islam by examining previously unstudied movements in the smaller Gulf states that do not require Brotherhood organisations to provide services, to form social networks, or to contest elections (aside from in Kuwait). Through a divergent case study, we demonstrate the degree to which and the means through which the Ikhwan shapes domestic politics in the some of the world's wealthiest oil states, the super-rentiers.

This research helps to break the causal link established by rentier state theory between oil rents and lack of politically relevant Islamist organizations. As will be shown, Muslim Brotherhood organizations in the Gulf are politically influential entities. It is important to note, however, that these groups shape cultural and social ideas as readily as political notions. The division between these sectors is often blurred in the atmosphere of the socially conservative super-rentiers, as politics is often displaced to the social sphere in restricted political systems. We therefore elucidate a new model for understanding how Muslim Brotherhood movements influence government policies, in addition to cultural and social policies, in the wealthiest rentier states of the Gulf, which we call rentier Islamism.

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In the field, I was fortunate to meet a number of people who were willing to help me with my research. I am indebted to everyone who agreed to be interviewed and in particular to the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information, which aided me greatly in the arrangement of my field interviews. I also owe a huge thank you to the Brookings Doha Center team, which has been supportive of me in this endeavour since the application process back in 2012.

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### **Note on Transliteration**

Throughout this thesis, transliteration of Arabic titles and terms was guided by standards of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. For transliteration of personal names, we used the same guide yet defaulted to those used by individuals in their publications, websites, social media platforms, or business cards. For places, we have deferred to generally accepted spellings to enhance clarity.

## Chapter One

### Uncharted Territory: Political Islam and Rentier States

Scholars have struggled for decades to understand the role of political Islam<sup>1</sup> in the Middle East, and a large body of literature has emerged on this topic. The study of political Islam, however, has primarily been confined to examination of the region's more democratic states – those in which Islamist<sup>2</sup> groups like the Muslim Brotherhood (also referred to as Ikhwan, the Arabic word for brotherhood) can participate in elections – or those states in which such organisations either provide much-needed social welfare or more broadly constitute powerful social movements.<sup>3</sup> Literature on political Islam in such environments does not apply to the wealthy monarchical states of the Arabian Gulf.

The body of scholarship on political life in the Gulf has similarly overlooked the role of Islamist movements in that area. Since Hussein Mahdavy introduced the theory of the “rentier state” in 1970,<sup>4</sup> many scholars have deferred to this framework to explain the domestic politics of states accruing substantial oil profit, or rents, in the region. Numerous studies, both qualitative<sup>5</sup> and quantitative,<sup>6</sup> have demonstrated the reality of a

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<sup>1</sup> We use Salwa Ismail's definition of political Islam, a term here used synonymously with “Islamism” as the use of Islamic symbols in political discourse, as well as “re-Islamisation, the process whereby various domains of social life are invested with signs and symbols associated with Islamic cultural traditions.” Salwa Ismail, *Rethinking Islamist Politics: Culture, the State and Islamism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 2.

<sup>2</sup> We consider an Islamist one who “mobilise[s] and agitate[s] in the political sphere while deploying signs and symbols from Islamic traditions.” Ismail, 2.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Janine A. Clark, *Islam, Charity, and Activism: Middle-Class Networks and Social Welfare in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Brynjar Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement 1928-1942* (New York: Ithaca Press, 2006); Richard Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); Carrie Rosefky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Quintan Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activist: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Hussein Mahdavy, “The Patterns and Problems of Economic Development in Rentier States: The Case of Iran,” in *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East*, ed. M.A. Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 428-467.

<sup>5</sup> See Hazem Beblawi, “The Rentier State in the Arab World,” in *The Rentier State*, eds. Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani (Routledge: London, 1987), 49-62; Matthew Gray, “A Theory of ‘Late Rentierism’ in the Arab States in the Gulf,” Center for International and Regional Studies, Occasional Paper, no. 7

“rentier effect,” distinguishing these states from those without large external windfalls. In describing the government systems of such states, taxation is emphasised as spurring citizens’ demands for representation. According to leading scholar of rentier state theory Hazem Beblawi, “with virtually no taxes, citizens are far less demanding in terms of political participation.”<sup>7</sup> The simple formula “no taxation, no representation” is thus often considered to describe the extent of political life within rentier states. The reality, as this study demonstrates, is far more complicated.

This thesis will examine the role of political Islam in the Gulf through the study of Muslim Brotherhood<sup>8</sup> affiliates in three of the least studied rentier states of the Arabian Gulf: Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). We will trace how Muslim Brotherhood movements, the most powerful independent voices in the region, originated in and currently influence government policies in states that allow few institutionalised means of political participation, at least outside of Kuwait. Muslim Brotherhood movements in the super-rentiers<sup>9</sup> are able to influence government policy decisions, yet function differently from Ikhwan affiliates elsewhere in the region due to their context

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(2011), <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/558291/CIRSOccasionalPaper7MatthewGray2011.pdf?sequence=5>; Michael Herb, “No Representation without Taxation?: Rents, Development and Democracy,” *Comparative Politics* 37, no. 3 (2005): 297-317; Michael Herb, “Taxation and Representation,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 38, no. 3 (2003): 3-31; Giacomo Luciani, “Allocation vs. Production States: A Theoretical Framework,” in *The Arab State*, ed. Giacomo Luciani (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 65-84; Mahdavy.  
<sup>6</sup> See Matthias Basdeau and Jann Lay, “Resource Curse or Rentier Peace? The Ambiguous Effects of Oil Wealth and Oil Dependence on Violent Conflict,” *Journal of Peace Research* 46, no. 6 (2009): 757-776; Jonathan Isham, Michael Woolcock, Lant Pritchett, and Gwen Busby, “The Varieties of Rentier Experience: How Natural Resource Export Structures Affect the Political Economy of Growth,” *World Bank Economic Review* 19, no. 2 (2005): 141-174; Michael Ross, *The Oil Curse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Benjamin Smith, “Oil Wealth and Regime Survival in the Developing World, 1960-1999,” *American Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 2 (2004): 232-246.

<sup>7</sup> Beblawi, 53.

<sup>8</sup> For a definitional description of the Muslim Brotherhood, see Chapter Two.

<sup>9</sup> We introduce the term super-rentier to describe Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE, as the states with the highest per capita income, lowest proportion of nationals to expatriates, and greatest overall “rentier” package as a consequence of these dynamics.

inside oil wealthy states. Significantly, there exists variation among the cases, as political participation is institutionalised in Kuwait through parliamentary elections yet remains far more personalistic in Qatar and the UAE. By examining the unique properties of Muslim Brotherhood activities in super-rentiers, this project will thus fill a gap in the existing literature on political Islam. Neither the body of scholarship on political Islam nor the academic work on rentier states adequately explains the political role of Islamist groups in the oil monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula.

*Explaining the Political Role of Islamist Movements in Rentier States*

Rentier state theory, the primary theoretical framework used in discussions of Gulf politics, allows solely for the presence of economically based political movements in such wealthy states. Indeed, Giacomo Luciani claims “it is only in the case that an allocation state fails, or is widely believed to fail, to take full advantage of the possibility of receiving income from the rest of the world that substantial political opposition may develop.”<sup>10</sup> Examination of the political histories and contemporary political currents in the Gulf, however, proves this to be untrue; opposition in the Gulf is not dependent on economic largesse or lack thereof. While rulers in the Gulf may consider their duties to citizens to be primarily pecuniary, as they have repeatedly answered calls for democratic reform with economic benefits, continued protest in the face of government disbursements demonstrates that citizens disagree with this simplistic perception of government responsibility. Ideologically driven Islamist movements are even less likely to be placated by government payouts, making it more probable that they become powerful voices of political opposition in rentier states. Nonetheless, Islamist movements

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<sup>10</sup> Luciani, “Allocation vs. Production States,” 75.

in such states remain underexamined, and so little is known about how exactly they operate.

In his 2011 book on Saudi Arabia, Stéphane Lacroix explains the rise of independent Islamism inside the Kingdom, marking an important development to the literature on rentier Islamists. He traces Muslim Brotherhood infiltration of the education system, outlining the transformation of Islamists into independent actors in the form of the Sahwa movement, and analysing the ultimate failure of this group. While Islamist complaint initially constituted “politically neutered opposition [that] gradually became primarily a cultural opposition,” dynamics changed with the advent of the Sahwa movement of the 1990s.<sup>11</sup> The new group united sectors of society that had previously been separated, namely the ‘ulama’ and intellectuals, behind an Islamist agenda. During this period of Sahwa activity, “it was precisely the collapse of sectoral barriers and the transformation of the social arena into a unified space that momentarily gave life to what Islamist discourse had long proclaimed: the utopia of a fusion of politics and religion. But the crisis was short lived and inevitably ended with a return to the logic of sectorization.”<sup>12</sup> By granting that Islamists in the rentier context came to hold widespread political appeal, Lacroix makes an important contribution. He also adds the notion of “state Islamism” in the discussion of Islamism in the rentier context: “In almost all countries in the Muslim world, Islamism arose and developed outside the state. The converse was true of Saudi Arabia: from the beginning, Islamism was integrated into the official institutions.”<sup>13</sup> Because the state dominates so much of life in rentier societies

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<sup>11</sup> Stéphane Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 17.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 265-266.

even outside of Saudi Arabia, it has historically played a large role in the Islamic sector. As a result, the trajectory of Islamist organisations is much different in Gulf states than elsewhere in the Middle East: they have gained political capital<sup>14</sup> through the prevailing system before coming to challenge it. This pattern is affirmed in examining how Brotherhood affiliates in Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE came to gain influence through their positions in state apparatuses beginning as early as the 1950s.

Gwenn Okruhlik also notes the ability of Saudi Islamists to instigate a series of reforms in the Kingdom in the 1990s, specifically the creation of the Consultative Council in 1992, citing the politicisation of Wahhabi Islam after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.<sup>15</sup> She posits that Islamists, more difficult for the state to regulate, have “capture[d] the discourse in Saudi Arabia” and have “initiated a renegotiation of the social contract in Saudi Arabia and an alternative telling(s) of history.”<sup>16</sup> Although Saudi Islamists have not secured an institutionalised place in politics, they have had remarkable success in beginning political negotiation and compromise in arguably the most autocratic state of the Gulf. She charges that, in the absence of Islamists, such changes would not have taken place.<sup>17</sup> Islamist organisations have managed to gain a political say by “provid[ing] people with common scripts and symbols to utilize when confronting the overwhelming power of state institutions.”<sup>18</sup> Islamist movements in the Saudi context also benefit from the fact that the ruling family “cannot easily quash or oppose Islamist

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<sup>14</sup> We use the phrase political capital to refer to non-governmental actors' ability to influence government policymaking, which is aided by (though not conditional upon) their capacity to gain popular support among the citizenry.

<sup>15</sup> Gwenn Okruhlik, “Making Conversation Permissible,” in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 255.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

arguments, since they stake their right to rule on largely Islamic grounds.”<sup>19</sup> The same is true elsewhere in the Gulf to a large extent. Okruhlik’s study goes a long way toward demonstrating that Islamist actors in the Gulf do, in fact, hold political influence, yet, like Lacroix’s research, remains focused on such actors in the unique Saudi case.

Eric Rouleau makes the important point that Wahhabi Islam<sup>20</sup> of the Arabian Peninsula, and particularly Saudi Arabia, became politicised with the arrival of members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood escaping persecution under the rule of Jamal ‘Abd al-Nasir.<sup>21</sup> This period, he claims, marks the time when the Saudi ‘ulama’<sup>22</sup> “under the impact of the new arrivals [...] began, for the first time, to challenge the House of Saud’s temporal power.”<sup>23</sup> Still, there has been no comprehensive account of *how* exactly Muslim Brothers came to the broader Gulf or in what ways they affected the domestic political scenes of Gulf countries.

Our study will demonstrate that political Islam serves as a prominent voice critiquing social policies, as well as promoting more strictly political, and often populist or reformist, views supported by a number of Gulf citizens. The way that Islamist organisations operate in the unique environment of the super-rentiers is distinct. The smallest and wealthiest states of the Arabian Gulf – Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE – are monarchies that, with the exception of Kuwait, do not allow for political participation through elections. In the monarchical systems of Qatar and the UAE, Islamist groups do not have the opportunity to compete for power and therefore cannot use the ballot box to

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 263.

<sup>20</sup> Wahhabi Islam is a strand of orthodox Islam that originated in and prevails in Saudi Arabia, similar to Salafism yet following the teachings of Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab.

<sup>21</sup> Eric Rouleau, “Trouble in the Kingdom,” *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 4 (2002): 79.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Ulama’ are Muslim religious authorities or scholars.

<sup>23</sup> Rouleau, 79.

gain popularity or influence political life, as they do elsewhere in the Middle East. One interviewee went so far as to state that “[t]he Muslim Brotherhood needs parliamentary democracy as oxygen to function [...] The Muslim Brotherhood doesn’t come to power without democracy.”<sup>24</sup> Further distinguishing these countries from others in the region, rentier states benefit from oil wealth which allows them to grant generous social welfare benefits for all nationals, obviating the need for Islamic societies to provide such services. The smaller states of the Gulf also differ from the rest of the region in the prevailing importance of tribal social structures. Because these emirates have only existed as independent states for the past four to five decades, they have retained their tribal sub-structures: kinship ties remain of critical importance in social and political life. The existence of such a strong social network reduces the need for an organisation like the Muslim Brotherhood to provide a sense of belonging and an arena for social gathering. Further constricting the space for the Muslim Brotherhood is government co-optation of the Islamic sphere through Ministries of Endowments (or *Awqāf*)<sup>25</sup> and Islamic Affairs, which often monitor mosques, imams,<sup>26</sup> and sermons.

Despite these unique conditions, Muslim Brotherhood branches have existed in the Gulf for decades, dating back to the Nasir era in Egypt, when many Islamists moved to the Gulf to escape persecution in Egypt and to take jobs in the understaffed region. Large numbers of Egyptian immigrants worked in the Gulf states’ newly established educational and judicial systems, beginning in the 1950s. Gulf governments, under British protection at that time, initially welcomed Islamism as a counterbalance to the

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with Patrick Forbes, December 6, 2013.

<sup>25</sup> *Awqāf* is the plural form of *waqf*, which in the religious context, is a voluntary endowment collected from among Muslims to be used for charitable or religious purposes. A ministry of *awqāf* oversees the collection of and possible uses for such funds.

<sup>26</sup> Imams are those who lead prayers and give sermons in mosques.

rising tide of Arab nationalism, even granting Brotherhood groups funds for social activities. Today, however, the Gulf states have taken a very different tack toward the Brotherhood, with Saudi Arabia and the UAE leading the charge against the organisation as a terrorist group and a major political threat to their governments. Qatar has adopted a more sympathetic stance toward the Brotherhood, supporting its cause abroad and providing refuge for influential Brotherhood figures within the country. Even Qatar, however, expelled seven leading Egyptian Brotherhood members in September 2014, pursuant to an article in the Riyadh Agreement signed with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in November 2013.<sup>27</sup> Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE went so far as to withdraw their ambassadors from the state in March 2014 over Qatar's failure to implement the agreement, which demanded that it not support "anyone threatening the security and stability of the GCC whether as groups or individuals – via direct security work or through political influence, and not to support hostile media."<sup>28</sup> This veiled reference to the Muslim Brotherhood reveals the degree to which the organisation has become politically relevant and polarising in the region. Meanwhile, Kuwait has remained a mediator as political Islam has divided the other Gulf states, pitting the Emirati and Saudi response against the Qatari approach. Looking at recent events in the region, it becomes clear that the Muslim Brotherhood holds considerable political capital in the Gulf and deserves greater scholarly attention.

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<sup>27</sup> Ian Black, "Qatar-Gulf Deal Forces Expulsion of Muslim Brotherhood Leaders," *The Guardian*, September 16, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/16/qatar-orders-expulsion-exiled-egyptian-muslim-brotherhood-leaders>.

<sup>28</sup> "Gulf Ambassadors Pulled from Qatar over 'Interference'," BBC, March 5, 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-26447914>.

### *Methodology*

To demonstrate how and why Muslim Brotherhood affiliates have remained active in the Gulf super-rentiers for decades, we trace the existence and activities of these organisations in such states. In so doing, we reveal the degree to which rentier state theory and scholarship on political Islam fail to recognise the political influence that Islamist actors hold in rentier states – both in terms of policy formation and shaping popular discourse. We do so first by constructing a contemporary history of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gulf countries under study, beginning with the arrival of Ikhwan sympathisers in the 1950s and continuing to the present day. Such a record does not now exist – in Arabic or English – and therefore will be of critical importance to future studies of the region and of this topic. We then focus on the current role played by Muslim Brotherhood affiliates in the countries under study.

This project takes the form of a multi-country deviant case study.<sup>29</sup> As such, the cases involved (Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE) are used to disprove the causal linkage proposed by rentier state theory between oil rents and the political irrelevance of Muslim Brotherhood organisations. This study will also update working theories on political Islam by examining Islamism in the unique rentier context. This case study methodology is most appropriate, as the aim of this study is to explain “case(s) that, by reference to some general understanding of a topic (either a specific theory or common sense), demonstrates a surprising value.”<sup>30</sup> Though differences exist among these cases, on the whole they call into question the model which has previously been used to explain them –

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<sup>29</sup> John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 105-108.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

a key criterion for the use of this methodological approach.<sup>31</sup> We also build a new theory of Islamist political action in super-rentiers, drawing on pieces of existing scholarship.

In addition, we aim to avoid the potential pitfalls of the case study – subjectivity and lack of generalisability – as described by Bruce Berg and Howard Lune.<sup>32</sup> Although complete objectivity is impossible in qualitative work, intersubjectivity will be sought; assumptions and definitions will be clearly laid out to ensure replicability and internal consistency of the study.<sup>33</sup> As for generalisability, we aim not to establish a broad theory about all rentier states, but to elucidate the relationship between rentierism and the political activity of Muslim Brotherhood movements in the super-rentiers of Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE. This study will fill a substantial gap in the literature on the domestic political workings of rentier states by highlighting the unique role played there by Islamist movements, while also distinguishing the means of mobilisation that Brotherhood affiliates use in wealthy rentier states. Though this study cannot determine how Muslim Brotherhood organisations function in all rentier states, it may serve as the basis for further study in other similar states and can also inform studies on political Islam elsewhere in the region.

#### *Relevance of the Study*

As King et al. note, research projects should “make a specific contribution to an identifiable scholarly literature by increasing our collective ability to construct verified scientific explanations of some aspect of the world” as well as “pose a question that is

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>32</sup> Bruce L. Berg and Howard Lune, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Pearson, 2012), 339-342.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 340.

‘important’ in the real world.”<sup>34</sup> Our study will facilitate understanding of the political cultures of the wealthiest rentier states of the Gulf, as there is a dearth of scholarly writing, particularly in English, about domestic politics in the region. The vast majority of literature on the Gulf has focused on political economy, regime politics, or external issues like security and foreign policy. This study will also create new knowledge on the theoretical level by combining literature on rentier state theory with scholarship on political Islam for the first time and on the empirical level through fieldwork in some of the least studied states in the Middle East. While several studies in English have focused on secular and Islamist opposition movements in Saudi Arabia<sup>35</sup> and a smaller number has examined Islamist blocs in Kuwait,<sup>36</sup> no empirical study in English treats the topic of Islamist organisations, in Qatar or the UAE; and there exists no comparative literature in English on this topic.<sup>37</sup> Beyond adding to existing scholarship, this research on the Muslim Brotherhood will reveal the degree to which it is in fact a threat to the status quo in the Gulf, as the Saudi and Emirati governments claim, and thus may influence future policy decisions in the region.

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<sup>34</sup> Gary O. King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 15.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Mansoor Jassem Alshamsi, *Islam and Political Reform in Saudi Arabia: The Quest for Political Change and Reform* (London: Routledge 2010); R. Hrair Dekmejian, “The Rise of Political Islamism in Saudi Arabia,” *Middle East Journal* 48, no. 4 (1994): 627-643; Lacroix; William Ochsenwald, “Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Revival,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13, no. 2 (1981): 271-286; Gwenn Okruhlik, “Networks of Dissent: Islamism and Reform in Saudi Arabia,” *Current History* 101, no. 541 (2002): 22-28; Jean Paul Sez nec, “Stirrings in Saudi Arabia,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 4 (2002): 33-40

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Ali Fahed al-Zumai, “The Intellectual and Historical Development of the Islamic Movement in Kuwait 1950-1981” (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 1988); Sami Awadh, “Islamic Political Groups in Kuwait: Roots and Influence” (PhD diss., University of Portsmouth, 1999); Nathan J. Brown, “Pushing Toward Party Politics?: Kuwait’s Islamic Constitutional Movement,” *Carnegie Papers* 79, (January 2007), [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79\\_brown\\_kuwait\\_final.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79_brown_kuwait_final.pdf); Shafeeq Ghabra, “Balancing State and Society: The Islamic Movement in Kuwait,” *Middle East Policy* 5, no. 2 (1997): 58-72.

<sup>37</sup> A 2012 book published by Al-Mesbar Studies and Research Centre, *Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun wa-l-Salafiyyun fi al-Khalij (The Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis in the Gulf)* is the only current extensive literature on this topic. Though it provides helpful background information, because Al-Mesbar is UAE-based and directed by a Saudi chairman, the impartiality of the study is dubious.

*Sources*

Data have been collected through primary sources (in Arabic and English), namely government documents, such as constitutions and relevant laws – particularly those that regulate civil society<sup>38</sup> and the religious sphere. These sources helped to clarify the extent to which independent political and religious associations are permitted in the countries under study. Official documents, such as platforms, petitions, and publications from the national Muslim Brotherhood organisations, were also examined to determine the nature of these groups' goals and their success in achieving them. In addition, secondary sources, such as other studies that critique rentierism or those that concern domestic politics of the Gulf, and relevant news items were examined. This body of literature has made clear where our project adds unique insight.

Extensive fieldwork was conducted from September 2013-April 2014, divided into roughly two months in each country. During this period, some 90 open-ended interviews (approximately 30 in each country under study) were conducted, in English and Arabic, about Islamist opposition movements, and particularly Muslim Brotherhood organisations, in Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE. Interviewees came from a variety of backgrounds and ideological leanings. They included academics, politicians, activists, and journalists.<sup>39</sup> While in the field, primary source material was also gathered through visits to archives, including the National Library of Kuwait and the UAE Federation

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<sup>38</sup> We define civil society as “the constellation of associational forms that occupy the terrain between individuals and the state. It is viewed as a mechanism of collective empowerment that enhances the ability of citizens to protect their interests and rights from arbitrary or capricious state power.” Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Civil Society as Social Control: State Power in Jordan,” *Comparative Politics* 33, no. 1 (2000): 43.

<sup>39</sup> For a complete list of interviewees, see Bibliography, page 403.

Library. Local university libraries,<sup>40</sup> think tanks,<sup>41</sup> the office of Jam‘iat al-Islah al-Ijtima‘i (the Social Reform Association, hereafter Islah) in Kuwait, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information, and American and British embassies in Kuwait and Qatar proved useful resources as well.

*Case Selection: Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE as Super-Rentiers*

Though the GCC countries are often considered as a single unit, Michael Herb makes an important distinction between the wealthier rentier states of the GCC (Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE) and their less affluent neighbours (Bahrain, Oman, and Saudi Arabia), explaining that the former group has managed to use petroleum windfalls to perpetuate the strongest support system for their citizens.<sup>42</sup> In addition to providing extensive social welfare benefits, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE have “fail[ed] to wean citizens from dependence on public sector jobs,”<sup>43</sup> making employment part of the rentier package.<sup>44</sup> These wealthy states can also afford to import large numbers of expatriates to fill private sector positions, as well as jobs in service industries that nationals consider undesirable, leading the state to employ some nine out of every ten citizens.<sup>45</sup> Further reinforcing the privileged position of nationals, the governments of the wealthiest Gulf

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<sup>40</sup> Universities visited included the American University in Dubai, the American University of Kuwait, Kuwait University, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies, Qatar University, and UAE University (UAEU).

<sup>41</sup> In Kuwait, think tanks visited included the Center for Strategic and Future Studies at Kuwait University, the Gulf Center for Development Policies, and Kuwait Center for Strategic Studies. In Qatar, the author visited Al Jazeera Center for Studies, the Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies, the Brookings Doha Center, the Center for International and Regional Studies at the Georgetown School of Foreign Service in Qatar, the Qatar Foundation, the RAND-Qatar Policy Institute, the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Qatar, and the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute. In the UAE, think tanks visited included Al Mezmaah Studies and Research Centre, Emirates Policy Center, the Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis (INEGMA), and Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Herb, “A Nation of Bureaucrats: Political Participation and Economic Diversification in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no. 3 (2009): 376.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 383.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 382.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Herb, *The Wages of Oil: Parliaments and Economic Development in Kuwait and the UAE* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 2.

states have constructed systems of disbursements to citizens so extensive that Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE provide the best examples of rentierism in the Gulf. We thus have distinguished them as super-rentiers. Rentier state theory would lead us to believe that these states are the least likely to house independent political actors of any type.

**Figure 1: Economic Comparison of GCC States**

Country	GNI per capita, Atlas method, 2013 (U.S. Dollar) <sup>46</sup>	Purchasing Power Parity per capita, 2013 (International Dollar) <sup>47</sup>	Percentage of Non-National Population (2008) <sup>48</sup>	Percentage of Non-Nationals in Labour Force (2008) <sup>49</sup>
Bahrain	19,700	36,290	51%	76.70%
Kuwait	45,130	84,800	68%	83.20%
Oman	25,150	52,780	31%	74.60%
Qatar	86,790	128,530	87%	94.30%
Saudi Arabia	26,260	53,640	27%	50.60%
UAE	38,360	59,890	81%	85%

Aside from economic differences, significant political variations complicate comparisons with other GCC states. Bahrain seems an obvious outlier as the only GCC state with a majority Shi'i population. Consequently, Bahrain's most powerful opposition Islamist movements (al-Wefaq and the Haq Movement) are Shi'i and therefore not linked to the Muslim Brotherhood ideologically, as the Ikhwan is Sunni. Interestingly, that country's Muslim Brotherhood branch is most often aligned with the government, suggesting the primacy of loyalty to religious sect over political ideology in Bahrain.

Oman, while also having a highly centralised and personalised government under Sultan Qaboos, is influenced by ideologies that differ greatly from those found in the rest

<sup>46</sup> "Gross National Income per Capita 2013, Atlas Method and PPP," *World Development Indicators Database*, World Bank, March 12, 2015, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/GNIPC.pdf>.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Martin Baldwin-Edwards, "Labour Immigration and Labour Markets in the GCC Countries: National Patterns and Trends," Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States, no. 15, March 2011, 10, [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/55239/1/Baldwin-Edwards\\_2011.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/55239/1/Baldwin-Edwards_2011.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 9.

of the GCC. A unique strand of Ibādī Islam dominates the religious scene,<sup>50</sup> where Sunni Muslims number only 15-20 percent of the population.<sup>51</sup> The state's most prominent independent Islamist movement, Jama'at al-Tabligh, has roots in India,<sup>52</sup> reflecting Oman's outward-looking orientation, which has long differentiated it from its Gulf neighbours. Furthermore, the Omani branch of the Brotherhood was effectively shut down in the early 2000s.<sup>53</sup>

Saudi Arabia's opposition movements, specifically Islamist groups, have been the subject of a number of studies, particularly since the 1979 takeover of the Grand Mosque by radical Islamists under the leadership of Juhayman al-'Utaybi. Many studies have focused on violent strands of Islamism in the Kingdom,<sup>54</sup> while several others have treated the topic of Islamism in Saudi Arabia more broadly.<sup>55</sup> Aside from hoping to uncover new knowledge about understudied countries, concerns about access to information and entry into the states were taken into consideration in the selection of cases.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Zohrul Bari, "Islamic Revival in the Gulf: An Overview," *International Studies* 31, no. 49 (1994): 51.

<sup>51</sup> Lori Plotkin Boghardt, "The Muslim Brotherhood in the Gulf: Prospects for Agitation," The Washington Institute, June 10, 2013, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-muslim-brotherhood-in-the-gulf-prospects-for-agitation>.

<sup>52</sup> F. Gregory Gause III, *Political Opposition in the Gulf Monarchies* (San Domenico di Fiesole: European University Institute, 2000), 23.

<sup>53</sup> See Plotkin Boghardt, "The Muslim Brotherhood in the Gulf," and N. Janardhan, "Islamists Stay Clear of Terrorism in Oman," The Jamestown Foundation, March 9, 2006, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=698#.VETiief1f-Z](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=698#.VETiief1f-Z).

<sup>54</sup> See Daniel L. Byman and Jerrold D. Green, *Political Violence and Stability in the States of the Northern Persian Gulf* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1999); Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Bruce Riedel and Bilal Y. Saab, "Al Qaeda's Third Front: Saudi Arabia," *The Washington Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (2008): 33-46. Sarah N. Stern, ed., *Saudi Arabia and the Global Islamic Terrorist Network: America and the West's Fatal Embrace* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>55</sup> See Alshamsi; Dekmejian, "The Rise of Political Islamism in Saudi Arabia;" Mamoun Fandy, *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1999); Lacroix; Ochsenswald; Okruhlik, "Networks of Dissent;" Rouleau.

<sup>56</sup> It is difficult for a single female to travel to Saudi Arabia without a sponsor in the country. Further complicating entrance into the Kingdom is the fact that the author was denied entry into Bahrain in June 2012, due to previous writings. This incident also obviously complicates travel to Bahrain.

Unlike the other GCC states, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE are Sunni majority emirates. They are also the wealthiest states of the region, were influenced by British rule, and enjoy relatively placid internal political environments. Nonetheless, these cases demonstrate a spectrum of political activity among the Gulf rentiers. The study of Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE will be used to build an independent theory of Islamist political action in the Gulf. Nonetheless, each case is unique. Indeed, one reason for the case selection is the variety these states provide.

Kuwait, under leadership of al-Sabah family since the eighteenth century, is the only Gulf country with an active parliament, already making it unique amongst rentier states of the region. Further, the country's Muslim Brotherhood organisation has successfully fielded candidates for this body since the 1980s. In 1991, the Brotherhood created a specialised political branch, al-Harakat al-Dusturiyya al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Constitutional Movement, also known by its Arabic acronym HADAS and hereafter ICM), which functions as a political party in all but name (political parties are formally banned in all super-rentiers). It works alongside Islah, the organisation's social branch, which was established in 1951. The Kuwaiti Brotherhood is highly organised, well funded, and benefits from a broad support base. Although the Brotherhood boycotted the last two parliamentary elections and therefore is not represented in the current legislature, its influence continues to be felt through its social outreach, which is done through its participation in charity organisations, sporting clubs, and educational institutions. Politics in the super-rentiers like Kuwait is often displaced into other groups and institutions, considering the lack of formal political parties and meaningful institutionalised political participation.

Qatar lies on the other end of the spectrum in terms of political freedom. The emirate has one elected political institution, the Central Municipal Council (CMC), yet the body itself plays little more than an advisory role on primarily non-political matters. Policy decisions thus remain in the hands of a relatively small number of people, namely members of ruling al-Thani family. Current Amir Shaykh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani (r. 2013-present), who has held this position since his father Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani (r. 1995-2013) transferred power in June 2013, is often portrayed as a pragmatist rather than an ideologue, who is likely to continue his father's policies to the extent that they are politically useful for his reign at home and his relationships abroad. Though Qatar does not have a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, as it formally disbanded in 1999, Islamist influence remains palpable, if not structurally salient. As mentioned above, charges of Qatari support for Islamist movements worldwide have become more prominent in recent years. Qatar has, since 1961, provided rentier Brotherhood figure Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi a platform from which to spread his ideas, has been charged with aiding Islamists in Libya, Syria, and Tunisia, and publicly supported the Mohamed Morsi government in Egypt in 2012 and 2013.

The UAE is composed of seven emirates, each with its own ruling family. Still, the country is dominated by the ruling families of Abu Dhabi (the president is Abu Dhabian ruler Shaykh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahyan) and Dubai (the vice president is Dubai ruler Shaykh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum). The UAE has one partially elected body, the Federal National Council (FNC), yet it is chosen by a small percentage of Emirati nationals and holds only nonbinding advisory power in a variety of federal government matters. Decision-making in the UAE, similar to Qatar, remains personalised

and concentrated in the hands of relatively few people, though political and cultural variation exists across the emirates. As the UAE has experienced a meteoric economic rise and resultant social changes, a degree of Islamist backlash has been witnessed, along with liberal<sup>57</sup> opposition movements advocating for more participatory governance. The government has responded swiftly and harshly, increasing internal security and arresting over 100 suspected Emirati Islamists since 2012 on charges of attempting to overthrow the regime.<sup>58</sup> Below find illustrative evidence of these countries' political similarities.

**Figure 2: Political Comparison of the Super-Rentier States**

Country	Amir	Parliament	Consultative Assembly	Political Parties	Council of Ministers
<b>Kuwait</b>	✓	✓			✓
<b>Qatar</b>	✓		✓		✓
<b>UAE</b>	✓		✓		✓

Sources: Various. Author generated.

### *Goals of This Study*

This study will shed light on why and how Muslim Brotherhood branches have emerged as important social and political actors in wealthy oil monarchies of the Arabian Gulf. By examining the three super-rentiers of the region, we demonstrate the degree to which rentier state theory underestimates the complexity of domestic politics in states that benefit from large amounts of oil wealth. The variation among these cases in and of itself illustrates the inadequacy of one theory to describe them all. This study also reveals the shortcomings of the prevailing literature on political Islam, as it fails to account for the presence of politically relevant Brotherhood movements in the Gulf monarchies and

<sup>57</sup> Here we define liberal as who one aspires to political values of “psychological security and personal independence for all, legal impartiality within a single system of laws applied equally to all, the human diversity fostered by liberty, and collective self-rule through elected government and uncensored discussion.” Stephen Holmes, *Passions and Constraint: On the Theory of Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 16.

<sup>58</sup> “UAE Coup Plot Trial Begins in Abu Dhabi,” Al Jazeera, March 4, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/03/20133472546866175.html>.

thus does not describe how their function differs from that of the Ikhwan in other parts of the region.

As will be shown, Muslim Brotherhood organisations in the Gulf are politically influential entities in terms of influencing government policy. It is important to note, however, that these groups often shape cultural and social ideas as readily as political<sup>59</sup> notions; they promote the implementation of conservative social policies while also often advocating for major reforms to government apparatuses and changes in domestic and foreign policies. The division between the social and political sectors is often blurred in the atmosphere of socially conservative states of the Gulf, as political actors operate through channels that are not institutionalised, due to the informal and under-institutionalised nature of such political systems more generally, excepting Kuwait. Simply because politics is underinstitutionalised in such states does not mean that it is underdeveloped; the informal realm holds considerable political capital. In the super-rentiers, social policies form a major part of local Ikhwan discourse, and opinions about appropriate social practice inform citizens' views of the correct role of the government more broadly.

There is a social element to political trust within the super-rentiers, and Brotherhood movements have managed to use the links between the social (i.e. informal personal networks) and political (i.e. government institutions) to gain influence in policymaking in such states. In the case of Kuwait, the Muslim Brotherhood wields tremendous political capital in the domestic arena, as it forms the most organised political bloc in the country. The Qatari case, however, demonstrates that even when a formal

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<sup>59</sup> We define the political as “of, relating to, or concerned with the making as distinguished from the administration of governmental policy.” *Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online*, 2014, s.v. “political,” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/political>.

Brotherhood branch does not exist locally, Islamist ideology is influential domestically in social policy and has affected the government's posturing abroad to a limited extent. In the case of the UAE, the local Brotherhood's involvement in domestic politics and criticism of local policies led to the government crackdown in 2012-2013. Today, the Brotherhood is vilified, yet its ideology remains influential in some circles. Despite the variety of outcomes in these states, they are critically similar in that the Ikhwan is politically significant.

### *Structure of Project*

This study is divided into nine chapters, in addition to this introduction. Chapter Two offers a review of relevant literature – namely rentier state theory and significant scholarship on political Islam. By assessing the existing literature on these topics, we clarify where this study adds value. We also consider these two bodies of literature together for the first time to assess their efficacy in describing the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gulf countries under study. The third chapter provides relevant comparative historical background on the political landscapes of Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE. In tracing the rise of the political systems in these three states, we demonstrate how such systems have constrained independent political action. Historical and political background also provides important regional context that further clarifies the importance of the case studies.

Chapters Four through Nine cover the country cases (Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE). The study of each state is divided into two chapters: one comprising a preliminary political and historical background and the second focused on current politics, using data

from fieldwork. These chapters provide critical background on each country as well as showcasing the original field research conducted for this project.

Chapter Ten contains an extended, substantive conclusion to take into account individual country experiences and to compare these countries along common themes. In this final chapter, we elucidate a new model for understanding how Muslim Brotherhood movements influence government policies in the super-rentier states, which we tentatively call rentier Islamism.

## **Chapter Two**

### **No Taxation, No Representation?: Political Opposition in Rentier States and the Origins of Muslim Brotherhood Movements in the Gulf**

#### *Introduction*

The study of oil-wealthy states in the Gulf has long been dominated by rentier state theory, which endeavours to describe the domestic politics of such countries by their primary economic characteristic as recipients of substantial oil rents. In a similar vein, theories of political Islam have largely failed to examine Islamist movements in rentier monarchies of the Gulf, focusing instead on societies like Algeria, Egypt, and Jordan, which have historically contained greater space for political activity and participation, as well as having displayed a need for non-state actors to provide services that financially strained governments have failed to deliver. In this chapter, we examine the scholarship concerning rentier state theory and political Islam. By reviewing each strand of the literature, we assess where and how this study adds value to each and use existing scholarship to craft a theory of rentier Islamism unique to the countries under study.

#### *Theories of the Rentier State*

Since it was defined in 1970, the notion of the rentier state has been a greatly discussed categorisation. Though it aptly describes the basic economic characteristics of states with substantial external incomes, traditional views of the rentier state are limited in scope. Most early works on rentierism treat the state as a single, homogeneous unit, leaving little space for political actors aside from what is assumed to be a united government and devoting scant attention to the internal political workings of such a state. Rentier states are portrayed as little more than passive participants in the receipt of oil rents, and their governments are considered to hold uncontested and autonomous

economic and political control. Modified theories come closer to uncovering the more complicated nature of political life in the Gulf states, yet most studies on rentierism “raise the problem of economic determinism. Clearly left out is politics.”<sup>1</sup>

Hussein Mahdavy first defined rentier states, in the context of Iran, as “those countries that receive on a regular basis substantial amounts of external rents. External rents are in turn defined as rentals paid by foreign individuals, concerns or governments of a given country.”<sup>2</sup> This definition is solely economic, referring to a fiscal reality of countries reliant on outside profit. Mahdavy’s description of the rentier state makes little mention of the political system likely to accompany the economic model he describes. He does deduce that the government, as the manager of external incomes, will have a prominent role in the economy, thereby enhancing its ability to embark on large-scale spending without taxation and boosting its ability to bribe dissidents.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps more so than later theorists of rentierism, Mahdavy laments poor education and technological development among the population of the rentier state and concludes: “Instead of attending to the task of expediting the basic socio-economic transformations, they [oil-producing countries] devote the greater part of their resources to jealously guarding the *status quo*.”<sup>4</sup> Mahdavy here seems to suggest that governments of rentier states must work to maintain their position as the primary recipients of the country’s wealth, yet he does not specify why or in what way their power would be insecure. Further, while Mahdavy claims “the mass of the population may remain in a backward state,” citing low levels of educational and technological advancement in Iran

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<sup>1</sup> Gwenn Okruhlik, “Rentier Wealth, Unruly Law, and the Rise of the Opposition,” *Comparative Politics* no. 3 (1999): 296.

<sup>2</sup> Mahdavy, 428.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 467.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 443.

during the 1960s, he does not imply that citizens are aware of or unhappy with low levels of development.<sup>5</sup> Mahdavy, like other early theorists of the rentier state, presumes that, in a state with such an underdeveloped economic system, the political and social orders are similarly stunted by the receipt of considerable oil rents.

Mahdavy presents a fairly straightforward economic equation: external rents, managed by the government and distributed to the population, create a rentier state in which local economy and society remain underdeveloped. Politics remains peripheral. Mahdavy therefore suggests that the problem of the rentier state is one for economists, not political scientists.

Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani are best known for expanding the definition of the rentier state, yet, for the political scientist, their formulation remains similarly unsatisfactory. Beblawi describes four main characteristics of a rentier state: its economy is dominated by rent; the economy is reliant on external, rather than internal, rents; a small number of people is involved in the creation of this rent; and the government is the primary recipient of external rent.<sup>6</sup> Again, the defining features of the state are economic. Beblawi goes on to explain that, in these states, citizens tend to receive payments from their wealthy governments. In such an environment, “income is no longer a reward of serious and hard work.”<sup>7</sup> Rather, nationals are recompensed by virtue of their being citizens, making them less likely to form political opposition or to make demands of the state more generally.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 437.

<sup>6</sup> Beblawi, 51-52.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 53-54.

In terms of describing government systems of rentier states, taxation is considered to lead to citizens' demands for representation. Luciani, in his description of these "allocation states," presumes that "whenever the state essentially relies on taxation the question of democracy becomes an unavoidable issue, and a strong current in favor of democracy inevitably arises."<sup>9</sup> Because rentier states do not need to tax their citizens, he concludes "democracy is not a problem."<sup>10</sup> Citizens' engagement in politics, then, is considered contingent upon monetary benefits. Unless citizens' share of rent money is threatened, Luciani contends, they will not form political opposition.<sup>11</sup> Again, economic conditions are considered the primary determinants of political behaviour, denying the pull of ideological politics.

Giacomo Luciani grants that, in the rentier context, Islam provides the "only rallying point" around which rentier citizens can create independent blocs.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, he posits that they "represent cultural or ideological orientation,"<sup>13</sup> thereby dismissing the potential political capital held by Islam.

The fact that protest is voiced in Islamic terms may give the impression that it adds up to a coherent political opposition movement. However, the common Islamic language is not sufficient to transform generic dissatisfaction and revolt into a political movement, all the more so since Islam is a divisive as much as uniting government, and the Saudi government itself legitimizes its deeds in Islamic terms. The situation is no different in the other members of the GCC, including Kuwait – notwithstanding the limited electoral exercise that took place there.<sup>14</sup>

This claim that Islam serves to divide rather than unite people in rentier states is unsubstantiated – especially in conservative Gulf societies. Further, the fact that Saudi Arabia, which uses "common Islamic language" to enhance its legitimacy, is one of the

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<sup>9</sup> Luciani, "Allocation vs. Production States," 73.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>14</sup> Luciani, "The Oil Rent, The Fiscal Crisis of the State and Democratization," 144.

oldest states in the Middle East illustrates the political capital held by Islam in the Gulf and the degree to which it can be used to unite, rather than divide. Perhaps in the Gulf more so than in any other region of the Middle East, Islam carries substantial political weight. Indeed, super-rentier governments invest large sums into Islamic causes to appear as pious rulers and thus to enhance their legitimacy, transforming religion into a potent political force. Islam thus has not only proven successful in strengthening government legitimacy, but also has provided a strong basis for political movements.

Later literature also describes rentier states as necessarily authoritarian and therefore lacking independent political movements. In *The Oil Curse*, Michael Ross uses Luciani's taxation-representation argument to explain the ability of rentier governments to "maintain popular support and avoid democratizing rebellions."<sup>15</sup> He makes the far-reaching assertion: "While autocracies without oil gradually become democratic, autocracies with oil can remain autocratic."<sup>16</sup> The cases of Libya and Algeria in particular call his claim into question. Again, considering oil as the primary variable is a mistake, due to the widely divergent economic and political outcomes in oil-exporting states.

Ultimately, region-focused empirical studies are more valuable to the advancement of scholarship about the Gulf's rentier states. Kiren Aziz Chaudhry, in her analysis of the influence of oil boom-bust cycles in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, demonstrates the shortcomings of wide-ranging studies of rentier states. In her words, "[e]xternal capital inflows are not of a piece. Their effects depend on a host of historically constituted relationships."<sup>17</sup> She further demonstrates that elites in rentier

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<sup>15</sup> Ross, *The Oil Curse*, 69.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>17</sup> Kiren Aziz Chaudhry, *The Price of Wealth: Economies and Institutions in the Middle East* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 314.

states do not always maintain autonomy from independent social forces and that the influence of capital inflows must be placed within a local context.<sup>18</sup>

Adding further nuance, Michael Herb contests the much-discussed connection between taxation and demands for representation in a 2003 article, in which he traces the history of representative institutions in Europe.<sup>19</sup> Herb concludes that taxation leads to the growth of representative bodies only in instances where those institutions play a role in administering taxation.<sup>20</sup> While in pre-modern Europe, parliaments had such responsibilities, they tend to be under the auspices of the executive in the modern period, thus delinking taxation from legislative control; assemblies have acquired power not through starving the government of tax money, but rather by gaining authority over bureaucracy.<sup>21</sup> Further, pro-democracy movements employ means like protests, rather than contesting jurisdiction over taxation, to advance their cause.<sup>22</sup> As Herb explains, “taxation does not always lead to democracy: there has been much more taxation than representation in history.”<sup>23</sup> Breaking the link between taxation and representation damages rentier state theory, which assumes that lack of taxation preserves the authoritarian system, allowing the government to act independently of its politically quiescent citizens.

Another mechanism described as perpetuating authoritarianism in oil wealthy states is that of inhibiting group formation, described by Michael Ross. In his 2001 article, he asserts that government funds can be used to prevent the emergence of

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 306.

<sup>19</sup> Herb, “Taxation and Representation,” 3-31.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 26-27.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 26.

independent social groups in wealthy rentiers. Ross explains: “as governments increase in size (relative to the domestic economy) they are more likely to prevent the formation of civic institutions and social groups that are independent from the government, and that the absence of these groups will hinder a transition to democracy.”<sup>24</sup> This stipulation is more applicable to the super-rentiers under study than that of the taxation-representation effect. Still, it has not been examined with regard to Islamist groups specifically in rentier states. Such organisations have faced varying levels of government crackdown and have adjusted their structure to ensure their survival, most commonly turning to the informal social sector as the primary space for mobilisation.

Further advancing the literature, Gwenn Okruhlik highlights the shortcomings of rentier state theory in describing the political process, rightfully cautioning scholars against falling into economic determinism.<sup>25</sup> She contends that the distributive nature of rentier states does not exempt them from political opposition, but rather can help create it. In her view, the political decisions of the leadership, not the existence of oil money itself, lead to political outcomes: “The determining variable in the creation and convergence of opposition is the choices of a personal regime in distributing money inequitable for political reasons, not rent.”<sup>26</sup> By granting agency to domestic political actors, Okruhlik helps explain outbreaks of political opposition (Islamist and secular) in the Gulf. Her study also shows that simply possessing rents is not what differentiates Gulf oil states from other, less stable states; rather, it is *how* they spend these funds that distinguishes them. A government’s use of this money can either secure its power or threaten it. This wealth can in fact threaten regime power. As Okruhlik explains, “[w]ealth generated

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Ross, “Does Oil Hinder Democracy?,” *World Politics* 53, no. 3 (2001): 347.

<sup>25</sup> Okruhlik, “Rentier Wealth, Unruly Law, and the Rise of the Opposition,” 296.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.

through oil receipts is a catalyst for opposition to the state, rather than a tool to placate dissent, for two reasons. It is distributed inequitably [...] and it provides potential dissenters with the resources necessary for mobilization against the regime. In short, the state engenders its own opposition.”<sup>27</sup> Okruhlik makes the important point that rentier states are not exempt from independent opposition movements, yet still focuses on economic policies as the starting point for political mobilisation in such states.

Steffen Hertog’s work on Saudi Arabia also draws out some of the critical complexities of the Gulf rentier states by analysing the Kingdom’s inconsistent record in implementing economic reforms. In particular, he challenges the notion that the rentier state is autonomous from society, stating that it puts limits on its own authority during the state-building period through its creation of clients.<sup>28</sup> In so doing, the government gains allies yet also generates distributive obligations.<sup>29</sup> Rather than maintaining absolute political power independent of society, as rentier state theory predicts, government autonomy is in fact constricted over time, “as the state gets tied down in society as it incurs micro-level distributional obligations that are difficult to reverse.”<sup>30</sup> Hertog’s addition of “segmented clientelism” helps explain how formal and informal rent-based clientelistic relationships sustain stability, in addition to determining “where rentier-derived phenomena kick in and where not as well as which concrete power relations underlie them.”<sup>31</sup> He concludes that macro-level structures like trade unions and meso-level organisations like professional associations have little space to function within the

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>28</sup> Steffen Hertog, *Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats: Oil and the State in Saudi Arabia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 18-20.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 5.

Saudi system yet maintains that informal structures influence policy implementation on the micro-level.<sup>32</sup> Though Hertog ultimately concedes “Saudi Arabia fully confirms the rentier debate hypothesis that states and, more specifically, executives dominate politics in rentier systems,” he highlights the significance of the informal sector in political life in the Gulf.<sup>33</sup> This informal sector has proven particularly important for Islamist groups facing government crackdown.

More such empirical study is needed on the Gulf, especially considering that describing these states as rentiers indicates surprisingly little about their political systems and particularly about the type of independent political actors that emerge in such states. Just as the scholarship on rentier state theory has largely neglected the role of Islamist political actors, so too has the literature on Islamism failed to account for independent Islamist movements within rentier states of the Arabian Gulf.

### *Theories of Political Islam*

What is Political Islam?

Scholarship on political Islam has become one of the most expansive bodies of literature in political science. Definitional challenges abound. Terms such as Islamist, Islamicist, and fundamentalist have been used interchangeably, and often incorrectly, to describe a variety of actors. Further complicating the definitions of such terms is the fact that “no two Islamists are alike. Political activities undertaken by Islamists are largely determined by the contexts within which they operate.”<sup>34</sup> In this study, the term Islamist is defined broadly, as actors who “mobilise and agitate in the political sphere while

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 273.

<sup>34</sup> Mohammed Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 15.

deploying signs and symbols from Islamic traditions.”<sup>35</sup> We focus solely on strands of Sunni Islamism, as Sunnism is dominant in the states under study.

The general notion of political Islam springs from the fact that “the Islamic tradition provided a normative system in which religion was integral to all areas of Muslim life – politics, economics, law, education, and the family.”<sup>36</sup> It is because of the comprehensiveness of this system that, in the eyes of Islamists, religion and politics cannot be separated: Islam affects all spheres of an individual’s life ranging from the religious to the mundane. It is, to borrow John Obert Voll’s description, “a total way of life.”<sup>37</sup>

At the centre of the unity of all aspects of life is the notion of *tawhīd* (oneness) – a key tenet of Islam stressing its monotheistic and unified nature. Society is meant to reflect divine oneness.<sup>38</sup> As Olivier Roy explains, “a *tawhidi* society [...] cannot tolerate either intrinsic segmentation (social, ethnic, tribal, or national) or a political authority that is autonomous with respect to the divine order.”<sup>39</sup> This concept of unity explains why Islamists use similar language in both the political and religious spheres.

Due to this central unity, the political inevitably becomes religious, and vice versa: “the sovereign has a ‘religious’ function: to defend Islam and the *sharia*. The state, too, has a goal: to enable Muslims to live as good Muslims. The state is an instrument and not an end in itself.”<sup>40</sup> Shari‘a, the body of law derived from the Qur’an and the sunna, is central to the state’s role as a promoter of acceptable religious behaviour.

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<sup>35</sup> Ismail, 2.

<sup>36</sup> John L. Esposito, “Introduction,” in *Islam and Development: Religion and Sociopolitical Change*, ed. John L. Esposito (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1980), ix.

<sup>37</sup> John Obert Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982), 4.

<sup>38</sup> Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 40.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-41.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

Because it governs the actions of both the ruler and the ruled and has jurisdiction over matters of personal status as well as criminal law, the application of shari‘a is an important means of maintaining a *tawḥīdī* society.<sup>41</sup>

With the distinction between the secular and religious blurred, Islamist political action seems logical. “The Islamist movement thus conceives of itself explicitly as a sociopolitical movement, founded on an Islam defined as much in terms of a political ideology as in terms of a religion.”<sup>42</sup> The tenet of *tawḥīd* makes it impossible to divide the spheres. Despite this ideological grounding, a great deal of literature tries to determine whether Islamist mobilisation at the grassroots is motivated by social, economic, or political considerations.

#### Motivations for Islamist Mobilisation

In recent years, scholars like Quintan Wiktorowicz have used social movement theory to explain Islamist political action, charging that “Islamic activism is not *sui generis*.”<sup>43</sup> Academics have debated whether Islamist movements constitute, at their core, a sociocultural or psychological reaction to the failures of the modern state and Western encroachments in the Muslim world, a response of the disenfranchised to economic disappointment, or a political movement agitating for a greater say in government. In so doing, most studies have focused on cases outside of the Arabian Gulf.

Early social movement theory relied on functionalism, which emphasised the importance of “structural and psychological causes of mass mobilization.”<sup>44</sup> Psychological isolation is often cited as a reason for the rise of Islamist groups –

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<sup>41</sup> Ayoob, 13-14.

<sup>42</sup> Roy, 39.

<sup>43</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 3.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

particularly in the face of rapidly accelerating urbanisation and modernisation.<sup>45</sup> Such movements are considered “escapist coping mechanisms through which individuals regain a sense of belonging and empowerment.”<sup>46</sup> The Gulf has experienced limited Islamist backlash as a result of its rapid modernisation since the oil boom, with nationals urging a return to traditional Islamic values as secularism and Westernism become more prevalent. Still, the sense of social isolation experienced in other parts of the region is less likely to emerge in the Gulf, where most citizens rely on an extended network of family and tribal connections for support. Because “the tribe is the principal building block for the structure of their society,”<sup>47</sup> other social groups are less necessary.<sup>48</sup> Considering Islamic activism as “a response to cultural imperialism” more aptly describes the psychological appeal of Islamist mobilisation in the Gulf.<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless, if Western influence were the sole motivation for Islamist movements, they would be less likely to agitate repeatedly for domestic political changes unrelated to Westernisation.

Considering motivations for Islamist mobilisation to be socioeconomic, political scientist François Burgat portrays Islamist organisations as anti-elite social movements. Interestingly, he contends that this anti-elite sentiment is even stronger in a rentier economy:

when clientelism is a strong trait in a regime, and when, moreover, there is a rentier economy, the further away from power you stand, the less access you have to the benefits

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<sup>45</sup> See R. Hrair Dekmejian, “The Anatomy of Islamic Revival: Legitimacy Crisis Ethnic Conflict and the Search for Islamic Alternatives,” *Middle East Journal* 34, no. 1 (1980): 1-12; Valerie J. Hoffman, “Muslim Fundamentalists: Psychological Profiles,” in *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, eds. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 199-230; Susan Waltz, “Islamist Appeal in Tunisia,” *Middle East Journal* 40, no. 4 (1986): 651-670.

<sup>46</sup> Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism*, 6.

<sup>47</sup> Frauke Heard-Bey, “The Tribal Society of the UAE and Its Traditional Economy,” in *United Arab Emirates: A New Perspective*, ed. Ibrahim al-Abed (London: Trident Press, 2001), 101.

<sup>48</sup> Frauke Heard-Bey, “The United Arab Emirates: Statehood and Nation-Building in a Traditional Society,” *The Middle East Journal* 59, no. 3 (2005): 357-375.

<sup>49</sup> Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism*, 7.

it distributes. It is therefore true to say that a difference of social status separates the anti-Islamist elite in power (who are sometimes rashly labeled as secularists) from the (Islamist) opposition who challenge them, and that poverty may radicalize this movement.<sup>50</sup>

Such a description, though apt in the less wealthy rentier states of Algeria, Jordan, and Libya, does not describe the super-rentiers. Because their nationals are so few in number and because their rent income is so high, these small states have managed to provide the vast majority of citizens with impressive benefits through a well-established and massive welfare state. Leaders of the super-rentiers have also proactively responded to critiques about secularisation and Westernisation, using their ample funds to elevate the role of Islam in public life. Still, some discontent remains about the secularisation and Westernisation of Gulf regimes.

Economic factors are also cited as a reason for the rise of Islamic activism. Several scholars have backed this view, pointing out that many recruits of Islamist movements have been recent, relatively well-educated migrants unable to find jobs in cities to which they have moved.<sup>51</sup> Nazih Ayubi contends that the beginning of the modernisation process, which included developments in education, urbanisation, and industry, failed to deliver employment opportunities or upward mobility for many members of Middle Eastern populations.<sup>52</sup> Ayubi therefore concludes that Islamist movements are somewhat “a manifestation of, and a reaction to, a developmental crisis in the Muslim part of the Third World.”<sup>53</sup> Since modernisation has failed them, Islamists reject it: “Theirs is the proverbial case of ‘sour grapes’.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> François Burgat, *Face to Face with Political Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 21.

<sup>51</sup> See Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World* (London: Routledge, 1991); Roy.

<sup>52</sup> Ayubi, 176.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

Further advancing the theory that Islamist mobilisation is motivated by economic interests, nearly all Islamist organisations, ranging from Hizbullah to the Muslim Brotherhood, “began with a focus on social-welfare activities – concrete activities to address the needs of their surrounding populations.”<sup>55</sup> Aside from responding to material needs, social welfare institutions of independent Islamist organisations “represent an ideological and practical alternative to the present system.”<sup>56</sup> While the notion of economically motivated Islamic activism is applicable in the poorer states of the region, it does not make sense for the super-rentiers. Although income is not evenly distributed in Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE, these states have the financial wherewithal to provide material support to citizens. Their governments have also taken over control of, or at least funded, most local charities – even those with a religious bent.

In the restricted political systems of the Middle East, there are few institutionalised means for citizens to voice their political opinions, leading to “societal frustration and a sense of alienation. The feeling of political impotence is exacerbated in the face of security service repression and administrative processes that attempt to depoliticize civil society and prevent oppositional activities.”<sup>57</sup> Islamist movements are thus often seen as voicing primarily political dissent.<sup>58</sup> Further, Islamist movements have more freedom to operate in environments where other political movements are restricted, as they occupy a space that is not solely political. Mosques remain an important site for political discussion, as do organisations like student and professional associations;

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<sup>55</sup> Janine A. Clark, “Patronage, Prestige, and Power: The Islamic Center Charity Society’s Political Role within the Muslim Brotherhood,” in *Islamist Politics in the Middle East: Movements and Change*, ed. Samer S. Shehata (London: Routledge, 2012), 69.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>57</sup> Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism*, 8.

<sup>58</sup> See Ayoob; Ismail; Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, ed., *The Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World* (Praeger: New York, 1982).

political activity is thus displaced to spaces traditionally considered more social than political.

Regardless of where they act, according to this theory, Islamist movements “are often explicitly focused and directed toward the political arena.”<sup>59</sup> They may act in a political capacity primarily through social activities and welfare provision, through the formation of political blocs or parties, or alternatively through the informal sector to influence political opinions indirectly. “At least a few scholars have argued that informality, as opposed to formal organizations, is more effective for protest since the organizational survival imperatives of SMOs [social movement organisations] can undermine the purpose of a movement.”<sup>60</sup> Particularly in the tightly controlled Gulf states, informal networks become primary means of Islamist mobilisation. Past studies confirm the power of informal social networks in advancing Islamist goals,<sup>61</sup> yet the role of political Islam within that sphere in the super-rentiers has not been studied.

Ultimately, social movement theory goes wrong by treating Islamists as fundamentally similar to other such movements, rather than a distinctive type of organisation. Carrie Rosefky Wickham’s seminal study of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt most aptly reflects the multi-faceted nature of Islamist movements that differentiates them from other social movements. She describes the Ikhwan as gaining followers not only through the provision of material and social benefit, but also by providing an ideology that influences members’ spiritual, social, and political outlooks.

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<sup>59</sup> Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism*, 9.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>61</sup> See Guilain Denoeux, *Urban Unrest in the Middle East: A Comparative Study of Informal Networks Egypt, Iran, and Lebanon* (Albany: State University of New York Press); Ismail; Diane Singerman, “The Networked World of Islamist Social Movements,” in *Islamic Activism*; Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism*.

Indeed, membership into the Brotherhood requires serious spiritual commitment. As John Obert Voll put it, the Islamist trend “would not be a serious movement worthy of our attention were it not, above all, an idea and a personal commitment honestly felt.”<sup>62</sup> Islamists provide an all-encompassing ideology, as they seek religious reforms of all aspects of life, including social structure, politics, and economics. Rosefky Wickham explains, when writing about the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood:

Islamist mobilization on the periphery has created nothing less than a ‘counter-society’ detached from the mainstream social and political order. To reduce the spirit of this community to one of opposition would be to understate its creative, experimental, and comprehensive character. What defined the Islamic movement was less its opposition to a given regime or set of policies than its efforts to construct, from the bottom up and over time, a new kind of society inspired by Islamist ideals.<sup>63</sup>

By advocating widespread reconstruction of the social order and by appealing to faith, Islamists attract followers from varying backgrounds and in different environments. Indeed, Islamist mobilisation is “an attempt to create a seemingly seamless web between religion, politics, charity, and all forms of activism.”<sup>64</sup> Rentier state theory’s attempt to dismiss the political relevance of Islamist actors in such states, while allowing them a social role, is nonsensical, considering the fact that the social, political, and religious are intrinsically intertwined for Islamists. Islamists in super-rentiers use their social capital to gain political influence.

### *Islamist Politics*

Because religion carries substantial social and political significance in the Middle East, “Islam continues to be part of the regimes’ legitimacy formula in most Muslim

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<sup>62</sup> John Obert Voll, “Foreword,” in *The Society of Muslim Brothers*, Richard P. Mitchell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), xiii.

<sup>63</sup> Rosefky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam*, 174-175.

<sup>64</sup> J.A. Clark, “Patronage, Prestige, and Power,” 70.

countries.”<sup>65</sup> While Brotherhood affiliates work at the grassroots level, at the government level, co-optation of the religious sector is critical to the maintenance of legitimacy.<sup>66</sup> State control of mosques and sermons allows governments to monitor religious messages – amplifying the favourable and muting the problematic.<sup>67</sup> The almost unavoidable use of religion in political discourse also makes it “difficult [for opposition movements] to communicate in purely political terms,” even when agitating for strictly political changes like reform of state institutions.<sup>68</sup>

Government crackdowns on political organisations have thus paralysed secular liberal groups much more than Islamist ones, which can gain popular support through harder to regulate religious and social gatherings.<sup>69</sup> In politically restrictive systems of the Gulf, “Islamists moved into spaces of cooperation and solidarity like the mosque, the sports association and the neighbourhood society.”<sup>70</sup> Islamist movements thus operate differently depending on the opportunities afforded them by structures of the state, which is why they look so dissimilar across varying environments.<sup>71</sup> Certainly, “Islamists have adopted a multitude of strategies, ranging from outright confrontation and violent action to agitation in the public sphere to infiltration of societal spaces.”<sup>72</sup> Political Islam is thus constantly evolving.<sup>73</sup> Even the wealthiest regimes have failed in the eyes of Islamists, whether due to “the regimes’ widespread corruption, their squandering of oil revenues, their reliance on the West, their more recent submission to the International Monetary

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<sup>65</sup> Ayoob, 33.

<sup>66</sup> F. Gregory Gause III, *Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1994), 14.

<sup>67</sup> Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism*, 18.

<sup>68</sup> Ayubi, 29.

<sup>69</sup> Vickie Langohr, “An Exit from Arab Autocracy,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 3 (2002): 120.

<sup>70</sup> Ismail, 170.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

Fund strictures, or their persistent lack of interest in tradition.”<sup>74</sup> In the restrictive states of the Middle East, then, political Islam, multifaceted as it is, has become “on the whole a protest movement.”<sup>75</sup>

Some such protest movements have become violent, in radical reaction to Westernisation and failed nationalist movements. These groups, however, are “irrelevant to the day-to-day political struggles within Muslim countries.”<sup>76</sup> Organisations like al-Qa‘ida privilege transnational aims, namely the restoration of a unified Islamist state, or caliphate, over immediate domestic political concerns. Aside from lacking specific political solutions to immediate challenges, these violent movements have failed to progress toward their political goals – leading to further violence, government crackdown, or both.<sup>77</sup> In addition, extremist movements are ideologically linked to Salafi<sup>78</sup> jihadism. Unlike the Brotherhood, they “embrace a strict, literal interpretation of Islam, but combine it with an emphasis on jihad, understood here as holy war. To Salafi jihadists such as al-Qa‘ida members, jihad becomes the prime instrument through which the ‘Salafi’ desire to ‘return’ to the original message of Islam will be turned into reality.”<sup>79</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood, while espousing a return to Islamic practices, certainly does not share this theological belief and has denounced the use of violence since the 1970s.

Although it is difficult to summarise the agendas of Islamist parties, Michael Hudson describes four common aspects of “Islamic ideological complaint”: political,

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<sup>74</sup> Ghassan Salamé, “Islam and the West,” *Foreign Policy* 90 (Spring 1993): 23.

<sup>75</sup> Ayubi., 123.

<sup>76</sup> Ayoob, 17.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>78</sup> Salafis are orthodox Sunni Muslims who advocate a return to the practices of early Islam, as described in the Qur’an and sunna.

<sup>79</sup> Guilain Denoeux, “The Forgotten Swamp: Navigating Political Islam.” *Middle East Policy* 9, no. 2 (2002): 69.

national, social, and moral.<sup>80</sup> Politically, Islamists challenge the policies of current rulers and especially how they were chosen; nationally, they cite failures to pursue Arab and Islamic goals; socially, uneven distribution of wealth is emphasised; and morally, Islamists stress corruption and public ethics.<sup>81</sup> Islamists therefore have a multi-faceted political platform with wide appeal. As Olivier Roy describes it, Islamism aims to deliver on both ideological and practical promises: “Islamism is the *sharia* plus electricity.”<sup>82</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood has been particularly successful in appealing to followers with its wide-ranging platform and political ideology.

#### *Origins and Ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood*

Founded in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna, the Society of Muslim Brothers was initially conceived of as a social movement seeking to re-Islamise Egypt. Al-Banna, as a schoolteacher in the Suez Canal zone, “directly experienced Egypt’s cultural Westernization, which he equated with atheism and immorality. Like many Muslims, he reacted with alarm to Mustafa Kemal Ataturk’s abolition of the caliphate and his programme to secularize Turkey.”<sup>83</sup> Largely in response to what he saw in Egypt and abroad after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, al-Banna founded the Society of Muslim Brothers in an effort to restore Islam to the lives of Egyptians. The Society “sought to fuse religious revival with anti-imperialism – resistance to foreign domination through the exaltation of Islam.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Michael C. Hudson, “Islam and Political Development,” in *Islam and Development: Religion and Sociopolitical Change*, ed. John L. Esposito (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1980), 20.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>82</sup> Roy, 52.

<sup>83</sup> David Commins, “Hasan al-Banna,” in *Pioneers of Islamic Revival*, ed. Ali Rahema (London: Zed Books, 1994), 130.

<sup>84</sup> Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke, “The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood,” *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 2, (2007): 108.

Al-Banna, who had been a member of other religious organisations, hoped to create a unique movement. The Society, at its start, “differed from earlier reformers by combining a profoundly Islamic ideology with modern grass-roots activism.”<sup>85</sup> The organisation was also unique in its focus on improving socioeconomic conditions and promoting social justice.<sup>86</sup> Al-Banna’s ideology was “thoroughly, and sincerely, populist.”<sup>87</sup> Still, the Brotherhood’s bylaws prohibited direct political action until 1934,<sup>88</sup> and it was not until its sixth conference, in 1941, that the Society chose to participate in parliamentary elections.<sup>89</sup>

The Muslim Brotherhood’s first activities focused on *tarbīā*<sup>90</sup> as a means of re-Islamising society from the grassroots, since the road to an Islamic society necessarily involved the conversion of individuals. Al-Banna famously described the Muslim Brotherhood as “a Salafi movement, an orthodox way, a Sufi reality, a political body, an athletic group, a scientific and cultural society, an economic company and a social idea.”<sup>91</sup> Such a wide-ranging definition reflected al-Banna’s holistic view of Islam’s role in society and of his organisation’s mission to maintain and spread this vision of the religion. A 1943 statement captures al-Banna’s hope for the movement to be a means of re-instilling Islam in modern society: “My Brothers: you are not a benevolent society, nor a political party, nor a local organization having limited purposes. Rather, you are a new soul in the heart of this nation to give it life by means of the Qur’an; you are a new light

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>86</sup> Voll, *Islam*, 176.

<sup>87</sup> L. Carl Brown, *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 147.

<sup>88</sup> Shadi Hamid, *Temptations of Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 9.

<sup>89</sup> John L. Esposito and James P. Piscatori, “Democratization and Islam,” *Middle East Journal* 45, no. 3 (1991): 429.

<sup>90</sup> *Tarbīā* is usually used in reference to educating or raising children in accordance with Islam.

<sup>91</sup> L.C. Brown, 146.

which shines to destroy the darkness of materialism through knowing God; and you are the strong voice which rises to recall the message of the Prophet.”<sup>92</sup>

Al-Banna’s ultimate goal was to create an Islamic society without political parties or socioeconomic classes: he sought a *tawhīdī* order.<sup>93</sup> The state would be ruled by a just Muslim leader and would instil Islamic values through education in addition to ensuring that such values were obeyed in practice.<sup>94</sup> The state, in al-Banna’s conception, was instrumental to the re-Islamisation of society. There were three essential principles that al-Banna specified for the Islamic state: (1) the Qur’an is the constitution; (2) the government operates on the basis of consultation (*shūrā*) with society; (3) the executive, like the people, is bound by the rules of Islam.<sup>95</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly considering its ideological underpinnings, the Brotherhood became politically active as it gained social popularity.<sup>96</sup> The original conception was that the Ikhwan should come to power politically only after society had been Islamised.<sup>97</sup> The notion of “slow Islamisation” was compatible with democracy, as members of a truly Islamic society would support Islamic rulers in elections.<sup>98</sup> Al-Banna was clear about the functions a good government should fulfil. These included “providing security, enforcing the law, spreading education, promoting public welfare, strengthening morality, protecting property and wealth, defending the Muslim nation, and disseminating the call to Islam.”<sup>99</sup> If a government failed to fulfil these tasks, al-Banna stated, people should

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<sup>92</sup> Hasan al-Banna, Qtd. in Voll, *Islam*, 175-176.

<sup>93</sup> L.C. Brown, 146.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>95</sup> Mitchell, 246.

<sup>96</sup> Ayubi, 130.

<sup>97</sup> Mitchell, 103.

<sup>98</sup> Leiken and Brooke, 110.

<sup>99</sup> Commins, “Hasan al-Banna,” 136-137.

challenge its authority and advocated for governments ruling in consultation with their publics.<sup>100</sup>

The Muslim Brotherhood's original support base reveals the degree to which its message held broad appeal, from among the religious rural population to the urban lower classes.<sup>101</sup> Brotherhood leadership, as today, came primarily from "students, civil servants, teachers, office workers, and professionals."<sup>102</sup> The organisation also provided welfare assistance, religious guidance, and a social community to urban newcomers. The Brotherhood thus spread throughout the Middle East, providing an alternative arrangement to the prevailing government-led order which had proved disappointing. Beginning in the 1940s, the mother organisation also actively dispatched representatives to various countries in the region to spread the Brotherhood's message, in addition to widely disseminating the organisation's literature.

Like many influential ideological movements, the Muslim Brotherhood developed splinter organisations. In the face of ongoing arrests and crackdown under the Nasir regime, Brotherhood figures encouraged a more radical turn toward violence. These figures were under the influence of Sayyid Qutb, executed in 1966 for plotting the assassination of Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir. While Hasan al-Banna had encouraged gradual steps toward the Islamisation of society and the political order, Qutb contended that the only way to imbue society with Islamic values for creation of an Islamic state through jihad, which he considered a military struggle.<sup>103</sup> Inspired by his ideology and frustrated by the current political system, a variety of groups dedicated to violent overthrow of the

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<sup>100</sup> Ayoob, 29.

<sup>101</sup> Voll, *Islam*, 176.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>103</sup> Ayubi, 145.

prevailing order emerged in the 1970s, including al-Takfir wa-l-Hijra, al-Jama‘at al-Islamiyya, and Egyptian Islamic Jihad. The third General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, ‘Umar al-Tilmisani, made clear in 1982 that Qutb did not speak for the movement, though, stating “Sayyid Qutb represented himself alone and not the Muslim Brethren.”<sup>104</sup> The Brotherhood has thus continued its efforts to gradually Islamise society from the bottom-up.

*The Muslim Brotherhood Today*

Despite the diversity of Islamist political groups, “[t]he Muslim Brotherhood is the world’s oldest, largest, and most influential Islamist organization.”<sup>105</sup> It has several national affiliates, yet only weak central organisation exists. While all agree on the important role of Islam in politics, Brotherhood affiliates promote different platforms depending on local circumstances. In essence, “[t]he Brotherhood is a collection of national groups with differing outlooks, and the various factions disagree about how best to advance its mission. But all reject global jihad while embracing elections and other features of democracy.”<sup>106</sup> Various branches of the Muslim Brotherhood are concerned primarily with domestic politics, though informed by the same ideology.<sup>107</sup> Certainly, “[p]olitical Islam is [...] effectively nationalized in the contemporary era.”<sup>108</sup>

Largely because the Muslim Brotherhood’s platform is so wide-ranging, with only broad outlines for proper governance, the organisation has become popular in a variety of cultural and political contexts, taking on different structural forms as well.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> ‘Umar al-Tilmisani, Qtd. in Ayoob, 80.

<sup>105</sup> Leiken and Brooke, 107.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>107</sup> Samer S. Shehata, “Introduction,” in *Islamist Politics in the Middle East: Movements and Change*, ed. Samer S. Shehata (New York: Routledge, 2012), 7.

<sup>108</sup> Ayoob, 154.

<sup>109</sup> Leiken and Brooke, 111.

Linked by their commitment to Islamic governance, the various national branches of the Brotherhood remain only vaguely connected:

The Brotherhood's dreaded International Organization is in fact a loose and feeble coalition scarcely able to convene its own members. Indeed, the Brotherhood's international debility is a product of its local successes: national autonomy and adjustability to domestic conditions. The ideological affiliations that link Brotherhood organizations internationally are subject to the national priorities that shape each individually.<sup>110</sup>

The fact that the agendas of the various Brotherhood branches differ so widely demonstrates the primacy of domestic political concerns and underlines the importance of regime policies in determining these groups' compositions and activities.<sup>111</sup>

When Brotherhood affiliates came to power for the first time in Egypt and Tunisia following the so-called Arab Spring, the organisation found itself in unfamiliar territory. Ultimately failing to cooperate with other political blocs and overpowered by the military, Islamists were stripped of power in Egypt,<sup>112</sup> while they faced electoral losses in Tunisia amidst accusations of inexperience and maladministration.<sup>113</sup> Considered by many to have failed in government, the Brotherhood has been outlawed as a terrorist organisation in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Such governments have attempted to eradicate the Brotherhood even as a social organisation, believing its members to be loyal to Ikhwan ideology above their state and considering their ultimate aim to be the overthrow of national political orders.

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>111</sup> Roy, 75.

<sup>112</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick, "Army Ousts Egypt's President; Morsi is Taken into Military Custody," *The New York Times*, July 3, 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/04/world/middleeast/egypt.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/04/world/middleeast/egypt.html?_r=0).

<sup>113</sup> Ahmed El Amraoui, "Tunisia's Ennahda 'Faced Defeat' in Elections," *Al Jazeera*, October 28, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/10/tunisia-ennahda-says-secular-rivals-ahead-20141027141737474289.html>.

*Rentier Islamism: Muslim Brotherhood Organisations in the Gulf Context*

Because of the lack of widespread economic grievances and overt political opposition in the Gulf, Islamist organisations there have traditionally been viewed primarily as a reaction to the rapid Westernisation and modernisation after the discovery of oil. It has often been assumed that wealthy regimes are well equipped to face down complaints, Islamist or otherwise, using generous welfare packages, repression, or patronage.<sup>114</sup> In addition, Gulf rulers' apparent commitment to Islam leaves little space for Islamists to act. Nonetheless, "[o]ne of the ironies of the Gulf is that, despite the use or manipulation of Islam by many governments as a source of identity and legitimacy and as a high-profile means to promote Islam internationally, Islam also represents a challenge to be reckoned with – a political force with the capability to delegitimize or to support protest and opposition."<sup>115</sup> Notwithstanding this, empirical research on independent oppositional political movements in the Gulf is greatly lacking.

The scant scholarship about Islamism in the Gulf portrays the Gulf War as a turning point for the rise of independent Islamist movements, primarily in the form of the Sahwa movement in Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom's invitation to Western forces to assist with the liberation of Kuwait not only exposed the vulnerability of the Gulf states to outside aggression, but also demonstrated their willingness to turn to the West for assistance.<sup>116</sup>

The Gulf crisis witnessed a shift among many Islamic movements from an initial Islamic ideological rejection of Saddam Hussein, the secular prosecutor of Islamic movements, and his invasion of Kuwait to a more populist Arab nationalist, anti-imperialist support for Saddam (or more precisely those issues he represented or championed) and the condemnation of massive Western (especially U.S.) military buildup in the region and its

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<sup>114</sup> John L. Esposito, "Political Islam and Gulf Security," in *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform?*, ed. John L. Esposito (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), 71.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

presence near Islam's sacred cities, as well as the threat of military action against an Arab nation and of a permanent Western presence.<sup>117</sup>

Following the Gulf War, Islamism developed into a form of nationalism in the Gulf and became more widely accepted as a means of expressing political discontent.<sup>118</sup> Nonetheless, this growth of Islamism in the Gulf has been studied primarily in Saudi Arabia.

After the attacks of September 11, 2001, the notion that "closed societies can also breed new forms of radicalism" led to more in-depth studies of Islamist opposition movements in the nondemocratic states of the Gulf.<sup>119</sup> This trend resulted in several studies focused on violent transnational Islamist organisations, rather than national Muslim Brotherhood affiliates that focus on domestic political issues. Because religious radicalism emerged from the Gulf, with Saudi Usama bin Ladin having founded al-Qa'ida, a great deal of writing has concerned the violent strand of Islamism in the region. Local Islamist movements have largely been left unstudied, despite the fact that these groups dominate the limited space for institutionalised political activity in the Gulf.

The Gulf states are unique in two respects as environments for political Islam. First, they have responded to the rise of religious activism primarily by co-opting the religious sphere and by increasing the government's commitment to religiosity in rhetoric and (to a certain extent) deed, in addition to providing more funding for the religious sector. Nazih Ayubi points out that the smaller GCC states are distinctive in that

practically all these countries also have access to means that bring financial resources in sizable or at least significant magnitude directly to the State (oil, phosphates, and foreign aid). Thus these countries are able to support the sources of their religious (or

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>118</sup> Sami Zubaida, *Islam, the People and the State: Political Ideas and Movements in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), xix.

<sup>119</sup> Esposito, "Political Islam and Gulf Security," 71.

‘traditional’) legitimization with substantial amounts of financial resources. Several of these regimes have ‘incorporated’ (rather than simply ‘controlled’) the religious establishments within the educational, judiciary and social affairs.<sup>120</sup>

Government attempts at “ideological outbidding” or promotion of “establishment Islam,” using their ample funds, have largely failed, as Islamist demands are not solely religious or ideological, but also involve social and political demands states have failed to address.<sup>121</sup>

Second, due to the general lack of independent professional organisations, student groups, or political parties in Qatar and the UAE, Islamist organisations benefit from their ability to meet in the informal sector. While the Kuwaiti system provides institutionalised means of Islamist complaint, political parties remain outlawed, and informal ties are critical for such groups. Uninstitutionalised meetings of *dīwāniyyāt*<sup>122</sup> and *majālis*<sup>123</sup> are the primary modes of civil society in the Gulf. The majlis remains an important tribal element of political life, with ruler’s majlis “the final court of appeal on all important matters.”<sup>124</sup> The informal institution essentially constitutes “the substance of day-to-day government.”<sup>125</sup> Lobbying governing elites in such fora in fact is the primary modus operandi of the Brotherhood in super-rentiers like Qatar and the UAE, allowing them to advocate for changes in social policies as well as broader political reform. Considering the uninstitutionalised and highly personalised nature of tribal political life in the super-rentiers, it is unsurprising that social trust remains an important

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<sup>120</sup> Ayubi, 118.

<sup>121</sup> Burgat, 173.

<sup>122</sup> A *dīwāniyya* (plural *dīwāniyyāt*) is an informal meeting, which has long been a part of Kuwaiti political life. Such gatherings, hosted by members of the ruling family, politicians, and private individuals, are most often convened in homes and cover topics ranging from social life to religious ideology to politics.

<sup>123</sup> The majlis (plural *majālis*), similar to Kuwait’s *dīwāniyya*, is a crucial element of civil society. Such meetings are hosted by rulers, as well as by private citizens.

<sup>124</sup> A. Ann Fyfe, “Wealth and Power: Political and Economic Change in the United Arab Emirates” (PhD diss., Durham University, 1989), 14.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

component of political allegiance. Commitment to Islam is one means through which leaders can convey their trustworthiness and alignment with traditional values that are considered to be increasingly eroding.

Despite efforts at modernisation and institutionalisation, F. Gregory Gause III cites Islam and tribalism in the Gulf as “important arms of the state, providing institutional support and ideological legitimation to the regimes.”<sup>126</sup> As a result, public space is granted to these sectors.<sup>127</sup> Limiting public assembly as such has led opposition movements, logically, to form along religious or tribal lines, as mosques, religious schools, or tribal meetings are the primary locations (outside of private homes) where people in the region can easily gather. “Establishing state authority has necessarily meant subordinating Islamic and tribal institutions to state supervision, if not outright control. However, that does not mean that those institutions, and the rhetoric and symbols that accompany them, are politically unimportant.”<sup>128</sup> This study focuses on the Islamic sector specifically, as it has been the most vociferous and organised in its contestation of state policies.

We find that Muslim Brotherhood organisations have followed similar trajectories inside the Gulf. Members of the Ikhwan successfully took control of parts of the rapidly growing and well-funded rentier state apparatuses from the 1950s when they faced a shortage in staff, particularly in the education and justice sectors. The Brotherhood’s focus on identity and spiritual grassroots work in lieu of service provision allowed them to fill the civil society vacuum in the Gulf context. Further, their strong reaction against Westernisation and secularisation aided them in gaining a following among national

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<sup>126</sup> Gause, *Oil Monarchies*, 11.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

populations frustrated with changes to their local environments that have accompanied the massive influx of expatriate populations in recent decades. Though they gained support in similar ways, rentier Islamists have used different channels to influence politics. In Kuwait, the Muslim Brotherhood is able to effect change through parliament, while in Qatar and the UAE, means of Ikhwan mobilisation are primarily through the uninstitutionalised social sphere.

### *Conclusions*

Both rentier state theory and scholarship on political Islam have fallen short of adequately describing the internal political dynamics of the Gulf's wealthy rentier states. These states provide a unique arena for Islamist actors. Because rentier governments have made efforts to promote Islam, as well as to diminish sources of social, political, and economic strain, the traditional explanations for Islamist mobilisation do not apply. In the absence of a need for social welfare or even less formal social organisations and without electoral campaigns to run (aside from in Kuwait), the function of Islamist organisations in the super-rentiers remains unclear and unstudied.

What is indisputable, however, is that Islam is heavily politicised in the region. With super-rentier governments regularly employing religious language to maintain their legitimacy and attempting to co-opt the religious sector, Islam has become politically powerful. To understand the role of Islam in the context of the super-rentiers under study, we next examine their political environments to determine the means by which Islamist organisations mobilise support in such states.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Variations on a Theme: Systems of Governance in the Super-Rentiers**

##### *An Introduction to Hereditary Monarchies of the Gulf*

The super-rentiers of Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE share considerable economic, political, and social similarities. Their common history as British protectorates and later independence under local ruling families created a set of powerful monarchies in which nonstate political actors, secular or Islamist, are uncommon.

The historical process of state formation in the oil monarchies has been decisive in giving them their current institutional characteristics and determining their patterns of rule. By the time independence came to the Persian Gulf states – beginning in the late 1880s in what later became Saudi Arabia but not until 1971 for the UAE – most of the ruling families had already established their supremacy over the tribal areas that later became independent states. British support was a critical factor in transforming ruling clans into royal families.<sup>1</sup>

Ruling families remain the primary political actors in super-rentiers, having institutionalised their tribal dominance by placing family members in powerful government and commercial positions.<sup>2</sup> Such families are often considered “synonymous with the state,” due to their dominance of the political scene and authority over primary state institutions.<sup>3</sup>

Although all of the super-rentiers are controlled by powerful ruling families, each has a distinctive style of rule: “al-Sabah of Kuwait, for example, have such a strong corporate identity and interests that they have evolved an intricate set of organizations, epitomized by a Family Council specifically designed to run the affairs of the royal family. In contrast, the al-Thani in Qatar have at times shown disregard for the ruler’s

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<sup>1</sup> Mehran Kamrava, *The Modern Middle East: A Political History since the First World War*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 313.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 315.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 315.

authority and have often demonstrated little corporate identity.”<sup>4</sup> The six ruling families in the UAE,<sup>5</sup> on the other hand, at times dispute the dominance of al-Nahyan of Abu Dhabi and al-Maktoum of Dubai, yet tend to function together through the UAE’s central state institutions. In this chapter, we trace the rise of the political systems in these three states with a focus on how such systems constrain independent political action. We also examine their constitutional frameworks and the laws governing civil society to gain a broader understanding of the political landscapes and the potential place for Islamist actors in super-rentier systems.

### *A Brief Political History of Kuwait*

Kuwait existed as a political entity long before the other Gulf states, dating back to the eighteenth century with the arrival of the central Arabian Bani Utub tribe. The Bani Utub, once they adopted a settled lifestyle in present-day Kuwait City, became a distinct class with control over the commerce, pearling, and fishing that dominated the Kuwaiti economy.<sup>6</sup> Notably, such a class of sedentarised elites did not emerge in Qatar or the UAE until the twentieth century.

It was the wealthy Bani Utub elites who elected the first al-Sabah shaykh in the 1750s.<sup>7</sup> Al-Sabah family came to power largely due to its good relations with nomadic tribes. While many elite merchant families were oriented toward the sea for trade and commerce, “Sabah family remained oriented toward the desert.”<sup>8</sup> Al-Sabah therefore provided important political connections, though it was among the poorest of the

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 314.

<sup>5</sup> They include al-Nahyan of Abu Dhabi, al-Nu‘aimi of Ajman, al-Maktoum of Dubai, al-Sharqi of Fujairah, al-Qasimi of Ras al-Khaimah and Sharjah, and al-Mu‘alla of Umm al-Quwain.

<sup>6</sup> Jacqueline S. Ismael, *Kuwait: Dependency and Class in a Rentier State* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 23.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 27.

prominent families.<sup>9</sup> Because the ruling family depended on merchants for funds, “from the beginning governance in Kuwait was based on compromise and coalition-building, not extreme authoritarianism or brute force.”<sup>10</sup> As a result, Kuwait’s system of government allows for much more popular participation than do other systems in the Gulf.

As early as the mid-eighteenth century, under al-Sabah rule and largely due to a lucrative pearl trade, Kuwait prospered.<sup>11</sup> During this period, al-Sabah became “the uncontested ruling family of Kuwait” and has retained that power uninterrupted since the eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup> By the early 1860s, present-day Kuwait City housed 20,000 people, making it one of the largest settlements on the Arabian Peninsula at that time.<sup>13</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century, Kuwait came under British protection due to anxieties held by Shaykh Mubarak al-Sabah (r. 1896-1915) about Ottoman and Saudi advances. Although initially hesitant to take on additional foreign responsibilities, Britain signed a treaty with Shaykh Mubarak in January 1899, which “promised Kuwait British support in exchange for an exclusive relationship with Britain and British control of Kuwait’s foreign policy.”<sup>14</sup> This protection allowed Mubarak to focus on consolidating his power domestically, with British endorsement of his rule a boon.<sup>15</sup>

Kuwait began to suffer economically in the 1920s, as a Saudi embargo of Kuwait following disagreements about transport and import duties harmed commercial

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<sup>9</sup> Mary Ann Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy: Politics and Society in Contemporary Kuwait* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 34.

<sup>10</sup> Helen Mary Rizzo, *Islam, Democracy, and the Status of Women: The Case of Kuwait* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 11.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Mansfield, *Kuwait: Vanguard of the Gulf* (London: Hutchinson, 1990), 18.

<sup>12</sup> Jill Crystal, *Kuwait: The Transformation of an Oil State* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 10.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

interests.<sup>16</sup> Making matters worse, Japan's Mikimoto pearl entered the global market at the end of the decade, harming Kuwait's pearl trade. Shortly thereafter, Shaykh Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah (r. 1921-1950) received his first oil payment in 1935, marking the beginning of Kuwait's growth as a major petroleum producer.<sup>17</sup> With the arrival of oil revenues came demands to distribute this wealth. As elsewhere in the Gulf, pleas came first from members of the ruling family. "Not only did the ruler distribute revenues preferentially to his own family, but he also granted state positions and state salaries to family members in order to assure loyalty at the highest levels."<sup>18</sup>

In the early 1950s, Shaykh 'Abdullah Salem al-Mubarak al-Sabah (r. 1950-1965) instituted programmes to redistribute oil wealth not only to the ruling family and merchant elite, but also to the rest of Kuwaiti society through development programmes, thereby creating the super-rentier state.<sup>19</sup> "In the late 1950s 'Abdullah shifted the emphasis toward a broadly based and highly popular program of social services, providing Kuwaitis with free health care and education, a variety of welfare benefits, and guaranteed state employment."<sup>20</sup> Despite these disbursements, the pull of nationalist and Nasirist ideology reached Kuwait, with a large number of Iraqi and Egyptian expatriates transmitting the message of Arab nationalism to the local population.<sup>21</sup> By 1960, the shaykhdom was pushing to cut its ties with Britain.<sup>22</sup>

In January 1962, after the protectorate relationship with Britain formally ended, Shaykh 'Abdullah issued an amiri decree to call for the election of a body to draft the

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<sup>16</sup> Jill Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 38-39.

<sup>17</sup> Crystal, *Kuwait*, 18.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>21</sup> Crystal, *Oil and Politics*, 81.

<sup>22</sup> Mansfield, 49.

new country's constitution.<sup>23</sup> He demanded that the constitution “be based on ‘democratic principles taken from the realities and objectives of Kuwait’.”<sup>24</sup> The 1962 Constitution created a hybrid system, fusing hereditary rule with parliamentary government.<sup>25</sup> The constitution, while designating power to a legislature, established Kuwait as “a hereditary Amirate, and limited succession to the descendants of Mubarak. The amir was declared immune and his person inviolable.”<sup>26</sup>

### Kuwait's System of Government

The amir undoubtedly remains the central figure in Kuwaiti government. He is “head of state, appoints all government ministers, and is not accountable under constitutional law.”<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the amir enjoys the rights to initiate, suspend, and publicise legislation, as well as to rule by decree when parliament is not in session.<sup>28</sup> His approval is also required before the declaration of any law proposed by the legislature, which he or the Constitutional Court can dissolve at will, provided that new parliamentary elections are called within two months of its dissolution<sup>29,30</sup>.

The Cabinet, or Council of Ministers, led by an amir-appointed prime minister, “sets much of the political agenda and directs the work of government agencies.”<sup>31</sup> It also tends to be dominated by members of al-Sabah.<sup>32</sup> These ministers, even if not elected, automatically become members of parliament (MPs), though their number in the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>25</sup> Abdo I. Baaklini, Guilain Denooux, and Robert Springborg, *Legislative Politics in the Arab World: The Resurgence of Democratic Institutions* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 175.

<sup>26</sup> Ismael, 82.

<sup>27</sup> Doron Shultziner and Mary Ann Tétreault, “Representation and Democratic Progress in Kuwait,” *Representation* 48, no. 3 (2012): 281.

<sup>28</sup> Ismael, 83.

<sup>29</sup> In practice, this has not always happened, as in 1976 and 1986.

<sup>30</sup> Article 107, Constitution of the State of Kuwait, Diwan of His Highness the Prime Minister, 1962, <https://www.pm.gov.kw/kuwait-constitution.aspx>.

<sup>31</sup> Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 146.

<sup>32</sup> Shultziner and Tétreault, 286-287.

legislature is not to exceed one-third of the total number of members.<sup>33</sup> Still, “the cabinet is an arm of the rulers” in the legislature.<sup>34</sup> Cabinet members of the National Assembly vote equally with other MPs on most issues, excluding votes of no confidence against ministers.<sup>35</sup>

The National Assembly, Kuwait’s legislature, consists of 50 members elected every four years (unless dissolved by the amir before that time), in addition to the aforementioned members of the cabinet. This parliament is undoubtedly the most powerful legislature in the Gulf, with significant abilities to check the power of the executive branch. “It can declare an election invalid by a majority vote (article 95); vote a minister out of office (article 101); express no-confidence in a minister, including the prime minister (article 102); reject laws proposed by the executive branch (article 66); and draft and pass independent laws and regulations, though they must be approved by the Amir to become law.”<sup>36</sup> Notably, the legislature also holds authority to oversee public finances, which has become a significant policy issue, as repeated allegations of government corruption emerge.<sup>37</sup>

From its inception, parliament has proven itself willing to confront the government, though the executive branch retains the upper hand.<sup>38</sup> As David Roberts put it, “[t]he most powerful institution in Kuwait remains the al-Sabah ruling family. Having ruled continuously since the mid-eighteenth century, it has been sewn into the fabric of Kuwait’s politics and society not so much through dictatorial methods but rather by

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<sup>33</sup> Ismael, 82.

<sup>34</sup> Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 146.

<sup>35</sup> Shultziner and Tétreault, 286-287.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 281.

<sup>37</sup> Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 186.

<sup>38</sup> Crystal, *Kuwait*, 72.

conciliation and wholesale cooption in the post-oil era.”<sup>39</sup> A vibrant political atmosphere has emerged as a result. Though parties are banned and political blocs have no legal status, they take on largely the same duties as parties, organising electoral campaigns and community outreach.<sup>40</sup>

### Civil Society in Kuwait

According to article 43 of the Kuwaiti Constitution, “freedom to form associations and unions on a national basis and by peaceful means shall be guaranteed in accordance with the conditions and manner specified by law.”<sup>41</sup> These conditions, notably, have changed depending on the domestic political climate. Civil society associations have tended to enjoy more freedom when the National Assembly is in session, while the government has traditionally sought to extend its control over associations, seen as opposition strongholds, when parliament is disbanded.<sup>42</sup>

Despite certain restrictions, the political force of Kuwaiti civil society is evidenced by the fact that each time the National Assembly has been suspended without the announcement of immediate elections, the Kuwaiti people have managed to force the reinstatement of the legislature and of any suspended constitutional rights.<sup>43</sup> In particular, *dīwāniyyāt* have proven successful in effecting political change when parliamentary life has been suspended. Still, just as al-Sabah have tried to manage opposition in parliament, the ruling family has endeavoured to co-opt civil society. “In order to facilitate the articulation of competing political and religio-political trends within Kuwaiti society –

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<sup>39</sup> David Roberts, “Kuwait,” in *Power and Politics in the Persian Gulf Monarchies*, ed. Christopher M. Davidson (London: Hurst and Company, 2011), 92.

<sup>40</sup> Brown, “Pushing Toward Party Politics?,” 4.

<sup>41</sup> Article 43, Constitution of the State of Kuwait.

<sup>42</sup> Neil Hicks and Ghanim al-Najjar, “The Utility of Tradition: Civil Society in Kuwait,” in *Civil Society in the Middle East*, ed. Augustus Richard Norton (Leiden: EJ Brill, 1995), 1:195.

<sup>43</sup> Mary Ann Tétreault, “A State of Two Minds: State Cultures, Women, and Politics in Kuwait,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33, no. 2 (2001): 205.

the better to control them – the state has fostered the development of a broad range of semi-autonomous associations. These voluntary, professional, and mosque-based groups benefitted from state subsidies, and are regulated by legislation that ensures ultimate governmental control over their affairs.”<sup>44</sup> Clubs and professional associations must be approved by the state.<sup>45</sup> In addition, these organisations are to operate solely within their officially permitted mandate.<sup>46</sup> In practice, however, professional associations have expressed political views.

Labour unions remain ineffectual in Kuwait, in large measure due to the fact that they can only be formed by nationals, who constitute around ten percent of the work force<sup>47</sup> and 92 percent of whom work in the public sector.<sup>48</sup> Like professional associations, they “operate under state charters that, among other constraints, forbid political activity.”<sup>49</sup> The Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry is an active body, however, and serves as an important means through which merchants’ traditional political gravitas has been institutionalised. It has, since the Suq al-Manakh crisis in 1982, “figured into policy formulation, negotiation, and implementation.”<sup>50</sup>

In 1962, the government passed a law limiting the activities of voluntary associations to “social welfare purposes” and prohibiting non-nationals from becoming

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<sup>44</sup> Hicks and Al-Najjar, 187-188.

<sup>45</sup> Mary Ann Tétreault, “Civil Society in Kuwait: Protected Spaces and Women’s Rights,” *Middle East Journal* 47, no. 2 (1993): 276.

<sup>46</sup> Mary Ann Tétreault and Mohammed al-Ghanim, “The Day After ‘Victory’: Kuwait’s 2009 Election and the Contentious Present,” *Middle East Report Online*, July 8, 2009, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero070809>.

<sup>47</sup> Paul Salem, “Kuwait: Politics in a Participatory Emirate,” *Carnegie Papers* 3 (July 2007): 10, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cmec3\\_salem\\_kuwait\\_final1.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cmec3_salem_kuwait_final1.pdf).

<sup>48</sup> Anh Nga Longva, “Neither Autocracy Nor Democracy But Ethnocracy: Citizens, Expatriates and the Socio-Political System in Kuwait,” in *Monarchies and Nations: Globalisation and Identity in the Arab States of the Gulf*, eds. Paul Dresch and James Piscatori (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 120.

<sup>49</sup> Tétreault, “Civil Society in Kuwait,” 276.

<sup>50</sup> Pete W. Moore, “What Makes Successful Business Lobbies?: Business Associations and the Rentier State in Jordan and Kuwait,” *Comparative Politics* 33, no. 2 (2001): 143.

leaders in such organisations.<sup>51</sup> Under this law, voluntary associations must register with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, which holds the authority to “deny an association a license, to disband an association if it was not providing benefits to society as a whole, or not following its constitution.”<sup>52</sup> In reality, this ministry is overstretched and has not generally imposed such restrictions, leading to the emergence of political blocs that contest parliamentary elections. In addition, public gatherings are legal, yet must be approved by the government.<sup>53</sup>

Kuwait, as of 2007, contained some 300 registered NGOs, which primarily deal with issues such as education, welfare, environment, and social awareness.<sup>54</sup> Many of the organisations depend on the government for funding or are run by elites with ties to the ruling family.<sup>55</sup> To be sure, “[o]nly a small portion of the NGO sector has been a source of sociopolitical dynamism, hosting debates and participating in public movements. The majority of other NGOs have remained focused on narrower sectoral or service functions, preserving a nonantagonistic relationship with the state and other elites.”<sup>56</sup> The National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS) at Kuwait University is undoubtedly politically relevant, however, often serving a proxy for broader political battles, particularly when parliament is suspended.<sup>57</sup>

As for media, freedom of the press is enshrined in the 1962 Constitution, and the state has five primary newspapers, all of which are “privately owned and fairly

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<sup>51</sup> Rizzo, 16-17.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>53</sup> Hicks and Al-Najjar, 190.

<sup>54</sup> P. Salem, 10.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>57</sup> Marc Lynch, *The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2012), 130.

opinionated and influential.”<sup>58</sup> In times of political turmoil, though, the government has threatened this press freedom through traditional and social media. In fact, over the course of 2013, 25 people, including three former MPs, were arrested for “insulting the Amir” through speeches or social media platforms.<sup>59</sup>

The Kuwaiti system of allowing limited freedoms to parliament, as well as to civil society, has distinguished the emirate from its neighbours. “Perhaps inadvertently, Kuwait’s ruling family can be said to have demonstrated that decentralization of power, and the fostering of a competitive political environment, albeit within limits, can greatly enhance the legitimacy of a government.”<sup>60</sup> The government has been credited with allowing the participation of a diverse group of actors in politics, including Islamists, yet has managed to institute policies to ensure al-Sabah dominance of the political system.<sup>61</sup>

#### *A Brief Political History of Qatar*

In contrast to Kuwait and largely due to the prominence of the pearl trade in Qatar, a settled community did not develop there until the late nineteenth century. At least half of Qatar’s population – the highest ratio in the region – was directly involved in the trade.<sup>62</sup> First-hand reports from the nineteenth century reflected a political scene “of terrible insecurity,” with no leader able to control the peninsula’s roaming settlements –

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<sup>58</sup> P. Salem, 11.

<sup>59</sup> F. Gregory Gause III, “Kings for All Seasons: How the Middle East’s Monarchies Survived the Arab Spring,” Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper, no. 8, September 2013, 19, [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2013/09/24%20resilience%20arab%20monarchies%20gause/resilience%20arab%20monarchies\\_english.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2013/09/24%20resilience%20arab%20monarchies%20gause/resilience%20arab%20monarchies_english.pdf).

<sup>60</sup> Hicks and Al-Najjar, 188.

<sup>61</sup> Nicolas Gavrielides, “Tribal Democracy: The Anatomy of Parliamentary Elections in Kuwait,” in *Elections in the Middle East: Implications of Recent Trends*, ed. Linda L. Layne (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 194.

<sup>62</sup> Allen James Fromherz, *Qatar: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 53.

in particular because pearl merchants could easily opt to move, as their trade did not require a territorial base.<sup>63</sup>

By 1862, three settlements that comprise present-day Doha came under the control of Muhammad bin Thani (r. 1847-1876) alongside a Bahraini governor, representing an important step toward settlement of the population.<sup>64</sup> Until the 1860s, however, Qatari politics was marked by struggles with Bahrain due to its historical claims over Qatari land. In fact, naval attacks between the two motivated Britain to sign an agreement with Muhammad bin Thani in 1868, which amounted to “the first formal recognition of Qatari independent sovereignty by the British.”<sup>65</sup> Significantly, the document also stated that it was Muhammad bin Thani’s responsibility to protect the tribes of Qatar, thereby institutionalising al-Thani rule. The 1893 Battle of Wajba, in which Shaykh Jassim bin Muhammad al-Thani (r. 1876-1913), along with a number of tribes in Qatar, defeated Ottoman forces, was another milestone in cementing al-Thani authority. Following the Ottomans’ formal renunciation of their claims to Qatar in 1913, the Anglo-Qatari Treaty of 1916 solidified al-Thani’s status as ruling family and decisively distinguished Qatar as a separate entity from Bahrain.<sup>66</sup> The agreement was similar to those signed with the rulers of the emirates composing the present-day UAE, demanding close cooperation with the British in maintaining maritime peace.<sup>67</sup>

When in the 1920s, Japanese cultured pearls became popular, and global financial slowdown harmed the pearling market, Qatar’s economy was devastated. Unlike its neighbours, Qatar had no other significant commercial activities. The decline of the pearl

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 68.

trade therefore had far-reaching consequences, leading to large-scale emigration. According to Jill Crystal, this economic crisis “almost destroyed Qatar.”<sup>68</sup>

The arrival of oil the following decade changed the nation’s fortunes dramatically. As in Kuwait, the new revenue “allowed the rulers to deal directly with the population, to implement distributive policies that bypassed pre-existing alliance structures. By hiring nationals directly into the bureaucracy, the rulers deprived the merchants of a politically useful workforce.”<sup>69</sup> Such policies helped al-Thani, like the ruling families of Kuwait and UAE, to strengthen their authority and to create a super-rentier state.<sup>70</sup> Oil also introduced the problem of distribution among family members, which was particularly controversial among fractious al-Thani family.<sup>71</sup> In fact, infighting among al-Thani family members allowed the British to maintain inroads into Qatari internal politics well into the twentieth century.<sup>72</sup>

In 1968, in an attempt to draw down its forces overseas, the British government announced that it would withdraw from all territories east of the Suez Canal by 1971. This pronouncement was received by leaders in the small Gulf states with shock and trepidation.<sup>73</sup> Eager to maintain security from external threats, the small states of Bahrain, Qatar, and the present-day UAE (Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah, and Umm al-Quwain) began discussions about forming a single independent federation.<sup>74</sup> Throughout these talks, the rulers disagreed about the nature of the union and appropriate leadership of it. When Bahrain withdrew from the proposed body in

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<sup>68</sup> Crystal, *Oil and Politics*, 5.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>73</sup> Rosemarie Said Zahlan, *The Creation of Qatar* (London: Routledge, 1979), 104.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

1970, Qatar set about writing a preliminary constitution, its first step toward independence, which was formally declared in September 1971.

In February 1972, Shaykh Khalifa bin Hamad al-Thani (r. 1972-1995) instituted an amended provisional constitution and created the Advisory Council, whose 35 members he appointed and who could “offer suggestions on draft laws issued by the cabinet.”<sup>75</sup> Shaykh Khalifa also passed the 1972 Basic Law, which stated that the amir would be a member of al-Thani.<sup>76</sup> In addition, he developed the state’s welfare system by investing heavily in education, health care, and other programmes to assist nationals.<sup>77</sup> By decreasing disbursements to family members and nationalising the state’s oil industry in 1976,<sup>78</sup> Khalifa was able to provide a 30 percent increase in social aid, a 20 percent raise for members of the military and civil service, and a 25 percent increase in old age pensions.<sup>79</sup>

Despite launching substantial social development in Qatar, Shaykh Khalifa retained power largely for himself. A description at the time of Khalifa’s reign reflects his highly personalised rule: “There is no meaningful distinction, either political or legal, between the person of the Emir and the institutions of the state. Sovereignty is unlimited.”<sup>80</sup> Unimpressed with his father’s approach to ruling, Shaykh Hamad seized power in a nonviolent palace coup in June 1995.

Shaykh Hamad’s takeover ushered in an era of unprecedented political and economic development. In 1999, he created a constitutional committee, charged with

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<sup>75</sup> David Commins, *The Gulf States: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 213.

<sup>76</sup> Mehran Kamrava, “Royal Factionalism and Political Liberalization in Qatar,” *Middle East Journal* 63, no. 3 (2009): 413.

<sup>77</sup> Crystal, *Oil and Politics*, 157.

<sup>78</sup> Commins, *The Gulf States*, 213.

<sup>79</sup> Crystal, *Oil and Politics*, 156-157.

<sup>80</sup> Jill Crystal, “Coalitions in Oil Monarchies: Kuwait and Qatar,” *Comparative Politics* 21, no. 4 (1989): 440.

drafting a document to replace the provisional constitution that had been last amended in 1972.<sup>81</sup> Upon crafting the committee, the amir stated that the constitution “must be based on Gulf, Arab and Islamic reality, as well as on original Arab traditions and the principles of the Islamic religion.”<sup>82</sup> Once Shaykh Hamad approved the drafted document, it was referred to the population for approval. In a referendum held in 2003, 96 percent of Qatari voters accepted the new constitution, though only some 71,400 of the eligible 150,000 nationals voted.<sup>83</sup>

### Qatar’s System of Government

Despite article one’s assertion that the Qatari government is “democratic,” several clauses preserve the primacy of the amir and the ruling family.<sup>84</sup> Article 67 grants the majority of executive powers to the amir, who is able to “override legislation, rule by decree, and even dissolve elected bodies.”<sup>85</sup> The constitution bars the amir solely from “declaring martial law without cause and approval from the Advisory Council (Article 69), from engaging in offensive warfare (Article 71), and from issuing decrees without the eventual approval of the Advisory Council.”<sup>86</sup> Notably, this Advisory Council is yet to be elected.

The Ruling Family Council, created and appointed by Shaykh Hamad in June 2000, sets salaries for family members, in addition to its primary role of selecting a new

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<sup>81</sup> Elisheva Rosman-Stollman, “Qatar: Liberalization as Foreign Policy,” in *Political Liberalization in the Persian Gulf*, ed. Joshua Teitelbam (London: Hurst and Company, 2009), 192.

<sup>82</sup> Shaykh Hamad, Qtd. in Rosman-Stollman, 192.

<sup>83</sup> Ahmed Abdelkareem Saif, “Deconstructing Before Building: Perspectives on Democracy in Qatar,” in *Reform in the Middle East Oil Monarchies*, eds. Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Steven Wright (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2008), 110.

<sup>84</sup> Article 1, Constitution of Qatar, Government of Qatar, 2003, <http://portal.www.gov.qa/wps/wcm/connect/5a5512804665e3afa54fb5fd2b4ab27a/Constitution+of+Qatar+EN.pdf?MOD=AJPERES>.

<sup>85</sup> Rosemarie Said Zahlan, *The Making of the Modern Gulf States: Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Oman* (Reading: Ithaca Press), 89.

<sup>86</sup> Fromherz, 130.

amir in the case of a death or illness.<sup>87</sup> Further, it provides a means of granting a voice to disparate branches of al-Thani. The amir-appointed Council of Ministers, or Cabinet, is also traditionally composed of members of al-Thani and notable loyalist families yet increasingly includes technocrats. This cabinet drafts laws for the amir to review and to which the Advisory Council can suggest amendments.<sup>88</sup>

The current Advisory Council, consisting of 35 members, each appointed for four years, has little independent authority, solely “empowered to debate legislation and issue recommendations.”<sup>89</sup> Most members of the Council hail from important allied families.<sup>90</sup> Overall, the body is “used as an institutional means to keep notable Qataris connected to and vested in the political system.”<sup>91</sup> Still, Shaykh Hamad assigned the Council the task of preparing the state for elections.<sup>92</sup> Despite having been granted this serious duty, members meet solely two hours per week between November and June.<sup>93</sup>

Articles 76-116 of the Constitution outline the duties and procedures of the state’s legislative authority – the yet to be elected 45-member Advisory Council. The body is to include 30 members elected for four-year terms and 15 members appointed by the amir. Its responsibilities include drafting legislation, questioning ministers, debating decisions made by the cabinet, and reviewing the government’s proposed budgets.<sup>94</sup> Curbing the council’s power, the amir can dissolve the legislature, yet must call for new elections

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<sup>87</sup> Kamrava, “Royal Factionalism and Political Liberalization,” 414.

<sup>88</sup> Commins, *The Gulf States*, 213.

<sup>89</sup> Louay Bahry, “Elections in Qatar: A Window of Democracy Opens in the Gulf,” *Middle East Policy* 6, no. 4 (1999): 120.

<sup>90</sup> Fromherz, 137.

<sup>91</sup> Kamrava, “Royal Factionalism and Political Liberalization,” 417.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 418.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 418.

<sup>94</sup> Saif, 110-111.

within six months of dissolution.<sup>95</sup> Though Qatar's rulers have stressed the importance of the legislative body, elections have been postponed several times. The date for polls was originally set for 2005 and then was scheduled for June 30, 2013. Following the transition of authority from Shaykh Hamad to Shaykh Tamim in June 2013, elections will likely not take place before the end of 2016, as the existing Advisory Council's term was increased by three years in 2013.<sup>96</sup>

Although the Advisory Council has not yet been elected, in 1999, the first elections for the CMC were held. Qatari male and female nationals were eligible to elect the council's 29 members. Due to the nature of the body as an arm of the Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning, however, campaigns are apolitical and focus on "local issues such as road building, family life and improvement of public health and the environment."<sup>97</sup> The body itself is by no means a legislature; instead, it is "[r]esponsible for municipal affairs, agriculture, buildings and road, food quality, garbage disposal, and public health."<sup>98</sup>

On the whole, the Qatari government remains personalistic, monarchical, and hierarchical, with power centralised in the ruling family. The form of government differs substantially from the more representative system described by the Qatari Constitution. Certainly, "[t]he constitution may be a fine document, but it remains largely aspirational."<sup>99</sup> Al-Thani supremacy has been carefully protected, with power centralised

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 110-111.

<sup>96</sup> "Advisory Council's Term Extended until 2016 amid Government Transition," *Doha News*, July 2, 2013, <http://dohanews.co/advisory-councils-term-extended-until-2016-amid/>.

<sup>97</sup> Bahry, "Elections in Qatar," 122-123.

<sup>98</sup> Kamrava, "Royal Factionalism and Political Liberalization," 416.

<sup>99</sup> Jill Crystal, "Political Reform in Qatar," in *Political Change in the Arab Gulf States: Stuck in Transition*, eds. Mary Ann Tétreault, Gwenn Okruhlik, and Andrzej Kapiszewski (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2011), 122.

among a handful of individuals and with the actions of secular and Islamist independent nonstate organisations facing restrictions.

### Civil Society in Qatar

As in the other super-rentiers, few civil society groups operate beyond the purview of the state or ruling family, and such groups are primarily apolitical. A 2013 study revealed that, of 26 registered organisations examined in Qatar, 65 percent function in “culture and development,” reflecting their primarily apolitical nature.<sup>100</sup> Before any NGO can operate, it must gain licensing from the government, which has refused approval for certain political, human rights, and women’s organisations.<sup>101</sup> In addition to restrictions on the formation of organisations, their activities are constrained: “Permits are still required for public gatherings and demonstrations, and the government grants them reluctantly.”<sup>102</sup>

Although a revised 2004 labour law granted workers the right to form associations, such groups remain largely inactive because only Qataris, 92 percent of whom are publicly employed,<sup>103</sup> are allowed to participate.<sup>104</sup> Further, labour associations are forbidden to take part in “any activity related to religion or politics.”<sup>105</sup> The Chamber of Commerce, though it has elected its own leadership since 1998, “lacks the independence of, for example, its Kuwaiti counterpart,” perhaps due to the historic absence of a merchant class and because most of the Qatari business elite remains

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<sup>100</sup> “2013 Survey of Civil Society Organizations in Qatar: Report of Findings,” Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI), commissioned by the National Human Rights Committee, June 2013, 9, [http://www.nhrc-qa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/2013\\_Report-NHRC-Final-English-with-intro-from-NHRC-pdf](http://www.nhrc-qa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/2013_Report-NHRC-Final-English-with-intro-from-NHRC-pdf).

<sup>101</sup> Crystal, “Political Reform in Qatar,” 122.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 121-122.

<sup>103</sup> Commins, *The Gulf States*, 284.

<sup>104</sup> Article 116, Law No. 14 of the Year 2004: The Labour Law, Embassy of the State of Qatar Washington, D.C., 2010, [http://www.qatarembassy.net/Qatar\\_Labour\\_Law.asp](http://www.qatarembassy.net/Qatar_Labour_Law.asp).

<sup>105</sup> Article 119.1, Law No. 14 of the Year 2004.

dependent on government contracts.<sup>106</sup> In December 1998, Minister of Education Shaykha Ahmad al-Mahmoud al-Thani pledged to bring elected student unions to all schools,<sup>107</sup> yet they remain largely politically irrelevant, unlike in Kuwait, as campaigns are launched by individual candidates rather than by political blocs.

In 2005, the Ministry of Civil Service Affairs and Housing issued new regulations for nongovernmental organisations and professional societies, forbidding “affiliation with groups outside Qatar and restrict[ing] membership of organizations to Qatari nationals over 18 years. The societies are not allowed to deal with political issues and all their activities, including fundraising, are monitored by the ministry.”<sup>108</sup> Such rules straightforwardly restrict civil society organisations from political involvement, while also clearly banning membership to the Muslim Brotherhood, though it had completed its dissolution at the time new regulations were put in place.

The media face similar challenges. Though the Qatari government gained international attention for its establishment of Al Jazeera as an independent entity in 1996, it remains financed by the government through Qatar Gas<sup>109</sup> and under the control of an al-Thani chairman.<sup>110</sup> The country’s major radio and television stations, Qatar Radio and Qatar Television, are state-owned as well. Though Qatar’s major newspapers are privately owned in principle, their board members and owners often hail from the ruling family or have ties to the government. For example, the chairman of the influential daily *al-Watan*, Hamad bin Suhaim al-Thani is a member of the ruling family, while

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<sup>106</sup> Crystal, “Political Reform in Qatar,” 130.

<sup>107</sup> Bahry, “Elections in Qatar,” 120.

<sup>108</sup> Saif, 112.

<sup>109</sup> Fromherz, 23.

<sup>110</sup> Anealla Safdar and Ben Flanagan, “Royal Family Member Put in Charge at Al Jazeera,” *The National*, September 22, 2011, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/royal-family-member-put-in-charge-at-al-jazeera>.

former Foreign Minister, Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr al-Thani, owns half of the newspaper.<sup>111</sup> Another leading Arabic daily *al-Sharq* and the English daily *The Peninsula* are under the leadership of chairman Shaykh Thani bin ‘Abdullah al-Thani.<sup>112</sup>

A 2012 media law also restricts domestic journalism considerably. Article 53 prohibits publishing or broadcasting information that would “throw relations between the state and the Arab and friendly states into confusion” or “abuse the regime or offend the ruling family or cause serious harm to the national or higher interests of the state.”<sup>113</sup> Violations may lead to fines of as much as \$275,000,<sup>114</sup> and public criticism of the amir carries a five-year prison sentence, according to article 134 of the penal code.<sup>115</sup>

The Qatari government’s co-optation of the public sphere, though complete, could be characterised as a soft co-optation. The state has used high-level projects such as the establishment of Al Jazeera and public rhetoric reiterating the government’s commitment to political reform to enhance public opinion of the government. Nonetheless, domestic political debates continue largely through private majlis meetings, which are the site of “political give-and-take and consensus-building” on social, economic, and political issues.<sup>116</sup> It is in these uninstitutionalised settings that Islamists exert political influence in Qatar.

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<sup>111</sup> “Dar al-Watan,” Al-Watan, April 2015, [http://www.al-watan.com/watan.aspx?d=20150416&page=%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1\\_%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86/%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA](http://www.al-watan.com/watan.aspx?d=20150416&page=%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1_%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86/%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA).

<sup>112</sup> “H.E. Shaikh Thani ibn Abdullah al-Thani, Chairman of the Board,” Dar al-Sharq, April 2015, <http://daralsharq.net/ar/node/36?language=en>.

<sup>113</sup> Article 53, Draft Media Law, Qtd. in “Qatar: Revise Draft Media Law to Allow Criticism of Rulers,” Human Rights Watch, October 30, 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/10/30/qatar-revise-draft-media-law-allow-criticism-rulers>.

<sup>114</sup> “Qatari Draft Media Law Criticized by Rights Group,” Reuters, October 30, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/30/us-media-qatar-idUSBRE89T17620121030>

<sup>115</sup> “Qatar: Revise Draft Media Law.”

<sup>116</sup> Shadi Hamid, “There Aren’t Protests in Qatar – So Why Did the Emir Just Announce Elections?,” *The Atlantic*, November 1, 2011, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/11/there-arent-protests-in-qatar-so-why-did-the-emir-just-announce-elections/247661/>.

*A Brief Political History of the UAE*

As Trucial States under British protection in the nineteenth century, the seven emirates of the present-day UAE were under the control of tribal shaykhs. Such a local ruler was “not so much a territorial overlord as one who held the allegiance of several tribes or tribal groups.”<sup>117</sup> Power structures and territorial boundaries remained fluid, though the authority of ruling families was solidified when the British made treaties with them. Certainly, “in many ways the centuries-old ebb and flow of tribal power had been frozen in time, as Britain signed treaties with whichever family happened to hold the reins of power at the time.”<sup>118</sup> Aside from strengthening certain families, by categorising the grouping of seven separate emirates into Trucial States, the British made these previously independent tribal societies more likely to cooperate with one another after British withdrawal.<sup>119</sup>

Because its interest in the region was primarily commercial, the British government worked to expand trade with and secure the passage of goods through the Trucial States to India. A mercantile culture already existed in the area, with Dubai a commercial centre centuries before the discovery of oil and with the Sharjah Port particularly important in the pearl trade. Thus, a merchant class and limited commercial infrastructure existed in parts of the UAE before the arrival of the British and the discovery of oil. The Trucial States had only limited interaction with one another, though, until they came together in 1971 as an independent state.

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<sup>117</sup> Kevin Fenelon, Qtd. in Christopher M. Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates: A Study in Survival* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), 14-15.

<sup>118</sup> Christopher M. Davidson, “Arab Nationalism and British Opposition in Dubai, 1920-1966,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 6 (2007): 880.

<sup>119</sup> Malcolm C. Peck, “Formation and Evolution of the Federation and its Institutions,” in *Perspectives on the United Arab Emirates*, eds. Edmund A. Ghareeb and Ibrahim al-Abed (London: Trident Press, 1999), 124.

Local rulers began formulating the UAE after the announcement of the withdrawal of British protection in 1968, a proclamation that was received, at least by the ruling elite, with “intense disappointment, as many felt that much of the recent development work would stall or be undone without further British support.”<sup>120</sup> The creation of the UAE was therefore “the response to a political necessity,” rather than a natural step toward consolidating the existing power of local shaykhs.<sup>121</sup> Abu Dhabi and Dubai were the first to join forces in February 1968 and two weeks later invited the Qatari and Bahraini rulers, as well as the other five emirates of the present-day UAE, to sign on to their federation.

Despite the withdrawal of Bahrain and Qatar, the union’s draft constitution remained largely unchanged and was adopted as a provisional document by the UAE in December 1971. Drafters of the Emirati Constitution clearly took into consideration the political sensitivities of potential members hesitant to surrender their local authority.<sup>122</sup> Even today, “the constitution of the UAE reflects the political reality of the time [...] that the individual emirates were not yet ready to give up their identity, and their rulers could certainly not imagine relinquishing their authority in the face of such crucial changes.”<sup>123</sup> As a measure of such hesitance, Ras al-Khaimah did not join the union until February 1972. Further, the provisional constitution was renewed several times before it was finally made permanent in 1996, thereby solidifying the existing system.<sup>124</sup> The state

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<sup>120</sup> Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*, 44-45.

<sup>121</sup> Frauke Heard-Bey, “The United Arab Emirates: A Quarter Century of Federation,” in *Middle East Dilemma: The Politics and Economics of Arab Integration*, ed. Michael C. Hudson (London: I.B. Tauris), 136.

<sup>122</sup> Peck, “Formation and Evolution,” 129-130.

<sup>123</sup> Heard-Bey, “A Quarter Century of Federation,” 135.

<sup>124</sup> William A. Rugh, “The United Arab Emirates: What Are the Sources of Its Stability?,” *Middle East Policy* 5, no. 3 (1997), 21.

also integrated its armed forces for the first time that year, some 25 years after the union's establishment.<sup>125</sup>

### The UAE's Government System

Notwithstanding its unique federal system, the UAE resembles its neighbours in that it remains “essentially tribal and authoritarian.”<sup>126</sup> Nonetheless, the Emirati Constitution commits the union to progress “‘towards a complete representative democratic rule,’ but precedes that with the observation the newly created federal governance must exist ‘in harmony with the emirates’ existing conditions and potential,’ clearly indicating that traditional social and cultural norms would shape the new state’s evolution.”<sup>127</sup>

The federal system described by the Emirati Constitution is hierarchical, with the president and vice president holding central authority.<sup>128</sup> While all emirates retain their individual ruling families, the president is universally considered the leader of the federation, while the vice president also holds considerable political power, namely presiding over the Council of Ministers, or Cabinet,<sup>129</sup> and serving as president in his absence.<sup>130</sup> The president and vice president are chosen from the Supreme Council of Rulers, comprised of the leaders of the seven emirates, for five-year terms and can be re-elected. Despite this election process, the ruler of Abu Dhabi has traditionally held the

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<sup>125</sup> Sean Foley, “The UAE: Political Issues and Security Dilemmas,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no. 1 (1999): 3.

<sup>126</sup> W.A. Rugh, 18.

<sup>127</sup> Peck, “Formation and Evolution,” 130.

<sup>128</sup> Frauke Heard-Bey, *From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates: A Society in Transition* (London: Longman, 1982), 376.

<sup>129</sup> Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*, 204.

<sup>130</sup> Article 51, United Arab Emirates Constitution, Federal National Council, 2010 Edition, <http://www.uaecabinet.ae/English/UAEGovernment/Pages/ConstitutionOfUAE.aspx>.

presidency, while the leader of Dubai has been elected as vice president.<sup>131</sup> As head of the Council of Rulers, the president gains a great deal of authority when that body is not in session.<sup>132</sup> The president also serves as ceremonial head of state and retains the last word in selection of the cabinet, while maintaining authority of “supervising the implementation of Union laws, decrees and decisions through the Council of Ministers of the Union and the competent Ministers.”<sup>133</sup>

Aside from the president and vice president, there are three primary organs of government. The Supreme Council of Rulers is composed of the leaders of the seven emirates and “sets the general policy of the UAE, elects the president and vice-president, ratifies federal laws and international treaties, and prepares the federal budget.”<sup>134</sup> The dominance of Abu Dhabi and Dubai is felt in this institution. Article 49 of the constitution specifies that, in the Supreme Council, procedural matters can be determined through a majority vote, yet that votes on substantive matters require a majority of five, provided that Abu Dhabi and Dubai are included.<sup>135</sup> Significantly, no list of “substantive matters” is included in the document, leaving it open to interpretation and possible co-optation by the two leading emirates.<sup>136</sup> In addition, only the rulers of Dubai and Abu Dhabi hold veto power in this body.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> W.A. Rugh, 19.

<sup>132</sup> Heard-Bey, *From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates*, 376.

<sup>133</sup> Article 54, Qtd. in Heard-Bey, *From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates*, 374.

<sup>134</sup> Peck, “Formation and Evolution,” 130.

<sup>135</sup> Article 49, United Arab Emirates Constitution.

<sup>136</sup> We hereafter refer to Abu Dhabi and Dubai with the term leading emirates for technical, rather than substantive, organisation. They are undoubtedly the country’s most influential economic and political players and, as such, set almost all statewide policy.

<sup>137</sup> Ali Mohammad Khalifa, *The United Arab Emirates: Unity in Fragmentation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1979), 92.

The Council of Ministers is considered “the real seat of legislative authority.”<sup>138</sup> It is selected by the president in consultation with the Supreme Council of Rulers and includes members of the ruling families and their allies, in addition to a small number of technocrats.<sup>139</sup> The body is responsible for approving presidential decrees, can write legislation after approval from the Supreme Council of Rulers, and reports to the president and Supreme Council.<sup>140</sup> The cabinet also allows the rulers to grant positions to politically relevant individuals, endeavouring to strike a balance through “an informal quota system” among the emirates (though the most significant posts go to Abu Dhabians and Dubaians),<sup>141</sup> in addition to “an acceptably high ratio of commoners to shaikhs.”<sup>142</sup>

The FNC, the UAE’s only elected body, is sometimes described as the legislative branch of government, though it holds little independent authority. The Council of Ministers determines which issues the FNC can debate and is not legally bound to heed the FNC’s suggestions, making the council little more than a forum for debate.<sup>143</sup> The FNC in reality “resembles more closely a traditional consultative *diwan* [council] or *majlis* [assembly] than a modern representative body.”<sup>144</sup> Further, the FNC is chosen by only some 12 percent of the Emirati national population.<sup>145</sup>

At the emirate level, ruler-appointed executive councils have been instituted in all emirates, with Umm Al-Quwain the last to do so in 2011.<sup>146</sup> In each, “the mix of

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<sup>138</sup> Peck, “Formation and Evolution,” 130.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 130-131.

<sup>140</sup> Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*, 190.

<sup>141</sup> W.A. Rugh, 19.

<sup>142</sup> Fyfe, 47.

<sup>143</sup> Khalifa, 48.

<sup>144</sup> Peck, “Formation and Evolution,” 131.

<sup>145</sup> “Turnout in UAE’s Second Election Low at 28 Percent of Handpicked Voters,” Al Arabiya, September 24, 2011, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/09/24/168394.html>.

<sup>146</sup> Yasin Kakande, “Umm al Qaiwain Forms Last of UAE’s Executive Councils,” *The National*, July 12, 2011, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/umm-al-qaiwain-forms-last-of-uaes-executive-councils>.

personalities would still today not be very different if the members were chosen by the ballot box, because tribal leaders are trusted representatives of their communities, and a local businessman, who has made good, may be entrusted with public affairs.”<sup>147</sup> Such councils thus serve as a means of managing emirate-level affairs while also granting a seat at the table, so to speak, to notables. Local authority is also preserved through article 23 of the Emirati Constitution, which states that “the natural resources and wealth in each emirate shall be considered to be the public property of that emirate.”<sup>148</sup> In other words, constituent emirates are not required to share their wealth with other members of the union. This proviso has sparked considerable domestic political debate, as the leading emirates could potentially use it as a means of guarding their wealth from the poorer emirates.

Abu Dhabi continues to underwrite the federation with its oil wealth, while Dubai expands non-oil sectors, and the remaining five emirates seek to develop their economies with varying degrees of success. These smaller emirates, however, “often find it difficult to secure the necessary capital” to embark on infrastructure and business projects that would enable them to become more self-sufficient.<sup>149</sup> The central government, mainly through Abu Dhabi, has funded ruling families of the poorer emirates “in order for them to maintain their status and respond to the ever-increasing demands made on their largesse.”<sup>150</sup> In so doing, emirate-level rulers have garnered more local authority and have become increasingly hesitant to cede power to the central authorities.<sup>151</sup> This

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<sup>147</sup> Heard-Bey, “Statehood and Nation-Building,” 369.

<sup>148</sup> Article 23, United Arab Emirates Constitution.

<sup>149</sup> Heard-Bey, *From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates*, 398.

<sup>150</sup> Heard-Bey, “Statehood and Nation-Building,” 363.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 363.

relationship of reluctant dependence of the peripheral emirates on the leading emirates is an important feature of the Emirati political system.

The integrity of every local emirate's autonomy remains an all-important principle in the UAE's political landscape. Throughout the more than three decades of its existence, the political life of the UAE was beholden to a 'push-me-pull-you' relationship of the local versus the central powers. Every time one of the emirates gave up its authority, for instance, over its police force or law courts or opened its power station to the federal ministry, such acts were hailed as progress by some, but regretted by others.<sup>152</sup>

The most prominent state-wide disagreements in the UAE have concerned the issue of federal versus local authority. Attempts to formulate a permanent constitution between 1976 and 1979 pitted al-Nahyan of Abu Dhabi, who favoured greater integration, against al-Maktoum of Dubai and al-Qasimi of Ras al-Khaimah, who favoured greater local autonomy. This led to the system of reconfirming the provisional constitution every five years, which prevailed until 1996.<sup>153</sup>

Considering that the UAE is religiously, ethnically, and socially diverse, it is somewhat remarkable that the union has proven to be such a success.<sup>154</sup> Still, complete integration of all emirates has not taken place – in large measure due to the prevalence of “[t]ribalism, local territorial disputes, the paternal and personal nature of political leadership, and immigration.”<sup>155</sup> The government has been careful to ensure that the freedom of independent political actors, especially Islamists, is restricted in such a divided environment.

#### Civil Society in the UAE

The Ministry of Social Affairs grants licences solely for civil society groups that are not considered “interfering in politics or matters harming the security of the State and

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 365.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 360.

<sup>155</sup> Khalifa, 94-95.

the governing regime.”<sup>156</sup> Further stifling civil society, public assemblies and associations must have government approval.<sup>157</sup> A 2008 law granted the Ministry of Social Affairs “the right to supervise [any approved] society’s programs and projects within the scope of its objectives stipulated under its articles of association,” while also stating that “the society shall be subject to the ministry’s control regarding the financial matters.”<sup>158</sup> Due to such restrictions, there are few independent civil society organisations, as most are under the purview of a federal ministry, a branch of an emirate-level government, or a prominent member of a ruling family.<sup>159</sup>

As of 2009, the UAE housed some 100 registered NGOs.<sup>160</sup> The largest number existed in Abu Dhabi (28), following by Dubai (19), Ras al-Khaimah (12), and Sharjah (11).<sup>161</sup> The political sector of civil society is virtually non-existent, however. In fact, article 180 of the penal code criminalises the establishment of, or participation in, any organisation “aiming at overthrowing, seizing, or opposing the basic principles supporting the government regime in the State, or preventing any institution of the state or any public authority from exercising its functions, or attempting at the citizens’ personal or other freedom or public rights guaranteed by the constitution or law, or

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<sup>156</sup> Federal Law no. 2 of 2008 Concerning Associations and Domestic Institutions of Public Interest, Qtd. in “‘There Is No Freedom Here’: Silencing Dissent in the United Arab Emirates (UAE),” Amnesty International, November 2014, 55-56, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE25/018/2014/en/da9909f8-498a-49b0-a1f9-d269f102f8ce/mde250182014en.pdf>.

<sup>157</sup> Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*, 270.

<sup>158</sup> Articles 19 and 20, Federal Law No. 2 of 2008.

<sup>159</sup> Christopher M. Davidson, *Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 211.

<sup>160</sup> Michael C. Hudson, “The Incremental Approach to Political Reform in the Gulf,” in *The Arabian Gulf: Between Conservatism and Change*, ed. Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (Abu Dhabi: Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2009), 57.

<sup>161</sup> Mouza Ghubash, “Social Development in the United Arab Emirates,” in *Perspectives on the United Arab Emirates*, 285.

harming the national unity of social peace.”<sup>162</sup> Private majlis gatherings allow a limited outlet for political discussion, yet free speech about politics is restricted even at such gatherings.<sup>163</sup>

Professional associations provide a forum for employees to share work-related concerns but “are essentially limited to making recommendations on behalf of their members” to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.<sup>164</sup> Notably, such bodies can include expatriates, though they do not have voting rights and cannot serve on leadership boards.<sup>165</sup> While professional associations have in some instances managed to lobby the government, “ministries retain the right to supervise, inspect, and disband all such organizations.”<sup>166</sup> Independent professional associations have been closed or co-opted by government dismissal of elected board members.<sup>167</sup> The UAE Jurist Association and UAE Teachers’ Association, both traditional Muslim Brotherhood strongholds, were politically neutralised in this way.<sup>168</sup>

In addition, trade unions, strikes, and collective bargaining have been outlawed, though a labour strike was staged as recently as November 2007.<sup>169</sup> The Chambers of Commerce, one from each emirate, have, for the most part, also been co-opted by the government, as their members are appointed by emirate-level rulers, aside from the

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<sup>162</sup> Article 180, Chapter 2, Crimes Against the Internal Security of the State, UAE Penal Code, amended 2005, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/122309224/182/Article-182>.

<sup>163</sup> Michael Herb, “Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates,” in *Politics and Society in the Contemporary Middle East*, ed. Michele Penner Angrist (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010), 361.

<sup>164</sup> Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*, 279-280.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 279-280.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>167</sup> Christopher M. Davidson, “The United Arab Emirates,” in *Power and Politics in the Persian Gulf Monarchies*, 27.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>169</sup> Hudson, “The Incremental Approach to Political Reform,” 57.

elected Abu Dhabi Chamber.<sup>170</sup> While student associations also exist, they are apolitical. The Muslim Brotherhood once held sway in the Union of Emirati Students, founded in 1982 at UAE University (UAEU).<sup>171</sup> Today, elections to partially appointed student council are held, yet, as in Qatar, candidates are not linked with any type of political bloc.

The central government's restriction of the press has been as extensive as its regulations on civil society. In 2006, the Ministry of Information was dissolved, and many of its former employees moved to the newly established National Media Council (NMC). The council is responsible for "the supply of official press releases through its Emirates News Agency (WAM), the blacking out of nudity in media output (still by using black felt tip on newspaper and magazine articles), and the provision of funding for local filmmakers."<sup>172</sup> The NMC also monitors foreign media sources' output about the UAE, and bans materials that it deems inappropriate for social and political reasons.<sup>173</sup> Further, the Federal Press and Publications Law passed in 2009 "introduced massive penalties for journalists who crossed red lines such as 'disparaging senior government officials or the royal family' or 'misleading the public and harming the economy'."<sup>174</sup> In 2012, the Federal Decree on Combatting Cybercrimes came into effect, which "contains broad and sweeping provisions that severely constrain free expression," with

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<sup>170</sup> W.A. Rugh, 20.

<sup>171</sup> Mansour al-Noqaidan, "Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun fi al-Amirat: Al-Tamaddad wa-l-Inhisar" [The Muslim Brotherhood in the Emirates: Expansion and Decline], in *Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun fi al-Khalij* [The Muslim Brotherhood in the Gulf], ed. Al-Mesbar Studies and Research Centre (Dubai: Al-Mesbar Studies and Research Centre, 2012), 65.

<sup>172</sup> Christopher M. Davidson, *Abu Dhabi: Oil and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 158.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>174</sup> Christopher M. Davidson, *After the Sheikhs: The Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 148.

punishments ranging from large fines to imprisonment for criticism of the Emirati authorities.<sup>175</sup>

As in Qatar, domestic politics is rarely mentioned in favour of coverage of economic news and international politics.<sup>176</sup> Further squelching free press is the fact that most of the country's most popular newspapers are controlled by the government or receive sizable state subsidies.

Dubai's Arabic daily newspaper *Al-Bayani*, together with two other UAE-based Arabic dailies, are owned by their respective emirate-level governments, while the other three Arabic papers, including Sharjah's *Al-Khaleej*, receive generous state subsidies. Similarly, Dubai's two best-selling English dailies, *Gulf News* and *Khaleej Times*, also receive subsidies, as does Sharjah's English language paper, *Gulf Today*. Although there are now two seemingly self-sufficient new English papers in Dubai, *Emirates Today* and *Seven Days*, their relevance is questionable as both seem to have positioned themselves at a tabloid audience.<sup>177</sup>

In large measure due to the financial control that the government holds over the media, it has been possible for members of the regime to pronounce publicly the need for free press while taking few steps to advance it.

Unlike in the other two states under study, there is a sense that the Emirati government's control goes beyond censorship and involves the monitoring of emails, website visits, and telephone calls.<sup>178</sup> In fact, several Emiratis interviewed were hesitant to speak until mobile phone batteries were removed. In the words of one, "[t]he UAE became a full-fledged security state, intervening in all aspects of civil life since 2005 [...] Security services are in all ministries, all active NGOs linked to human rights, journalism, and lawyers."<sup>179</sup> The Emirati government has been particularly sensitive to

<sup>175</sup> "'There Is No Freedom Here,'" 55-56.

<sup>176</sup> Herb, "Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates," 361.

<sup>177</sup> Davidson, *Dubai*, 214.

<sup>178</sup> Davidson, *Abu Dhabi*, 160.

<sup>179</sup> Interview with Ahmed Mansoor, March 26, 2014.

the popular appeal of Islamists and thus has taken care to restrict their ability to express their opinions and to meet by centralising state power, particularly in the security sector.

*Understanding Similarities and Differences among Super-Rentiers*

Governed by powerful ruling families, institutionalised political life in super-rentiers is hampered, and civil society and political life remain largely informal. More formal is the power of Islam in these states. The constitutions of all of the super-rentiers proclaim Islam the state religion and Islamic law “a main source of legislation.”<sup>180</sup> Despite managing secular styles of government, then, rulers remain reliant on Islam both to direct their rule and to solidify their legitimacy. Still, these states provide different environments for political Islam.

Kuwait’s experience has demonstrated that monarchy and parliamentary government can coexist in a super-rentier state. Unlike in the other super-rentiers, the character of Kuwaiti politics is to a large degree determined by which political blocs hold power in the National Assembly. Still, al-Sabah family retains the privileges of the other rulers in the Gulf. In essence, “[t]he complicated interaction between the state’s Sabah rulers, formal groups and society, with all of its informal underpinnings, is a dynamic mix of fluid corporatism and restricted pluralism.”<sup>181</sup> While the Kuwaiti political system has allowed Islamist actors to come to the fore, the government continues to assert its authority over such actors, leading to something of a tug-of-war between government and Islamist forces.

In Qatar, the ruling family undoubtedly dominates the political scene, which is highly personality-driven and uninstitutionalised. Al-Thani had the advantage of coming

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<sup>180</sup> Article two, Constitution of the State of Kuwait; article one, Constitution of Qatar; article seven, United Arab Emirates Constitution.

<sup>181</sup> Ghabra, “Balancing State and Society,” 59.

to power in a state with few competing powerful families and without a strong merchant class to challenge its rule.<sup>182</sup> Today, Islam is the primary ideological inspiration for Qatar's national population, yet its influence largely remains uninstitutionalised. In Qatar's personalistic political system, it is perhaps unsurprising that Brotherhood influence is not formalised through an institutional structure.

In the UAE, despite divisions among the various emirates, "most government departments and authorities remain opaque and secretive."<sup>183</sup> In an atmosphere where the federal government has sometimes struggled to maintain control, opposition movements, in particular Islamist groups, have been repressed. The segmented nature of the UAE's federal system, however, made it possible for the Brotherhood to survive for decades. The fact that each emirate differs from the others also adds to societal tensions often expressed by Islamist groups.

While we have established that Islamism functions in different ways in each of the super-rentiers, we have yet to discover exactly how Muslim Brotherhood affiliates have adapted to such circumstances and how they operate in such states. To do so, we turn to our case studies, first examining how the Ikhwan emerged in Kuwait as a major social and political actor.

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<sup>182</sup> Crystal, "Coalitions in Oil Monarchies," 430.

<sup>183</sup> Davidson, "The United Arab Emirates," 28.

## Chapter Four

### Brotherhood in Parliament: Origins of the Kuwaiti Ikhwan

The Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood is the oldest and most organised branch in the Gulf, having been founded over a decade before the others under study.<sup>1</sup> The Kuwaiti organisation is also the most entrenched in the institutionalised political system of any Brotherhood affiliate in the Gulf, as it has successfully contested parliamentary elections since the 1980s. The local branch of the Ikhwan was founded in 1951, with the aim of Islamising Kuwaiti society in the face of Western encroachment. Today, in its capacity as a political bloc, the Kuwaiti Brotherhood influences major policy decisions and political debate. Despite the existence of a generous welfare package to citizens, Brotherhood activity has persisted, proving that it cannot be “bought off,” as rentier state theory predicts. Rather, rentier Islamists adapt to political systems where they are afforded little freedom by infiltrating the social sector before turning to institutionalised politics.

Usama al-Shahin, a former ICM parliamentarian, describes the history of the Kuwaiti Brotherhood as having passed through five stages.<sup>2</sup> The first lasted from the 1940s until the 1960s, during which time “there was no political work. The Muslim Brotherhood focused on charity, *tarbīa*, *da‘wa*.<sup>3</sup>”<sup>4</sup> The second phase began in the 1970s, when political work started “but in an independent way, not organized.”<sup>5</sup> The third stage came in 1981 when Islah stood for elections in parliament as a bloc, and thus officially took on political role.<sup>6</sup> The creation of the ICM in 1991 marked the fourth phase, as “we

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<sup>1</sup> The Qatari Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1975, and the Emirati branch in 1974, while the Kuwaiti branch was established in 1951.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Usama al-Shahin, November 24, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> *Da‘wa*, literally translated to “call” or “invitation,” refers to preaching or proselytising the Islamic religion.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Usama al-Shahin.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

decided the Muslim Brotherhood needed a political role in a separate way.”<sup>7</sup> Al-Shahin insists that the ICM has now entered a new stage, during which the ICM and Islah are working increasingly as a political party, with a focus on reform of the government system.<sup>8</sup>

This chapter focuses on the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood’s development through the first three of these stages, revealing how the movement’s social activities translated into political capital – a common trajectory for rentier Islamists. The organisation’s maturation also illustrates the superficiality of the division between the social/cultural and the political in the Kuwaiti context, as the Brotherhood’s role in the social sphere heralded its rise to political relevance. Inside the Gulf generally, because social policy is highly politicised and a means through which governments can strengthen their legitimacy, it is logical that Islamists who began agitating to challenge cultural Westernisation have become politically relevant actors as well. Another unique aspect of Brotherhood activity in super-rentier states is the degree to which governments there have managed to co-opt the religious arena, making the informal social sector an even more likely place for Islamists to gather, as demonstrated in the Kuwaiti case.

#### *Challenges to “Establishment Islam”*

The Islamic sector has long held substantial social and political capital in Kuwait. The government has spent large sums to fund religious education and mosques to help gain the support of official ‘ulama’ who have historically backed al-Sabah rule.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the Education Ministry, along with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Tawfic E. Farah, “Political Culture and Development in a Rentier State: The Case of Kuwait,” *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 24, no. 1/2 (1989): 108.

Affairs, oversees the curricula of religious schools and the messages of Friday sermons to ensure that radical ideas, and particularly notions that could undermine Kuwaitis' loyalty to their ruler, are not spread.<sup>10</sup> Al-Sabah leaders have also sought to assure Kuwaitis of their own Islamic credentials by participating in religious events and using Islamic references in public rhetoric.<sup>11</sup> Although the state has largely managed to co-opt "establishment Islam," it has failed to undercut support for the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, which has long influenced Kuwaiti society.<sup>12</sup>

Islamist thought was prominent in Kuwait even before the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood, and a history compiled by Brotherhood member Ali Fahed al-Zumai is instructive in constructing the movement's background. A group of Kuwaitis, inspired by the literature of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad 'Abduh, and Rashid Rida, had begun to hold meetings in the house of religious scholar Shaykh Yusuf bin 'Isa al-Qina'i at the beginning of the twentieth century to discuss Islamist ideas of reform. Eager to update the education sector, they established the first modern Kuwaiti school, al-Mubarakiiyya, in 1912.<sup>13</sup> As al-Mubarakiiyya grew, a new generation was exposed to modern education and reformist visions of Islam. In fact, two other schools were founded by the reformers who established al-Mubarakiiyya: al-Ahmadiyya in 1920 and al-Sa'ada in 1924.<sup>14</sup> The emirate's first charity institution, the Arab Islamic Charitable Society, was also established under the leadership of a well-known Islamist, philanthropist Farhan al-Khalid, in 1913.<sup>15</sup> The organisation aimed to Islamise Kuwaiti society, promoting

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<sup>10</sup> Crystal, *Kuwait*, 69.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Sami al-Faraj, November 13, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Farah, "Political Culture and Development in a Rentier State," 108.

<sup>13</sup> Al-Zumai, 23.

<sup>14</sup> Carine Lahoud-Tatar, *Islam et Politique au Koweït* [Islam and Politics in Kuwait] (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2011), 50.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Zumai, 28.

awareness of Islam in the face of the influence of Christian missionaries and providing social services to the poor.<sup>16</sup> Despite such initiatives, a local Islamist organisation did not exist. Until the mid-1940s, the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood comprised mainly teachers at al-Mubaraikyya or al-Ahmadiyya, and many non-Kuwaitis.<sup>17</sup> The Brotherhood's presence, then, took on "an embryonic form, without structure or organization" at that time.<sup>18</sup>

During the 1940s, as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood began to grow, the influence of Islamists in Kuwait's education system and intellectual life expanded. Many teachers who supported the Ikhwan travelled to Kuwait as part of the Egyptian mission of al-Azhar University and "helped to promote a good reputation in favour of the movement inside Kuwait."<sup>19</sup> In addition, during that period, Brotherhood founder Hasan al-Banna sent supporters of his movement to the Gulf to promote Brotherhood ideology by delivering public lectures and distributing the organisation's weekly magazine.<sup>20</sup>

Though the Kuwaiti Brotherhood was undoubtedly influenced by the Egyptian mother organisation, its development was also aided by the branch in neighbouring Iraq.<sup>21</sup> Brotherhood bookstores in Basra, Zubayr, and Baghdad, founded in the mid-1940s, carried the books and brochures of the Iraqi and Egyptian organisations and were commonly brought to Kuwait.<sup>22</sup> Certainly, "the visits made by Kuwaitis to Iraq for trade and tourism and counter-visits of Iraqis to Kuwait created a kind of contact and effect."<sup>23</sup> By the 1950s, the Brotherhood's ideology and rejection of Western domination had

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<sup>16</sup> Lahoud-Tatar, 50-51.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 51-52.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 51-52.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Zumai, 70.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>21</sup> Lahoud-Tatar, 52.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Zumai, 70-71.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 71.

spread; “a group of Kuwaiti young men were strongly influenced by the Ikhwan. They admired its ideology and its political participation.”<sup>24</sup> In 1941, one such Kuwaiti man, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ‘Ali al-Mutawa, met with Egyptian teacher and Brotherhood supporter Muhammad Ahmad ‘Abd al-Hamid in Baghdad.<sup>25</sup> Following this encounter and al-Mutawa’s expression of admiration of the Brotherhood, ‘Abd al-Hamid sent an application form for al-Mutawa’s membership to the Brotherhood and an introductory letter to General Guide Hasan al-Banna.<sup>26</sup> Al-Mutawa then spent Ramadan in Egypt among a group of Brotherhood members in 1945, where he met al-Banna.<sup>27</sup> In 1946, along with his brother ‘Abdullah ‘Ali, who also supported Brotherhood ideology, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Mutawa met al-Banna once again at hajj, where they discussed opening a branch of the Brotherhood in Kuwait.<sup>28</sup>

#### *The Establishment of Irshad*

The Muslim Brotherhood was formally organised in Kuwait under the banner of al-Jam‘iat al-Irshad al-Islami (The Islamic Guidance Association, hereafter Irshad) in 1951. The membership elected ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Mutawa as the group’s first General Supervisor. The organisation was headquartered at al-Mutawa’s home near al-Mubarakiyya School and housed a library, a lecture hall, a management department, and a place for prayer.<sup>29</sup> ‘Abdullah al-Mutawa, quoted in Kuwaiti political scientist Sami Awadh’s dissertation, explained the birth of the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood as a counterweight to Western influence: “Our Islamic movement started in the early fifties,

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>25</sup> Lahoud-Tatar, 52.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Zumai, 69.

<sup>27</sup> Lahoud-Tatar, 52.

<sup>28</sup> Al-Zumai, 70.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 73.

during the period in which Kuwait was under the fierce assault from western concepts and values of secularism and nationalism, the most noticeable of which were the Pan-Arab Nationalism, Ba'athism, and Socialism. Such an assault was meant to distract the Kuwaiti Muslims from their faith. That was the main reason for the establishment of political Islamic activities.”<sup>30</sup> Irshad was clearly influenced by the central Brotherhood organisation in Egypt, which shared this aim.

Irshad's followers comprised two major groups. First, young people influenced by contemporary Islamist ideology “found, in this society, the symbolism and required representation enabling them to understand Islam in a modern way by presenting it in a comprehensive, up-to-date, style suitable for both practical and theoretical application.”<sup>31</sup> Second, conservative religious personalities joined the Society largely because it “was the only [non-state] Islamic organisation present in Kuwait at that time.”<sup>32</sup> The group's members, then, did not enrol to influence domestic political life. In fact, most members of Irshad were similar in social profile to members of other associations and clubs in Kuwait at that time: intellectuals and merchants from established Sunni families who lived primarily in the city and had the leisure time and money to devote to a civil society organisation.<sup>33</sup> As explained by prominent Brotherhood member Tareq al-Suwaidan, Irshad “did mostly social work, *da'wa*, and some relief work because they [its members] came from rich families.”<sup>34</sup>

Official Irshad documents confirm the organisation's primarily social and cultural nature. Though Irshad's first constitution has been lost, amendments made by the

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<sup>30</sup> ‘Abdullah al-‘Ali al-Mutawa, Qtd in Awadh, 162.

<sup>31</sup> Al-Zumai, 72.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Tareq al-Suwaidan, November 14, 2013.

leadership in 1957 shed light on its official aims.<sup>35</sup> The organisation espoused seven primary goals, recorded by Kuwaiti Islamist ideologue Mustafa Muhammad al-Tahan: (1) establishing Islamic tradition and pure monotheism; (2) spreading a religious spirit in the country; (3) advancing Islamic culture and education; (4) working to reform the individual Muslim, the Muslim family, and Muslim society; (5) calling on God for wisdom and good council; (6) eliminating unemployment and fighting illiteracy; and (7) cooperating with other charity bodies inside and outside Kuwait.<sup>36</sup> Toward these ends, Irshad was formally divided into four sections of organisational management: students, workers, merchants, and spreading of *da'wa*.<sup>37</sup> Irshad listed the following means of achieving its goals:

Publicity through different publishing and broadcasting methods [...] This in addition to organising delegations and missions inside Kuwait and abroad.

Training the Society's members in these objectives and confirming a practical religious sense in them as individuals and families; making them bodily sound through sports, spiritually sound through worship and intellectually sound through knowledge. This is in addition to stressing the concept of true brotherhood, perfect complementarity and genuine co-operation among them, so that a united Islamic society is created and a new generation is trained that understands the true meaning of Islam, applies its teachings, and directs the renaissance towards it.<sup>38</sup>

These tools of action were aligned with those proposed by Hasan al-Banna, as the Brotherhood aimed to Islamise society from the grassroots through the social sphere – much like the Egyptian mother organisation in its first decades.

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<sup>35</sup> Al-Zumai, 73.

<sup>36</sup> Mustafa Muhammad al-Tahan, *'Abdullah al-'Ali al- Mutawa wa-Qadayya al-Muslimin fi al-'Alam* [‘Abdullah al-'Ali al-Mutawa and the Issues of Muslims in the World] (Kuwait: Mustafa Muhammad al-Tahan, 2010), 68.

<sup>37</sup> Falah 'Abdullah al-Mdaires, *Jama'at al-Ikhwān al-Muslimin fi al-Kuwait* [The Muslim Brotherhood Group in Kuwait] (Kuwait: Huquq al-Taba' wa-l-Nashar Mahfuza, 1994), 15. Al-Mdaires, a Kuwaiti political scientist, has been distinguished by his suspicion towards Islamists groups of all strands inside the country. His account is used in balance with those of Islamist sympathisers, namely al-Zumai and al-Tahan, and more neutral writers like Sami Nassir al-Khalidi. Importantly, these sources do not differ greatly in terms of historical background.

<sup>38</sup> “Al-Qanun al-Asasi li Jam'iat al-Irshad al-Islami” [The Basic Law of the Islamic Guidance Association] Qtd. in al-Zumai, 74.

*Irshad's Expanding Social Role*

Though Kuwait's education sector had already been exposed to Islamist ideology, Irshad contributed to further Islamist infiltration of the sector. The group established al-Irshad School, which aimed to spread Islamic thought and encourage *da'wa*. The school grew quickly, with 400 registered students in its second year.<sup>39</sup> Unlike other schools in the emirate, Irshad did not place restrictions on which students could join the school, other than that they be Muslims. Because Muslims of any nationality could enrol, al-Irshad School became a stronghold for expatriates from states that had influential Brotherhood affiliates.<sup>40</sup> To take on the growing number of students, many Egyptian, Syrian, Palestinian, and other Arab teachers sympathetic to Brotherhood ideology were hired in the 1950s.<sup>41</sup> The Teachers' Club was established shortly thereafter, and the Ikhwan earned the majority of seats in the club's management council, giving Irshad its first public and institutionalised role in a professional association.<sup>42</sup> Adding to its influence, the first Brotherhood student committee began in one of Kuwait's largest schools, al-Shuwaikh Secondary School.<sup>43</sup> Further, Kuwaiti Brotherhood members held a number of positions within state educational institutions like the Institute of Religious Studies, founded in 1947, most of whose faculty members were Egyptian graduates from al-Azhar who were sympathetic to or subscribed to Brotherhood thought; their influence was palpable in the 1950s.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Sami Nasir al-Khalidi, *Al-Ahزاب al-Islamiyya fi al-Kuwait: Al-Shi'a, al-Ikhwan, al-Salaf* [The Islamic Parties in Kuwait: The Shias, the Brotherhood, the Salafis]. Kuwait: Dar al-Naba' li-l-Nashar wa-l-Tawzi', 1999; 163.

<sup>40</sup> Al-Mdaires, *Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, 15.

<sup>41</sup> Al-Tahan, 68.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>43</sup> Awadh, 163-164.

<sup>44</sup> Al-Khalidi, 163.

The Ikhwan also established Irshad Library, which was open to the public, as well as the Centre for Youth Sports and Culture, which hosted prominent Brotherhood ideologues and preachers in lectures while also organising sporting events.<sup>45</sup> Further aiding the growth of Brotherhood thought was the dispatch of key leaders from Egypt to Kuwait.<sup>46</sup> In addition, Irshad opened literacy classes to the general public under the umbrella of its Society Committee for Eliminating Illiteracy.<sup>47</sup> The organisation's Department for Propagating Islamic Culture also housed a section that sold Islamic books and brochures at subsidised prices.<sup>48</sup> In addition to its monthly magazine *Irshad*, which was founded in 1952,<sup>49</sup> the organisation held daily two-hour programmes on the Broadcasting Station, which it managed for one and a half years at the beginning of the 1950s.<sup>50</sup> Irshad's takeover of the radio station from state control was due to the government's lack of interest in the project, Irshad's impressive degree of organisational sophistication, and the nonthreatening nature of Irshad's message to the government.<sup>51</sup> In fact, because of its reputation for social work, the organisation at first enjoyed excellent relations with al-Sabah.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Mutawa was among Kuwait's wealthiest merchants and held the trust of many al-Sabah shaykhs.<sup>53</sup> Though it was not spreading an explicitly political message, Irshad gained control of political tools and became adept at using them to disseminate a message that primarily concerned the Islamisation of society.

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<sup>45</sup> Al-Tahan, 68.

<sup>46</sup> Al-Khalidi, 163.

<sup>47</sup> Al-Zumai, 79-80.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>49</sup> Al-Khalidi, 166.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Zumai, 80-81.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Tareq al-Suwaidan.

<sup>53</sup> Al-Tahan, 71.

Islah developed other forms of social outreach. In the charity sector, Irshad's committees of zakat<sup>54</sup> created a variety of initiatives to aid the poor. Among these was "the programme of dress," through which the organisation provided winter clothing for people without means to buy it.<sup>55</sup> Irshad also registered a group of scouts with the Department of Education, which became one of Kuwait's largest scout groups.<sup>56</sup> Irshad arranged other activities, in particular for youth, such as acting, sports, and choral singing.<sup>57</sup>

In terms of strictly political activity, Irshad campaigned to spur the Committee of Kuwaiti Clubs to support Egypt during the Tripartite Aggression in 1956.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, Irshad backed the Algerian revolution and directed a note to the Kuwaiti government encouraging it do to the same, while calling for donations to aid the cause.<sup>59</sup> As far as domestic political issues, Irshad's philosophy was one of reform rather than radical change.<sup>60</sup> "As a result, a mutual relationship of trust and respect was nurtured between al-Irshad and the political order."<sup>61</sup> Irshad seemed to support popular participation in government, however. When, in 1954, the term of membership of the state's councils, which oversaw state administration, had ended, Irshad recommended the holding of new elections and the formal division of authority among the executive, legislature, and judiciary.<sup>62</sup> Nonetheless, the organisation's political ideology remained uncoordinated, as

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<sup>54</sup> Zakat, the third of the pillars of Islam, is an obligatory annual payment, or tax, given towards charity.

<sup>55</sup> Al-Zumai, 79

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>58</sup> Al-Mdaires, *Jama'at al-Ikhwān al-Muslimin*, 19

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>60</sup> Al-Zumai, 84-85.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 86-87.

the group expended most of its energy on influencing the social and educational spheres. It also faced a serious ideological challenge from the nationalist movement.

*The Rising Tide of Arab Nationalism*

While Islamism continued to influence Kuwaiti society, it failed to reach the political relevance of the Arab nationalist movement. The nationalists, unlike the Brotherhood, were politically active from the start. The takeover of Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir in Egypt in 1952 led to region-wide prominence of his ideology. Nationalists won support of the Kuwaiti street, as Nasir's successes at home and abroad gave his movement increased popular support.<sup>63</sup> The nationalisation of the Suez Canal in 1956, Egypt's unification with Syria in 1958, and the ongoing broadcast of Nasir's Voice of the Arabs radio programme throughout the Middle East made Arab nationalism increasingly popular as the 1950s progressed.<sup>64</sup> Though Irshad was sympathetic to Nasir's rejection of Western influence, it considered secular nationalism itself to be an import from the West.

The nationalists established the Nationalist Cultural Club in 1953 as an opponent to Irshad. The movement annexed a number of Arab nationalists from Egypt and Palestine, and a substantial proportion of Kuwaiti elite and intellectuals, foremost among them Ahmad al-Khatib, also supported the nationalist movement.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, nationalists in Kuwait benefitted from their control of the Workers' Club, in addition to their work in establishing the Public Union of Kuwaiti Workers.<sup>66</sup> Although the Brotherhood had initially found support among the merchant classes, nationalists co-opted a great many of them through their infiltration of the Merchants' Market, which

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<sup>63</sup> Al-Khalidi, 165.

<sup>64</sup> Al-Tahan, 69.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>66</sup> Al-Mdaires, *Jama 'at al-Ikhwān al-Muslimin*, 17.

became a nationalist stronghold in the 1950s.<sup>67</sup> Sports and cultural clubs, in addition to other youth organisations, came under the control of the Arab nationalists, especially after the appearance of the Committee of Kuwaiti Clubs, the Union of Kuwaiti Clubs, and the Kuwaiti Association, all of which became part of the nationalist strategy to gain broader influence in the 1950s and came to form the backbone of the movement.<sup>68</sup>

#### *Internal Division Begins in Irshad*

As nationalism became increasingly popular, Irshad faced challenges due to internal dissension. The first split within the Kuwaiti Brotherhood emerged between the older members of Irshad, led by General Supervisor ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Mutawa, and the new generation of leaders led by ‘Abd al-Rahman al-‘Atiqi. Al-Mutawa accused the newer members of trying to co-opt the youth and turn them against him and of opposing the participation of older members who were loyal to him.<sup>69</sup> This clash essentially pitted the younger members, who “by virtue of their age, were free from all business interests and social responsibilities” against “the conservative group of older dignitaries who had extensive business interests, commercial concerns and social responsibilities.”<sup>70</sup> While younger members were less compromising in their pursuit of Irshad’s goals, the older generation was wary of clashing with or alienating portions of society or the government.<sup>71</sup>

One area of major disagreement between these factions emerged about the proper reaction to arrests of Egyptian Brotherhood members under the Nasir regime. The more moderate faction, led by al-Mutawa and supported by the majority of the organisation,

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>69</sup> Al-Zumai, 90-91.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 92.

urged neutrality on the issue. These members were reticent to risk private interests in Egypt and the strong relationship between the Kuwaiti and Egyptian governments by taking a publicly anti-Egyptian stance.<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, the younger faction, which represented the student organisation and was led by ‘Abd al-Rahman al-‘Atiqi, Muhammad al-‘Adsani, and Ahmad al-Da‘ij, insisted on action.<sup>73</sup> They argued that the Kuwaiti movement should take a stronger position against the Nasir regime, in solidarity with fellow Ikhwan members. In the end, the moderate faction was successful, yet serious divisions remained. Despite attempts made to persuade al-Mutawa to remain in authority, he submitted his resignation in the face of such internal disunity, “on the pretext of his preoccupation with the management of his commercial affairs in Egypt and other Arab countries.”<sup>74</sup>

#### *The Downfall of Irshad*

Following this split, in the late 1950s, Irshad’s activities floundered, and the organisation grew more insular.<sup>75</sup> Meanwhile, al-Irshad School failed to attract new, particularly Kuwaiti, students, signalling stagnation of the movement among the local population.<sup>76</sup> Due to the appeal of nationalists among the educated classes, where the Brotherhood had traditionally found support, the Ikhwan lost many backers.<sup>77</sup> The remaining group of Irshad members “could keep alive the Islamic activities, though on a simple basis, through its coordination and co-operation with non-Kuwaiti Ikhwan groups.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>73</sup> Al-Mdaires, *Jama‘at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, 20.

<sup>74</sup> Al-Zumai, 92.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>77</sup> Awadh, 166-168.

<sup>78</sup> Al-Zumai, 97.

The year 1959 perhaps marked the lowest point in Brotherhood power in Kuwait, as the rising tide of nationalism diminished its appeal. Furthermore, Irshad members' disappointing results<sup>79</sup> in the 1958 Administrative Council elections<sup>80</sup> and the 1959 government prohibition of all social and cultural clubs put a formal end to its organisational power. Though there is disagreement about whether this ban affected Irshad, the group was so weak at this time that a government-mandated closure would have had little effect. Because the restriction of social clubs and publications stemmed from the government's disapproval of a celebration arranged by nationalists on the occasion of the first anniversary of the United Arab Republic,<sup>81</sup> some scholars maintain that Irshad was not banned, as it was considered a counterweight to the nationalist movement.<sup>82</sup> Regardless, Irshad closed either in 1959, as a result of the government injunction,<sup>83</sup> or in 1960, when members left their headquarters and did not look for a new one.<sup>84</sup> Though Irshad closed, Brotherhood ideology remained, and Ikhwan-led and financed study circles, lectures, gatherings, and charity projects continued.<sup>85</sup> It was not until 1962, when a new law for clubs and public welfare societies was established, that the Brotherhood organised itself again.<sup>86</sup> Significantly, this law specified that new groups "must not interfere in politics, religious disputes or provocation of sectarian or racial fanaticism."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Awadh, 169.

<sup>80</sup> Four Brotherhood members won seats, and narrowly so.

<sup>81</sup> Al-Tahan, 72.

<sup>82</sup> Al-Zumai, 95.

<sup>83</sup> Al-Khalidi, 162; Al-Mdaires, *Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, 20-21.

<sup>84</sup> Al-Zumai, 95.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>86</sup> Law No. 24 for the Year 1962 Concerning Clubs and Public Welfare Societies, in *Records of Kuwait 1961-1965: 1965*, ed. Anita L.P. Burdett (Cambridge: Cambridge Archive Editions, 1997), 513-520.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 514.

*Independence and the Founding of Islah*

In 1963, deciding to revive the Brotherhood movement in newly independent Kuwait, former members of Irshad gathered in the *dīwāniyya* of Fahad al-Hamad al-Khalid to discuss the founding of a new association.<sup>88</sup> The result was the establishment of Islah in July 1963, a group that remains active today. The organisation's initial membership was composed primarily of "[r]emnants of al-Irshad; some religious scholars; judges with an Islamic cultural background, in addition to numbers of citizens from religious conservative groups (especially of Najdi origin)."<sup>89</sup> The aims and activities of Islah closely resembled those of Irshad.<sup>90</sup> The organisation's primary goals were listed as: (1) anti-vice and resistance to social pests and harmful habits; (2) guidance to youth; (3) a return to Islamic legislation particularly in areas of education and media; (4) finding solutions for the dilemmas facing Islamic society; (5) engaging in *da'wa* and spreading virtuous morals throughout society; (6) encouraging acts of kindness and charity as well as advocacy for justice according to the Islamic example; (7) freedom of the mind and thought from ignorance; (8) education of youth in the Islamic manner; (9) maintenance of Islamic rules; (10) realising social justice and ensuring it for all citizens; and (11) supporting Arab and the Islamic unity.<sup>91</sup> Though several of these goals were strictly social and religious, others had become more focused on changing government policy, with explicit mention of the prevailing political authorities and the need for their involvement in Islamising Kuwaiti legislation.

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<sup>88</sup> Al-Zumai, 179.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>91</sup> Al-Tahan, 74-75.

Importantly, although the Brotherhood had a principal role in the establishment, management, and administration of Islah, it lacked an independent structure.<sup>92</sup> In fact, Brotherhood members failed to “differentiate between their commitment to Jam‘iyat al-Islah and the fact that they were individuals with distinguished ideological and dynamic commitment to the Ikhwan al-Muslimun. This was facilitated by the fact that most of al-Islah’s members, though the majority of them were not Ikhwan, accepted the domination of the ideology of the Ikhwan members.”<sup>93</sup> When Yusuf al-Hajji took over leadership of Islah in 1963, the group began to focus on renewing its efforts to spread Islamist thought and combat the rising tide of Arab nationalism, which aligned with Brotherhood aims.

Throughout the 1960s, the international Brotherhood represented “the cultural and organisational artery of the Muslim Brotherhood movement” in Kuwait.<sup>94</sup> In the mid-1960s, the mother group even sent a group of Kuwaiti Brotherhood youth to Syria and Jordan to take a course on organisational and cultural work, in addition to dispatching several Egyptians to Kuwait.<sup>95</sup> During this period and throughout the 1980s, the Kuwaiti Brotherhood “was often influenced by the parent Egyptian organization. Formal ties existed (until 1991), but the model of the Egyptian organization – with its networking activities and organizational efforts – proved far more influential than formal ties. More important still were the personal contacts.”<sup>96</sup>

Similar to Irshad, Islah has focused on intensive training in ideology and scholarship, as well as athletic and cultural activities, in addition to *da‘wa*.<sup>97</sup> Beginning in

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<sup>92</sup> Al-Zumai, 183.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>94</sup> Al-Khalidi, 168.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>96</sup> N.J. Brown, “Pushing Toward Party Politics?,” 6.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Tareq al-Suwaidan.

the 1960s, Islah's Cultural Committee sponsored popular events for specific weeks – weeks of Ramadan, hajj, and the Qur'an, among others – which attracted large numbers of Kuwaitis.<sup>98</sup> In 1968, Irshad opened its first centre for memorisation of the Qur'an in al-Irshad School.<sup>99</sup> By 1980, the number of Qur'an memorisation schools had reached approximately 60, with more than 5,000 students among them.<sup>100</sup> Islah recruited new members through these centres, as the schools essentially “turned into undeclared party headquarters.”<sup>101</sup> Its position in learning centres also allowed Islah to hold sway in a number of mosques and religious centres, thereby influencing the broader social arena.<sup>102</sup>

In all of its endeavours, Islah enjoyed relative freedom from government influence, since the authorities feared the power of Arab nationalists over that of the religious movement, as evidenced by British records during the 1960s on this matter.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, the group had long proven effective in hosting social programmes and improving education. Because of their good relationship with the government due to their largely non-confrontational stance, Brotherhood members gained positions in the state apparatus, enhancing their ability to spread Ikhwan ideology. Yusuf al-Hajji served as minister of *awqāf* during the 1960s<sup>104</sup> and was named justice minister in 1972.<sup>105</sup> Former Brotherhood MP Yusuf al-Rafa'i was appointed minister of the state for cabinet affairs in 1967; prominent member 'Abd al-Rahman al-'Atiqi became minister of oil and finance in

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<sup>98</sup> Al-Tahan, 82.

<sup>99</sup> Al-Mdaires, *Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, 22.

<sup>100</sup> Awadh, 191.

<sup>101</sup> Al-Mdaires, *Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, 22.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>103</sup> “BBC Monitor Report of 3 May 1966: Kuwait Premier Accuses ‘Newcomers’ of ‘Harmful Activities’ against National Unity,” in *Records of Kuwait 1966-1971: 1966*, ed. Anita L. P. Burdett (Cambridge: Cambridge Archive Editions, 2003), 170-172; “Counter Subversion Committee: Working Group on the Persian Gulf (Including Kuwait)” Meeting Record, August 12, 1965, in *Records of Kuwait 1961-1965: 1965*, 323-329.

<sup>104</sup> Al-Mdaires, *Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, 22.

<sup>105</sup> Al-Khalidi, 173.

1971.<sup>106</sup> The Brotherhood used its long-standing relationship with the ruling family “to wield pressure against the regime with the aim of implementing Islamic *sharia‘a*, in return for several concessions as to popular participation in political decision-making.”<sup>107</sup> During this period, for example, the Brotherhood began a campaign to amend article two of the Kuwaiti Constitution to proclaim Islamic shari‘a *the* rather than *a* primary source of legislation.<sup>108</sup>

The Brotherhood also focused on influencing state educational establishments and instruments of the media to win over the next generation of Kuwaitis.<sup>109</sup> Through its relationship with the government, Islah progressed toward its social goals using its political posts. Members of Islah “used positions in government ministries to advance their agenda of injecting religion into public affairs. The Ministry of Education presented the opportunity to revise curricula and the Ministry of Information banned books and put television under tight regulation.”<sup>110</sup> Still, the Brotherhood’s gains in electoral politics remained limited.

#### *Electoral Politics of the 1960s*

Kuwait’s first National Assembly elections, held in 1963, confirmed the primacy of Arab nationalism: Islah’s seven candidates garnered 2,784 votes, compared to the 16 Arab nationalist candidates who received 10,277 votes.<sup>111</sup> Though it undoubtedly held political capital and gained three seats in the 1963 parliament, members of the “Muslim Brotherhood did not raise themselves politically in the period of the 1960s in a clear way

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>107</sup> Awadh, 181.

<sup>108</sup> Al-Khalidi, 173.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>110</sup> Commins, *The Gulf States*, 236.

<sup>111</sup> Al-Khalidi, 169.

except they were active in pressuring the first National Assembly in 1963 to amend article 206 of the penal code and prevent the sale of alcohol in Kuwait.”<sup>112</sup> Aside from social policies, the Brotherhood was unable to create any coherent political platform.<sup>113</sup>

The 1967 election saw the beginning of the downfall of the nationalist strand in Kuwait, yet by no means due to rising popularity of Islamists. Kuwaiti nationalists’ involvement in election fraud, in addition to Nasir’s defeat to Israel in June 1967, the disintegration of the United Arab Republic, and the fall of nationalism in Yemen and Mosul signalled the beginning of the end for the movement and an opening for the Brotherhood.<sup>114</sup> Despite diminishing support for nationalists, only one Islah member gained a seat in the National Assembly.<sup>115</sup>

#### *Internal Reform of Islah*

The decline of the nationalist movement coincided with a change in Islah’s tactics. The organisation’s unsuccessful entry into policymaking, such as its failure to amend article two of the constitution and to implement strict gender segregation, led many members of the Brotherhood to believe they needed a new means of achieving political influence.<sup>116</sup> Still, the organisation held a degree of popular support, as demonstrated by the successful declaration of a law to prohibit alcohol in 1965.<sup>117</sup> To secure greater political relevance, Islah embarked on internal reforms.

Until the late 1960s, Brotherhood members within Islah had “continued to merge themselves into the Jam‘iyat al-Islah as a shapeless inner group of individuals without

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<sup>112</sup> Al-Mdaires, *Jama‘at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, 27.

<sup>113</sup> Awadh, 173-174.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>116</sup> Al-Zumai, 184.

<sup>117</sup> Awadh, 174.

any special organisation.”<sup>118</sup> At that time, the Brotherhood’s desire to enter political life was hampered by Islah’s establishment as a religious organisation. Nonetheless, the board of directors was dominated by Ikhwan members and sympathisers.<sup>119</sup> Frustrated by their lack of political success yet heartened by the decline of Arab nationalism, these Brotherhood members “adopted new organisational, dynamic and secret methods, whilst at the same time, keeping their strong influence in al-Islah, which in turn became a supporter for their movement. This turned al-Islah into an Ikhwan façade in most of its issues and ideological and cultural attitudes, rather than an independent ally with a separate ideological approach.”<sup>120</sup>

At that time, the writings of prominently imprisoned Egyptian Brotherhood member Sayyid Qutb had begun to influence the Arab world, and the Brotherhood started positioning itself as “the revolutionary alternative” to secular and Western nationalism.<sup>121</sup> Qutb’s notion of the importance of faith in overcoming society’s moral deterioration was particularly appealing to a conservative Kuwaiti public unhappy with increasing importation of Western ideas and customs. This influence played a large role in changing the Brotherhood’s methods: “Despite the continuing failure of the first generation of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement leadership to win over Kuwaiti public opinion, a group of active, ambitious youths emerged. They began to demand a re-evaluation of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement’s existing course, with the aim of injecting new life into the Movement.”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Al-Zumai, 184.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 186-187.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 174.

As part of this reassessment, Islah expanded its activities. The organisation moved its headquarters to a larger facility in al-Rawda in 1970. This building, funded by donations from members and a government grant, houses a library, a theatre, sports facilities, a mosque, and a youth centre.<sup>123</sup> Also in 1970, Islah transformed its internal monthly brochure *al-Islah*, which it had produced since 1965, into the weekly and broadly circulated magazine *al-Mujtama (The Society)*.<sup>124</sup> This magazine, which remains in distribution, became the principal voice of the international Brotherhood organisation, as government repression in Egypt, Syria, and Yemen prevented these branches from releasing publications.<sup>125</sup> Islah also developed youth and social programmes. In addition, zakat committees were established and operated from mosque headquarters to collect and distribute donations and alms for the poor.<sup>126</sup> Women's committees were also successful in explaining and spreading Islah's views to females, displacing the liberal movements that had previously held sway among Kuwaiti women.<sup>127</sup> Further, journeys abroad for *umra*<sup>128</sup> and to visit the other Gulf states were arranged with Islamist societies in those countries.<sup>129</sup> The expansion of Islah activities led to an increase in its membership during the 1970s. Certainly, by the end of the 1960s, members of the Kuwaiti Brotherhood had

brought an end to the stage of the Ikhwan's activities based on individual enthusiasm and sentiment, and replaced it with a collective work based on a strict organisation and a defined ideology. Hence the Kuwaiti Ikhwan was renewed in form. It is true to say that this group was identical in ideology and activity to the first faction of the Ikhwan that existed in Kuwait in the early fifties. On the ideological level it adopted completely the Ikhwan line of the original Egyptian association, with one difference in the political field,

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 186-187.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>125</sup> Al-Khalidi, 171.

<sup>126</sup> Al-Zumai, 188-189.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>128</sup> *Umra* is known as the "lesser pilgrimage" to Mecca. Unlike hajj, it can be performed at any time during the year and is not compulsory.

<sup>129</sup> Al-Zumai, 191.

namely, that is believed in reformist work and rejected the radical method in dealing with the political regime.<sup>130</sup>

*Waning Nationalism and the Rise of Islamism in the 1970s*

Because the Brotherhood had become popular during the oil boom of the 1970s, when government spending on social welfare exploded, support for the Brotherhood was not contingent on receiving material benefits, as it sometimes is in other, poorer, parts of the Arab world. As explained by Kuwaiti political scientist Shafeeq Ghabra, “human beings don’t live only on social services. Kuwaiti society, when Islamists became more popular, in the 1970s and 1980s, was not poor, yet felt the need for something larger. Kuwaitis wanted a sense of belonging to the region.”<sup>131</sup> This need for security and sense of identity was particularly acute following the failure of Arab nationalism.

The 1971 National Assembly elections appeared to give the government cause for confidence, as pro-government candidates took 20 of the 50 seats. In the 1971 and 1975 elections, the Brotherhood expanded its representation by using coalitions and aligning with independent personalities.<sup>132</sup> “This method exaggerated the political power of the Ikhwan and gave them importance in the eyes of others [...] It was also instrumental in promoting many laws and issues of an Islamic nature.”<sup>133</sup> In a politically charged environment, an increasingly oppositional parliament was an unwelcome nuisance to the ruling family. Parliament sought greater power in “issues considered by the ruling family to be its reserved domain: foreign policy, inter-Arab politics, and national security.”<sup>134</sup> The early 1970s marked the first time that the Brotherhood found itself willing to ally

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>131</sup> Interview with Shafeeq Ghabra, November 21, 2013.

<sup>132</sup> Al-Zumai, 201.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>134</sup> Baaklini, Denoeux, and Springborg, 181.

with non-Islamist political blocs to expand its representation in parliament. Its agenda remained focused on pushing for social change once in the legislature, however.

When the opposition-dominated 1975 parliament, which included members of the traditional secular opposition and a large number of independents,<sup>135</sup> began taking measures to allow the Supreme Judicial Council to examine the constitutionality of any government order, Amir Shaykh Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah (r. 1965-1977) feared the loss of his prerogative as ruler.<sup>136</sup> Though he vetoed the law, parliament, which could overthrow his decision with a two-thirds majority, tried to vote again. Before this could happen, “[t]he government, fearing an undesirable precedent, dissolved the body” in August 1976.<sup>137</sup> The parliament’s disbandment after less than one year led to protests among members of associations, particularly of workers, students, and teachers. In response, the government replaced the elected boards of professional associations with appointed boards sympathetic to the regime.<sup>138</sup> Still, it did not call for new elections.

In the face of increased government control, the Brotherhood failed to comment publicly, while members of the secular political opposition filled the streets in protest.<sup>139</sup> Brotherhood members thus continued to enjoy the cabinet positions they had been granted at the beginning of the decade, with its former leader ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Mutawa appointed minister of *awqāf* and Islamic affairs in 1976.<sup>140</sup> The Brotherhood’s relationship with the government remained strong. In a 1977 *al-Mujtama* article recounting a meeting between Islah Chairman ‘Abdullah ‘Ali al-Mutawa and Minister of

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<sup>135</sup> Al-Zumai, 162-163.

<sup>136</sup> Shafeeq Ghabra, “Voluntary Associations in Kuwait: The Foundations of a New System?,” *Middle East Journal* 45, no. 2 (1991): 205.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>139</sup> Al-Mdaires, *Jama‘at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, 30-31.

<sup>140</sup> Ghabra, “Voluntary Associations,” 206.

Social Affairs and Work Salim Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah, the minister even voiced the government's support for and encouragement of the Islamic direction.<sup>141</sup>

Beginning in 1977, Islamist parties, led by Islah, came to control a number of associations, labour unions, NUKS, and markets of cooperative societies.<sup>142</sup> This signalled the beginning of another strategy of spreading Brotherhood ideology: "the leadership of the Brotherhood concentrated on forming public welfare societies, trade associations and student unions [...] Then evolved the idea of infiltrating these institutions with the aim of totally dominating them."<sup>143</sup> It is impossible to determine, however, whether the Brotherhood aimed to gain supporters in these bodies primarily to advance their political or social capital, signalling the increasing overlap between the two.

During this period, nationalists had little power in popular associations, allowing Islamists to dominate the political scene not only through their relationship with the government but also through the student and professional groups.<sup>144</sup> In particular, "schooling and curricula emerged as critical sites of contestation between regimes and Islamists, and cut to the heart of the ideological battle for the control of Gulf polities."<sup>145</sup> As a result, student and youth organisations became more politically important than ever. The most prominent of these youth associations, the Muslim Youth League, was founded in 1972 in the United States under the leadership of Tareq al-Suwaidan.<sup>146</sup> Thereafter, Brotherhood power increased through the Kuwaiti Student Unions in Cairo, Alexandria,

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<sup>141</sup> Al-Mdaires, *Jama 'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, 31.

<sup>142</sup> Ghabra, "Voluntary Associations," 208.

<sup>143</sup> Awadh, 178.

<sup>144</sup> Ghabra, "Balancing State and Society," 60.

<sup>145</sup> Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *Insecure Gulf: The End of Certainty and the Transition to the Post-Oil Era* (London: Hurst and Company, 2011), 98.

<sup>146</sup> Awadh, 178.

and the United Kingdom.<sup>147</sup> Following successes in student union elections in Cairo and Alexandria, the Brotherhood decided to participate in elections of NUKS.<sup>148</sup> Importantly, Kuwait University's student union had become "a front for political work" when the National Assembly was suspended after 1976.<sup>149</sup> In 1977, the Brotherhood faction al-Musaqbal al-Tulabi (the Student Future) gained control over four of the nine groups in the Student Union and in 1979 won seats in the student council, displacing the nationalist al-Wasat al-Dimoqrati (the Democratic Centre).<sup>150</sup> Throughout Kuwait, the Brotherhood transformed student groups at various levels into "Islamic societies that represented their political and ideological viewpoints in all the contemporary issues. This was in addition to their benefitting from them as an organisational means through which to attract supporters."<sup>151</sup>

Remarkably, since 1979, the Muslim Brotherhood faction has without fail won leadership of NUKS. As a result, even today, Islah's primary constituency is composed of "young people of professional and academic backgrounds who became acquainted with revivalist ideas during their studies in local or Western universities. They seek to cultivate a meaningful and productive life through religion and to abandon Western-style consumer habits. However, typically, they have not called for complete destruction of the present life-style, but rather to complement and reform it."<sup>152</sup> As in Egypt, Brotherhood influence in student groups allowed the organisation to gain support in professional associations, with the Brotherhood garnering seats on many of their management councils

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 178.

<sup>148</sup> Al-Mdaires, *Jama'at al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*, 32.

<sup>149</sup> Al-Tahan, 139.

<sup>150</sup> Awadh, 178.

<sup>151</sup> Al-Zumai, 200.

<sup>152</sup> Joseph Kostiner, "Kuwait and Bahrain," in *The Politics of Islamic Revivalism: Diversity and Unity*, ed. Shireen Hunter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 126.

by the mid-1970s.<sup>153</sup> The Brotherhood worked within groups of engineers, graduates, teachers, oil syndicates, and workers in particular.<sup>154</sup> The organisation also gained seats on the boards of directors of other popular societies, such as trade unions, and cooperative societies.<sup>155</sup> In addition to activity in professional associations, charity organisations and solidarity committees represented major funding activities for the Brotherhood, which also raised its profile.

Gaining influence in Kuwaiti society even in absence of parliament and influenced by the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Kuwaiti Islamists became “more vocal and aggressive in their attempts to Islamize society and gain a share of power for themselves. Their ability to infiltrate the government bureaucracy increased.”<sup>156</sup> Kuwaiti political scientist Falah ‘Abdullah al-Mdaires describes six indicators of the spread of Brotherhood thought in Kuwaiti society in the 1970s and 1980s. First, the organisation came to dominate the students’ and workers’ unions.<sup>157</sup> Second, Kuwaiti mosques essentially were transformed into “party headquarters.”<sup>158</sup> Third, cooperative societies became another sector of Brotherhood control, as members became major shareholders and spread their slogans around the markets.<sup>159</sup> Fourth, rhetoric festivals, Islamic shows, and solidarity weeks were held, raising awareness of Brotherhood activity and ideology.<sup>160</sup> Fifth, charities such as the Africa Muslim Committee and the Asia Muslim Committee became popular and led to Brotherhood control of the World Islamic Charity

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<sup>153</sup> Al-Khalidi, 171.

<sup>154</sup> Awadh, 178.

<sup>155</sup> Al-Zumai, 200.

<sup>156</sup> Ghabra, “Balancing State and Society,” 59.

<sup>157</sup> Al-Mdaires, *Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, 32-34.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

Body, Zakat House, and Islamic Finance House.<sup>161</sup> Sixth, weekly religious studies groups resulted in the establishment of weekly women's meetings and the Brotherhood's consolidation of female support.<sup>162</sup> Because of the instruments at its disposal, the Muslim Brotherhood's success extended to other parts of Kuwait, both geographically and demographically.<sup>163</sup>

*Islamism in the Context of Ḥaḍar-Badū Divide*

In a highly homogenous ethnic environment, and with the large majority of the population Sunni, the major social division in Kuwait exists between fully urbanised long-time citizens (*ḥaḍar*) and newly naturalised tribal figures (*badū*, or bedouin).<sup>164</sup> In the 1970s, a large number of the *badū* was naturalised, bringing this social cleavage to the fore. Like many new urban dwellers in Cairo in the 1940s and 1950s, these bedouin were conservative and attracted to the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. In this context, belonging to a group like the Brotherhood allowed the *badū* to gain “a sense of equality and belonging and transition to urban life.”<sup>165</sup>

The newly naturalised bedouin were considered to hold a different, inferior, type of citizenship, and “old urbanites [remained] in control.”<sup>166</sup> Over time, as “relative deprivation increased,” tribal figures became more dissatisfied with the government.<sup>167</sup> As a result, they turned to the Brotherhood. In fact, despite the Brotherhood's popularity among many educated *ḥaḍar* Kuwaitis, “it is striking that many Kuwaiti Islamists have

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 35-36.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>163</sup> Al-Khalidi, 172.

<sup>164</sup> Interview with 'Abd al-'Aziz al-'Areedh, November 13, 2013.

<sup>165</sup> Interview with Shafeeq Ghabra.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

humble social backgrounds, including former Beduins, suggesting that the rise of this trend signifies a broadening scope of participation in national politics.”<sup>168</sup>

Many *ḥaḍar* Kuwaitis complain that the *badū* have failed to assimilate and consider their naturalisation an attempt by the state “to ‘tribalize’ and ‘bedouinize’ the whole society.”<sup>169</sup> In fact, Brotherhood detractors speculate that the organisation’s sympathy for the challenges facing Kuwait’s *bidūn* (stateless) population, many of whom live in outlying areas, can be explained by the fact that many “are members of the same tribes that provide core electoral support to the movement.”<sup>170</sup> Although the Brotherhood has historically gained followers from among the *badū*, tribes also exert independent political power, having held their own primary elections to select parliamentary candidates since 1976.<sup>171</sup> In such races, clan or tribal connections can outweigh ideological leanings.

Despite criticism of its role in outlying areas as politically expedient, the Brotherhood has been involved in tribal districts for decades. Beginning in 1973, it took up work in *badū* areas in an effort to win over some of the country’s largest tribes.<sup>172</sup> Ultimately, “[s]uccess was brought about by a number of factors, particularly the weakness of the Wahhabi trend, and the spread of education through which the young men in Bedouin tribes were committed to Islam in a modern perspective and moved much closer to the Ikhwan’s ideology.”<sup>173</sup> Due to these efforts, particularly in rural

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<sup>168</sup> Commins, *The Gulf States*, 236.

<sup>169</sup> Anh Nga Longva, “Nationalism in Pre-Modern Guise: The Discourse on Hadhar and Badu in Kuwait,” *Middle East Studies* 38, no. 2 (2006): 176.

<sup>170</sup> N.J. Brown, “Pushing Toward Party Politics?” 14.

<sup>171</sup> Mary Ann Tétreault, “Political Activism in Kuwait: Reform in Fits and Starts,” in *Taking to the Streets: The Transformation of Arab Activism*, eds. Lina Khatib and Ellen Lust (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 281.

<sup>172</sup> Al-Zumai, 197.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

communities, Islah's membership grew.<sup>174</sup> The organisation's branches in poorer areas, such as al-Jahra, Omariya, and the island of Failaka, were especially important, as these places had never before received attention from nongovernmental organisations, and so became fertile ground for new members.<sup>175</sup> Further facilitating membership, at the end of the 1970s, Islah changed the age of membership from 18 to 17 years old and decreased the membership fee.<sup>176</sup> The consequent "increase in the membership of al-Islah led to a change in its members which made it the most comprehensive society as far as its membership and geographical spread was [*sic*] concerned."<sup>177</sup>

*Accomplishments of Islah in Its First Two Decades*

By 1980, Islah had made many notable achievements, such as the establishment of the Kuwait Finance House, Zakat House, and Shari'a College, each under the leadership of an Islah member; and the undertaking of an Encyclopaedia of Islamic Fiqh<sup>178</sup> by the General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments.<sup>179</sup> In addition, Islah succeeded in the dismantling of so-called Masonic clubs like the Rotary and Lyons clubs; spreading its strong anti-drug message; hosting Islamic book exhibitions beginning in 1974; and continuing with uninterrupted publication of its widely circulated magazine *al-Mujtama*.<sup>180</sup> The organisation was also instrumental in establishing women's committees beginning in 1968; hosting lectures and events for special weeks; establishing the first Commission for Islamic Youth Education; and a number of other charity groups, including the Commission of the Islamic Public in 1982 and the Commission of Islamic

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 191-192.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 191-192.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 191-192.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>178</sup> Fiqh, the Arabic word for "deep understanding," is Islamic jurisprudence.

<sup>179</sup> Al-Tahan, 76-78.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 79-80.

Da‘wa in 1982.<sup>181</sup> Such activities allowed the Kuwaiti Brotherhood to gain a popular following that later translated into institutionalised political capital. The organisation’s trajectory into politics was indirect – a characteristic of rentier Islamism. Due to restrictions on independent political action and attempted government co-optation of the religious sector, creating social networks and providing spiritual welfare are the logical entrypoints for Islamists in the Gulf and have proven most effective in influencing policy in the Kuwaiti case.

During the 1970s, the Kuwaiti Brotherhood attracted an increasing number of nationals.<sup>182</sup> Also during this period, the reinvigorated Islah began working from mosques, in particular through cultural study circles, to which it often invited young men after they attended prayers.<sup>183</sup> As these gatherings, in which Qur’anic interpretation and recitation were popular, attracted an increasing number of young people, Islah expanded its activities beyond study.<sup>184</sup> Mosques became central for its activities.

In each mosque where they were active, they established a public library for lending general Islamic books as well as some books that tackled the Ikhwan ideology and history. In many mosques the Ikhwan established a special section for tapes which were available for people to borrow free of charge. They contained recordings from the Qur’an, Islamic lectures given by well-known scholars, and tackled various creedal, political, social and historical issues presented from the Ikhwan’s point of view. This was in addition to various publications in the form of booklets or brochures on Islamic legislation and ideology. These activities continued to develop until the mosques became cultural centres, spread throughout the country, disseminating Islamic and Ikhwan thought through their cultural activities.<sup>185</sup>

Other social programmes, sporting activities, cultural exchanges, and trips, as well as supervision of zakat committees and charity projects, were also organised through the

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 81-84.

<sup>182</sup> Al-Zumai, 194.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 195.

mosques, thereby increasing Islah's popularity in the broader Muslim community.<sup>186</sup> The expansion of activities through mosques changed their traditional function: "every mosque became a complete cultural as well as social unit, managed by Ikhwan members who were inhabitants of the area in which the mosque was situated. This established a strong relationship between the Ikhwan and the general public who frequented the mosques."<sup>187</sup> In a climate of increasing popularity, it was not surprising that the Brotherhood took on a formal role in electoral politics in the 1980s.

*The 1980s and Formal Entry into Politics*

Although members of the Kuwaiti Brotherhood had run for seats in parliament since the 1960s, they had done so as individuals, rather than as members of the organisation.<sup>188</sup> In fact, it was argued that the group's entry into electoral political life represented a deviation from the mission of *da'wa* and incremental progress toward the ideal Islamic state, as explained by Hasan al-Banna.<sup>189</sup> Reservations also remained about the appropriateness of Islamists contesting elections in a non-Islamic political order.<sup>190</sup> Brotherhood leader Jassim Muhalhal al-Yasin explained the movement's entry into politics in the 1980s: "The purpose of the entry of Islamists into legislative and executive power, despite the reservation about the legitimacy of many of the laws of the constitution for violating the law of God Almighty, is demonstrating the presence and the best example in an effort to Islamise the previous laws and prevent any new laws contrary to the Qur'an."<sup>191</sup> Furthermore, in 1980, Islah was the only Islamist bloc

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>188</sup> Al-Khalidi, 175.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>191</sup> Jassim Muhalhal al-Yasin, Qtd. in al-Khalidi, 177.

contesting elections, making it the sole avenue through which their views could be articulated in government.<sup>192</sup> Many members thus considered it their duty to represent the Sunni Islamist strand as a bloc in parliament. In addition, Islamic alternatives were becoming increasingly relevant in the region during this period.

The presentation of a new model of government in Iran in 1979 led Kuwaitis, along with many other Arabs, to question the validity and permanence of current governing structures. In an atmosphere of political change, the Kuwaiti government faced opposition from both Islamists and liberals, as it had failed to fully Islamise legislation and to restore parliamentary life. Increasingly unpopular, the government issued a law in autumn 1979 limiting public gatherings to 20 people and allowing police to attend all public and private meetings.<sup>193</sup> The government finally agreed to hold parliamentary elections in February 1981, yet only after issuing “a new electoral law that involved substantial gerrymandering.”<sup>194</sup> While previous legislation had divided the country into ten electoral districts, each sending five members to the National Assembly, the new law separated Kuwait into 25 districts, each selecting two MPs. Critically, most new districts were created in areas dominated by tribes, which the government expected to be loyal.<sup>195</sup> “Altogether, ‘tribal districts’ now accounted for 31 seats in parliament. By contrast, the seats allotted to predominantly Shiite districts had decreased from 10 to 4. Most important, the liberal and leftist opposition remained competitive in only 15 districts; even there, it faced strong rivals.”<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Al-Zumai, 192.

<sup>193</sup> Fred Lawson, “Class and State in Kuwait.” *MERIP Reports* no. 132 (May 1985): 20.

<sup>194</sup> Baaklini, Denoeux, and Springborg, 182.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

Not surprisingly, the election results dealt a blow to liberals and leftists, with Islamist candidates from Sunni and Shi‘i backgrounds, as well as tribal representatives, faring well.<sup>197</sup> “Although the intention behind redistricting was to hobble what at the time was a predominantly secularist political opposition, among the unforeseen outcomes was to privilege urban as well as tribal Islamists as a political force.”<sup>198</sup> Islah won three seats through its participation in a coalition, the Islamic Bloc, with Salafi groups.<sup>199</sup> These more conservative Sunni Islamist organisations also entered electoral politics 1981 and have found considerable common ground with the Brotherhood, though they tend to take a more conservative social stance and are less flexible in forming electoral coalitions with secular and Shi‘i political blocs.<sup>200</sup>

The new parliament sought to Islamise Kuwaiti society. Islamist MPs again pushed to amend article two of the constitution and attempted to ban public Christmas celebrations.<sup>201</sup> Further, the Brotherhood succeeded in limiting Kuwaiti nationality to Muslims in 1982 and in banning the consumption or sale of alcohol in embassies in 1983.<sup>202</sup> In the economic sector, three government financial institutions remained under the control of Brotherhood members: Zakat House and the World Islamic Charitable Body, both under the leadership of the Minister of Awqaf Yusuf al-Hajji, and Kuwait Finance House, directed by Ahmad Bazi‘ al-Yasin.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>198</sup> Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 110.

<sup>199</sup> Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 200.

<sup>200</sup> Nathan J. Brown, *When Victory Is Not An Option: Islamist Movements in Arab Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 238.

<sup>201</sup> Crystal, *Kuwait*, 112.

<sup>202</sup> Al-Khalidi, 176.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 176.

The 1980s, with the ongoing Iran-Iraq war and a new Islamist-leaning parliament at home, proved tumultuous. In 1982, the crash of Kuwait's unofficial stock market, the Suq al-Manakh, led to a financial crisis and significant backlash against the government, which had failed to regulate the technically illegal market. "Despite the government's intervention the crash bankrupted thousands of individual Kuwaitis."<sup>204</sup> On top of the domestic financial crisis and drop in oil prices, a series of bombs was set off in Kuwait in December 1983 by sympathisers of the pro-Iranian Shi'i organisation al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya.<sup>205</sup> Hijackings of commercial airliners in 1984 and 1985, linked to the earlier bombings, added to the tense environment.<sup>206</sup> In May 1985, the amir himself was attacked in a motorcade, and two of his guards were killed in the assault waged by Islamic Jihad.<sup>207</sup> In July of that year, two bombings at cafes in Kuwait City wounded 90 and killed eight, including an Interior Ministry official.<sup>208</sup> Overall, the attacks between December 1983 and the summer of 1985 resulted in some two-dozen civilian deaths and over 100 injuries.<sup>209</sup> As the government failed to stop such violence, criticisms of the regime became more widespread.<sup>210</sup> Members of the Brotherhood were also censured, even facing limited losses in the 1983 NUKS elections.<sup>211</sup> "Although the Islamist deputies publicly disassociated themselves from the attacks, the public perceived both Sunni and Shiite fundamentalists to be ideologically related to the militant extremists

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<sup>204</sup> Crystal, *Kuwait*, 108.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-113.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>209</sup> Lori Plotkin Boghardt, *Kuwait amid War, Peace and Revolution: 1979-1991 and New Challenges* (London: St. Antony's College and Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 70.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

perpetuating the bombings. By 1984, some Kuwaiti press articles were calling for a return to Arabism as the basis for Kuwaiti society.”<sup>212</sup>

In this chaotic atmosphere, press suspensions and government subsidies to newspapers increased.<sup>213</sup> Several political dissidents, mostly non-Kuwaitis with various ideological leanings, were arrested, and some 15,000 foreigners were deported in 1985 and 27,000 in 1986.<sup>214</sup> Despite the ongoing unrest, elections were held as scheduled in 1985 and “produced an Assembly which still had a conservative majority but in which an effective *de facto* opposition of radicals and independents increased in size and cohesion.”<sup>215</sup> Notably, Islah retained the three seats in the Assembly that it had won in 1981.<sup>216</sup> It was in this parliament that, for the first time, “the cordial relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood Movement’s deputies and the regime [...] was transformed into a confrontational one.”<sup>217</sup>

Islamist MPs continued their efforts to Islamise Kuwaiti society and in 1985 successfully ousted Education Minister Hassan al-Ibrahim, whom they regarded as too secular,<sup>218</sup> on account of his, and the government’s, attempts “to cut religious studies programs at the universities.”<sup>219</sup> Disturbingly for the government, Islah seemed increasingly willing to work with other, even secular, opposition blocs to achieve its goals; “the Islamic fundamentalist and pan-Arab, leftist MPs often found common ground in blocking government bills and in sponsoring legislation or resolutions against the

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid, 100.

<sup>213</sup> Crystal, *Kuwait*, 114.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid, 172.

<sup>215</sup> Mansfield, 108.

<sup>216</sup> Al-Tahan, 93.

<sup>217</sup> Awadh, 186.

<sup>218</sup> Crystal, *Kuwait*, 112.

<sup>219</sup> Kostiner, 126.

cabinet.”<sup>220</sup> In fact, a number of political blocs, including Islah, banded together to interpellate, or question, the oil and finance ministers and helped force the resignation of the liberal minister of education.<sup>221</sup> Islah was working together with other members of the opposition toward common goals, perhaps in reaction to criticisms at that time that Islamists privileged social reform over more immediate issues of national concern.<sup>222</sup>

In July 1986, Prime Minister Shaykh Sa‘ad al-Salem al-Sabah submitted the cabinet’s resignation, claiming that parliament’s continued attacks on ministers made it impossible for government to operate. Two days later, Amir Shaykh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah (r. 1977-2006) dissolved the legislature.<sup>223</sup> With this disbandment, he “also clamped down on the press, suspended parts of the constitution, and outlawed public meetings of more than five people.”<sup>224</sup> During the second parliamentary suspension, another series of bombs, 11 in total, was set off in 1987; the Iran-Iraq war raged on; and another commercial airliner was hijacked in 1988.<sup>225</sup> Meanwhile, opposition coalesced among Islamists, merchants, the growing intelligentsia, and former parliamentarians, all calling for the restoration of parliament.<sup>226</sup> “In August 1988 the ending of hostilities in the Iraq-Iran war which had been one of the main justifications for the closure of parliament and the imposition of press censorship, inevitably began to revive pressure for the restoration of democratic life and the removal of censorship.”<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Baaklini, Denoeux, and Springborg, 183.

<sup>221</sup> Crystal, *Kuwait*, 112.

<sup>222</sup> Plotkin Boghardt, *Kuwait amid War, Peace and Revolution*, 100.

<sup>223</sup> Baaklini, Denoeux, and Springborg, 183.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>225</sup> Crystal, *Kuwait*, 114.

<sup>226</sup> Jill Crystal and Abdullah al-Shayji, “The Pro-Democratic Agenda in Kuwait: Structures and Context,” in *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World*, eds. Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany, and Paul Noble (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 2: 105.

<sup>227</sup> Mansfield, 115.

In autumn 1988, the opposition, including Islah, started a petition campaign, calling for the restoration of parliament and reinstatement of the 1962 Constitution.<sup>228</sup> Beginning with 32 members of the dissolved parliament from various ideological factions, the so-called Constitutional Movement circulated the petition that eventually, with the help of student and voluntary associations, gathered 30,000 signatures.<sup>229</sup> Unable to meet publicly, members of the opposition instead gathered at private homes in a series of Monday night *dīwāniyyāt* beginning in December 1989. “This Monday diwaniyya represented the new cooperation between the various forces of society [...] It was supported by the associations, their organizing committees, and many sectors of society.”<sup>230</sup> As during the other period of parliamentary suspension, Brotherhood-dominated NUKS played a large role, having been active in the wide-ranging campaign to collect signatures for the petition denouncing the dissolution.<sup>231</sup>

As the Constitutional Movement gathered momentum among secular and Islamist blocs, its meetings turned into protests and led to confrontations with police and government attempts to shut down certain *dīwāniyyat*.<sup>232</sup> Security forces also attempted to stop public meetings, even attacking a mosque with tear gas, and launched a campaign of arrests, which included former Islah MP ‘Abdullah al-Nafisi.<sup>233</sup> “As a result, [Islah members] decided to discontinue the gatherings and their inflammatory tactics against the regime’.”<sup>234</sup> Finally, in the face of sustained popular pressure from other groups, Shaykh

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<sup>228</sup> Awadh, 187.

<sup>229</sup> Ghabra, “Voluntary Associations,” 212.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>231</sup> Al-Tahan, 139.

<sup>232</sup> Crystal and al-Shayji, 105.

<sup>233</sup> Awadh, 193-194.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 193-194.

Jaber agreed to receive the opposition's petition for the restoration of parliament in February 1990.<sup>235</sup>

Rather than conceding to call for new parliamentary elections, however, the amir proposed the formation of a 75-member National Council, 50 of whom would be elected and 25 appointed by the amir. The council would be solely consultative, with the task of studying "the advisability and feasibility of a restoration of parliament."<sup>236</sup> It could propose changes to the constitution, yet lacked the National Assembly's power to "question ministers on government policy and to debate the budget before it was promulgated."<sup>237</sup> NUKS issued a strong statement against the establishment of the National Council, yet the government did not acquiesce.<sup>238</sup> In the face of regime obstinacy, Islah's leaders released a memorandum in May 1990, which "appealed to the Amir to limit the National Council's sessions to one year not four."<sup>239</sup> Though the Brotherhood had agreed to back the council for one year,<sup>240</sup> it ultimately backed the opposition in boycotting the council's elections, which were held in June 1990.<sup>241</sup> Despite the boycott, the election had an official turnout rate of 62 percent of eligible voters.<sup>242</sup> Because only allies of the government had run for election, however, the National Council was composed primarily of tribal leaders sympathetic to al-Sabah.<sup>243</sup> The council had begun meeting when, on August 2, 1990, Iraqi President Saddam Hussain invaded Kuwait. During the invasion and occupation, which lasted until February 1991, the

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<sup>235</sup> Crystal and al-Shayji, 105.

<sup>236</sup> Baaklini, Denoeux, and Springborg, 186.

<sup>237</sup> Mansfield, 116-117.

<sup>238</sup> Awadh, 194.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>240</sup> Al-Mdaires, *Jama 'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, 40.

<sup>241</sup> Plotkin Boghardt, *Kuwait amid War, Peace and Revolution*, 143.

<sup>242</sup> Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 73.

<sup>243</sup> Baaklini, Denoeux, and Springborg, 187.

Brotherhood's role drastically changed from agitating for political participation alongside broader opposition to forming an integral part of the resistance movement inside Kuwait.

*Changing Ideology and the Second Internal Division of the Kuwaiti Brotherhood*

The spread of revolutionary Islamist ideology in the 1980s, as relations with the government worsened, led to a second internal split in the Kuwaiti Brotherhood. Two trends emerged: the fundamentalist strand, which rejected participation in a non-Muslim government, and the more moderate one, which considered the practice of political work as a means of facilitating *da'wa*.<sup>244</sup> 'Abdullah al-Nafisi represented the extreme rejectionist fundamentalist stance. He considered a clash with the government to be inevitable, even stating that "[t]he greatest actual enemy to the Islamic movement is the regimes. It is clear power we see night and day and it is the obstacle before the march of Islamic *da'wa*."<sup>245</sup> Editor-in-Chief of *al-Mujtama* Isma'il al-Shatti, on the other hand, advocated a more moderate stance. He referred to himself as a "gradualist reformer," who hoped to effect eventual progress toward the Islamisation of society through the political system.<sup>246</sup> Furthermore, al-Shatti "explained that parliamentary work endowed the revivalists with societal credibility."<sup>247</sup> In 1987, al-Nafisi resigned from *Islah*, on grounds that the discipline of the political bloc was too tightly knit and not suited to the all-encompassing nature of Islam.<sup>248</sup> Although al-Nafisi had served as an MP, he came to believe that reform was too slow in changing society and favoured radical changes instead.<sup>249</sup> His "comments contributed to the emergence of a new generation of the

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<sup>244</sup> Al-Tahan, 94-95.

<sup>245</sup> 'Abdullah al-Nafisi, Qtd. in al-Khalidi, 180.

<sup>246</sup> Kostiner, 126.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>248</sup> Awadh, 192.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

Muslim Brotherhood Movement that began to clash with the methods of the traditional symbols of the movement in which they had been brought up in the seventies.”<sup>250</sup>

Unlike the division in Irshad in the 1950s, this split did not diminish Islah’s membership numbers, with the number of officially registered members of the movement reaching 1,170 by 1989.<sup>251</sup> It did, however, contribute to Islah’s use of “inconsistent tactics toward the regime.”<sup>252</sup> While Islah participated in the Constitutional Movement, it also retreated when the government failed to fulfil the group’s demands.<sup>253</sup>

### *Islah in Contemporary Perspective*

As will be explained in the next chapter, Islah became, after the occupation of Kuwait, the social arm of the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood, with the ICM established to manage the Brotherhood’s political projects. Islah continues to host a variety of social programmes – particularly among youth. These programmes involve sports organisations, in addition to classes on ethics, morals, and piety. Though Islah is formally apolitical, its activities bring together like-minded people into a single community, which has strong political implications. As one interviewee who attended such programmes explained, “it is not at all political, but these people will be loyal.”<sup>254</sup> The Brotherhood’s charity networks and social programmes are similarly seen as means of complementing the ICM’s institutionalised political activity.<sup>255</sup>

Many non-Islamist Kuwaitis also consider Brotherhood-sponsored activities and charities means of enticing new members and view the group’s educational efforts as

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>251</sup> Al-Mdaires, *Jama‘at al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*, 22.

<sup>252</sup> Awadh, 194-195.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 194-195.

<sup>254</sup> Interview with Fahad al-Zumai, January 29, 2014.

<sup>255</sup> Interview with Ministry of Information officer, November 11, 2013.

tools of indoctrination. As Kuwaiti political scientist Shamlan al-Essa described it, “the Ikhwan bribes kids in the streets with footballs, fixing football fields, then invites them to pray.”<sup>256</sup> Still, most charity is focused outside the country. Due to Kuwait’s infamously lax financial laws,<sup>257</sup> which did not criminalise terrorist financing until 2013, many fear that Brotherhood charities fund Islamist organisations abroad, in particular Islamist militias in Syria, despite Kuwaiti government pledges to enhance oversight.<sup>258</sup> Rumours abound about the Brotherhood’s financial strength, and its misuse of charity funds. Still, members of the organisation insist that “we have trouble raising the funds necessary.”<sup>259</sup> In fact, in 1996, the government took over control of zakat committees that had once been a source of financial and popular support for the Brotherhood, “causing the Movement to lose the funds, life blood necessary to maintain the normal level of activities.”<sup>260</sup> The Brotherhood is still able to fund many social programmes, attractive largely to a self-selected group of people drawn to the organisation’s ideology.

### *Islamist Influence in the Education Sector*

Although changes have been made to the curricula in recent years, it is almost universally acknowledged that Islamists have had or continue to hold influence in education, particularly through their positions in the Ministry of Education. In his extensive 1988-1989 study of Kuwait’s primary school curriculum, Kamal al-Manufi

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<sup>256</sup> Interview with Shamlan al-Essa, November 17, 2013.

<sup>257</sup> See, for example, Elizabeth Dickinson, “Why Private Gulf Financing for Syria’s Extremist Rebels Risks Igniting Sectarian Conflict at Home,” Saban Center at The Brookings Institution, Analysis Paper no. 16, December 2013, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2013/12/06%20private%20gulf%20financing%20syria%20extremist%20rebels%20sectarian%20conflict%20dickinson/private%20gulf%20financing%20syria%20extremist%20rebels%20sectarian%20conflict%20dickinson.pdf>.

<sup>258</sup> Simeon Kerr, “Kuwait Clamps Down on Terror Financing,” *Financial Times*, September 9, 2014, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/1cd94792-3812-11e4-b69d-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3ZGcZU800>.

<sup>259</sup> Interview with Nasser al-Sane November 21, 2013.

<sup>260</sup> Awadh, 215-216.

noted that religious texts in Kuwaiti schools “encouraged the idea that religious fundamentalism should be followed as a way of life and thinking to achieve better life for individuals and the whole society.”<sup>261</sup> He concluded that the curriculum highlighted five sets of values: obedience and disobedience, division of labour, equality and inequality, religious fundamentalism, and scientific thinking.<sup>262</sup> All of these values are, notably, ones which the government would logically hope to promote. Indeed, some Kuwaitis consider this the “regime [having] tailored the curriculum to their needs.”<sup>263</sup>

Educational requirements still involve “heavy emphasis on Islam and Arabic.”<sup>264</sup> Even in private schools, Islamic religion is a required course and is taught in a variety of languages.<sup>265</sup> All schools must also adhere to standards for government-issued exams on Arabic and religion.<sup>266</sup> Some Kuwaitis consider state-mandated texts to go beyond fostering Islamic education and in fact to encourage extremism. One tenth grade book was cited as an example of such teachings, as it featured a passage stating that one who kills an infidel will not face punishment.<sup>267</sup>

Islamist influence in education goes beyond curriculum, with the major goals of the system highly influenced by religion. Article three of the Public Education Act of 1987 explicitly lists the goals of education as “(i) providing students with opportunities for comprehensive and complete development spiritually, intellectually and physically within the framework of the principles of Islam, Arab heritage, modern culture, and the

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<sup>261</sup> Kamal al-Manufy, Qtd. in Abdulkarim al-Dekhayal, *Kuwait: Oil, State and Political Legitimation* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2000), 77.

<sup>262</sup> Al-Dekhayal, 77.

<sup>263</sup> Interview with Khalil ‘Ali Haidar, November 17, 2013.

<sup>264</sup> Michael C. Hudson, *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 151.

<sup>265</sup> Interview with Nizar Hamzeh, November 10, 2013.

<sup>266</sup> Interview with Farah al-Nakib, November 24, 2013.

<sup>267</sup> Khalid F. al-Mutawa, Twitter post, May 16 2015, <https://twitter.com/KFAIMutawa/status/599552570147737600>.

nature of Kuwaiti society, its customs, and traditions; and (ii) inculcating Kuwaiti national feeling, and loyalty to the country and the Amir.”<sup>268</sup> Conservative Islam has also influenced the culture of the education system, with gender segregation mandated at Kuwait University and the Public Authority for Applied Education in 1996.<sup>269</sup> In addition, Law 34 passed in 2000 required that each private university and college, as well as branches of foreign universities, “1. Operate its buildings to ensure gender segregation in all departments, disciplines and student activities. 2. Observe Islamic values and time-honoured traditions in relation to students’ costumes and activities.”<sup>270</sup>

Brotherhood influence in education is most visible in NUKS, as mentioned above. With a student population of over 40,000, Kuwait University is a major political force. There are several theories about why the Brotherhood’s al-Mustaqbal al-Tulabi has had such uninterrupted success in NUKS elections since 1979. One is that students vote for Islamist candidates because they hail from conservative tribal areas, making it difficult for liberal parties to garner conservative *badū* support.<sup>271</sup> A second theory is that women make up the majority of students at Kuwait University, as men are more likely to attend universities abroad, and have shown great support for Islamist parties in the past, thereby giving the Brotherhood a boost in elections.<sup>272</sup> A third explanation for al-Mustaqbal’s al-Tulabi’s success is that, because elections are held early in the term, the incumbent gains “the first mover advantage.”<sup>273</sup> A fourth theory is that well-connected members of the

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<sup>268</sup> Al-Dekhayal, 64-65.

<sup>269</sup> Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 221.

<sup>270</sup> Establishment of Private Universities Law no. 34 for 2000, Private Universities Council, Kuwaiti Ministry of Higher Education, July 11, 2000, <http://www.puc.edu.kw/en/?com=content&id=13&act=view>.

<sup>271</sup> Interview with Fahad al-Zumai.

<sup>272</sup> Interview with Khalil ‘Ali Haidar.

<sup>273</sup> Interview with Marzouq al-Nusf, February 4, 2014.

Brotherhood offer jobs to students who vote for their candidates.<sup>274</sup> A final explanation for the Islamists' popularity is that an official alliance between the Brotherhood and Salafis allows Islamists to dominate over the less organised liberals. Ultimately, al-Mustaqbal al-Tulabi benefits from better organisation and from strong tribal links.<sup>275</sup> It also holds ideological appeal. Taken together, these factors have helped ensure Islamist control of the country's largest organ of civil society.

As the 2013-2014 President of NUKS and member of al-Mustaqbal al-Tulabi Falah al-'Ajmi explained, the Union's goal is "to represent young people of Kuwait."<sup>276</sup> The Islamist trend remains dominant among this segment of society because people choose to support it. In fact, students recently voted to ban music at any and all Kuwait University parties.<sup>277</sup> Furthermore, gender segregation, according to al-'Ajmi, "is something the students wanted because of academic, social, Islamic reasons. Kuwaiti society is conservative. Men and women don't mix. Islam also mandates this."<sup>278</sup> NUKS, under influence of the Brotherhood, continues to be a site for proxy fighting among secular and Islamist blocs in parliament, giving the Brotherhood a distinct advantage.

### *Social and Ideological Appeal of the Brotherhood*

The Muslim Brotherhood no doubt retains ideological appeal, having formed a major part of Kuwaiti intellectual life for decades. One interviewee explained: "The government cannot provide an ideology for the street."<sup>279</sup> Notions of Islam providing solutions and of the necessity of Muslim piety are attractive in a society that remains, by

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<sup>274</sup> Interview with Khalil 'Ali Haidar.

<sup>275</sup> Interview with Fahad al-Zumai.

<sup>276</sup> Interview with Falah al-'Ajmi, January 31, 2014.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Interview with Khalil 'Ali Haidar.

and large, conservative, traditional, and religious. Kuwait feels far more conservative than do Qatar and the UAE – a testament to the ability of Kuwait’s more participatory governmental system to reflect stances of a large portion of the population, namely Islamists, who support conservative social policies. Further distinguishing it from the other cases, unlike Qatar and the UAE, Kuwait pushed for independence from British control a decade before British withdrawal from the other super-rentiers, suggesting a desire for indigenous rule. The ban on alcohol and prevalence of gender segregation contribute to the atmosphere of social conservatism. In addition, while Qatar and the UAE vie to host popular concerts and sporting events, “there is no real entertainment in Kuwait.”<sup>280</sup> Even musical concerts on television featuring local artists have led to Islamist protest.<sup>281</sup> Although Kuwait is in many ways the most politically open country in the Gulf and long held a reputation for being liberal, it remains the most socially traditional of the super-rentiers. It is no coincidence that the most socially conservative country in the Gulf (aside from Saudi Arabia) is home to the GCC’s oldest and largest branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.

### *Conclusions*

This chapter has demonstrated how the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood’s institutionalised political activities grew out of its presence in the social sphere. Through social and educational activities, aided by government backing, the Brotherhood gained popular support in the 1950s and 1960s, despite the pervasive influence of Arab nationalism. The Ikhwan’s popularity allowed it to garner political capital in the 1970s and 1980s. Once in institutionalised political roles as government ministers and MPs,

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<sup>280</sup> Interview with Ministry of Information officer.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

Brotherhood members continued pushing their social agenda. On the whole, during its first decades, the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood maintained cordial ties with the regime, advocating primarily for the Islamisation of legislation.

The next chapter will focus on institutionalised political activities of the Kuwaiti Brotherhood through the ICM. It aims to demonstrate the degree to which rentier state theory underestimates the political power of Islamist organisations by analysing the role of the Kuwaiti Brotherhood since 1990. In particular, we trace the Kuwaiti Ikhwan's adoption of an increasingly pro-democracy political agenda, often at the expense of its ties with the regime and its traditional goal of Islamising society.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Islamism Ascendant: The Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood in the Face of Iraqi Occupation**

The Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood filled the political vacuum that emerged during the Iraqi occupation, taking on roles traditionally filled by the state. Following the crisis, the Kuwaiti Brotherhood began advocating, through the ICM, for broad-ranging political reform, often in cooperation with secular opposition blocs. During this period, the ICM has increasingly balanced its ideological aims with a pro-democracy agenda, transforming itself into from a group aiming to Islamise society to an influential member of the broader opposition.

This chapter will trace the ICM's development, in particular its role during the occupation and its later transformation into a pragmatic political player, while also highlighting the importance of its social programmes in enhancing its influence in institutionalised political life. The Kuwaiti Brotherhood's political weight has increased in this manner, despite government attempts to win over discontented segments of the citizenry with financial disbursements. Certainly, in the same post-war period during which Kuwait's welfare state has expanded, the Muslim Brotherhood has gained credibility as a member of the political opposition, contrary to the prediction of rentier state theory.

#### *Iraqi Invasion and Occupation*

The Iraqi invasion and subsequent occupation, followed by the American-led liberation of Kuwait, displaced the country's citizens and disrupted the existing political system. Within hours of the invasion, Amir Shaykh Jaber and the ruling family had fled to Saudi Arabia. On August 8, 1990, six days after the invasion, Iraq formally annexed

Kuwait and declared it its nineteenth province on August 28. Though the border between the two countries had long been contested, Iraqi actions were shocking.

Life in Kuwait changed dramatically. “The ensuing occupation was brutal. Iraqi forces engaged in large-scale torture and summary execution of those it suspected of involvement in the opposition movement and transferred thousands of Kuwaitis and resident expatriates to Iraq during the occupation. Iraqi troops looted Kuwait, taking anything of value back to Iraq and destroying what remained.”<sup>1</sup> The horrors of occupation led more than half of the Kuwaiti population to flee and motivated those remaining to forge a resistance movement using pre-existing social institutions – namely mosques and cooperative societies.<sup>2</sup> Notably, both of these were essentially under control of the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>3</sup> Though cooperative societies originally functioned as supermarkets, they took on political significance, “serving as a forum for public debate on issues of general importance and as a bellwether of political trends.”<sup>4</sup> Mosques and cooperative societies, protected by their apolitical appearance, helped resistance groups take up arms against the Iraqi army while also aiding in supplying the Kuwaiti population with food, medical care, and other services.<sup>5</sup>

#### *The Brotherhood's Change in Tactics under Occupation*

The new circumstances under occupation led the Muslim Brotherhood to focus primarily on Kuwait's liberation and the provision of services ahead of the issues it had previously promoted, specifically the Islamisation of society.<sup>6</sup> The Brotherhood worked

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<sup>1</sup> Crystal, *Oil and Politics*, 174.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Khalidi, 181.

toward liberation by establishing a Committee of Social Solidarity, which aimed to increase living standards for Kuwaitis by disbursing treasury rations to markets of cooperative societies.<sup>7</sup> The Brotherhood thus became instrumental in “supervis[ing] the provision of basic services to the citizens.”<sup>8</sup> In addition, the Brotherhood established the Adherents’ Movement (Harakat al-Murabitun, hereafter Murabitun Movement), which worked to publicise the atrocities of Iraqi occupation and to gain experience in armed resistance and the management of people inside Kuwait during occupation.<sup>9</sup> It also published a weekly magazine, under the leadership of Nasser al-Sane, called *al-Murabitun*, which was issued in London.<sup>10</sup>

Outside of the country, the International Commission of Solidarity with Kuwait was considered the sister movement to the Murabitun Movement on the inside.<sup>11</sup> Tareq al-Suwaidan founded this organisation in Washington D.C., yet branches also existed in countries including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, and Bahrain.<sup>12</sup> The group aimed to garner popular and material support by raising global awareness of the Iraqi occupation.<sup>13</sup> Namely, it circulated information from inside Kuwait to international media outlets for publication. The organisation also promoted awareness of the atrocities in Kuwait through actions like making January 21, 1991 Kuwait Solidarity Day and asking “that everyone fasts and prays for the oppressed Kuwaitis inside Kuwait and we pray that God protects the innocents and oppressed and the valiant fighters fighting for our just

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<sup>7</sup> Al-Mdaires, *Jama ‘at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, 40-41.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-41.

<sup>9</sup> Al-Tahan, 106.

<sup>10</sup> Falah Abdullah al-Mdaires, *Islamic Extremism in Kuwait: From the Muslim Brotherhood to Al-Qaeda and Other Islamist Political Groups* (London: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-107.

cause.”<sup>14</sup> The organisation’s Islamist tilt was clear from such statements. Both inside and outside Kuwait, members of the Brotherhood led fundraising and support efforts, which were critical to bringing international attention to conditions inside Kuwait.<sup>15</sup> In the words of al-Suwaidan, “the Ikhwan was in the forefront, even before the government. The Ikhwan were in charge of the needs of people inside and on the forefront outside.”<sup>16</sup> For the first time, the Kuwaiti Brotherhood took on a role akin to other Ikhwan movements in the region, providing services and filling the vacuum left by an ineffective government. Considering the dire circumstances during that period, it is unsurprising that it set aside ideological aims in favour of aiding the Kuwaiti population materially.

#### *Negotiating with the Ruling Family in Exile*

Iraqi occupation led Kuwaitis of all ideological strands to rally around Shaykh Jaber. In fact, some analysts judge that Saddam Hussain overestimated political opposition inside Kuwait, believing that discontented political blocs would welcome his invasion and overthrow of al-Sabah.<sup>17</sup> Though they supported the amir, opposition leaders insisted on concessions from the government before its restoration to power. The ruling family’s behaviour in exile and the fact that it had left the country immediately following the invasion became points of contention. During the occupation, the Constitutional Movement continued to call for the reinstatement of the National Assembly.

In response, Shaykh Jaber held a Popular Congress in Jeddah in October 1990, inviting some 1,200 opposition figures. Notably,

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<sup>14</sup> “The Gulf Crisis, Day by Day: A Daily Newsletter from Solidarity International for Kuwait,” *Solidarity International for Kuwait*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., January 19, 1991, [http://freekuwait.org.kw/search.php?page=086603\\_January-19,-1991&search=solidarity&mode=9](http://freekuwait.org.kw/search.php?page=086603_January-19,-1991&search=solidarity&mode=9).

<sup>15</sup> Al-Tahan, 107.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Tareq al-Suwaidan.

<sup>17</sup> Ghabra, “Voluntary Associations,” 213.

the Muslim Brotherhood Movement played a prominent role in uniting the ranks of Kuwaitis, both on the government and public level by way of an initiative to revive the Popular Congress. This brought together many of the leaders of the Kuwait rank-and-file to give their allegiance to the Amir and to pledge their commitment to constitutional legitimacy in return for the Amir's pledge to accept full popular participation after liberation, to respect the Constitution and to be committed to the application of Articles of the Constitution.<sup>18</sup>

Despite its initial unifying role, the Brotherhood began to pressure other attendees of the summit to push for the Islamisation of Kuwaiti society after liberation and boost the movement's own power.<sup>19</sup> *Islah*, for instance, hoped to have its leader Yusuf al-Hajji make the opening speech at the Congress, while most others agreed that Ahmed al-Sa'doun of the Popular Action Bloc was the most appropriate speaker, considering that he had served as President of the most recent National Assembly.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, *Islah* compromised with the other opposition groups, and 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Saqr, the President of the first-ever National Assembly, took on the role of opening speaker.<sup>21</sup> Over the course of the summit, Brotherhood members continued clashing with other opposition strands,

align[ing] themselves with the ruling family against the demands made by the nationalist groupings during the congress. These demands centred on the necessity of forming a government of national salvation, representing all political groupings, to oversee the progress of all matters concerning extricating Kuwait from the ordeal it was in prior to liberation. The Muslim Brotherhood Movement managed to block this demand. They succeeded after much insistence to incorporate into the Congress's concluding statement a proviso that affirmed that a future Kuwait would be based upon two important premises: Islamic creed and education Islamic [*sic*] and the insertion of the term *shuri* [*sic*] ('consultative') alongside the term 'democracy.'<sup>22</sup>

The Brotherhood thereby managed to preserve its valuable ties to the government while pushing its own agenda. Having become a major political force under Iraqi occupation, the Ikhwan looked to retain political clout in the post-liberation era. The amir, crown

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<sup>18</sup> Awadh, 196.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 195-196.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

prince, and opposition ultimately agreed to reinstate the 1962 Constitution and to allow more popular participation in government, in exchange for opposition support of al-Sabah authority during the occupation.<sup>23</sup>

In January 1991, a second meeting with the opposition was arranged in Jeddah. At that time, however, the ruling family had successfully launched an international public relations campaign “equat[ing] liberation with restoration of the status quo ante,” thereby allowing al-Sabah to maintain support from traditional tribal supporters and making the regime less dependent on members of the opposition for support.<sup>24</sup> In this way, the ruling family managed “to bypass the political groupings and political processes of state organs in planning for post-liberation Kuwait.”<sup>25</sup> Still, opposition blocs insisted on the restoration of the 1962 Constitution.<sup>26</sup>

### *Liberation and Domestic Turmoil*

Throughout Iraqi occupation, the Kuwaiti government urged international support for Iraq’s unconditional withdrawal. The government funded media campaigns in the United States and Europe and offered financial incentives to allies.<sup>27</sup> The aforementioned Brotherhood-led International Commission of Solidarity with Kuwait also played a large role in lobbying governments for assistance.<sup>28</sup> Having secured backing from the international community through Security Council Resolution 660, an American-led coalition began its campaign against Iraq in August 1990. On February 26, 1991, after an air battle under Operation Desert Storm, Iraqi forces left Kuwait.<sup>29</sup> “After the liberation

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<sup>23</sup> Crystal and al-Shayegi, 105-106.

<sup>24</sup> Ismael, 172-173.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Tareq al-Suwaidan.

<sup>29</sup> Crystal, *Oil and Politics*, 176.

the new government celebrated the destruction of the Iraqi security regime – then began setting up its own. Within hours of the Iraqi withdrawal the Amir declared martial law.”<sup>30</sup> During this period, various human rights violations took place at the hands of the Kuwaiti government, namely targeting Arab expatriates.<sup>31</sup> The government acknowledged such violations and pledged to put on trial those who had participated in the atrocities. The Muslim Brotherhood was particularly vocal in its demands to hold accountable those responsible for the violence and led efforts to do so.<sup>32</sup>

In April 1991, Shaykh Jaber appointed a new government, consisting primarily of members of the old regime and notably excluding those who had remained inside Kuwait during the war.<sup>33</sup> This led to complaints from the opposition, including members of the Muslim Brotherhood, which had not been consulted in the cabinet’s formation.<sup>34</sup> The highly contested National Council, which had been elected in 1990 amidst an opposition boycott, was also reconvened. The opposition, emboldened after having faced the brutalities of the Iraqi occupation, protested.<sup>35</sup>

Unwilling to make substantial political reforms yet facing increased opposition, the amir tried to win popular support from Islamists and liberals alike by providing economic disbursements. Although the government owed billions of dollars in debts from the war, it announced plans to “pay existing consumer loans, car loans and mortgage loans to Kuwaitis, pay back salaries to government employees for the occupation period, exempt Kuwaitis from utility and other public service charges and rents incurred during

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<sup>30</sup> Crystal, *Kuwait*, 173.

<sup>31</sup> Ismael, 176.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Tahan, 108-109.

<sup>33</sup> Crystal, *Oil and Politics*, 178.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>35</sup> Ismael, 179.

the occupation, and increase government entitlements in a variety of categories (marriage grants, child allowances, aid to orphans, widows and the poor).”<sup>36</sup> In March 1992, all Kuwaitis working in the public sector received a 25 percent salary increase, and the government issued a bailout to the financial sector.<sup>37</sup> This tactic, not only economically unsustainable, also failed to satisfy an opposition that felt entitled to a representative government – particularly after having experienced the Iraqi occupation, which the ruling family had fled. Furthermore, Kuwaitis were angered by the government’s slow postwar rebuilding efforts and “the appearance of widespread corruption in the reconstruction effort.”<sup>38</sup> Contrary to rentier state theory’s prediction, then, opposition continued in the face of increasingly generous government handouts.

In such an atmosphere, Islamists garnered additional support, demonstrating the appeal of their ideology as a rallying point for political opposition even in the presence of rentier benefits.

The Gulf War and its ramifications were crucial in reinforcing political Islam as the most potent form of nationalism [...] the clear exposure of their [the Kuwaiti rulers’] dependence on American protection widened the deficit of legitimacy with their own people, opposition being most commonly articulated in the very Islamic idioms used by the authorities. The bounty of oil may no longer be sufficient to maintain the distributive ‘rentier’ state.<sup>39</sup>

The Muslim Brotherhood offered the ideological inspiration that the government could not provide, regardless of government efforts to “buy off” opposition. Islam became a weapon of Arabism against the West and became politicised as such. The Iraqi invasion and occupation strained relations between the Kuwaiti Brotherhood and its parent organisation in Egypt, however, leading to the formal end of their relationship in 1991.

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<sup>36</sup> Crystal, *Oil and Politics*, 178.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>39</sup> Zubaida, xix.

*A Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood Independent of the International Movement*

As mentioned in the previous chapter, ties between the Kuwaiti Brotherhood and central organisation remained strong into the 1980s, with the Kuwaiti branch heavily influenced by the Egyptian model and linked through personal connections.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps because of this historically strong relationship, the international Muslim Brotherhood was among the first organisations to condemn the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The group released a statement from Cairo in which it disparaged Iraq's actions and demanded its immediate and complete withdrawal from Kuwait.<sup>41</sup> This stance changed, however, following the Saudi Arabian government's declaration of its alliance with a coalition of foreign forces, headed by the United States, to liberate Kuwait. Following that announcement, the Brotherhood issued an announcement stressing the importance of expelling Western troops from Muslim territory.<sup>42</sup> "This statement represented a turning point in the [international] Brotherhood's position towards the invasion, as its leadership warned of the likelihood of hundreds of thousands of foreign troops rushing madly to the territories of the Muslims on the pretext of protecting them from the danger of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait."<sup>43</sup>

Significantly, not every branch of the Brotherhood held the same view. Groups in Lebanon and Iraqi Brotherhood sympathisers abroad stood firmly against Hussain's regime, "declar[ing] their support for any action leading to the liberation of Kuwait even if it required bringing in foreign forces to the region."<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile, the Jordanian branch

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<sup>40</sup> N.J. Brown, "Pushing Toward Party Politics?," 6.

<sup>41</sup> Al-Khalidi, 182.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>43</sup> Awadh, 197.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 197.

staunchly supported both the Iraqi invasion and the confrontation of foreign troops.<sup>45</sup> The majority of Brotherhood affiliates, including those in Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Tunisia, though they may not have supported Saddam Hussain's actions, could not back a non-Arab or non-Muslim resolution to the conflict.<sup>46</sup> Members of these branches therefore "still met with the Iraqi regime in a gesture of support for the latter in its confrontation with the foreign forces."<sup>47</sup>

The contradictory stances among different national Brotherhood affiliates made it difficult for the Kuwaiti Brotherhood to determine its approach. In October 1990, the Kuwaiti movement sent a formal complaint to the Brotherhood's General Guide in Cairo, Hamad 'Abd al-Nasir, expressing opposition to the international Brotherhood's stance and explaining the necessity of expelling Iraqi troops.<sup>48</sup> This missive seemed to be ignored. In fact, at an international Brotherhood conference during the occupation, Kuwaiti Brotherhood members were "forced to give their approval to the final communiqué of the conference which contained no denunciation of the outrageous Iraqi invasion."<sup>49</sup>

Relations suffered considerably following a visit by a delegation of Brotherhood members to Saddam Hussain himself in early 1991.<sup>50</sup> "The visit was interpreted as an expression of Islamic advocacy for the Iraqi regime's stance towards the foreign liberation forces."<sup>51</sup> Despite the organisation's previous calls for a meeting to help resolve the issue, a statement by 'Abbasi Madani, leader of the Algerian Islamic

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<sup>45</sup> Al-Khalidi, 182.

<sup>46</sup> Awadh, 197-198.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 197-198.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Khalidi, 183.

<sup>51</sup> Awadh, 199.

Salvation Front (an independent Islamist group not affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood), seemed to support Hussain. Madani said “[t]he Islamic movement concurred with Saddam Hussain in one point only, and it is confrontation of the American occupation forces present in the Gulf.”<sup>52</sup> The international Brotherhood denied supporting this visit,<sup>53</sup> and in fact no high-level representative from the international section attended, with the Egyptian government having prohibited the travel of the General Guide Hamad ‘Abd al-Nasir, as well as prominent members Mustafa Mashhour and Ma‘mun al-Hudaybi.<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, the visit and resulting statement were considered a sign of the international branch’s support for the Iraqi position, leading to a bitter exchange between the Kuwaiti and Egyptian Brotherhood branches.

Following the liberation of Kuwait in February 1991, Isma‘il al-Shatti published a series of articles accusing some Brotherhood leaders in Cairo of misconduct and calling for them to step down from their control of the organisation, in addition to demanding a freeze of Kuwait’s membership of the international Brotherhood.<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, Ma‘mun al-Hudaybi, official spokesperson of the Egyptian-based Brotherhood, affirmed its strong relationship with the Kuwaiti Ikhwan and claimed that al-Shatti’s opinion was personal, rather than reflective of the entire organisation.<sup>56</sup>

The Kuwaiti Brotherhood split into two factions. One group favoured the severing of ties with the international branch, privileging local work over a focus on the international sphere.<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, another faction considered cooperation with the

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<sup>52</sup> ‘Abbasi Madani, Qtd. in al-Khalidi, 183.

<sup>53</sup> Awadh, 199.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>55</sup> Al-Khalidi, 183.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 183-184.

<sup>57</sup> Awadh, 202.

international section critical to the Kuwaiti branch, as it “embodies the dimension of thought, ideology and morale.”<sup>58</sup> ‘Abdullah al-‘Ali al-Mutawa in particular worked to resolve the crises between the Kuwaiti and international Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>59</sup> Despite the existence of varying viewpoints within the organisation, it ultimately froze relations with the international movement. “The suspension of involvement by the Kuwaiti Movement was brought about as a moderate solution to satisfy both sides of the debate within the organisation.”<sup>60</sup>

The divergence over responses to the Iraqi occupation was not the only time when the Kuwaiti Brotherhood disagreed with the international section, perhaps signalling the Kuwaiti branch’s desire to follow an independent path even before the Iraqi invasion.<sup>61</sup> “In fact, this conflict of opinion was preceded by several others, some of which were attributable to the ideological interpretation of circumstances while others were due to doctrinal interpretations.”<sup>62</sup> First, the branches differed over the entitlement of women to vote and stand in elections. While the international section publicly supported the extension of such rights, the Kuwaiti Brotherhood maintained that a woman must fulfil certain shari‘a conditions to vote or stand as a candidate. “It believes, in fact, that the Muslim woman is not socially, culturally, or politically prepared to enable her to participate in parliamentary elections, whether as a voter or as a candidate for election.”<sup>63</sup> The Kuwaiti Brotherhood went so far as to help ensure the passage of a shari‘a-based

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>59</sup> Al-Tahan, 104.

<sup>60</sup> Awadh, 202.

<sup>61</sup> Al-Khalidi, 184.

<sup>62</sup> Awadh, 203.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 203-204.

fatwa<sup>64</sup> from the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs' Department of Fatwas, which forbade women's participation as voters or candidates in parliamentary elections.<sup>65</sup>

Second, the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood tacitly supported Iraq in its war with Iran during the 1980s, while the international section "denounced the continuation of the Iran-Iraq war, as they considered that it was simultaneously draining the resources of the Islamic Umma<sup>66</sup> while serving the interests of other countries, most prominently, Israel."<sup>67</sup> As a result, the international branch was critical of both sides in the conflict, while Kuwait quietly backed Iraq's interests due to its function as a bulwark against the spread of Iranian (and Shi'i) power in the Gulf.<sup>68</sup> Third, the international movement found no basis in shari'a for the legality of hereditary monarchies.<sup>69</sup> In its view, only if people have the option to accept or reject the monarchy of their own volition is it considered legitimate.<sup>70</sup> The Kuwaiti branch, however, considered hereditary regimes, of the type seen in the Gulf, to be part of shari'a and Islamic history, as they ruled during the Umayyad, Abbasid, and Ottoman Empires.<sup>71</sup>

Having weathered such conflicts, the international section and Kuwaiti branch formally parted ways in 1991. In the tense environment after liberation, the Kuwaiti Ikhwan began to expand its role in the local political system. "Given the nature of the circumstances, the Muslim Brotherhood Movement was obliged to establish an overt political wing whose decisions were made independently of the international section. This enabled the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood Movement, on a tactical level, to

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<sup>64</sup> A fatwa is a judgment on a matter of Islamic law handed down by a religious leader.

<sup>65</sup> Awadh, 205.

<sup>66</sup> The *umma*, literally "nation," describes the entire Muslim community.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 205-206.

<sup>68</sup> Al-Khalidi, 185.

<sup>69</sup> Awadh, 206-207.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 206-207.

<sup>71</sup> Al-Khalidi, 185.

persevere with their political approach without their views clashing with the Muslim Brotherhood structure abroad.”<sup>72</sup>

### *Emergence of the ICM*

On March 30, 1991, the Kuwaiti Brotherhood created the ICM. Over 1,000 people are said to have attended the founding meeting of the movement, where members elected Shaykh Jassim Muhalhal al-Yasin as Secretary General of the ICM and ‘Isa Majid al-Shahin as official spokesperson.<sup>73</sup> The organisation’s membership was considered “an organic extension” of the Murabitun Movement, as well as of Brotherhood-sponsored *dīwāniyyāt* and social organisations.<sup>74</sup> Overall, the ICM’s leadership “tended to be younger,” with many principal organisers having joined the Brotherhood in the 1970s and 1980s as students.<sup>75</sup> The ICM’s founding statement describes it as “a popular Kuwaiti movement including in its rank a group of Kuwaiti citizens believing in constitutional legitimacy and in the Kuwaiti constitution as the legal framework for the regime and legislation.”<sup>76</sup> The new bloc thus “sought to have a comprehensive political agenda and hardly restricted itself to religious and cultural issues.”<sup>77</sup>

Although the Brotherhood had gained considerable influence in the social sector during the occupation, it remained “outside the central structure of political power.”<sup>78</sup> Importantly, members of the Brotherhood did not consider their new emphasis on politics to be “a switch” from their past social work;<sup>79</sup> rather, it was seen as a maturation, which came about after Kuwaitis had effectively “run the country by themselves” under

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<sup>72</sup> Awadh, 208-209.

<sup>73</sup> Al-Mdaires, *Jama‘at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, 43.

<sup>74</sup> Al-Tahan, 110-111.

<sup>75</sup> N.J. Brown, *When Victory is Not an Option*, 110.

<sup>76</sup> Founding Statement of the ICM, Qtd. in al-Mdaires, *Jama‘at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, 39.

<sup>77</sup> N.J. Brown, *When Victory is Not an Option*, 109.

<sup>78</sup> Al-Tahan, 123.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Nasser al-Sane.

occupation.<sup>80</sup> Certainly, members “felt that this [political branch] was an angle we were missing. The social group is helpful, but without politics you may not enjoy the influence political groups enjoy.”<sup>81</sup> Because the Brotherhood had already taken on a political role during the occupation, there was little internal debate about the need for a formal political bloc.

In the process of creating a political bloc, the Kuwaiti Ikhwan underwent a number of changes. Most significantly, the Brotherhood gradually learned to work with other, even secular, movements toward common goals and seemed willing to accept middle ground, or an interim period in which shari‘a was not fully applied, to push for other gains.<sup>82</sup> For example, it “became flexible enough to agree to deal with an economic system involving usury [...] until such time as an Islamic system would demonstrate the advantage of a non-usurious system.”<sup>83</sup> Such willingness to compromise differed a great deal from the Qutbism of the 1960s; the ICM’s “goals became to reform instead of completely change.”<sup>84</sup> As explained by Tareq al-Suwaidan, this approach was “not a concession nor a retrogression, but instead indicated maturity and pragmatism in understanding the arena and weighing the new postulates with the aim of achieving the greatest number of gains possible.”<sup>85</sup> Another part of the movement’s development was its organisation of specialised delegations within the body, each with a separate decision-making body, as opposed to the previous model wherein one body dealt with cultural, social, political, and organisational matters.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Interview with Usama al-Shahin.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Nasser al-Sane.

<sup>82</sup> Al-Khalidi, 189.

<sup>83</sup> Awadh, 210.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>85</sup> Tareq al-Suwaidan, Qtd. in Awadh, 210.

<sup>86</sup> Awadh., 210.

At the beginning of the 1990s, as signalled by the Brotherhood's stance during the Popular Congress, the ICM benefitted from relatively peaceful relations with the government. It profited from "the political authority's reluctance to confront any political tendency which called for basic theological principles, such as the 'Islamic religion,' while being committed to working within the framework of the constitution of the country."<sup>87</sup> In fact, in December 1991, the Brotherhood scored a political gain when the government created a higher consultative committee to ensure that Kuwaiti laws were in line with shari'a, though this body was not granted enforcement authority.<sup>88</sup> As the government began challenging Brotherhood attempts at further social reform and Islamisation, the ICM became more strategic in reaching its goals, banding together with members of the opposition to maximise electoral gains, as it had done during other suspensions of parliament.<sup>89</sup>

*Restoration of Parliamentary Life in the 1990s*

In May 1992, opposition figures from across the political spectrum, including the ICM, called a press conference, criticising the new and largely pro-government cabinet, and reiterating calls for restoration of the National Assembly.<sup>90</sup> The government had not granted permission for this meeting, and the lights were turned off as reporters attempted to speak with opposition figures.<sup>91</sup> Despite this setback, "the atmosphere was one where political groups wanted to work together for Kuwait."<sup>92</sup> In June, in the face of continued

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>88</sup> Rosefky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 221.

<sup>89</sup> Awadh, 212.

<sup>90</sup> Crystal and al-Shayaji, 107.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Nasser al-Sane.

protest, Shaykh Jaber ended martial law and set a parliamentary election date for October.<sup>93</sup>

The 1992 election focused on two primary sets of issues: “laws for more effective government,” namely to reduce corruption, and “expansion and protection of political and civil rights.”<sup>94</sup> Notably, neither of these was historically important for the Brotherhood, yet the group recognised their importance in that period. Various groups from the opposition coalition won 35 of the 50 seats – with 16 from secular (primarily liberal) opposition MPs and 19 MPs from Islamist (Brotherhood and Salafi) groups. The ICM had entered seven candidates in the elections, five of whom were successful.<sup>95</sup> It publicly supported 25 candidates in total, however, including secular leaders who had pressured al-Sabah to restore parliamentary life before the Iraqi invasion, as well as candidates in districts that favoured the Brotherhood.<sup>96</sup> The success of opposition candidates further “demonstrated that the al-Sabahs could no longer fully rely on patronage and tribal loyalty” to retain a pro-government majority in the Assembly.<sup>97</sup> Perhaps having seen the inefficacy of economic disbursements in quieting opposition, the amir also granted six ministries (oil, justice, commerce and industry, education, Islamic affairs, labour and social affairs) to new MPs, five of whom were ICM members.<sup>98</sup>

Following their success at the ballot box and in gaining cabinet seats, opposition members of the 1992 parliament, who had once formed a coalition, became divided on religious and cultural issues, in particular because “[t]he parliamentarians from Islamist

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<sup>93</sup> Crystal, *Kuwait*, 175.

<sup>94</sup> Crystal, *Oil and Politics*, 180.

<sup>95</sup> Awadh, 212-213.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>97</sup> Uzi Rabi, “The Kuwaiti Royal Family in the Postliberation Period: Reinstitutionalizing the ‘First Among Equals’ System in Kuwait,” in *Middle East Monarchies: The Challenge of Modernity*, ed. Joseph Kostiner (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 160.

<sup>98</sup> Baaklini, Denoeux, and Springborg, 192.

groups believed that the vote could be interpreted as a mandate for the Islamization of the country's laws and regulations.”<sup>99</sup> The Brotherhood had first used the social sector to influence politics, yet later came to see the political arena as the primary tool for Islamising society – a controversial move for its secular coalition members. Despite the fact that Brotherhood deputies and sympathisers were the largest minority in this Assembly, they failed to implement the movement's traditional goals.<sup>100</sup> Though secular political blocs had worked with the ICM to guarantee restoration of parliamentary life, they did not support the Islamists' cultural agenda, which appeared to have been set aside during the electoral campaign.

The ICM continued to push the government to implement shari‘a. In 1994, all but six liberal MPs signed a petition demanding that article two of the constitution be changed from “shari‘a shall be *a* main source of legislation” to “shari‘a shall be *the* main source of legislation.”<sup>101</sup> A bill to that effect was signed by the majority of elected MPs.<sup>102</sup> To pass, however, legislation must receive two-thirds support from elected MPs *and* government-appointed ministers; it failed to garner necessary support from the ministers.<sup>103</sup> Following this disappointment, five Islamist MPs unsuccessfully suggested the creation of “an authority ‘to direct the public to do good and refrain from evil’,” with offices in every district to promote religiously acceptable behaviour and report violations of it.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Ghabra, “Balancing State and Society,” 64.

<sup>100</sup> Awadh, 213.

<sup>101</sup> Ghabra, “Balancing State and Society,” 66.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>103</sup> Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 221.

<sup>104</sup> Ghabra, “Balancing State and Society,” 65.

In addition, Brotherhood MPs demanded several changes in the education sector, spending many parliamentary sessions challenging a decision by the dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Kuwait University to prohibit the wearing of the niqab in laboratories.<sup>105</sup> Though Islamist parliamentarians attempted to overturn the university's decision, provoking backlash from many professors, the dean's ruling was upheld.<sup>106</sup> Members of the ICM also strongly backed gender segregation of Kuwait University, and a bill mandating such separation was defeated by a narrow margin in 1994.<sup>107</sup> Ultimately, in 1996, the law for segregation passed, though it specified that the university would be coeducational for five years and that there would be no government interference in private coeducational schools.<sup>108</sup> The Brotherhood also unsuccessfully attempted to remove Education Minister Ahmad al-Rub'ī from office after he had “embarked on a series of educational reforms that aimed to diminish religious influence in the educational system.”<sup>109</sup>

The Brotherhood's emphasis on its social platform ultimately led to the crumbling of its coalition in parliament. Repeated demands from Islamist MPs for cultural reforms delayed the discussion of more substantive and urgent domestic and foreign policy issues and thus forged “something of an alliance between liberals and government.”<sup>110</sup> The ICM's political pragmatism in this period seemed to have ended once it entered parliament, from which it hoped to impose controversial social policies to Islamise society. Because of the ICM's focus on such cultural issues in the 1990s, “the

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>107</sup> Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 221.

<sup>108</sup> Ghabra, “Balancing State and Society,” 66.

<sup>109</sup> N.J. Brown, “Pushing Toward Party Politics?,” 8.

<sup>110</sup> Ghabra, “Balancing State and Society,” 66.

government was able to play opposition elements off against each other and opposition movements themselves began to focus on some of the issues dividing them.”<sup>111</sup>

In 1994, Prime Minister Shaykh Sa‘ad al-Sabah reshuffled the cabinet, taking away the ICM’s posts, as the cabinet had become fractious.<sup>112</sup> Brotherhood members also lost positions in sub-committees of parliament during the 1995 session.<sup>113</sup> Further diminishing the Brotherhood’s position was the government’s prohibition of zakat committees in mosques in 1996, which had been a source of funding for the Ikhwan.<sup>114</sup> Such changes granted the group more freedom “to move into fuller opposition.”<sup>115</sup> The ICM worked with secular blocs to move forward with anti-corruption legislation. “ICM deputies attempted not only to investigate officials but also to provide a firm legal basis for public integrity by urging passage of financial disclosure laws. To prove the sincerity of their dedication to the issue, ICM deputies have disclosed their own financial holdings.”<sup>116</sup>

In an atmosphere of increasing suspicion of the government, elections were held on schedule in October 1996. The government and broader Kuwaiti population were happy to see the dissolution of the 1992 parliament, which “was widely regarded as overly contentious.”<sup>117</sup> In fact, many have insisted that the government intervened in the 1996 election to forge a more cooperative Assembly.<sup>118</sup> Of the 50 new MPs, 21 were considered cooperative with the government; 18 Islamists were elected, with more from

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<sup>111</sup> N.J. Brown, “Pushing Toward Party Politics?,” 8.

<sup>112</sup> N.J. Brown, *When Victory is Not an Option*, 110.

<sup>113</sup> Awadh, 216.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 215-216.

<sup>115</sup> N.J. Brown, *When Victory is Not an Option*, 110.

<sup>116</sup> N.J. Brown, “Pushing Toward Party Politics?,” 13.

<sup>117</sup> Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 206.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 206

the Salafi movement and fewer (five in total) from the ICM.<sup>119</sup> “These results were touted as a popular reaction against the opposition, an electorate opting for cooperation over contention. But the 1996 parliament was even more contentious than its predecessor.”<sup>120</sup>

In May 1999, Shaykh Jaber dissolved the National Assembly, scheduling a new election for July. This third dissolution was similar to the 1976 and 1986 closures of parliament in that it was spurred by parliamentary investigations into the behaviour of al-Sabah ministers, yet, in this instance, elections were scheduled immediately after dissolution, as required by the constitution.<sup>121</sup> The 1999 elections were a success for liberals, who earned 16 seats, while the primary losses went to MPs sympathetic to the government; ICM support remained constant, as it earned four seats.<sup>122</sup> “The weakening hold of traditional political leaders was reflected in a bouquet of upset winners in rural districts in the 1999 election.”<sup>123</sup> The resulting parliament was thus considered “an opposition stronghold.”<sup>124</sup>

**Figure 3: The ICM’s Performance in Parliamentary Elections in the 1990s**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of ICM MPs</b>
1992	5
1996	5
1999	4

<sup>119</sup> Ghabra, “Balancing State and Society,” 67.

<sup>120</sup> Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, 206.

<sup>121</sup> Ghabra, “Balancing State and Society,” 67.

<sup>122</sup> Rabi, 163.

<sup>123</sup> Tétreault, “A State of Two Minds,” 215.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

*Disappointment and Reform*

Though the 2003 election marked a victory for Sunni and Shi'i Islamists, who together gained more than one-third of the seats in parliament,<sup>125</sup> the ICM earned only two seats, prompting the organisation to make substantial internal changes. Electoral success had become the primary measure of the movement's relevance.

The lackluster electoral performance and the sense of political change prompted Hadas to reorganize itself in a significant way. Some of the founders of the party were gracefully shunted out of a public role; instead of relying primarily on its most dynamic and prominent parliamentarians, Hadas brought in new, still younger leaders to run the party itself [...]. The party leadership embarked on an effort to revive and professionalize its operations, hiring, for instance, an outside communications and marketing firm to help fine-tune its message to Kuwaiti voters.<sup>126</sup>

As part of this overhaul of its image and message, the ICM's views became increasingly aligned with those of liberal blocs on issues of political reform, such as changing electoral and party laws, enhancing parliament's authority, and combatting corruption.<sup>127</sup>

"After 2004, the ICM participated in several cross-partisan initiatives."<sup>128</sup>

Notably, the 2003 election was also a major setback for liberal groups, which had run primarily on the promotion of female suffrage, a contentious issue for the Brotherhood. In November 1999, parliament had voted down a bill to grant women the right to vote and run for parliament, by a margin of 41 opposed to 21 in favour.<sup>129</sup> The ICM, along with Salafi groups, did not change its stance on granting women the right to vote and run as candidates, despite internal dispute and a statement from the Egyptian General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood publicly supporting women's political

<sup>125</sup> John Kifner, "Islamic Traditionalists Sweep Liberals in Kuwaiti Election," *The New York Times*, July 7, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/07/world/islamic-traditionalists-sweep-liberals-in-kuwaiti-election.html>.

<sup>126</sup> N.J. Brown, *When Victory is Not an Option*, 111.

<sup>127</sup> Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 225.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

rights.<sup>130</sup> With the proposal for women's political rights voted down in 1999, Shaykh Jaber granted these rights by decree in 2005. Realising how contentious the decision was, the government even went so far as to suspend 26 preachers who publicly criticised the amir's decision.<sup>131</sup> Though this political failure embarrassed the Brotherhood in the short term, in the long run, it aided the ICM in several ways.<sup>132</sup>

The amir's granting of political rights to women helped resolve debate within the bloc about granting such rights and demonstrated the ICM's willingness to accept women's suffrage, despite its opposition to this decision.<sup>133</sup> Perhaps most unexpectedly, "the addition of women voters may have strengthened the ICM – members recount how one of their leading parliamentarians, Nasir Al-Sani', was going down to defeat in the 2006 elections until women's ballots (cast separately in gender-segregated polling) were counted."<sup>134</sup> The Kuwaiti Brotherhood had engaged in outreach to the female population since the 1970s through *Islah* and knew first-hand the importance of female votes in student union elections. Recognising the rising tide of women's movements such as Sufi group *Bayader al-Salam*, the ICM created a popular women's committee.<sup>135</sup> Once women were granted the right to vote, the Brotherhood managed to gain their support. "Ironically, Islamists arguably incorporated women more effectively than the Liberals in a practical way that helped them to win parliamentary seats in following elections."<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Interview with Usama al-Shahin.

<sup>131</sup> Ghanim al-Najjar, "The Challenges Facing Kuwaiti Democracy," *Middle East Journal* 54, no. 2 (2000): 245.

<sup>132</sup> N.J. Brown, "Pushing Toward Party Politics?," 13.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>135</sup> Margot Badran, "Gender, Islam, and the State: Kuwaiti Women in Struggle, Pre-Invasion to Postliberation," in *Islam, Gender, and Social Change*, eds. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 192.

<sup>136</sup> Alessandra L. González, *Islamic Feminism in Kuwait: The Politics and Paradoxes* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 52-53

Many women, especially those from the middle classes, welcomed involvement in the Islamist movement as a means of preserving Islamic culture, indicating the appeal of the organisation's ideology and ability to translate social to political capital, a critical tool of rentier Islamism.<sup>137</sup>

### *2006 and the Consolidation of Opposition*

A 2006 cabinet reshuffle brought Isma'īl al-Shatti into the position of minister of communications, yet the ICM broke ties with him when he voted to delay electoral reform.<sup>138</sup> In 2006, then, the bloc wholeheartedly joined the opposition coalition in demanding reform.<sup>139</sup> In the same year, a group of lawyers questioned the constitutionality of the law that had banned public gatherings since 1979, leading the Constitutional Court to remove it.<sup>140</sup> The National Assembly, under pressure from civil society, also succeeded in passing a new press and publication law in March. "Easing restrictions in the regulatory framework applied since 1961, it introduced two essential changes. First and foremost, it opened the door for newspaper licenses by providing applicants with the means of appeal if rejected by the officials in the Ministry of Information [...]. Secondly, the government lost its right to close down newspapers as a simple administrative procedure."<sup>141</sup> Nonetheless, the press law retained a prohibition on directly insulting God, the prophets, Islam, or the amir, in addition to a ban on "disclosing secret of private information and calling for the regime's overthrow."<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Haya al-Mughni, *Women in Kuwait: The Politics of Gender* (London: Saqi Books, 1993), 120.

<sup>138</sup> N.J. Brown, *When Victory is Not an Option*, 111-112.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 111-112.

<sup>140</sup> P. Salem, 5.

<sup>141</sup> Kjetil Selvik, "Elite Rivalry in a Semi-Democracy: The Kuwaiti Press Scene," *Middle Eastern Studies* 47, no. 3 (2011): 483.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 483-484.

In the midst of such reforms, opposition and youth organisations renewed their cry for amendments to the electoral law imposed by Shaykh Jaber in 1981, demanding the reduction of electoral constituencies from 25 to five.<sup>143</sup> “In the opinion of reformers, this matter would transform elections from occasions to buy votes and to launch campaigns to a race on the basis of program and ideology.”<sup>144</sup> Due to Kuwait’s relatively small population size and comparatively large number of electoral districts, a candidate could win a seat with fewer than 1,000 votes in his favour.<sup>145</sup> As the most organised political bloc, the ICM played a leading role in opposition agitating for reform, which dubbed itself the “We Want Five” Movement and included activists from liberal blocs.<sup>146</sup> This movement’s supporters organised large demonstrations throughout May 2006, even entering the National Assembly to place leaflets on the desks of cabinet ministers. Ultimately, “the intensity of the movement forced the emir’s hand.”<sup>147</sup> The government first offered to reduce the number of districts from 25 to ten.<sup>148</sup> This proposal led to additional demonstrations outside parliament, which were monitored by police and became violent, spurring some 4,000 people to gather against the government.<sup>149</sup> Following this display, the amir called for the dissolution of parliament and new elections.

These June 2006 polls, though organised under the 25 district voting system, affirmed popular support for the opposition. Among the surprising results were “victories for 35 candidates from across the political spectrum who had been endorsed by the anti-

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<sup>143</sup> P. Salem, 5.

<sup>144</sup> Al-Tahan, 125.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>146</sup> N.J. Brown, “Pushing Toward Party Politics?” 9.

<sup>147</sup> Mary Ann Tétreault, “Kuwait’s Annus Mirabilis,” *Middle East Report Online*, September 7, 2006, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero090706>.

<sup>148</sup> P. Salem, 6.

<sup>149</sup> Tétreault, “Kuwait’s Annus Mirabilis.”

corruption movement in return for pledges to fight corruption if they were elected.”<sup>150</sup> This election was also the first in which women could vote and run as candidates. Islamists did particularly well, with the ICM alone gathering its largest share of seats, at six (the group had only run six candidates).<sup>151</sup> Support for Islamists, however, was primarily due to “the decision of the liberal Alliance to back candidates who supported redistricting and the fight against corruption regardless of their other leanings.”<sup>152</sup> The ICM ultimately disagreed with its coalition members on a number of other matters, and the alliance fell apart – but only after working together to pass a law to reduce the number of electoral districts.<sup>153</sup> As seen in the 1990s, the ICM’s political pragmatism helped it earn seats in parliament, yet did not last after the campaign.

Although the opposition coalition crumbled, the government failed to capitalise on divisions in parliament. “The government could not muster a majority for many of its efforts and complained instead that various groups in the parliament seemed to be engaged in a rivalry over which one could criticize more ministers.”<sup>154</sup> The legislature attempted to interpellate Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser al-Sabah, the amir’s nephew, on suspicion of corruption, and staged interpellations of several other ministers.<sup>155</sup> It also demanded pay increases for state employees to counteract the effects of inflation.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Nathan J. Brown, “Kuwait’s 2008 Parliamentary Elections: A Setback for Democratic Islamism?,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 2008, 3, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/brown\\_kuwait2.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/brown_kuwait2.pdf).

<sup>152</sup> Tétreault, “Kuwait’s Annus Mirabilis.”

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> N.J. Brown, “Kuwait’s 2008 Parliamentary Elections,” 3.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>156</sup> Kenneth Katzman, “Kuwait: Security, Reform, and U.S. Policy,” *Congressional Research Service*, April 26, 2011, 3, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21513.pdf>.

When the government refused this request, the cabinet resigned, and Amir Shaykh Sabah dissolved the assembly, setting the date for new elections for May 2008.<sup>157</sup>

The 2008 election, the first held with five electoral districts, did not yield the expected benefits for organised political parties or the anticipated losses for tribal candidates. In each of the five districts, everyone had four votes, a system expected to aid minorities at the expense of the larger groups (in particular tribes). When tribes held their technically illegal primary elections, police arrested several tribal leaders.<sup>158</sup> Though such primaries were formally outlawed in 1998, the law was laxly enforced.<sup>159</sup> “It is unclear why the law against tribal primaries was suddenly applied for the first time in the unscheduled 2008 election campaign, but the most likely reason is that the large tribes, whose choices had the best chances of finding themselves in the parliament, had become too strong to ignore.”<sup>160</sup> The crackdown led tribe members to attack police stations, provoking a forceful response with tear gas, “a level of violence on both sides unprecedented in Kuwaiti elections.”<sup>161</sup> Adding to the political strain, earlier that year, sectarian tensions had flared after Shi’i politicians attended a ceremony to commemorate the death of Hizbullah militant ‘Imad Mughniyya.<sup>162</sup> Also notable in 2008 was the establishment of a self-proclaimed Salafi “party” and the success of a number of its outspoken members in gaining seats.<sup>163</sup> Its members took the opportunity to publicly decry the ICM as an organisation pursuing political rather than religious gains.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>158</sup> Mary Ann Tétreault, “Bottom-Up Democratization in Kuwait,” in *Political Change in the Arab Gulf States*, 88.

<sup>159</sup> Tétreault, “Political Activism in Kuwait,” 281.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>161</sup> Tétreault, “Bottom-Up Democratization,” 88.

<sup>162</sup> Katzman, 3.

<sup>163</sup> N.J. Brown, “Kuwait’s 2008 Parliamentary Elections,” 8.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 8.

Ultimately, “[t]he 2008 election was held in a tense and divided country,” leading to overall decreased voter turnout.<sup>165</sup>

In large measure due to the fact that political blocs had focused on discrediting each other rather than uniting to face down the government, the 2008 parliament was quite fractious.<sup>166</sup> The ICM, which had helped design the new electoral system, lost half of its seats, retaining only three.<sup>167</sup> Though ICM spokesperson Muhammad ‘Abdullah al-‘Ulaim was made minister of oil, the bloc “began to feel that its participation in the government allowed it little influence while still forcing it to support official policy. It withdrew from the cabinet and launched an attempt to bring the prime minister in for questioning before parliament.”<sup>168</sup> In December 2008, Shaykh Sabah reappointed the unpopular Shaykh Nasser as premier.

The amir’s selection of regime loyalists to government discouraged the opposition, which united in efforts to interpellate Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser on charges of corruption. The premier had never been subjected to parliamentary questioning, and the amir called for a new election in May 2009.<sup>169</sup> “The refusal of the Al Sabah to permit the premier to submit to questioning had also precipitated the unplanned election of 2006. Although the reasons for the confrontation between government and Parliament were different on that occasion, they were equally threatening to Al Sabah authority.”<sup>170</sup> As in 2008, tribal leaders protested the ban on tribal primaries, leading to a series of arrests yet not the level of violence seen in the previous year.

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<sup>165</sup> Tétreault, “Bottom-Up Democratization,” 88.

<sup>166</sup> N.J. Brown, “Kuwait’s 2008 Parliamentary Elections,” 9.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>168</sup> N.J. Brown, *When Victory is Not an Option*, 113.

<sup>169</sup> Tétreault and al-Ghanim, “The Day After ‘Victory’.”

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

Ultimately, “all of the ‘political groups’ that function as Kuwait’s substitute for political parties did poorly in May 2009, whether their orientation is center-left or religious;” the ICM won its lowest share yet, at only one seat.<sup>171</sup> “The movement’s leadership resigned – a step that certainly indicated their failure but in an odd sense also showed one sign of organizational health.”<sup>172</sup> It also again demonstrated the degree to which popular opinion, rather than progress toward its ideological goals, had become an indication of success for the ICM.

What was remarkable about the 2009 election was that “so many candidates, including several who had run as group representatives in previous elections, chose to run as independents.”<sup>173</sup> This rise in independent candidates demonstrated a rejection of the country’s political blocs as ineffective. The parliament was the first regime-friendly legislature in almost two decades.<sup>174</sup> Ultimately, “[t]he amir’s strategy of calling election after election, with the effect of alienating Kuwaiti voters, depressing voter turnout, and delegitimizing the entire electoral enterprise and the parliament it produces, shows how elections become instruments of authoritarianism.”<sup>175</sup> Polls held in such a discordant environment encourage social division and thereby strengthen the power of the executive rather than temper it, in something of a divide and rule scenario.<sup>176</sup> The new parliament stripped the political opposition of strong parliamentary representation.

Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser was finally interpellated, behind closed doors, in December 2009 about his handling of the financial crisis and possible misuse of state

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<sup>171</sup> Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 229.

<sup>172</sup> N.J. Brown, *When Victory is Not an Option*, 113.

<sup>173</sup> Tétreault and al-Ghanim.

<sup>174</sup> Sharmaake Sabrie and Pekka Hakala, “Kuwait’s Political Crisis Deepens,” European Parliament Directorate-General for External Policies, January 2013, 10, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/en/studiesdownload.html?languageDocument=EN&file=91150>.

<sup>175</sup> Tétreault, “Bottom-Up Democratization,” 91.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

funds, marking the first time a premier had been interpellated. Still, he was questioned by a sympathetic National Assembly,<sup>177</sup> 30 of whose voting members had signed a statement pledging support for the prime minister before the interpellation.<sup>178</sup> Predictably, the vote of no confidence failed, and Shaykh Nasser was not removed from office.

*Arab Spring Reaches Kuwait*

In the October 2010 parliamentary session, Shaykh Sabah again appointed government allies to key positions, and “[t]he tensions that built throughout 2010 carried over into 2011,” with sustained demands for the interpellation of Prime Minister Nasser and new calls for similar questioning of Interior Minister Jaber al-Khaled al-Sabah after police were accused of fatally torturing a prisoner.<sup>179</sup> Although Interior Minister al-Sabah resigned, ongoing protests throughout the Middle East as the Arab Spring gained momentum, spurring more unrest in Kuwait. In March, a Shi‘i MP asked to question the foreign minister about Kuwait’s involvement in the crackdown on protesters in Bahrain, leading the cabinet to resign.<sup>180</sup>

A new cabinet was formed in May 2011, featuring six new faces yet still under the leadership of Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser. The issue of corruption was pervasive in the new government. In fact, the next political crisis emerged in September 2011, when reports emerged that major Kuwaiti banks had deposited \$92 million into the accounts of several pro-government MPs, suggesting the government’s purchasing of political support.<sup>181</sup> Earlier that year, the parliament had removed through a vote of no confidence the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Development and Housing Affairs Shaykh

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<sup>177</sup> Selvik, 479.

<sup>178</sup> Shultziner and Tétreault, 287.

<sup>179</sup> Katzman, 5.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

Ahmad al-Sabah, on charges of corruption.<sup>182</sup> Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Mohammad al-Sabah resigned to protest the corruption charges, and one of the largest demonstrations in Kuwaiti history, with some 10,000 participants, took place in September. In November 2011, following repeated calls for his resignation amid increasingly large protests, Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser resigned. “The Amir’s selection of a new premier, which might have appeased protesters had it been made a few years earlier, did not satisfy them by the end of 2011.”<sup>183</sup> Kuwaiti youth and MPs from liberal and Islamist groups (including the ICM), outraged at what they considered rampant corruption within the system, also began demanding that the prime minister be elected rather than appointed by the amir. Continued protests led to the government’s resignation and the dissolution of parliament in December.<sup>184</sup>

The February 2012 election “produced a landslide victory for the opposition, mainly Islamist (Brotherhood and Salafi) and tribal candidates, who won 34 of the 50 parliamentary seats.”<sup>185</sup> The Salafi and Brotherhood blocs each won all four seats they contested. The liberal and merchant factions did less well, thereby widening divisions between the urban merchant elite and tribal *badū*.<sup>186</sup> This parliament was voided, however, four months later, as the Constitutional Court declared the dissolution of the previous parliament unconstitutional.<sup>187</sup> The Court thus reinstated the pro-regime 2009 National Assembly. Encouraged by this political victory, Shaykh Sabah asked the court

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<sup>182</sup> Shultziner and Tétreault, 288.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

<sup>185</sup> Sabrie and Hakala, 10.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>187</sup> Kristin Smith Diwan, “Kuwait’s Balancing Act,” *Foreign Policy*, October 13, 2012, [http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/10/23/kuwait\\_s\\_balancing\\_act](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/10/23/kuwait_s_balancing_act).

to review the legality of the 2006 redistricting law, yet it rejected this request.<sup>188</sup> The secular-Islamist opposition coalition widely protested the reimposition of the 2009 parliament, which ultimately never met because its reinstatement was so controversial.<sup>189</sup> At this point, with the government showing itself increasingly willing to quash the movement for political reform to enhance its own power, the ICM privileged the need for political change over its social goals, planting itself firmly with the broad-based opposition.

In October 2012, Shaykh Sabah “[w]arning of the threat of ‘chaotic sedition that could jeopardize our country (and) undermine our national unity’,” had the cabinet change voting rules ahead of the December elections, “abolishing the country’s complicated system that allowed each voter multiple votes. This move disregarded the court’s previous ruling on the matter, as well as the opposition’s demands of complying with the 2006 electoral law.”<sup>190</sup> As a result, the opposition, including the ICM, boycotted the December 2012 polls, leading to a low 39 percent turnout rate (compared to 60 percent in February) and, predictably, returning a pro-government National Assembly.<sup>191</sup> Sunni Islamist representation was the most drastically affected, decreasing from 23 MPs to four, and taking the ICM out of the legislative body for the first time since the bloc’s creation.<sup>192</sup> The parliament was dominated by independent MPs, with the historically pro-

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<sup>188</sup> Sabrie and Hakala, 11.

<sup>189</sup> Mary Ann Tétreault, “Looking for Revolution in Kuwait,” *Middle East Report Online*, November 1, 2012, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero110112>.

<sup>190</sup> Sabrie and Hakala, 11.

<sup>191</sup> “Kuwait Election: Opposition Hails Boycott as Turnout Falls,” BBC, December 2, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20571958>.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

government Shi'i Islamic National Alliance the largest bloc represented, with five MPs.<sup>193</sup>

In June 2013, the Constitutional Court once again dissolved parliament, after facing down opposition claims that it was voted in under an invalid electoral law. Many opposition groups, including the ICM as well as several tribal leaders and liberal groups, boycotted the July 2013 polls, again in protest of the change in electoral law. As a result, the current parliament is dominated by a blend of liberal and tribal blocs, with independents, including “service” or pro-government MPs, holding 30 of the 50 seats. When asked about the logic behind the ICM’s two consecutive boycotts, former MP Nasser al-Sane explained that they were meant to expose the government as the source of political gridlock.<sup>194</sup> He stated, “[t]he more we stay away, the more we show it’s the government that cannot perform.”<sup>195</sup>

**Figure 4: The ICM’s Performance in Parliamentary Elections in the 2000s**

Year	Number of ICM MPs
2003	2
2006	6
2008	3
2009	1
February 2012	4
December 2012	0 (boycott)
July 2013	0 (boycott)

#### *The ICM and Kuwaiti Politics Today*

National malaise continues, with liberal opposition leader and former Popular Action Bloc MP Musallam al-Barrak having led the call, beginning in 2014, for a return

<sup>193</sup> Sabrie and Hakala, 6.

<sup>194</sup> Interview with Nasser al-Sane.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

to protests until a new election is called and Cabinet positions become elected.<sup>196</sup> Although the ICM supports al-Barrak's ultimate goal of a constitutional monarchy, its social programme may hinder the coalition, as has happened in past ICM alliances. Still, in early 2013, the ICM signed on to a 23-page document on reform drafted by al-Barrak, along with former ICM parliamentarian Jama'an al-Harbash and Tariq al-Mutairi of the liberal Civil Democratic Movement.<sup>197</sup> Political trends ranging from secular leftists to Salafis, as well as the NUKS, have signed the document, which "proposes a full parliamentary system, with a stronger legislature, independent judiciary and revised criminal code."<sup>198</sup>

Significantly, as part of the opposition coalition, the ICM dropped its once primary demand of amending article two of the constitution and seems increasingly willing to work alongside other opposition movements to ensure political reform and to stamp out corruption.<sup>199</sup> Impressively, the opposition gathered some 6,000 people in protest in June 2014, exposing the corruption of Nasser Mohammed al-Sabah, influential member of the Amiri Diwan, and Judge Faisal al-Marshad, head of the Supreme Judicial Council, in addition to other judges.<sup>200</sup>

The government has reacted harshly against such opposition unity. It revoked the citizenship of five opposition members in July 2014, a step that Joe Stork, Deputy Director for Middle East and North Africa at Human Rights Watch, dubbed "yet another

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<sup>196</sup> "Freed Kuwait Opposition Leader Vows Protests Will Continue," *Gulf News*, July 8, 2014, [http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/kuwait/freed-kuwait-opposition-leader-vows-protests-will-continue-1\\_1357223](http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/kuwait/freed-kuwait-opposition-leader-vows-protests-will-continue-1_1357223).

<sup>197</sup> E.A.D., "Kuwait's Opposition: A Reawakening," *The Economist*, April 17, 2014, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/pomegranate/2014/04/kuwaits-opposition>.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Alastair Sloan, "A Renewed Kuwaiti Opposition Rises to Fight Corruption," *Middle East Monitor*, June 11, 2014, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/middle-east/12053-a-renewed-kuwaiti-opposition-rises-to-fight-corruption>.

downward step in Kuwait's assault on the right to free speech."<sup>201</sup> Although those stripped of citizenship did not include members of the ICM,<sup>202</sup> the organisation released a statement dubbing the situation a "regretful example of utilizing the state's capabilities in fighting reformists instead of supporting the process of reform."<sup>203</sup> In January 2015, former ICM MP Mubarak al-Duwailah was arrested on charges of endangering ties with an ally and insulting leaders of that state following his statements, on Kuwait's parliamentary television channel, about Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Shaykh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan being "against Sunni Islam."<sup>204</sup> Though al-Duwailah was not charged in Kuwait, his case was referred to the UAE's Federal Supreme Court, which will try him in absentia.<sup>205</sup>

In the face of such government suppression, the ICM is likely to continue to privilege political reform over social policies, as opposition groups focus increasingly on pursuing common goals of political reform.<sup>206</sup> In fact, al-Duwailah explicitly called for overcoming traditional differences in a January statement shortly after his arrest, and such opposition unification appears to be taking place.<sup>207</sup> The ICM, along with al-Barrak's Popular Labour Movement and the Salafi al-Umma Party have led the charge in

<sup>201</sup> Joe Stork, Qtd. in "Kuwait: 5 Critics Stripped of Citizenship," Human Rights Watch, August 10, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/08/10/kuwait-5-critics-stripped-citizenship>.

<sup>202</sup> Former Salafi MP 'Abdullah al-Bargash, two of his brothers and his sister were arrested, along with Ahmad Jabir al-Shammari, owner of al-Yawm satellite television and *Al-'Alam al-Yawm* newspaper, which are said to have ties with the liberal Popular Bloc.

<sup>203</sup> A. Saleh, "ICM accuses government of 'using' citizenship file," *Kuwait Times*, August 2, 2014, <http://news.kuwaittimes.net/icm-accuses-government-using-citizenship-file/>.

<sup>204</sup> "UAE to Try Kuwaiti Ex-MP over Remarks on Abu Dhabi Crown Prince," Middle East Eye, March 9, 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/uae-try-kuwaiti-ex-mp-over-remarks-abu-dhabi-crown-prince-1546132555>.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Hamid, *Temptations of Power*, 54-55.

<sup>207</sup> "Al-Duwailah: 'Ala al-Quwwa al-Siyasiyya an Tafham Hassasiyyat al-Marhala Tatatalab al-Ta'ali 'an al-Khilafat al-Taqlidiyya" [Al-Duwailah: The Political Forces Must Understand that the Sensitivity of the Stage Requires the Transcendence of Traditional Differences], Al-Harakat al-Islamiyya al-Dusturiyya, January 11, 2015, [http://www.icmkw.org/site/pages/topics/alduilx\\_-yl649-alqu649-alsiasi629-623n-tfx\\_m-623n-xhsasi629-almrxhl629-ttt\\_lb-altjali-yn-alxlafat-altqlidi629.php?p=60#.VTOHgxndKo](http://www.icmkw.org/site/pages/topics/alduilx_-yl649-alqu649-alsiasi629-623n-tfx_m-623n-xhsasi629-almrxhl629-ttt_lb-altjali-yn-alxlafat-altqlidi629.php?p=60#.VTOHgxndKo).

continued protests in 2015 against judicial corruption and the government's policy of stripping citizenship from dissidents,<sup>208</sup> while calling for new parliamentary elections and the release of political prisoners.<sup>209</sup> Al-Barrak's sentencing to two years in prison in February 2015 led to a renewed call to protests.<sup>210</sup> The most recent opposition protest, held in March protesting al-Barrak's arrest, was broken up by security forces and resulted in the arrest of dozens of opposition leaders and alleged assault of participants.<sup>211</sup> The more the government excludes opposition political blocs from power, the more they are likely to privilege a pro-democracy agenda over ideological differences. In this way, government crackdown has encouraged the moderation of traditional Islamist social aims as the Brotherhood and some Salafi strands promote broad-ranging reform, rather than Islamisation.

*The ICM's Goals and Separation of the Political and Social*

Most of the ICM's primary goals have become focused on domestic politics and a pro-democracy agenda, as the organisation pushes for reforms such as an elected prime minister, the imposition of a single electoral district to reduce government gerrymandering, the legalisation of political parties, and, eventually, the creation of a constitutional monarchy. The organisation also has more wide-ranging social and

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<sup>208</sup> Dahlia Kholaiif, "Kuwait's Opposition Movements Feel the Squeeze on Freedoms," Middle East Eye, March 30, 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/kuwaits-opposition-movements-feel-squeeze-freedoms-1703345061>.

<sup>209</sup> "Kuwait: Opposition Protest Broken Up," Human Rights Watch, March 29, 2015, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2015/03/29/kuwait-opposition-protest-broken>.

<sup>210</sup> "Kuwait Sentences Opposition Politician Mussallam Al Barrak to Two Years in Jail for 'Insulting Ruler'," Global Voices, February 22, 2015, <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2015/02/22/kuwait-sentences-opposition-politician-mussallam-al-barrak-to-two-years-in-jail-for-insulting-ruler/>.

<sup>211</sup> Linah Alsaafin, "Kuwait Security Forces Violently Disperse Anti-Government Protest," Middle East Eye, March 23, 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/kuwaiti-security-forces-violently-disperse-anti-government-protest-1878869579>.

economic aims. In a document explaining the platform of the ICM, released in 2007, seven general goals are listed. They include:

1. To develop and encourage the political regime towards an active popular interaction, and amend the Kuwaiti Constitution for the application of the optimum, sublime Islamic rules and principles.
2. To consolidate and establish justice in the State of Kuwait, apply equality between its citizens, and maintain principles of democracy and counseling in compliance with the Islamic Sharia principles.
3. To shape the Kuwaiti citizen according to his unique Islamic identity and true Arab loyalty, in a manner that meets the development plans, takes part in the reform of society and assists in the formation of the future of Kuwait in all fields.
4. To underline the sovereignty of Kuwait on all its territories and secure the defensive methods under patronage of the national unity and in accordance with the verse ‘and all of you shall take refuge of Allah and do not be separated from each other....’.
5. To reform the economic system in the State of Kuwait in line with the fair wealth distribution principles, and change it into a more productive system in accordance with the Islamic principles of containment and integration.
6. To impress the social, educational and informative systems into the State of Kuwait in a way that involves quality Islamic thinking and keeps pace with the aspirations of development, progress, and civilization.
7. To establish unity between the GCC countries in order to be able to achieve a comprehensive economic, political and military integration, and to achieve the Arab and Islamic unity in the future in a way that reflects the principles of Islam calling for unity and condemning disunity.<sup>212</sup>

This list highlights the overwhelmingly domestic agenda of the ICM, as well as the myriad similarities between its goals and those of secular liberal opposition parties.

Despite the fact that they share common aims, secular liberal political blocs and the ICM have clashed in the past over the issue of civil liberties. The ICM “supports liberalizing political reforms rather faithfully, but it draws the line when liberalization leads in a cultural direction.”<sup>213</sup> For example, in the 1990s, the ICM backed a press law that would decrease licensing requirements while also insisting that the publication of material insulting to Islam would be a punishable offence.<sup>214</sup> In such an instance, “[t]he

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<sup>212</sup> “ICM Vision, Mission and Objectives,” *Islamic Constitutional Movement*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, January 2007, 3-4.

<sup>213</sup> N.J. Brown, “Pushing Toward Party Politics?,” 11.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

party argued that justice had to come before freedom.”<sup>215</sup> In other cases, the ICM has promoted measures that place limits on personal freedoms, such as the rejection of female suffrage, the criminalisation of religious blasphemy in the press and the imposition of laws restricting hours when women can work. As one Kuwaiti political scientist put it, “the Brotherhood used democracy to establish laws that are unconstitutional and against the law.”<sup>216</sup> Indeed, liberals often express their hesitance to ally with the Brotherhood, as they fear it would impose limits on their freedoms. When asked about such restrictions, Nasser al-Sane explained, “of course we want Islam to be our social norm and the government to respect Islam.”<sup>217</sup> The group is therefore both staunchly liberal (in terms of demanding more representative government) while maintaining its social conservatism.

Notwithstanding its commitment to conservative social mores, Kuwait’s Brotherhood is “politically more liberal than those who call themselves liberal.”<sup>218</sup> In fact, the group’s “leaders are frustrated because they feel that in a sense they have become more democratic than the political system in which they operate – and perhaps more than Kuwaiti society is ready for.”<sup>219</sup> The ICM’s democratic credentials are proven by its internal structure, which is far more sophisticated than that of any other Kuwaiti political bloc (see Figure 5). ICM member and former MP Mohammad al-Dallal explained the party’s democratic bylaws, stating “we change the leadership and group inside every four years to give a chance to have new blood.”<sup>220</sup> The level of organisation

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>216</sup> Interview with Shamlan al-Essa.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

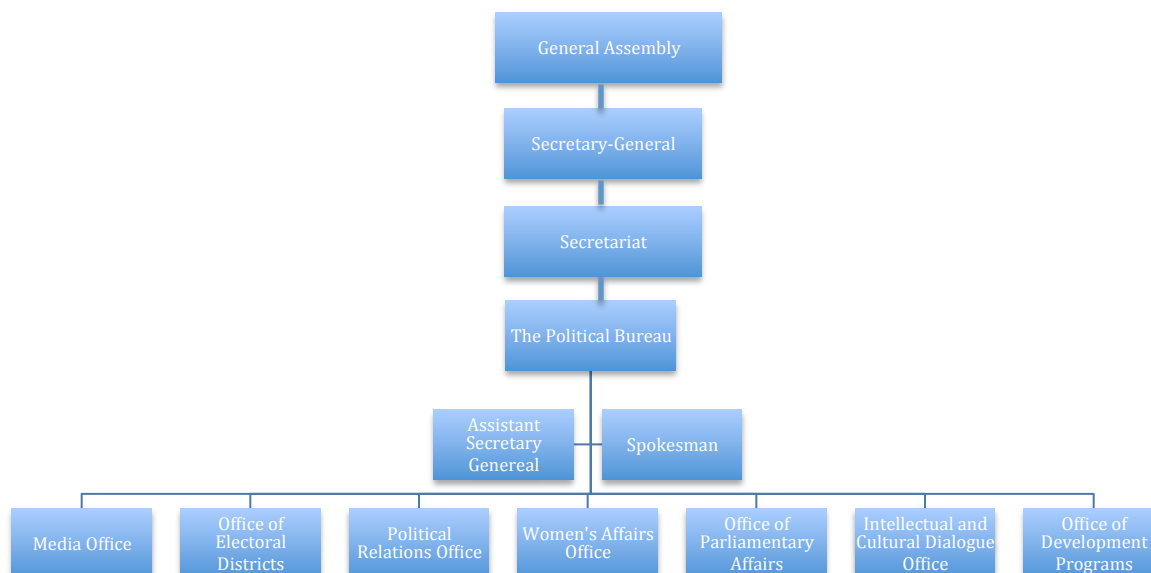
<sup>218</sup> Interview with Political Officer, British Embassy Kuwait, November 14, 2013.

<sup>219</sup> N.J. Brown, “Kuwait’s 2008 Parliamentary Elections,” 9.

<sup>220</sup> Interview with Mohammad al-Dallal, November 18, 2013.

within the ICM is impressive. Its general membership, all of whom have passed through a probationary period and pay dues, form a General Assembly.<sup>221</sup> The elected Secretary General, Secretariat, and eight-member Political Bureau handle day-to-day decision-making and running of the bloc, while a Parliamentary Committee oversees the activities of the organisation's MPs, who have been selected by party leadership to run.<sup>222</sup> Such structures maintain the bloc's discipline, and guarantee that "the ICM is more than the sum of a few leading personalities."<sup>223</sup>

**Figure 5: ICM Organisational Chart**<sup>224</sup>



<sup>221</sup> N.J. Brown, "Pushing Toward Party Politics?," 7.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>224</sup> "ICM Vision, Mission and Objectives."

Perhaps because of its modern democratic structure and focus on political reform, the ICM has been criticised by more conservative Islamists for focusing on political rather than religious matters, allowing for the growth of Kuwait's Salafi movement.<sup>225</sup> Further reflecting its accommodationist and politically pragmatic turn, the ICM has attempted to cooperate with a variety of political blocs, including Shi'i Islamist groups, yet has been held back, at times, by a coalition with the Salafis. "As a result, Shiite Islamist deputies do not vote with the Islamist bloc but instead with the populist one"<sup>226</sup> When asked about their willingness to form coalitions, members of the ICM responded that they were in favour, as the organisation is ultimately flexible.<sup>227</sup> The popular perception is that "you can speak reason with the Ikhwan. They're part of the system of elites, so they would never dream of overturning [the system]."<sup>228</sup> Isma'il al-Shatti, for his part, has called for the implementation of all parts of shari'a over time, considering that "[t]he Quran came in stages."<sup>229</sup> This more moderate stance prevails today, as issues of government reform appear more urgent.

Regarding its work through social services, the ICM's association with the Brotherhood's social organisation, Islah "may have actually proved a liability when other parties levied the charge (denied by HADAS) that charitable funds were being used for an expensive political campaign."<sup>230</sup> As for the ICM's relationship with Islah, al-Dallal explained "we cooperate with Jam'iat Islah in general. We need their support in elections, and we support them in parliament if they need it for social issues."<sup>231</sup> Members of Islah

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<sup>225</sup> N.J. Brown, "Kuwait's 2008 Parliamentary Elections," 7.

<sup>226</sup> N.J. Brown, "Pushing Toward Party Politics?," 17.

<sup>227</sup> Interview with Nasser al-Sane; Interview with Tareq al-Suwaidan.

<sup>228</sup> Interview with Ibrahim al-Hadban, November 14, 2013.

<sup>229</sup> Ghabra, "Balancing State and Society," 69.

<sup>230</sup> N.J. Brown, "Kuwait's 2008 Parliamentary Elections," 6.

<sup>231</sup> Interview with Mohammad al-Dallal.

can join the ICM, yet the ICM is in no way governed by that group.<sup>232</sup> The formal division between the social and political arms of the Brotherhood highlights that each is equally important in maintaining popular support. At the same time, this separation is not always appropriate, considering how much each branch depends on the other.

The Kuwaiti Brotherhood's agenda, at least on the part of the ICM, remains exclusively domestic. "The Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood are Kuwaiti first and Muslim Brotherhood second."<sup>233</sup> Furthermore, the organisation's agenda is shaped by local realities more than a desire to take over rule. As Usama al-Shahin explained, "we are 100 percent loyal to [the ruling family]. We want reform, repair, not change."<sup>234</sup> In fact, the amir meets with members of the Brotherhood and attends their *dīwāniyya*, demonstrating that the Kuwaiti government, unlike others in the Gulf, "isn't in panic mode."<sup>235</sup> While the Kuwaiti government has never legally recognised the ICM,<sup>236</sup> its approach in dealing with the bloc, and with the Brotherhood in general, is far more moderate than the repressive security-led approach seen in the UAE in part because the group's status as a primarily local political bloc has been established. Though a lawsuit called for the closure of Islah in March 2014,<sup>237</sup> one MP tried to persuade parliament to outlaw the Brotherhood as a terrorist organisation in July 2014,<sup>238</sup> and rumours swirled about purges

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Interview with Mohammad al-Rumaihi, November 25, 2013.

<sup>234</sup> Interview with Usama al-Shahin.

<sup>235</sup> Interview with Abdullah al-Shayegi, November 27, 2013.

<sup>236</sup> N.J. Brown, "Pushing Toward Party Politics?," 15.

<sup>237</sup> "Kuwait to Ban Muslim Brotherhood," Middle East Monitor, March 16, 2014,

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/10329-kuwait-to-ban-muslim-brotherhood>.

<sup>238</sup> Courtney Trenwith, "MP Calls for Ban on Kuwait's Muslim Brotherhood," *Arabian Business*, July 13, 2014, <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/mp-calls-for-ban-on-kuwait-s-muslim-brotherhood-557658.html>.

of Brotherhood supporters from government in 2013,<sup>239</sup> large-scale government action has not taken place against the Ikhwan, despite the fact that it holds popular support.

*Popularity of the ICM and the Muslim Brotherhood*

The ICM, as Kuwait's most organised political bloc, and as the largest Islamist organisation in a conservative country, has gathered a considerable following. Support for the ICM comes from many sectors of Kuwaiti society, ranging from segments of the urban merchants to *badū* of the countryside.<sup>240</sup> The Brotherhood's political bloc has also been remarkably popular among women, as it is seen to promote conservative social values which many women hope to maintain within their families.<sup>241</sup> Veteran ICM politician Nasser al-Sane, when asked how he served as MP for over 17 years and six terms, stated that it was "not through providing social, economic benefits to people, but I visited them, opened weekly *dīwāniyya* every Tuesday where they make comments, I say what I've been doing, they give advice [...] People appreciate this kind of openness."<sup>242</sup> Certainly, in Kuwait, there is a social element to political trust – people tend to support candidates who stress their personal moral uprightness in a country plagued by widespread corruption. As al-Sane explained, "[p]eople don't vote for our candidates because they're ICM but because those people have worked hard to go to the grassroots."<sup>243</sup> A critical part of this grassroots outreach is the social sector, managed by Islah. Largely through such social outreach, the Brotherhood in Kuwait is entrenched and

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<sup>239</sup> Scott Williamson and Nathan J. Brown, "Kuwait's Muslim Brotherhood under Pressure," *Foreign Policy*, November 20, 2013, [http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/11/20/kuwaits-muslim-brotherhood-under-pressure/?wp\\_login\\_redirect=0](http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/11/20/kuwaits-muslim-brotherhood-under-pressure/?wp_login_redirect=0).

<sup>240</sup> Interview with Ambassador Edward Gnehm, December 16, 2013.

<sup>241</sup> Interview with Nasser al-Sane.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

has become “a fundamental component of the political scene”<sup>244</sup> and will likely remain a strong political force, as it has managed to work with liberal secular trends toward popular reforms while also maintaining its identity as an Islamist party.

Brotherhood candidates have fostered a sense of community with their constituents, which has made them popular. One former ICM parliamentarian explained the group’s appeal as its relatability: “we are from the people, and we are with the people. I drive a Ford. I live in an apartment.”<sup>245</sup> The Brotherhood, by pushing for transparency, and by opening the finances of its MPs to the public in the past,<sup>246</sup> has managed to appeal to Kuwaitis fed up with what has been ranked as the world’s 69<sup>th</sup> least corrupt government, ranking well below Qatar and the UAE.<sup>247</sup>

In the Kuwaiti context, “religious affiliation is stronger than the liberal one because it is ideology-based and uses religion, the heritage of the people.”<sup>248</sup> The Brotherhood’s popularity, though undoubtedly linked to its political agenda, could not have been achieved without its social programmes. Further aiding the spread of Islamism, “Kuwait has liberals, but there is no liberalism. There is a big difference between the two. You will find liberal individuals, but liberalism as a concept in society remains weak.”<sup>249</sup> In such an environment, the Muslim Brotherhood is poised to remain ideologically and politically dominant, in particular as it adopts a pro-democracy agenda attractive to Kuwaiti liberals.

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<sup>244</sup> Interview with Abdullah al-Shayaji.

<sup>245</sup> Interview with Usama al-Shahin.

<sup>246</sup> N.J. Brown, “Pushing Toward Party Politics?,” 13.

<sup>247</sup> “Corruption Perceptions Index,” Transparency International, 2014, <http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2013/results/>.

<sup>248</sup> Interview with ‘Abdulla al-Nibari, February 2, 2014.

<sup>249</sup> Ahmed al-Baghdadi, Qtd. in Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood*, 230.

*Conclusions*

Beginning with the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait, the Muslim Brotherhood took on a task common to many of the organisation's branches: the provision of services. In so doing, the Ikhwan proved its ability to organise itself politically and gain popular support. Notably, the Kuwaiti Brotherhood is the only one in the super-rentiers that has needed to shoulder such responsibilities. Having taken on the role of the state in many ways during the Iraqi occupation, the Kuwaiti Brotherhood, eager to maintain power it had gained under occupation, began to privilege success in electoral politics over ideological purity.

Unlike other Brotherhood affiliates in the Gulf, the Kuwaiti Brotherhood has also benefitted from years of experience in government.<sup>250</sup> Perhaps because of its active involvement in public office, the Kuwaiti Brotherhood has learned to balance its conservative social goals with its pro-democracy agenda into a politically influential platform. The surprising marriage between Islamism and pro-democratic liberalism, and between Islam and politics, may ultimately be part of Kuwaiti political culture. As one interviewee put it, "Kuwaiti Islamists are liberal politically but conservative socially. This is the culture."<sup>251</sup> Such an atmosphere differs greatly from that seen in Qatar, where no institutionalised means of voicing dissent exist. We turn to analysis of the Qatari system in the two chapters that follow.

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<sup>250</sup> Interview with Sami al-Faraj.

<sup>251</sup> Interview with 'Abdulla al-Nibari.

## Chapter Six

### Ikhwan in the Informal Sector: Foundations of the Qatari Brotherhood

#### *Introduction*

Qatar's relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood has become a topic of international speculation. The state's leaders, in particular former Amir Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, have been charged with supporting the organisation, in large measure due to their foreign policy decisions during the Arab Spring uprisings beginning in 2011. Several journalistic articles have posited links between the government and Brotherhood,<sup>1</sup> yet little scholarship exists on this relationship.<sup>2</sup> In fact, no extensive historical account of the Qatari Muslim Brotherhood exists in English, and information about the organisation, in Arabic or English, is difficult to obtain.

What is most often overlooked in the scant existing literature on Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood is the role of political Islam inside Qatar itself, which has not been institutionalised since the organisation completed its dissolution in 2003. Nonetheless, because Qatar is “a naturally conservative society,” policies that are motivated by religiosity or adherence to tradition are often considered evidence of Brotherhood infiltration.<sup>3</sup> As one Qatari explained, “Muslim Brotherhood influence is informal, not

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Sultan Sooud Al-Qassemi, “Qatar's Brotherhood Ties Alienate Fellow Gulf States,” *Al-Monitor*, January 23, 2013; Dana El Baltaji, “Qatar Bankrolls Muslim Brothers as U.A.E. Jails Them,” *Bloomberg*, December 11, 2012, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2012-12-10/qatar-bankrolls-ascendant-muslim-brothers-as-u-a-e-jails-them>; David D. Kirkpatrick, “Qatar's Support of Islamists Alienates Allies Near and Far,” *The New York Times*, September 7, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/08/world/middleeast/qatars-support-of-extremists-alienates-allies-near-and-far.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/08/world/middleeast/qatars-support-of-extremists-alienates-allies-near-and-far.html?_r=0); Ron Prosor, “Club Med for Terrorists,” *The New York Times*, August 24, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/25/opinion/qatar-club-med-for-terrorists.html>; Lauren Williams, “Inside Doha, at the Heart of a GCC Dispute,” *The National*, March 19, 2014, <http://www.thenational.ae/world/qatar/inside-doha-at-the-heart-of-a-gcc-dispute>.

<sup>2</sup> The only scholarly articles in English dedicated specifically to this topic are David Roberts, “Qatar and the Brotherhood,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 56, no. 4 (2014): 23-32; David Roberts, “Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood: Pragmatism or Preference?” *Middle East Policy* 21, no. 3 (2014): 84-94.

<sup>3</sup> Mustafa 'Ashur, “Tajribat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi Qatar,” (Experience of the Muslim Brotherhood in Qatar), in *Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun wa-l-Salafiyun fi al-Khalij* (The Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis in the

institutionalised,”<sup>4</sup> making it difficult to trace. The history of the Brotherhood in Qatar thus extends beyond that of the organisation itself. Even when the group had a formal structure inside Qatar, its ranks were divided about how the Brotherhood would adapt to an environment with little space for political participation or independent social action.<sup>5</sup> By inhabiting the informal sector, the Brotherhood has maintained its ideological and popular appeal without infringing on the government’s prerogative.

Egyptian writer Mustafa ‘Ashur divides the Brotherhood’s history in Qatar into three stages. The first, in the mid-1950s, involved the arrival of Egyptian Brotherhood members in Qatar, eager to escape Nasir’s crackdown.<sup>6</sup> Many of them worked in the education sector, where they influenced the curricula and a new generation of Qataris. The second phase of the Brotherhood’s development in Qatar occurred in the 1970s when Qataris studying in Egyptian universities, among them former Brotherhood Supreme Guide Jassim Sultan, became influenced by Ikhwan ideology and brought it back to Qatar after completing their studies, eager to create an indigenous organisation.<sup>7</sup> The third stage involved the influx of Syrian Brotherhood members into Qatar at the start of the 1980s following the Assad regime’s violent crackdown on the organisation.<sup>8</sup> After this final period of organisational expansion, the Brotherhood entered a stage of internal discussion, which ended with a vote in favour of the organisation’s dissolution in 1999.

In this chapter, we trace the Brotherhood’s institutional history within Qatar through these three stages, beginning in the 1950s with the arrival of Brotherhood

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Gulf), ed. Al-Mesbar Studies and Research Centre (Dubai: Al-Mesbar Studies and Research Centre, 2011), 188.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Hassan al-Ibrahim, October 2, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Marc Lynch, “Muslim Brotherhood Debates,” *Abu Aardvark* (blog), February 28, 2007, [http://abuaardvark.typepad.com/abuaardvark/2007/02/muslim\\_brotherh.html](http://abuaardvark.typepad.com/abuaardvark/2007/02/muslim_brotherh.html).

<sup>6</sup> ‘Ashur, 191.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Ibid., 191-192.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Ibid., 192.

sympathisers and ending with its dissolution nearly 50 years later. We also analyse the role of Arab nationalism as a political force and ideological rival to the Ikhwan during the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the unique political and social environment that Qatar provides Islamist actors.

*The Education Sector as an Ideological Battleground*

During the first phase of Brotherhood expansion in Qatar in the 1950s and 1960s, Ikhwan ideology was popularly received, due to its perceived purity as a religious movement that rejected modernity and secularism, something appealing to a conservative society rocked by the (sometimes violent) influence of Arab nationalism. The Brotherhood's allure in Qatar thus resembles its spread through the Egyptian countryside during that era.<sup>9</sup> Because the Brotherhood's focus in Qatar, at that time, was on *da'wa* and education, rather than on political action, the movement received government support.<sup>10</sup> The first organised Brotherhood activities in Qatar involved groups of young men who studied, among others, the works of Fathi Yakan and Muhammad al-Ghazali.<sup>11</sup> They also organised *tarbīa* activities such as trips to the desert and camps.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout this initial period of the Brotherhood's growth, the government considered support for the movement to be a means of promoting its own religious legitimacy, while also benefitting its population through the organisation's provision of intellectual and social activities.<sup>13</sup> Early Brotherhood achievements, as described by former member Kuwaiti Brotherhood member 'Abdullah al-Nafisi, include the establishment of the Ministry of Education in 1954 as well as the Religious Institute in

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 191.

1961 – accomplishments that were not labelled as politically threatening.<sup>14</sup> Because Brotherhood members in exile feared that they would be hunted by Nasir’s security apparatus overseas, they were careful to focus on grassroots and individual, rather than organised, activities, so as not to raise suspicions of being “partisan.”<sup>15</sup> In this way, they differed considerably from the reigning Arab nationalists of the day who launched large-scale protests inside Qatar throughout the 1950s.

As in Kuwait and the UAE, the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Qatar started in education, as a large number of Brotherhood sympathisers came from abroad to staff Qatari schools. Formal education in Qatar began in 1952, with 250 male pupils taught by six teachers at one school in Doha,<sup>16</sup> while education for females was instituted in 1955, with 50 students taught by a single teacher in one school.<sup>17</sup> The education sector grew at remarkable speed: 42,610 students were in pre-university education in the 1981-1982 academic year.<sup>18</sup> Overseeing the expansion of formal education was the Ministry of Education, which was formed in 1954 and “followed an Egyptian education model for the first decade or so.”<sup>19</sup> At the beginning of this period, not only was the Egyptian model used, but also a large number of Egyptian teachers, particularly those sympathetic to the Brotherhood, worked in Qatari schools. Qataris in the sector held Islamist leanings as well.

Amir Shaykh ‘Ali bin ‘Abdullah al-Thani (r. 1949-1960) was inclined to trust the Brotherhood as an organisation that promoted traditional morals in the face of expanding

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<sup>14</sup> ‘Abdullah al-Nafisi, “Al-Hala al-Islamia fi Qatar,” [The Islamic Situation in Qatar], *IslamToday*, March 12, 2007, <http://www.islamtoday.net/bohooth/artshow-19-8828.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Zuhair Ahmed Nafi, *Economic and Social Development in Qatar* (London: Frances Pinter, 1983), 96.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>19</sup> Matthew Gray, *Qatar: Politics and the Challenges of Development* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013), 134.

Western influence and Arab nationalism. With his blessing, conservative Islam, particularly of the Brotherhood strand, influenced Qatar's education sector. In fact, Shaykh 'Ali appointed Qatari Jassim al-Darwish, a former pupil of Qatari Wahhabi cleric Muhammad 'Abd al-Aziz al-Mana, to organise the school system in 1952-1953.<sup>20</sup>

Education Director al-Darwish unsuccessfully tried to persuade Muhammad Fathi Osman, an Egyptian Brotherhood writer of increasing fame at the time, to oversee the education department in Qatar, signalling an early Brotherhood tilt to hiring decisions, which had strong political implications.<sup>21</sup> Qatari researcher and former President of Qatar University Abdulla Juma al-Kobaisi's PhD dissertation is a key resource in reconstructing the history of the Qatari Brotherhood and particularly in documenting its impact on the education sector. He explains: "[f]or a period of three years (1953/54 to 1955/56) most of the teachers who were brought in to run the Qatari schools were ideologically in favour of the Muslim Brotherhood Party, and in particular politically against the leadership of President Nasser. They stamped the educational system with their Islamic ideology since the education department of Qatar was under their control."<sup>22</sup>

'Abd al-Badi' Saqr, a known Brotherhood sympathiser who had been imprisoned in Egypt with Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi for his leadership of Brotherhood activities, was made joint Director of Education in 1954 along with al-Darwish, on the recommendation of Egyptian religious leader Shaykh Muhib al-Din al-Khatib.<sup>23</sup> Saqr, with al-Darwish and Brotherhood intellectuals like Shaykh Zuhair al-Shawish, "oversaw the expansion of

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<sup>20</sup> Roberts, "Pragmatism or Preference?," 85-86.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 85-86.

<sup>22</sup> Abdulla Juma Kobaisi, "The Development of Education in Qatar, 1950-1966 with an Analysis of Some Educational Problems" (PhD diss., Durham University, 1979), 122-123.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 122.

official schools and the bureaucracy of the department and personally sought to bring girls' education under the department's auspices."<sup>24</sup>

Despite the fact that a formal Brotherhood organisation did not exist during this period in Qatar, Islamist-leaning individuals influenced the education sphere, which became a battleground for competing nationalist and Brotherhood ideologies. With Saqr and al-Darwish heading the education department, and with Saqr serving as a cultural advisor to Shaykh 'Ali, Brotherhood sympathisers supported the amir's rule, thereby spurring division within the ruling family, as not all members approved of the Ikhwan.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, "the education department was brought into the ruling family's internal conflict, as a means of achieving power and various political objectives. The schools [*sic*] expansion and the educational service with the various inducements it offered to children was seen in a small country like Qatar as more than generous and was considered a credit to Shaikh 'Ali's rule."<sup>26</sup> Shaykh Khalifa bin Hamad al-Thani, himself a "progressive reformer" in support of Arab nationalism, carried on in silent disapproval of his uncle's rule, yet was unable to make advances against the group until the Muslim Brotherhood came under broader political attack.<sup>27</sup>

As conflict between the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir intensified in Egypt in 1954, pro-Brotherhood schools in Qatar publicly insulted President Nasir and Arab nationalism, going so far as to criticise the movement as a Western innovation meant to enfeeble the Islamic state.<sup>28</sup> Such strong political criticism

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<sup>24</sup> Roberts, "Pragmatism or Preference?," 86.

<sup>25</sup> Kobaisi, 123.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

produced an environment full of misunderstanding and hostility between them [Muslim Brotherhood sympathizers] and their students in the schools as well as the elite of Qatar, people who truly believed in Islam and Arabic nationalism and saw that there was no conflict between the two. Again, the majority of people in Qatar saw President Nasser as a national Arab hero, especially during and after the Suez crisis. These events encouraged the opposition members of the ruling family and their allies who put the whole responsibility for the state of affairs on the head of the educational committee and the ruler of Qatar, Shaikh 'Ali.<sup>29</sup>

In an effort to end divisions, Shaykh 'Ali disbanded the existing educational committee and made Shaykh Khalifa Educational Principal. When Shaykh Khalifa took over the education portfolio in 1956, he aimed to mitigate the Brotherhood's growing presence in Qatar's schools and to quell sympathetic teachers' increasingly public political stances, for fear that they would spread to Qatari society more broadly. To do so, he named Syrian pan-Arab nationalist 'Abdullah 'Abd al-Daim Director of Education.<sup>30</sup> Shaykh Khalifa also published the following circular in October 1957 calling on teachers not to participate in politics: "With our appreciation of the teachers and their education role we would like to inform them that their career in this country is purely educational. We shall take severe steps against those who interfere in politics and are connected with political parties which operate against our internal policy."<sup>31</sup> The government thus explicitly recognised the political weight of the education sector, demonstrating the degree to which a sector not traditionally considered political has allowed the advancement of Brotherhood ideology that influences politics more broadly.

Under the leadership of al-Daim, teachers who tended toward Arab nationalism and extreme anti-colonialism were brought into Qatari schools. Prominent Qatari educator Abdulla Juma Kobaisi claims "[t]he educational atmosphere in Qatari schools rapidly changed from conservative to progressive," citing mandated in-school celebration

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>30</sup> Roberts, "Qatar and the Brotherhood," 24.

<sup>31</sup> Circular issued by Shaykh Khalifa al-Thani, Qtd. in Kobaisi, 125.

of Egyptian-Syrian unity in 1958 as an example of nationalist influence.<sup>32</sup> This modification in the education sphere was part of a broader political strategy, as Qatar's rulers recognised the political relevance of schooling. Shaykh Khalifa "had a plan to use education 'to put himself forward as a mild pan-Arabist...using his responsibilities for finding foreign teachers to dabble in foreign affairs'."<sup>33</sup> British Political Agent Derrick C. Carden, however, urged Shaykh 'Ali to dismiss al-Daim, for fear that his leadership might spur further nationalist activity in the emirate.<sup>34</sup> As a result of British interference, al-Daim resigned after one year, and Shaykh Khalifa's brother, Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani, took over the education portfolio in 1958, retaining it until 1975, during which time schools remained an ideological battleground between nationalists and Ikhwan.<sup>35</sup>

Despite Shaykh Khalifa's intentions to diminish Islamist influence in education, Brotherhood scholars still travelled to Qatar in the 1960s, and the Islamist strand was by no means underrepresented in broader Qatari society. One notable success for the Brotherhood was the appointment of Egyptian Ikhwan scholar 'Izz al-Din Ibrahim as Assistant Director of Knowledge, responsible for creating a school syllabus.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, when Head of Islamic Sciences at the Department of Education 'Abdullah bin Turki al-Sbua'i went to Cairo's al-Azhar in 1960 to recruit Islamic scholars, he returned with several Islamist intellectuals. Most notably, al-Sbua'i recruited outspoken Brotherhood ideologue Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi from al-Azhar to teach at the Qatari branch of the university in 1961.<sup>37</sup> 'Abd al-Mu'az al-Sattar, Hasan al-Banna's personal

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<sup>32</sup> Kobaisi, 126.

<sup>33</sup> Roberts, "Pragmatism or Preference?," 86

<sup>34</sup> Kobaisi, 126.

<sup>35</sup> Roberts, "Pragmatism or Preference?," 86

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 86.

emissary to Palestine in 1946, also served as a school inspector and director of Islamic Sciences at the Ministry of Education, in addition to co-authoring “numerous textbooks for the nascent Qatari school system in the early 1960s.”<sup>38</sup>

Once these scholars arrived in Qatar, their influence went beyond the schools, as “these men used their positions to invite a variety of Brotherhood luminaries to Qatar for lecturing stints of varying lengths. Key examples include Mohammed Qutb, Sayyid Qutb’s brother; Mohammed al-Ghazzali, a leading member of the Brotherhood; and Abdul-Wafa al-Taftazani.”<sup>39</sup> Ahmad al-‘Assal, a close friend of al-Qaradawi, arrived in 1960 and “taught in schools, lectured in mosques, and helped form Brotherhood groups.”<sup>40</sup>

Another member of the Egyptian Brotherhood, Kamal Naji, took on a variety of positions in the Ministry of Education, including head of the publications committee and the foreign cultural relations advisor.<sup>41</sup> Yusuf al-Qaradawi, for his part, directed and overhauled the newly founded Religious Institute and later established and became the dean of the College of Shari‘a and Islamic Studies at Qatar University.<sup>42</sup> In such a small state, with a limited number of cultural activities and educational institutions, these individuals had considerable social and intellectual impact through *ḥalaqāt*<sup>43</sup> and public lectures, as well as through their formal roles in the Ministry of Education, formulating curricula and staffing most primary and secondary schools at that time.<sup>44</sup> At this point, however, Brotherhood influence continued to be spread through individuals, rather than

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<sup>38</sup> Roberts, “Pragmatism or Preference?” 86-87.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 86-87.

<sup>40</sup> Roberts, “Qatar and the Brotherhood,” 24.

<sup>41</sup> Roberts, “Qatar and the Brotherhood,” 24.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>43</sup> A *ḥalaqa* (plural *ḥalaqāt*) is a meeting, or study circle, about Islamic theology.

<sup>44</sup> Al-Nafisi.

through any organised institution, and held limited sway outside of educational and cultural activities.

Egyptian Brotherhood members were not the only influential expatriate figures in Qatar. Beginning in the 1950s, “the first wave of Palestinian intelligentsia arrived,” bringing into the education sector many individuals who came to lead Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), imbuing Qataris with sympathy for the Palestinian cause, also incidentally important to the Brotherhood, from that period.<sup>45</sup> From the early 1950s, Rafiq Shakir al-Natshah taught and wrote textbooks in Qatar, in addition to serving as director of the Office of the Head of Education.<sup>46</sup> Al-Natshah forged a close relationship with Shaykh Jassim while working as his advisor in the education department and was granted Qatari citizenship in 1979 before he went on to serve as the PLO representative to Saudi Arabia, Palestinian minister of labor, and chairman of the Palestinian Legislative Council.<sup>47</sup> Current Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas worked in Qatar’s education department during 1957-1969 and in fact signed the official paperwork for al-Qaradawi’s entry into the country.<sup>48</sup> Muhammad Yusuf al-Najjar, one of Fatah’s founding members and former head of its security apparatus, also recruited teachers for Qatar’s education department.<sup>49</sup> Politically active Palestinians, as well as a large number of Egyptian Ikhwan, staffed Qatar’s education department, leaving their mark on it.

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<sup>45</sup> Roberts, “Pragmatism or Preference?,” 87.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

Further influencing the recruitment of teachers sympathetic to the Brotherhood in particular were concerns about nationalist protest, the primary articulation of political demands in Qatar in the 1950s and 1960s.

The sacking of a Brotherhood head of education (Abdul-Badi Saqr), his replacement by a pan-Arabist (Dr. Al Daim), and the latter's subsequent sacking the next year speaks to the primacy of political over ideological preference. Later, Khalifah bin Hamad's intake of Brotherhood members matches the political context of the time. The 1960s in Qatar were turbulent, involving numerous strikes and increasing popular resentment of Al Thani impunity and their entrenched economic advantages. Notable citizens, such as Hamad bin Abdullah Al Attiyah and Abdullah and Nasser Al Misnad, agitated along pan-Arabist lines, criticizing the Al Thanis; they were arrested, jailed and exiled as a result. That Khalifah bin Hamad, the next in line to the throne at that time, had to carefully calibrate his reactions, empathizing with their plight, but preferring to recruit Brothers so as not to give the agitators more potential fodder, was logical.<sup>50</sup>

In such an environment, education policies were meant to promote regime survival above all. Because Arab nationalism was more threatening to the Qatari elite than the Ikhwan, Brotherhood members were intentionally granted influence in the education department. Certainly, "institutionally it was not possible to promote any line but that of the state," which was, at that time, aligned with the Brotherhood for strategic reasons.<sup>51</sup> The fact that religious Qataris like al-Darwish and al-Sbua'i were charged with recruiting teachers from the beginning made their selection of religiously oriented individuals unsurprising.<sup>52</sup> Their decisions in recruitment and curriculum development reflected ideological leanings and influenced the next generation of Qataris.

From the 1950s, al-Thani recognised the power of the education sector in shaping public opinion and political protest, and the turbulence of that era in education left its mark on Qatar. "The result of the period of unrest is that the political system now ensures that schools do not encourage again political attitudes which might be directed against the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 88.

role of the shaikdom; educational development in general has been strictly and narrowly controlled.”<sup>53</sup> While Brotherhood gains during this period were restricted primarily to the education and cultural sphere, Arab nationalists agitated openly for political reform.

*The Rising Tide of Arab Nationalism*

Nationalists, though briefly able to spread their ideology through schools under al-Daim’s leadership, found their primary base of support among Qatari labourers, as a working class emerged in the 1950s.<sup>54</sup> Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the emirate faced a number of large workers’ strikes.<sup>55</sup> As Jill Crystal explains, “[t]rouble began with the first oil shipment [...] From then on strikes were the norm.”<sup>56</sup> The first strike, in 1951, involved Qatari workers demanding the expulsion of Dhofari workers from Oman whom they considered “interlopers.”<sup>57</sup> A series of violent confrontations targeting the British government and local merchant families al-Darwish and al-‘Uthman in 1956 led Shaykh ‘Ali to establish a regular police force; “[t]hese events made it clear that public security threats were emerging outside the family that were not contained in the distant oilfields.”<sup>58</sup> Fearing escalation, the government endeavoured to win over nationalists by supporting parts of their agenda. “To build his power base, he [Shaykh Khalifa] championed workers’ rights and Arab nationalism,” in addition to allowing their influence through the education system under al-Daim’s leadership.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Kobaisi, 128.

<sup>54</sup> Gray, *Qatar*, 33-34.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34.

<sup>56</sup> Crystal, *Oil and Politics*, 141.

<sup>57</sup> Commins, *The Gulf States*, 151.

<sup>58</sup> Crystal, *Oil and Politics*, 127.

<sup>59</sup> Commins, *The Gulf States*, 188.

Nonetheless, protests continued, with a large demonstration in 1963 following the overthrow of Iraqi Prime Minister 'Abd al-Karim al-Qasim by the Ba'ath Party.<sup>60</sup> A National Unity Front was established among Qatari workers, lesser ranking al-Thani shaykhs, and other "disaffected notables."<sup>61</sup> This group circulated a platform, which called for reforms to the government system. "The Front's demands included the reduction of shaikhly privileges, expansion of social services, reduction of foreign labor in the government and oil company, establishment of a budget, creation of a representative municipal council, recognition of trade unions, better utility rates, a movie house and a broadcasting station."<sup>62</sup> The group also called a general strike, which lasted for three weeks.

In response, the government arrested several of the Front's leaders and, in an effort to appease Qatari members of the group, granted preferential hiring treatment to nationals in the oil industry and public sector.<sup>63</sup> Amir Shaykh Ahmad al-Thani also set elections in April 1963 for a "Doha Council," or municipal body. These elections, however, were held largely to mollify British advisors urging civil peace and had little domestic significance.<sup>64</sup> In fact, "most Qataris were 'unaware that an election was taking place'."<sup>65</sup> As a result, "[r]ather than being a democratic outlet, the Municipal Council turned into a flop."<sup>66</sup> The body existed for only three or four years.<sup>67</sup>

Until the 1970s, Arab nationalists dominated the political scene in Qatar. This upswing of nationalism was partly due to shifting demographics. "Within a short time oil

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<sup>60</sup> Fromherz, 145.

<sup>61</sup> Commins, *The Gulf States*, 188.

<sup>62</sup> Crystal, *Oil and Politics*, 153.

<sup>63</sup> Commins, *The Gulf States*, 188-189

<sup>64</sup> Fromherz, 146.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>67</sup> Bahry, "Elections in Qatar," 119.

turned unemployed pearl divers and slaves into a politically significant and volatile concentration of workers, then into a working class, and finally into a nationally identified working class,” for which nationalism was appealing.<sup>68</sup> As Emirati journalist ‘Abdul Ghaffar Hussain explains: “[t]he path to expansion was not easy for the Brotherhood and other [Islamist] associations in the Gulf that were not in line with the nationalist movement. Consequently, organized Brotherhood gatherings of any significance were not held until the 1970s.”<sup>69</sup> Although Brotherhood figures became influential in Qatar’s education sphere as individuals, they were unable to gather sufficient popular support for the establishment of a formal affiliate until the mid-1970s.

*The Fall of Nationalism and the Establishment of a Qatari Brotherhood*

Expatriate Brotherhood sympathisers continued to wield influence in the education sector in the 1970s. During that period, “education was limited to Arabic, Islamic studies and some science and mathematics.”<sup>70</sup> In the 1970-1971 academic year, there were 162 Qatari teachers at the primary school level, compared with 590 non-Qatari teachers at the same level.<sup>71</sup> The disparity between Qatari and non-Qatari teachers became even more noticeable at the secondary level, with ten Qatari teachers compared to 311 expatriates.<sup>72</sup> In terms of curriculum, at least in the 1970s, there was a heavier

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<sup>68</sup> Crystal, *Oil and Politics*, 139.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Abdul Ghaffar Hussain, Qtd. in ‘Amr al-Turabi and Tarek al-Mubarak, “Qatar’s Introspective Islamists,” *Asharq al-Awsat*, June 18, 2013, <http://www.aawsat.net/2013/06/article55306189>.

<sup>70</sup> Mohamed al-Thani, *The Arab Spring and the Gulf States: Time to Embrace Change* (London: Profile Books, 2012), xiv-xv.

<sup>71</sup> Ragaie El Mallakh, *Qatar: Development of an Oil Economy* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 113.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

emphasis on religion than elsewhere in the Gulf.<sup>73</sup> The prominence of religious education and Arabic language continued at the secondary level.<sup>74</sup>

Outside of the educational sphere, activities, such as trips and camps for youth, were conducted yet were, for the most part, arranged spontaneously and in the absence of any overarching organisational structure.<sup>75</sup> In Qatar's tribal culture, where most social activity is informally organised, this type of uninstitutionalised action was a natural fit.<sup>76</sup> Brotherhood preachers also controlled certain mosques, granting them a mouthpiece from which to spread Ikhwan ideology through *khuṭub*<sup>77, 78</sup>.

With the takeover of Anwar Sadat in Egypt in 1970 and the relaxation of restrictions on the Brotherhood, large numbers of Qataris moved to Egypt to attend university, becoming familiar with Brotherhood ideology during that time.<sup>79</sup> Jassim Sultan himself received his education in medicine in Egypt beginning in 1973.<sup>80</sup> While studying, he witnessed the growth of the Brotherhood movement in the College of Medicine and Engineering in Cairo University and became acquainted with leaders of the Islamist student movement as well as prominent Brotherhood figures abroad.<sup>81</sup> At home in Qatar, however, the Brotherhood remained “informal until the late 1970s when people

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<sup>73</sup> Muhammad T. Sadik and William P. Snavelly, *Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates*, (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1972), 78.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>75</sup> Al-Nafisi.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> The *khuṭba* (plural *khuṭub*), literally “speech,” is the formal sermon preached on Fridays, as well as on holidays of ‘*Īd al-Fiṭr*’ and ‘*Īd al-Aḍḥā*’.

<sup>78</sup> ‘Ashur, 193.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 191-192.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 191-192.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

decided to organize. They made a simple organisation just to teach children, arrange camping trips.”<sup>82</sup>

Indeed, as Islamist influence increased, sympathisers, especially the younger cohort, insisted that an official organisation was needed to oversee the organisation’s activities.<sup>83</sup> The Brotherhood affiliate, founded in 1975, was, in the words of its leader, Jassim Sultan, “just collaboration, a simple thing. Only one page described the organisation, and no one knows where that paper is.”<sup>84</sup> The group focused primarily on *da‘wa*, the intense study of shari‘a, the organisation of sporting activities, and integration into the community, attracting young people in particular to Brotherhood-sponsored trips, sports, charity, and public lectures.<sup>85</sup> To this end, the Qatari Brotherhood had a youth organisation, Markaz Shabab al-Doha (Doha Youth Centre), which hosted a series of educational, cultural, and athletic activities.<sup>86</sup> It “was the Brotherhood’s inculcation tool”<sup>87</sup> and “the main source of Ikhwanisation until the Brotherhood was dissolved.”<sup>88</sup> Still, the Qatari Brotherhood remained only loosely organised and contained no more than 100 people in its early stages.<sup>89</sup>

#### *The 1980s and 1990s: Internal Review*

In the 1980s, recent Qatari graduates began joining the local Brotherhood affiliate, eager to coordinate activities, having studied in countries with active

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<sup>82</sup> Interview with Jassim Sultan.

<sup>83</sup> Al-Nafisi.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Jassim Sultan, November 4, 2013.

<sup>85</sup> ‘Abdulaziz al-Mahmoud, “Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun fi Qatar... Man hum?” [The Muslim Brotherhood in Qatar... Who Are They?] *Al-Arab*, August 1, 2012, <http://www.alarab.qa/story/166996/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%85%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%87%D9%85>.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Michael Stephens, November 1, 2013.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Hassan al-Ibrahim.

<sup>89</sup> ‘Ashur, 196.

Brotherhood groups.<sup>90</sup> At the same time, an influx of Syrian Brotherhood supporters entered Qatar following the Assad regime's brutal crackdown on the organisation, integrating into the existing Qatari structure.<sup>91</sup> It was during this period that the magazine *al-Umma al-Qatariyya (The Qatari Umma)* was published (from 1980 until 1986), under the leadership of Syrian Brotherhood member 'Amr 'Abid Husna.<sup>92</sup> The magazine "expressed the intellectual content of the Brotherhood project."<sup>93</sup>

Returning Qatari students, as they endeavoured to expand and formalise the group's activities, clashed with the older generation, however. "When Jassim Sultan and other operatives returned to Qatar from their studies at the beginning of the 1980s and assimilated into the local Brotherhood, they were shocked by the leadership's narrow perspective. The organization bore no clear plan or vision for reform aside from that found in the general Brotherhood literature."<sup>94</sup> This signalled the first difference in leadership of the Qatari Brotherhood, similar to generational cleavages seen in the first decades of the Kuwaiti Brotherhood. As in Kuwait, older members were reticent to ramp up Brotherhood activities without first considering their impact, while the younger generation saw no reason not to expand the Brotherhood's presence.<sup>95</sup> Without elections to contest and lacking the need to provide social services, the Qatari Brotherhood found itself in a unique position. Younger members began raising questions about the organisation, such as the form it would take in the future (whether a political bloc or

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<sup>90</sup> Al-Mahmoud.

<sup>91</sup> 'Ashur, 192.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>94</sup> Al-Turabi and al-Mubarak.

<sup>95</sup> Al-Mahmoud.

cultural organisation), the impact it could have on Qatari society, and its overarching goals.<sup>96</sup>

Beginning in 1980-1981 and lasting until 1991, in part to resolve differing approaches in the leadership and partially to maximise the organisation's impact, the Qatari Brotherhood undertook an extensive two-part study.<sup>97</sup> The first portion, which was published under the title *On Basics of the Islamic Plan for the Renaissance of the Umma: Readings in the Thought of the Martyr Imam Hasan al-Banna*,<sup>98</sup> focused on the ideology of al-Banna.<sup>99</sup> Interestingly, it was published under the name of 'Abd al-Hamid al-Ghazali, a member of the Egyptian Brotherhood's Shura Council and the leader of its political department for nearly eight years.<sup>100</sup> The use of such authorship may have indicated tensions between the Qatari affiliate and the mother organisation, as the volume reflected on means of updating Ikhwan ideology.<sup>101</sup>

The second part of the study remains unpublished and concerns the affiliate of the Brotherhood in Qatar specifically.<sup>102</sup> Members were assigned to answer the aforementioned questions, using al-Banna's writings as a guide and the Egyptian experience as a reference.<sup>103</sup> The study was essentially "an intellectual and organisational dissection of the Brotherhood" in terms of its structure, communication, leadership, prevailing culture, and goals, as well as feasibility and risks associated with pursuing

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<sup>96</sup> Al-Nafisi.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> This publication can be found in Arabic, *Hawla Asasiyyat al-Mushrua' al-Islami l-Nahdat al-Umma... Qira'at fi fikr al-Imam al-Shahid Hasan al-Banna*, Dakahlia Ikhwan, 2013, <http://www.dakahliaikhwan.com/viewarticle.php?id=19446>.

<sup>99</sup> Al-Turabi and al-Mubarak.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Al-Nafisi.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

them.<sup>104</sup> Important questions included: Is there a real plan for the organisation? How much has been achieved (in Qatar and elsewhere), and what remains to be achieved?<sup>105</sup> Generally, “it finished with one of the problems that pushed the re-evaluation to begin: that the Muslim Brotherhood’s plans generally lacked clarity – what did it want exactly? And how would it get there?”<sup>106</sup>

After years of research and inquiry, the study revealed that many members considered the Qatari Brotherhood to have “been frozen by dogma, lost direction, and failed to adapt.”<sup>107</sup> Members questioned the need for a Muslim Brotherhood organisation in Qatar, a naturally conservative and religious society with few major economic, social, or political problems or openings.<sup>108</sup> Such questions led to broader discussion about how Islamist movements can survive in Gulf states where governments derive legitimacy from Islam and therefore support a variety of religious endeavours.<sup>109</sup> “By study and research, the pitfalls were obvious. The program doesn’t fit Qatar. There is a major defect in the theory.”<sup>110</sup>

Also harming the Brotherhood’s popularity as a formal movement in Qatar was the rise of the stricter brand of Wahhabi Islam during the same period that the Brotherhood was undergoing internal examination. The large group of Wahhabis within Qatar, though “never outwardly hostile to the Brotherhood,” knew primarily of its work abroad and believed the organisation was too political.<sup>111</sup> For them, loyalty belonged to

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<sup>104</sup> ‘Ashur, 197.

<sup>105</sup> Al-Nafisi.

<sup>106</sup> Al-Turabi and al-Mubarak.

<sup>107</sup> Lynch, “Muslim Brotherhood Debates.”

<sup>108</sup> ‘Ashur, 188.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Jassim Sultan.

<sup>111</sup> Interview with Michael Stephens.

the ruling shaykh, rather than to an ideology.<sup>112</sup> As a result, members of this strand of Islam were raised to government positions. During the 1980s, Shaykh Khalifa appointed a number of Wahhabi exiles to the Interior Ministry, while also promoting a Najdi Wahhabi exile as Qatar's most senior cleric.<sup>113</sup> Further, former Interior Minister Shaykh 'Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Thani was "appointed from the Wahhabi clique within the Qatari establishment."<sup>114</sup> Many of these officials have been removed when Shaykh Hamad, beginning in 2003, replaced many government employees with this leaning.<sup>115</sup> Still, it has been charged that "this [Wahhabi] clique remains embedded among mid-level Qatari security officials."<sup>116</sup> With or without institutionalised government positions, Islamist ideologies remain influential inside Qatar.

#### *Formal Dissolution of the Qatari Muslim Brotherhood*

The Qatari Muslim Brotherhood was officially disbanded in 1999 through a vote among its members.<sup>117</sup> The process of its dissolution, about which very little is known, was completed in 2003. Deputy Guide of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood Muhammad Habib addressed the Qatari branch's decision: "The organization defines the direction and principles [of the group] so that its methodology and principles are not lost."<sup>118</sup> Ultimately, the Brotherhood in its traditional form was considered inappropriate for Qatar for a variety of reasons. The Qatari Muslim Brotherhood thus chose to exist as "an Islamic renaissance movement, rather than remain in the organizational hierarchy."<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> "The Advent of Terrorism in Qatar," *Forbes*, March 25, 2005, [http://www.forbes.com/2005/03/25/cz\\_0325oxan\\_qatarattack.html](http://www.forbes.com/2005/03/25/cz_0325oxan_qatarattack.html).

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Jassim Sultan.

<sup>118</sup> Muhammad Habib, Qtd. in Al-Turabi and al-Mubarak.

<sup>119</sup> Al-Turabi and al-Mubarak.

Qatari Brotherhood members have, for the most part, remained silent about reasons for the organisation's dissolution, and a great deal of speculation remains as to the motivations for its disbandment.<sup>120</sup> The primary explanation is that the Brotherhood, in places like Qatar, became "an irrelevant matter," as the organisation can easily offer the same services without having any defined structure.<sup>121</sup> As former Kuwaiti Brotherhood member 'Abdullah al-Nafisi put it, "[w]e in the Arabian Peninsula are not in need of cloning the experience of Egypt (or any Muslim Brotherhood experience), as the conditions in Egypt justified the emergence of a tumour and the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood in its time 1928."<sup>122</sup> In its comfortable surroundings and lacking institutionalised means of political participation, the Qatari branch, unlike other organisations, was not swayed by strong Islamist emotion or the desire for a political utopia.<sup>123</sup> In the words of Jassim Sultan, "[n]obody will listen to any radical ideas when their needs are fulfilled."<sup>124</sup> He also posited that the lack of alternative political blocs in Qatar stunted the Brotherhood's growth. In his words, "[t]hese ideas grow if [they exist] in competition with others, but vanish without it."<sup>125</sup> According to Sultan, due to the absence of major grievances spurring political action, as well as the lack of ideological competition in Qatar, the Brotherhood's growth remained stunted.<sup>126</sup>

There are more complicated explanations for the Qatari Brotherhood's dissolution, however. One concerns the Qatari branch's relationship with the mother organisation in Cairo. In the words of one Qatari interviewee, the Qatari Brotherhood

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<sup>120</sup> 'Ashur, 197.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>122</sup> Al-Nafisi.

<sup>123</sup> 'Ashur, 198.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with Jassim Sultan.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

“made an evaluation of its achievements as well as needed reforms and proposed reforms to the Shura Council [in Egypt], but those were rejected. They were rejected likely due to concerns from the international Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt about how the organisation was managed – what should be covert and what should be overt, political versus social reform.”<sup>127</sup> Certainly, the published segment of Qatar’s internal evaluation revealed a number of problems with the central Brotherhood, particularly its lack of long-term strategy and focus.<sup>128</sup> Jassim Sultan admitted that “connection to the main organisation was sympathy rather than a line of authority; there was no command centre.”<sup>129</sup> The Qatari Brotherhood thus may have disbanded as a result of disagreements with the international leadership, ending its uneasy relationship with the mother organisation by dissolving itself.

Another explanation posited for the Brotherhood’s dissolution is the favourable stance of the Qatari government toward the organisation. According to this theory, the Ikhwan realised that it would be “easier for the Muslim Brotherhood to establish affiliates elsewhere through youth centres, websites. The government in Qatar was supportive of Brotherhood members joining existing institutions because the Brotherhood complemented its own agenda.”<sup>130</sup> The arrangement of lectures, religious studies, and *ḥalaqāt*, as well as the organisation of student and youth activities and social meetings, could hardly be considered threatening to the state. Harboursing no ill will against the government and able to function as they wished under its supervision, Brotherhood

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<sup>127</sup> Interview with Hassan al-Ibrahim.

<sup>128</sup> Al-Turabi and al-Mubarak.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with Jassim Sultan.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

members simply did not require a separate organisational structure, which itself was weak and informal even at its height.

A contradictory account maintains that government pressure, rather than an internal Brotherhood evaluation, led to its dissolution. Indirect pressure may have been placed on the organisation, as the movement became more popular throughout the Arab world.<sup>131</sup> Likely, though, fear of a government crackdown was sufficient to prevent overt political action. The experience of the Saudi Brotherhood was instructive, as that government took a decisive turn against the movement when it began pushing a domestic political agenda in the 1990s. Around the same time, crackdowns in the Brotherhood also took place in Oman and the UAE. As for Qatar, one analyst of the Gulf explains: “[t]he government sees them [members of the Brotherhood] as moderate but wanting to take power, so they can’t give them too much leeway.”<sup>132</sup> Perhaps anticipating government action, the Qatari branch was eager “to convert [from a more structured organisation] to a trend inside Qatari society, away from the pressure of regulatory frameworks.”<sup>133</sup> As an ideological movement, rather than an organisation, the Brotherhood is able to maintain its followers and popular relevance, which it may have lost as an institutionalised entity; “[i]deas live longer than any organisation.”<sup>134</sup>

Qatari political commentator ‘Abdulaziz al-Mahmoud posits that the local Brotherhood branch in fact strategically *chose* to dismantle its formal organisation to have freedom from government surveillance: “Someone within the Brotherhood, after crackdown on the UAE, Saudi Arabia, decided we shouldn’t use the Muslim Brotherhood

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<sup>131</sup> Interview with Darwish al-‘Emadi, November 5, 2013.

<sup>132</sup> Interview with Wanda Krause, November 7, 2013.

<sup>133</sup> ‘Ashur, 188.

<sup>134</sup> Interview with Jassim Sultan.

name, be formally organized.”<sup>135</sup> Al-Nafisi goes so far as to claim that “Qataris saw regulations and laws and formalization as hindering the natural and spontaneous growth of groups.”<sup>136</sup> Members of the Qatari Brotherhood, particularly Jassim Sultan, even advised the Emirati branch to disband to avoid potential future crackdowns because, in the absence of a distinct organisation, repression becomes impossible.<sup>137</sup> Al-Nafisi contends that the Qatari Brotherhood’s decision to dissolve itself “showed gumption” and prevented members from facing problems that members of the Brotherhood encountered in other Gulf countries.<sup>138</sup>

Another theory is that the Qatari government pushed for the closure of the Brotherhood due to pressure from the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, which supported the organisation abroad, but not domestically.<sup>139</sup> According to this view, the Qatari government demanded the disbandment of the domestic Brotherhood in exchange for backing its cause elsewhere. Yet another explanation is that the dissolution was “an initiative of Jassim Sultan,” the Qatari Brotherhood’s leader.<sup>140</sup> Sultan today promotes Mashrua‘ al-Nahda (Renaissance Project), an Islamist group that he has created to educate youth in “a new, more modern format of Islamist.”<sup>141</sup> Still, some former members of the Qatari Ikhwan, unhappy with the disbandment, continue Brotherhood activities today in defiance of the dissolution, with Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi said to have been particularly disappointed with the group’s closure.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Interview with ‘Abdulaziz al-Mahmoud, October 28, 2013.

<sup>136</sup> ‘Ashur, 198.

<sup>137</sup> ‘Ibid., 198.

<sup>138</sup> Al-Nafisi.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with Michael Stephens.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with ‘Abdulaziz al-Mahmoud.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with Hamad al-Ibrahim, October 24, 2013.

<sup>142</sup> Al-Turabi and al-Mubarak.

For his part, Jassim Sultan insists: “I can assure you that the government did not at any time raise the issue [...] It’s simple – people inside decided to disband.”<sup>143</sup> Having no institutionalised means of political participation and not needed as a social support system or to provide services to citizens, there was little space for the organisation to function. “In that particular historical moment we decided we were not adding anything, benefiting society so we removed [ourselves] from public life.”<sup>144</sup> Ultimately, the decision to dissolve was likely taken due to a combination of the fear of government crackdown and the ability of the Qatari Brotherhood to function informally under government supervision. In the absence of an organisational structure, individual members of the movement have maintained influence over political debate and policymaking within the country without inciting government action against it.

*Shaykh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi and Other Brotherhood Members in Qatar*

The continued public presence of Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi in Qatar is often considered proof of the state’s pro-Brotherhood stance. Al-Qaradawi is undoubtedly the most influential (and likely most controversial) Muslim Brother in the Gulf. He is by no means, however, the only such Brotherhood member to emigrate there. As mentioned above, ‘Abd al-Mu‘az ‘Abd al-Sattar, Shaykh Ahmad al-‘Assal, and Kamal Naji also found refuge in Qatar.<sup>145</sup> Al-Qaradawi alone, though, has reached levels of unprecedented fame and international influence. While studying in the late 1940s at al-Azhar University’s Faculty of Theology, he established a Muslim Brotherhood branch among

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<sup>143</sup> Interview with Jassim Sultan.

<sup>144</sup> Jassim Sultan, “Gulf Perspectives on the Muslim Brotherhood” (lecture, Brookings Doha Center, Doha, Qatar, October 9, 2013).

<sup>145</sup> Bernard Haykel, “Qatar and Islamism,” NOREF Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, Policy Brief, February 2013, 2, [http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow\\_site/storage/original/application/ac81941df1be874ccbda35e747218abf.pdf](http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/ac81941df1be874ccbda35e747218abf.pdf).

students and preached throughout the Egyptian countryside.<sup>146</sup> Though al-Qaradawi was arrested by Egyptian authorities in 1954 after the Brotherhood was officially banned, he was released in 1956 and began work as a teacher and preacher in a private school as well as in al-Azhar's Institute of Islamic Culture.<sup>147</sup> Al-Qaradawi was transferred to the al-Azhari Mission in Qatar in 1961 and has since that time found a safe haven and platform in the emirate.<sup>148</sup> Once he arrived in Doha, al-Qaradawi developed ties to al-Thani family.

From the start in Doha Qaradāwī began to preach and to give religious instruction during Ramadan. This is how in 1961 he met Shaykh Khalīfa b. Hamad Āl Thānī, who reigned as the Emir of Qatar from 1972 until the coup in 1995. According to Qaradāwī's memoirs the Shaykh did not want to do without him, so up until 1995 the Emir of the country received religious instruction from Qaradāwī in the mosque during 35 months of Ramadan. As early as 1968, he was offered a Qatari passport by the same Shaykh Khalīfa b. Ḥamad Āl Thānī.<sup>149</sup>

This personal connection helped consolidate al-Qaradawi's position as a prominent (and protected) cleric in Qatar. Interestingly, Shaykh Khalifa, as noted above, was sympathetic to Arab nationalism. The fact that he insisted on al-Qaradawi's continued presence in Qatar demonstrates the preacher's appeal to Muslims who do not necessarily support the Ikhwan as an organisation or even as an ideology. It also may have reflected Shaykh Khalifa's understanding that naturalising al-Qaradawi was politically expedient due to the preacher's prominent position in the Muslim world.

Aside from his religious role, al-Qaradawi has aided the development of Qatar's education system and intellectual life more generally. Beginning in 1961, he served as principal of the Religious Institute, and "fundamentally shaped the religious education

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<sup>146</sup> Bettina Graf and Jakob Skovogaard-Petersen, "Introduction," in *Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yusuf al-Qaradawi*, eds. Bettina Graf and Jakob Skovogaard-Petersen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 2.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

system in Doha.”<sup>150</sup> Al-Qaradawi also created Qatar University’s Shari’a and Islamic Studies Faculty, which opened in 1977.<sup>151</sup> He has earned international fame for his role in cofounding and directing of the European Council for Fatwa and Research in 1997 and the International Association of Muslim Scholars in 2004,<sup>152</sup> in addition to having published over 120 books on topics ranging from Islamic jurisprudence and theology to education.<sup>153</sup> The prolific al-Qaradawi has thus made Qatar “an important meeting point for scholars and activists, including Muslim Brothers from Egypt.”<sup>154</sup>

More controversially, al-Qaradawi has at times used his privileged position to voice political opinions, leading some to suspect that he serves as a mouthpiece for al-Thani family. “From his pulpit, al-Qaradawi has promulgated reformist Islamist teachings and has also intervened in the politics of the Arab world, most famously the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. He has, however, never commented on domestic Qatari politics.”<sup>155</sup> Throughout the Arab Spring, al-Qaradawi was a public supporter of Brotherhood movements in the region and Qatar’s assistance to them.<sup>156</sup> After the overthrow of Egypt’s Brotherhood-led government under Mohamed Morsi in 2013, Egyptian Attorney General Hisham Barakat issued an arrest warrant for al-Qaradawi on the grounds of “inciting the murder of security forces,” as the shaykh had, during one of his Al Jazeera broadcasts, called upon Muslims to fight to restore the Morsi regime.<sup>157</sup> He also famously

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>152</sup> Ana Belén Soage, “Yusuf Al-Qaradawi: The Muslim Brothers’ Favorite Ideological Guide,” in *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Organization and Policies of a Global Islamist Movement*, ed. Barry Rubin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 20.

<sup>153</sup> Graf and Skovogaard-Petersen, 5.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>155</sup> Haykel, 2.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>157</sup> Hicham Mourad, “Revising Qatari Policy on Egypt,” *Ahram Online*, October 13, 2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentP/4/83822/Opinion/Revising-Qatari-policy-on-Egypt.aspx>.

delivered the first Friday prayer in Cairo's Tahrir Square after Hosni Mubarak's fall from power in February 2011.<sup>158</sup>

Although al-Qaradawi has made political statements on the air, he "has not been involved in any political or juridical activities on a national level in Qatar."<sup>159</sup> Further, al-Qaradawi has not received "official state backing" in the form of an institutionalised government position; his most prestigious official title remains dean of Qatar University's College of Shari'a and Islamic Studies.<sup>160</sup> The fact that al-Qaradawi's formal role has been limited to the arenas of education and media indicates the type of position which the Qatari government wishes him to have – not explicitly political but no doubt influential in that sphere.<sup>161</sup>

No other ideologue in Qatar, or perhaps even the Gulf, has been given as much of a public platform as al-Qaradawi. As a 2005 cable from the U.S. Embassy in Doha explained, "al-Qaradawi is the one Islamic thinker in Qatar who matters."<sup>162</sup> In the popular sphere, he was best known for his Al Jazeera Arabic show *Al-Shari'a wa-l-Hayat* (*Sharia and Life*), in which, until mid-2014, al-Qaradawi introduced "more daring ideas to the debates that take place each week for two hours with guests who discuss from an Islamic point of view issues relating to the effect of modernization on the lives of Muslims."<sup>163</sup> This programme was similar to his *Hadi al-Islam* (*Guidance of Islam*) on

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<sup>158</sup> Lynch, *The Arab Uprising*, 209.

<sup>159</sup> Bettina Graf, "Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi in Cyberspace," *Die Welt des Islams* 47, no. 3-4 (2007): 405-406.

<sup>160</sup> Birol Baskan and Steven Wright, "Seeds of Change: Comparing State-Religion Relations in Qatar and Saudi Arabia," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (2011): 100.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>162</sup> "Qaradawi Viewed Locally as a Moderate Scholar," Embassy of the United States Doha, *WikiLeaks*, July 12, 2005, [https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05DOHA1268\\_a.html](https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05DOHA1268_a.html).

<sup>163</sup> Louay Y. Bahry, "The New Arab Media Phenomenon: Qatar's Al Jazeera," *Middle East Policy* 8, no. 2 (2001): 93.

state network Qatar TV, in which he answered letters about religious questions.<sup>164</sup> In addition, al-Qaradawi's *khutub* were broadcast on Fridays on Qatar State television. Both his television programmes and the broadcast of his sermons were stopped shortly after the March 2014 withdrawal of the Bahraini Saudi, and Emirati ambassadors from Qatar following controversial statements made by al-Qaradawi about the Emirati leadership,<sup>165</sup> discussed at length in chapter nine.

By hosting al-Qaradawi as well as by founding Al Jazeera and launching the websites IslamOnline and IslamWeb, Qatar has become “the hub of media production for Arabic-speaking Muslims.”<sup>166</sup> In introducing broadcasting platforms for Muslims and arranging conferences for them within the country, Qatar has also managed to gain global standing. Al-Qaradawi has publicly acknowledged the freedom Qatar grants him, stating explicitly that no one in the country has restricted his speech.<sup>167</sup> In short, “without the basis of the location in Qatar his activities would not be conceivable, neither on an intellectual nor on an organisational and financial level.”<sup>168</sup> By creating a space for influential Islamists, Qatar has been at the forefront of promoting popular Islam, rather than attempting to stem the tide of popular movements that hold appeal among much of Qatar's local population.

#### *Qatar's Policy of Taking in Exiles*

Although it has been argued that Qatar's support for Muslim Brotherhood figures is a recent phenomenon, the country, like many others in the Gulf, has in fact hosted them

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<sup>164</sup> Ehab Galal, “Yūsuf al- Qaradāwī and the New Islamic TV,” in *Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yusuf al-Qaradawi*, 157.

<sup>165</sup> Amana Bakr, “Qaradawi's U-Turn: I Love the UAE, Saudi Arabia,” Al Arabiya, April 20, 2014, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/2014/04/20/Qaradawi-s-U-Turn-I-love-Saudi-Arabia-UAE-.html>.

<sup>166</sup> Graf, 406-407.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 416.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 418-419.

since the Nasir era. Qatar has not taken in only Brotherhood exiles, however. As one Qatari put it, the country “hosted people who were oppressed, and this was the right thing to do.”<sup>169</sup> Providing refuge to exiles is a part of Qatar’s founding vision. In fact,

Qatar’s founder, Sheikh Jassim, once wrote a poem referring to Qatar as the ‘*Kaaba Lil Madiyoum*,’ the Kaaba of the dispossessed. To those looking for respite from persecution, Qatar is what the Kaaba - the black box in the center of the grand mosque in Mecca – is to Muslims: their direction of focus. This concept grew up in part because of the lawless nature of the peninsula. When someone had cause to flee, he could go to Qatar knowing that there was no meaningful authority there.<sup>170</sup>

The country’s recent history provides examples of its purposeful provision of asylum for a variety of figures. Controversial Indian artist M.F. Husain, former Iraqi Minister Najji Sabri al-Hadithi, much of Saddam Hussain’s family, former Mauritanian President Maaouya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya and his family, and former Knesset member and publicly known pan-Arabist ‘Azmi Bishara, none of whom has any ideological or organisational links with the Brotherhood, all found refuge in the country.<sup>171</sup>

In terms of Islamist figures who found a safe haven in Qatar, Hamas leader Khalid Mash’al has lived there since 1999; controversial preachers like Canadian Bilal Philips and American Wagdy Ghoneim, as well as Libyan cleric ‘Ali al-Sallabi and former Algerian Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) leader ‘Abbasi Madani, have also settled in Qatar.<sup>172</sup> Although these Islamist figures come from varying nationalities and strands of the faith, their presence is construed as evidence of the Qatari government’s sympathy toward the Brotherhood. Qatar’s attitude toward the Ikhwan and Islamists in general is certainly far more moderate than that of Saudi Arabia or the UAE, yet likely reflects an understanding of the local population’s preferences, rather than ideological or

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<sup>169</sup> Interview with Hassan al-Ibrahim.

<sup>170</sup> Roberts, “Pragmatism or Preference?,” 89-90.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

institutional links with political leadership.<sup>173</sup> Significantly, the government has not used the presence of such figures to impose Islamist policies inside Qatar, though they appear to have influenced the domestic political scene from the grassroots, discussed in the next chapter.

Qatar's policy of accepting exiles is ultimately strategic. In the midst of complaints about the loss of Arab culture in the Gulf, Qatar has "imported" significant intellectual figures as a means of maintaining authenticity and promoting Arab and Islamic culture.<sup>174</sup> Allowing exiles into the country has also helped the Qatari government appear sympathetic to popular causes across the Arab world and has afforded it the opportunity to promote political discussion largely divorced from local politics. By granting entry to international political figures of various ideological strands, Qatar becomes part of larger debates, while maintaining power to manoeuvre them. Islam is critical in such discussions, considering its influence among a local population that remains largely conservative.

#### *Government Influence in the Religious Sphere*

Unlike the other Wahhabi state in the region, Saudi Arabia, the Qatari government has not co-opted the religious institution through a formal alliance with the 'ulama'. While al-Sa'ud family used Wahhabism to expand political influence, Qatar's rulers feared that the implementation of religion to legitimise their rule could ultimately confuse their citizens' loyalty, motivating them to follow 'ulama' aligned with the Saudi state rather than becoming devoted to an independent Qatari entity.<sup>175</sup> Thus "Qatari religious scholars do not have an institutionalized role in the political decision-making process.

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<sup>173</sup> Interview with Shadi Hamid, November 5, 2013.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Baskan and Wright, 106.

There is no religious office, like the office of the Grand Mufti,<sup>176</sup> within the Qatari state system.”<sup>177</sup> Further, Wahhabi tenets not applied in public spaces in Qatar.

Also unlike the Kingdom, Qatar has been forced to rely on outside clerics due to its small indigenous population.<sup>178</sup> “The actual state-building project of the al-Thani and their desire to maintain relative autonomy in their domestic affairs, dictated limiting the development of an indigenous Ulama class through reliance on controlled non-native Ulama.”<sup>179</sup> Because some 73 percent of the state’s religious employees are non-Qatari, the amir retains power to deport any who prove uncooperative.<sup>180</sup> Importantly, “the historical reliance on non-nationals for religious guidance has allowed for a great deal more autonomy on behalf of the government, and ruling tribe in particular, in regard to state-religion relations.”<sup>181</sup>

The establishment of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs in 1993, over two decades after independence, as well as the 2008 unification of shari‘a and secular courts represent substantial, yet delayed, gains for Islamists inside the country, highlighting the lack of institutionalised involvement of ‘ulama’ in government policymaking.<sup>182</sup> “As the Ulama in Qatar have historically been non-nationals, they would have lacked the capacity to press the ruling elite to give them an institutional role within government.”<sup>183</sup> In addition, to ensure that sermons do not spur anti-government sentiment, “the Ministry [of Endowments and Islamic Affairs] provides a list of topics for preachers to discuss during their sermons – e.g. the plight of Palestinians, or the harmful

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<sup>176</sup> The grand mufti is the highest religious authority in a Sunni country.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>178</sup> Mehran Kamrava, “Royal Factionalism and Political Liberalization,” 409-410.

<sup>179</sup> Baskan and Wright, 108.

<sup>180</sup> Fromherz, 150.

<sup>181</sup> Baskan and Wright, 100.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

effects of smoking – but does not dictate the content of what is said by the preacher.”<sup>184</sup>

These *khuṭub* are published, and many religious programmes air on national television, bringing Islam into the public sphere while keeping it largely under state control.<sup>185</sup>

Qatar’s Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs is widely believed to harbour Islamist leanings, yet lacks substantial institutionalised or political power, and it remains unclear which strand of Islamism it supports.<sup>186</sup> Though it monitors mosques, the ministry “is not an institutionally meaningful arm of the bureaucracy.”<sup>187</sup> Further, the dominant Islamist influence in the Ministry of Endowments appears to be the stricter Salafī strand, rather than Brotherhood-related. As one analyst of the Gulf explained, “[t]here is not much space for the Muslim Brotherhood in Qatar for two reasons. One, Salafis dominate *awqāf* ministry –it’s all Salafi, and they don’t like the Brotherhood pushing into their territory. Two, every mosque has an informer in it. If you stray, you’re finished– either deported or sent to a small mosque.”<sup>188</sup> Despite a tendency toward more conservative Islam in some Qatari mosques, relatively unsurprising in a Wahhabi state, it is uncertain whether they are formally affiliated with the Brotherhood.<sup>189</sup> The Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs has endeavoured to maintain a balance between conservative and more moderate Islam, however. For instance, one Egyptian imam whose sermons favoured more radical anti-Western opinions was removed from his mosque in 2012 – demonstrating tempering of the anti-Western thought sometimes associated with Salafism.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 411.

<sup>185</sup> Interview with Khaled al-Hroub, September 18, 2013.

<sup>186</sup> Interview with Mehran Kamrava, September 19, 2013.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Interview with Michael Stephens.

<sup>189</sup> Interview with Ibrahim ‘Arafat, December 4, 2013.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

In such a small and homogenous state, it has been simpler for Qatari authorities to appease (to a certain extent), rather than squelch, Islamist influence. Unlike the UAE, Qatar's government aimed to integrate Islamism, at least to a certain extent, rather than to attempt to eliminate its influence. Hesitant to discourage an ideology that holds popular appeal and eager to keep its Islamic credentials intact, the regime has allowed for its limited expression under supervision in something of a soft co-optation. This policy has been used with the traditionally Islamist-dominated charity sector as well.

### *Qatar's Islamic Charity Sector*

As in Kuwait, the Islamist trend has greatly influenced the country's charities. In Qatar, however, the philanthropic sector has largely been co-opted by the government and the ruling family, with major charities like Reach Out to Asia and the Social Development Centre under the purview of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, founded in 1995 by Shaykh Hamad and his wife Shaykha Moza bint Nasser al-Missned al-Thani.<sup>191</sup> Only Qatar Charity is run by a non-al-Thani, 'Abdullah al-Nameh.<sup>192</sup> Despite its technically independent status, though, Qatar Charity "maintains close 'cooperative' links and 'partnerships' with a host of key government agencies."<sup>193</sup> All charities also come under the umbrella of the Ministry of Civil Service and Housing, which maintains "authority to dissolve an association based on membership of fewer than twenty persons, violation of the provisions of stipulated laws, or involvement in political activities."<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Kamrava, "Royal Factionalism and Political Liberalization," 408.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 408.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid, 408.

<sup>194</sup> Mahi Khalaf, "The State of Qatar," in *From Charity to Social Change: Trends in Arab Philanthropy*, eds. Barbara Lethem Ibrahim and Dina H. Sherif (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 156.

Notwithstanding government oversight, charities maintain a religious bent; “there really are no other charities beside the Muslim ones.”<sup>195</sup> A 2012 survey demonstrated the degree to which the religious sector dominates charities in the country, with almost 80 percent of Qatari participants saying they donated primarily for religious reasons.<sup>196</sup> In addition, some 72 percent of Qataris responded that it is highly important that the recipients of their donations be Muslims.<sup>197</sup> Further, what attracted many young Brotherhood followers to the group was appeal of helping others. Jassim Sultan went so far as to say that the only basis for Brotherhood work in the Gulf is charitable: “Apart from charitable work and moral guidance there is not much room for them to occupy [...] Islamists in Gulf mostly work in charity.”<sup>198</sup>

Due to the lack of absolute poverty in Qatar, though, most charitable contributions are sent abroad, spurring recent accusations that such funds support Islamist groups overseas.<sup>199</sup> Several Qatari charities are touted as strongholds for Salafis, with a recent report calling Qatar’s Eid Bin Muhammad Al-Thani Charitable Association “probably the biggest and most influential activist Salafi-controlled relief organizations.”<sup>200</sup> Its director, ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Nu‘aimi, has been accused of funding jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria.<sup>201</sup> In the face of such allegations about terrorist funding, the Qatari government in September 2014 issued a new set of regulations for charity organisations, stating that

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<sup>195</sup> Interview with Justin Gengler, October 23, 2013.

<sup>196</sup> “Annual Omnibus Survey: A Survey of Life in Qatar, Executive Summary Report,” Social and Economic Research Institute (SESRI), November 2012, 16, <http://sesri.qu.edu.qa/sites/default/files/Eng/ExecutiveReports/2012/OmniBus2012.pdf>.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>198</sup> Sultan.

<sup>199</sup> Lina Khatib, “Qatar’s Foreign Policy: The Limits of Pragmatism,” *International Affairs* 89, no. 2, (2013): 426.

<sup>200</sup> Zoltan Pall, “Kuwaiti Salafism and Its Growing Influence in the Levant,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 2014, 12, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/kuwaiti\\_salafists.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/kuwaiti_salafists.pdf).

<sup>201</sup> Robert Mendick, “Al-Qaeda Terror Financier Worked for Qatari Government,” *The Telegraph*, October 12, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/11156327/Al-Qaeda-terror-financier-worked-for-Qatari-government.html>.

those “indulging in politics, or sending or receiving money to/from other countries without approval from the regulatory authority will face action, including termination of their activities.”<sup>202</sup> Nonetheless, in August 2015, the U.S. Treasury Department imposed sanctions on Qataris Sa‘ad bin Sa‘ad Mohammed Sharyan al-Ka‘abi and ‘Abd al-Latif bin ‘Abdallah Salih al-Kawari for providing financial support of Al-Qaida and Al-Nusra Front in Syria.<sup>203</sup> With the charity sector largely under the umbrella of government ministries, it seems likely that any bias held by such organisations reflect leanings of powerful individuals, like al-Kaabi and al-Kawari, rather than an institutionalised partiality. Again, Islamist influence is personalised and informal rather than institutionalised or systemic.

#### *Qatari Society and the Muslim Brotherhood*

Government oversight of the Islamic sector is pragmatic, considering the political relevance of religion in Qatar. Indeed, “[i]n Qatari society, where Qur’anic learning and adherence to the Islamic faith are values that are still held in high esteem by the ruling family and the majority of the population, the religious leaders are of special political importance. Traditionally, in addition to their theological role, they have had a strong influence on the shaykhdom’s educational, legislative and judicial systems.”<sup>204</sup> Simply because these religious leaders have influence, however, does not mean that it is formal. Religious elements in Qatar exert pressure on the government to implement conservative

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<sup>202</sup> “Stricter Rules to Regulate Charities,” *The Peninsula*, September 16, 2014, <http://thepeninsulaqatar.com/news/qatar/300295/stricter-rules-to-regulate-charities>.

<sup>203</sup> Muna Shikaki, “U.S. Targets Alleged Qatari Militant Backers,” *Al Arabiya*, August 5, 2015, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/08/05/U-S-targets-alleged-Qatari-financiers-of-Al-Nusra-and-Al-Qaeda.html>.

<sup>204</sup> John Duke Anthony, *Arab States of the Lower Gulf: People, Politics, Petroleum* (Washington, D.C.: Middle East Institute), 1975, 81-82.

social policies, although they lack institutionalised positions in government.<sup>205</sup> “Only in 1970 did the government lift its ban on public cinemas [...] A national television system, in existence since the early 1970s, was established only after considerable procrastination due to pressures from the religious establishment.”<sup>206</sup> The Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage continues its censorship of foreign magazines and books to ensure that offensive or blasphemous material is removed.<sup>207</sup> Periodic grassroots campaigns also emerge, primarily concerning social issues such as dress codes, availability of alcohol, and appropriate public behaviour. While such campaigns are sponsored by Muslim Brotherhood affiliates in other Gulf states, they have developed more informally and spontaneously in Qatar.

In large measure due to the nature of Qatari society, the Muslim Brotherhood has not gained a foothold as an organised group.

Outside of the issue of government pressure, there is less of a need for Muslim Brotherhood here – even less than in Kuwait. The reasons for this are a small population and societal strength. The Muslim Brotherhood provides an alternative family; its basic unit is even called family, *usra*, something people do not need in a tribal society. The Muslim Brotherhood is also useful in a repressive context – you know people will take care of you if you are arrested. This is also not needed in Qatar [...] There is also the obvious economic reason the Brotherhood is weak in Qatar. To the extent that the Brotherhood provides financial benefits in the sense of helping with marriage, apartments, freer subsidised social services, access to employment, none of this is needed in Qatar.<sup>208</sup>

In an environment in which a social network is provided, the government does not openly oppose Islamists, elections are not held, and material needs are met, there is less motivation for the group to risk a crackdown by organising itself formally. Although the government jailed Islamist ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Nu‘aimi, for three years following his

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>207</sup> Victoria Scott, “Selling Books in Qatar to Become Easier, Minister Vows,” *Doha News*, December 15, 2013, <http://dohanews.co/selling-books-in-qatar-to-become-easier-minister-vows/>.

<sup>208</sup> Interview with Shadi Hamid.

involvement in a 1998 petition criticising reforms under Shaykh Hamad, discussed in the next chapter, few other examples exist of Islamists being imprisoned, at least in the public record. As compared to Egypt and elsewhere in the Gulf, “the level of repression isn’t as high, so there are fewer grievances against the government. Qatar is the closest thing to a benevolent dictatorship.”<sup>209</sup>

In terms of having a concrete structure, the Qatari Brotherhood has failed, yet its philosophy remains influential, as reflected in conservative social policies and to a certain extent foreign policy, which is discussed in the next chapter. “There is interest ideologically, but the Brotherhood’s social structure is not as helpful in Qatar. It is perhaps least helpful here than in any other Gulf state.”<sup>210</sup> Aside from providing intellectual and spiritual guidance through *ḥalaqāt* and various charity and youth activities, there is little space for organised Brotherhood activity in Qatar. Nonetheless, Brotherhood ideology continues to hold appeal for a great many Qataris seeking to stem the tide of Westernisation and secularisation. Qatar provides a unique model of informal and unstructured Brotherhood influence that is unique to the Gulf. Because it does not need to run electoral campaigns or provide material welfare benefits, the Qatari Ikhwan can exist in an amorphous state.

### *Conclusions*

Al-Thani family has come to dominate Qatar’s political and religious scene. Perhaps the sheer size of the ruling family, the largest in the Gulf relative to the size of the national population, has allowed it to infiltrate all areas of public life.<sup>211</sup> Al-Thani also had the advantage of coming to power in a state with few competing powerful families

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Crystal, *Oil and Politics*, 148.

and without a strong merchant class to challenge its rule. As for independent opposition movements, the ruling family appears to have successfully co-opted the most influential in the present day by forging an alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood, which has long exerted influence on Qatari society. I. William Zartman points out, in the contexts of Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia, that opposition movements can amplify support of the state. “Neither uses the other, but each serves the other’s interests in performing its own role. Thus, stability in the contemporary Arab state can be explained not only by the government’s handling of opposition but also by the opposition’s handling of itself and the government.”<sup>212</sup>

This type of reinforcing relationship may best describe the ties between the Qatari government and the Muslim Brotherhood, though the Ikhwan in that state has historically opposed government policy only in the social realm. In super-rentiers, such social policies carry significant political weight. The Qatari government has historically granted an outlet for the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Brotherhood has in turn praised the government for its Islamist policies, thereby cementing al-Thani power and domestic political stability – a testament to the system’s strength. “Qatar’s past does not reveal a weak political and social system doomed to failure in a modern, complex environment, but rather a surprisingly robust, durable and socially cohesive tribal society in which Al-Thani, the ruling tribe, were first among equals. Tribal consensus, not simply top-down totalitarianism, characterized and continues to characterize some aspects of decision-making in Qatar.”<sup>213</sup> Simply put, the Qatari regime does place restrictions on the Muslim

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<sup>212</sup> I. William Zartman, “Opposition as Support of the State,” in *Beyond Coercion: The Durability of the Arab State*, eds. Adeer I. Dawisha and I. William Zartman (London: Croom Helm, 1988), 62.

<sup>213</sup> Fromherz, 156.

Brotherhood because it does not need to do so, marking successful co-optation of political Islam.

In the next chapter, we examine the Brotherhood's influence in Qatar under Shaykh Hamad and more recently under Shaykh Tamim, analysing the influence of Brotherhood ideology on the state's domestic and foreign policies, even in the absence of an organisational framework. We also trace the role of the Qatari media and civil society more broadly in the promotion of Islamist ideology.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Brotherhood in the Amiri Diwan?: *Ikhwan* Influence on Contemporary Qatari Politics**

Since the rise of Arab nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s, Qatar has enjoyed a rather placid political environment. No group has attempted to make drastic changes to the government system, and the Muslim Brotherhood has remained only informally organised. The Qatari government, particularly since the Arab Spring, has been increasingly responsive to popular demands regarding social policies, reflecting the ability of the informal sector to articulate Islamist demands and to influence government decision-making. More controversially, Islamist sentiment in Qatar has been perceived to drive the country's foreign policy, specifically during the Arab Spring. Although there is no institutionalised government bias toward the Muslim Brotherhood, Qatari decisions abroad reflect a desire to promote Arab and Islamic nationalism on the international level.

In this chapter, we analyse the role of the Qatari Brotherhood since its disbandment, examining how its presence has influenced domestic and foreign policies under Shaykh Hamad and Shaykh Tamim. In so doing, we demonstrate the ability of Islamists and other political actors to act through the informal sector to influence government policies – a mechanism unique to super-rentiers.

#### *The Influence of the Muslim Brotherhood inside Qatar Today*

Determining what exactly it means to be a Muslim Brotherhood member in a state lacking a formal organisation is challenging. Few Qataris identify themselves as members of the Brotherhood even if they agree with its ideology, making it difficult to determine the organisation's domestic popularity and strength. A difference in labelling comes into play; “[i]t is very complicated because lots of Qataris agree with the Muslim Brotherhood

but don't even realize it.”<sup>1</sup> The conflation between support for the Brotherhood and allegiance to conservative Islam further complicates the study of the organisation in isolation in Qatar. “Lots of Qataris agree with what al-Qaradawi is saying but they see this as being religious, not as being Muslim Brotherhood.”<sup>2</sup>

All in all, the group's sympathisers, at least in the organised sense, do not constitute a large proportion of Qatari society.<sup>3</sup> One interviewee said he would “be surprised if there was any substantial number [of Muslim Brotherhood sympathizers] – 2,000-3,000 maximum.”<sup>4</sup> Others maintain that the organisation is even smaller, “just a few people,” and remains highly informal.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, due to successful government co-optation of the religious sphere, there are few Brotherhood imams, preventing the spread of Ikhwan ideology in this way; government reform of the education sector, discussed in detail below, has also squelched influence in that arena.<sup>6</sup>

In terms of its activities, Qatari Brotherhood sympathisers still gather primarily to recite the Qu'ran. Such meetings tend to involve “a couple hundred [people], at most.”<sup>7</sup> The organisation exists on a structural level only at the simplest unit, the *usra*. “The *usra* in the Brotherhood is the basic, smallest part of the organisation where they attract newcomers, and they read the Qur'an, [engage in] *tafsīr*,<sup>8</sup> play sports. They know each other, go on trips together.”<sup>9</sup> Without means to disseminate its ideology through an official publication or even a formal meeting place, the Qatari Ikhwan does not appear to

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Michael Stephens.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Darwish al-'Emadi.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with 'Abdulaziz al-Mahmoud.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Michael Stephens.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Hamad al-Ibrahim.

<sup>8</sup> *Tafsīr*, or “explanation,” is Qur'anic exegesis.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with 'Abdulaziz al-Mahmoud.

harbour ambitions beyond continuing intellectual and spiritual pursuits, which is not to say that these do not have a social agenda or political influence.<sup>10</sup> Further, simply because official estimates of the number of Brotherhood supporters inside Qatar are small does not mean that the ideology does not hold appeal for a broader segment of the national population.

A primary component of the Brotherhood's political ideology is *shūrā*, or consultation, which involves a call for popular participation in political life. The Qatari Brotherhood, unlike the other affiliates under study, has not voiced demands for such reforms. Possibly because of the lack of a political opening and partly due to general satisfaction with the prevailing system, the Islamic sector in Qatar has not become active in the pro-democracy movement. Further, because the government has been public about the need for democratic reforms, there is less space for Brotherhood agitation in this field. Although the Advisory Council still has not been elected, "publicity for democratization is as important to the amir as the steps themselves."<sup>11</sup>

Having witnessed crackdowns on Brotherhood organisations elsewhere, Islamists in Qatar may be unwilling to risk losing the peaceful and relatively free environment they enjoy in Qatar. In addition, because many Brotherhood members hail from ruling or prominent families, the organisation is "hardly subversive."<sup>12</sup> This non-confrontational relationship has led the government to be more accepting of the Brotherhood. As a

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with Ibrahim 'Arafat.

<sup>11</sup> Rosman-Stollman, 206.

<sup>12</sup> Jassim Sultan, Qtd. in Andrew Hammond, "Arab Awakening: Qatar's Controversial Alliance with Arab Islamists," Open Democracy, April 25, 2013, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/andrew-hammond/arab-awakening-qatar's-controversial-alliance-with-arab-islamists>.

former advisor to the Amiri Diwan put it, “[w]hy should the government put pressure on the Muslim Brotherhood when they don’t challenge them? The two are interdependent.”<sup>13</sup>

In its current form, the Qatari Brotherhood exists as “a tendency,” or “a current,” conceived of as an ideology or set of beliefs, rather than a political bloc.<sup>14</sup> In such a loosely organised form, members are able to meet without fearing consequences of a crackdown from authorities. Furthermore, their goals *of da’wa* and Islamic education are achievable without the implementation of a structure that the state may find objectionable.<sup>15</sup> By remaining amorphous, the Brotherhood can continue to enjoy state backing while maintaining its independent activities. One area in which it has lost institutionalised standing, however, is in the education sector.

#### *Brotherhood Influence in the Education Sphere Today*

Perhaps because of the immense impact that Brotherhood scholars had during the establishment of the Qatari education system and due to the degree to which education became politicised in the 1950s and 1960s, the government has gone to great lengths to diminish such influence and to modernise education in recent years. In 2002, Shaykh Hamad announced a broad-ranging educational reform initiative to facilitate economic and social progress under the Education for a New Era programme, proposed by U.S.-based RAND Corporation.<sup>16</sup> After being presented with three options for primary school education reform, the Qatari leadership selected a model requiring the creation of independent schools, with the hope that they would be less reliant on the Ministry of

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Ibrahim ‘Arafat.

<sup>14</sup> Al-Nafisi.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> “Qatar Education Study 2012: Curriculum Report,” Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI), May 2014, 7,

[http://sesri.qu.edu.qa/sites/default/files/Eng/ExecutiveReports/2012/Qatar\\_Education\\_Study\\_Curriculum\\_Report/Qatar\\_Education\\_Study\\_Curriculum\\_Report.pdf](http://sesri.qu.edu.qa/sites/default/files/Eng/ExecutiveReports/2012/Qatar_Education_Study_Curriculum_Report/Qatar_Education_Study_Curriculum_Report.pdf).

Education while providing a variety of schooling options for parents and teachers.<sup>17</sup> The reforms also involved the use of standardised national testing to ensure that students reach international benchmarks for curriculum criteria.<sup>18</sup> To facilitate these changes, the Supreme Education Council (SEC) was created by amiri decree in 2002. Some considered this restructuring a means of eradicating Ministry of Education influence, as it had an “Islamist tilt.”<sup>19</sup> Although certain members of the ministry have moved to the SEC, many new and non-Qatari staff members work in the council.<sup>20</sup> Due to the fact the SEC is largely staffed with Western expatriates, the SEC is not considered to favour an Islamist agenda.<sup>21</sup>

Because curriculum comes from the state, which was (until 2013) advised by RAND, any remaining Islamist influence in education is personalised, rather than institutionalised; “religious scholars have no input in textbooks, curriculum and administration.”<sup>22</sup> The very fact that Qatar outsourced major education reform, at both the primary and secondary levels, to RAND Corporation indicates the degree to which Qatari leadership hopes to promote an educational system that is aligned with Western standards.<sup>23</sup> As a consequence, though, many Qatari parents “believe that students are not getting enough instruction in Arabic language and culture and Islamic studies. They also believe that studying the Qur’an is becoming a secondary issue, and not as ‘an integral

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<sup>17</sup> Maha Ellili-Cherif and Michael Romanowski, “Education for a New Era: Stakeholders’ Perception of Qatari Education Reform,” *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership* 8, no. 6 (2013): 1-2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Gerd Nonneman, September 22, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Obaid Younossi, September 24, 2013.

<sup>22</sup> “Qatar Education Study 2012,” 7.

<sup>23</sup> Alisa Rubin, “Higher Education Reform in the Arab World: The Model of Qatar,” Middle East Institute, July 31, 2012, <http://www.mei.edu/content/higher-education-reform-arab-world-model-qatar>.

part of education' as they would like."<sup>24</sup> The use of English in mathematics and science instruction, as well as the reduction of time for Arabic and Islamic studies, are lingering issues.<sup>25</sup>

Still, some teachers harbour Islamist sympathies, which the state cannot control. "The teachers are generally women and come from conservative neighbourhoods in Egypt, Jordan, Syria. Most have a conservative religious attitude; they sympathise with the Muslim Brotherhood, though they may not be involved in its politics. It is unclear if there is an impact on students."<sup>26</sup> Informal guidelines also seem to exist for the behaviour of teachers, particularly regarding religion. In May 2013, Nepali teacher Dorje Gorung at Qatar Academy, a private school associated with Qatar Foundation led by Shaykha Moza, was imprisoned after being fired for allegedly insulting Islam in a discussion with students.<sup>27</sup> Following international outcry, he was released to his home country.<sup>28</sup> While Islamism is no longer promoted in the education sector, the study and respect of Islam remain critical.

In terms of higher education, several foreign branch campuses operate in Qatar, in addition to the publicly owned Qatar University, established in 1977. Education City, under the umbrella of the Qatar Foundation, offers education at six American universities (Carnegie Mellon University, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Northwestern University, Virginia Commonwealth, Weill Cornell Medical College, and Texas A&M University), one British university (University College London), and one

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<sup>24</sup> Ellili Cherif and Romanowski, 13.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 13,

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Ibrahim 'Arafat.

<sup>27</sup> Shabina S. Khatri, "Nepalese Teacher Accused of Insulting Islam Released from Qatar Jail," *Doha News*, May 12, 2013, <http://dohanews.co/nepalese-teacher-accused-of-insulting-islam-released/>.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

French university (HEC Paris). Attendees of these colleges, where courses are conducted in English, tend not to come from among the local population, reinforcing existing divisions between locals and expatriates and raising concerns about retaining Qatari culture.

A recent debate about the language of instruction in institutions of higher education brought to the fore underlying tensions between Qataris and expatriates, fuelled by the implementation of reforms following Western standards. In 2005, Qatar University, on the recommendation of RAND, began instruction in English rather than Arabic. In 2012, the university began using Arabic again.<sup>29</sup> The change in languages, though it inflamed cultural sensitivities, was primarily a “reflection of structural problems in the educational sector.”<sup>30</sup> As many as 5,000-10,000 Qatari students were unable to gain entry to Qatar University because their English skills were inadequate, resulting in “a vitriolic campaign [by Qataris] against the university saying it is for expats.”<sup>31</sup> Further fuelling the dispute, a series of editorials in local daily *al-Sharq* decried “a ‘devastating war’ between Qatari students and ‘the favored sons of expats’.”<sup>32</sup> By restoring Arabic instruction at Qatar University, the government showed its commitment to modernising in line with local preferences. As an advisor to Shaykh Tamim put it, “[s]witching to Arabic is modernisation. You modernise in your own language.”<sup>33</sup> The government appears responsive to popular complaint, despite the fact that it is not organised through

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with David Roberts, September 23, 2013.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Justin Gengler.

<sup>32</sup> Justin Gengler, “The Political Costs of Qatar’s Western Orientation,” *Middle East Policy* 14, no. 4 (2012): 71.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with ‘Azmi Bishara, October 5, 2013.

any institutional structure. The Qatari government also seems aware of the fact that cultural symbols like language are a major part of political debate in that state.<sup>34</sup>

*Islamism and Qatar's Government System*

The fact that Qatar remained largely undeveloped until al-Thani rule has led many Qataris to link the family's rulership with their country's advancement. "Historically, the lack of distinction between state and ruler has been more pronounced in Qatar than in other Gulf sheikhdoms," resulting in an intense association between al-Thani and the state of Qatar itself.<sup>35</sup> Because of the power wielded by al-Thani family since the mid-nineteenth century, it has a great deal of freedom to enact policies of its choosing.

While it has maintained its control of the state, al-Thani family itself is notoriously fractious.<sup>36</sup> Reflecting intra-familial power struggles, three of the last four changes in leadership (1960, 1972, and 1995) resulted from "forced abdications" or palace coups.<sup>37</sup> Only the latest transition in power, in 2013, was voluntary, when Shaykh Hamad, who had ruled since 1995, passed on power to his son, Shaykh Tamim. Mehran Kamrava posits that historical uncertainty about succession has actually helped to consolidate al-Thani's institutional control in government, with amirs eagerly appointing family members to government positions in an effort to secure their rule.<sup>38</sup> "Al-Thani have actively bureaucratized traditional tribal leadership roles, putting local leaders and representatives on the government payroll and quieting dissent over the distribution of

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<sup>34</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz and Suha Taji Farouki, "Islamic NGOs and Muslim Politics: A Case from Jordan," *Third World Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (2000): 688.

<sup>35</sup> Fromherz, 310.

<sup>36</sup> Kamrava, "Royal Factionalism and Political Liberalization," 412.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 412.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 413.

resources through a slow reformation of Qatari identity and tradition.”<sup>39</sup> In this way, Qatar under al-Thani rule has maintained a relatively calm political environment.

Nonetheless, rumours of failed coups persist. In 2009, Jordan-based *al-Bawaba* newspaper and American intelligence firm Stratfor reported the failure of an attempted overthrow by Major-General Hamad bin ‘Ali al-Attiyah.<sup>40</sup> In February 2011, *al-Bawaba* reported another failed coup, which resulted in the arrest of 30 members of the military.<sup>41</sup> Yet another coup attempt allegedly took place in April 2012, according to Iran’s Fars News Agency and Saudi Arabia’s Al Arabiya, “with high-ranking military officers being rounded up and placed under house arrest after clashes between Royal Guard troops and regular military personnel outside one of the ruler’s palaces.”<sup>42</sup> Although it is difficult to gain reliable information about any such events, especially since they were not mentioned in local press, it is certain that familial rivalries persist within al-Thani. Some of these follow ideological lines, as certain branches of the family are more conservative than others. Since Shaykh Tamim’s 2013 takeover, however, relations seem calm.

While the regime has not faced major challenges in recent years from outside the ruling family, political opposition certainly still exists. “Dissent in more recent times has been muted, but not muzzled.”<sup>43</sup> Discerning the type of domestic political opposition and its influence in Qatar is difficult, however. In the absence of a legislature, the ruling family and elites hold almost all decision-making power, leading the country’s policies to be remarkably personality driven.

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<sup>39</sup> Fromherz, 29.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>41</sup> Gray, *Qatar*, 61.

<sup>42</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 184.

<sup>43</sup> Crystal, “Political Reform in Qatar,” 120.

The only outlet for institutionalised popular participation is the election of the CMC every four years. Due to the nature of the body as an arm of the Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning, its election campaigns are apolitical, as the body deals almost exclusively with matters of public health, maintenance of roads, and other logistical issues. Though the Qatari Constitution allows for the implementation of an elected Advisory Council, repeated delays in the arrangement of polls have led many to question the leadership's commitment to creating a legislative body.

One explanation for the delay in elections is that the government fears that the Council could be used as “a Trojan Horse” for other branches of infamously fragmented al-Thani to take power.<sup>44</sup> Additional questions remain about technicalities of voting in such a small state. As seen in Kuwait, the drawing of electoral districts greatly influences the vitality of democratic life. It is likely that “[p]eople would vote in districts where their father was from, and this would cement tribal, familial, geographic differences and would help the government because it knows how to deal with tribes.”<sup>45</sup> Another unresolved issue is which citizens would have the right to vote. Questions also remain about the efficacy of a parliament in a country as small as Qatar, which has a tiny national population,<sup>46</sup> of which a large proportion comprises al-Thani family or people connected to it.<sup>47</sup> “The families that would be represented in a parliament already have a say through

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with Patrick Forbes.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Justin Gengler.

<sup>46</sup> Qatari nationals number only 278,000 as of 2014 (Jure Snoj, “Population of Qatar by Nationality,” *BQ Doha*, 7 December 2014, <http://www.bqdoha.com/2013/12/population-qatar>). This is compared to a population of 1.4 million Emiratis as of 2013 (Mahmoud Habboush, “Call to Naturalise Some Expats Stirs Anxiety in the UAE,” Reuters, October 10, 2013, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/10/10/uk-emirates-citizenship-feature-idUKBRE99904J20131010>) and 1.1 million Kuwaitis as of 2012 (“Population of Kuwait,” Kuwait Government Online, June 30, 2012, [http://www.e.gov.kw/sites/kgoenglish/portal/Pages/Visitors/AboutKuwait/KuwaitAtaGlance\\_Population.aspx](http://www.e.gov.kw/sites/kgoenglish/portal/Pages/Visitors/AboutKuwait/KuwaitAtaGlance_Population.aspx)).

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Justin Gengler.

other means, and the Advisory Council is not the only venue for reform. The amir has his own majlis, meets with tribal leaders. This system works now.”<sup>48</sup> Notably, concern about Islamist groups coming to power has not stymied democratic reform in Qatar, as it has in the UAE.

The majlis is a crucial element of Qatari civil society, as well as a means for the government to track public opinion. A great deal of consensus-building takes place in these informal gatherings, which promote discussion of political and economic topics, while also cementing tribal and social relations.<sup>49</sup> Crucially, “Qatar is still small – and rich enough – to have a largely consensual style of politics.”<sup>50</sup> In fact, some Qataris consider majlis meetings important enough to be formalised as part of the political apparatus, with the amir’s majlis meeting weekly and with other shaykhs holding regular *majālis* to hear citizens’ grievances.<sup>51</sup> Because privately held “*majālis* are composed not along ideological lines but based on social groups,” they provide a helpful microcosm of the Qatari political scene.<sup>52</sup> As described by an advisor to Shaykh Tamim:

The regime is made of various rings of hierarchy, is communitarian. Qataris have their own democracy because people know each other and know they can influence decision-making. People in Western Europe think it’s an absolute monarchy; it’s not. Qatar is more like feudal Europe, with the amir as *primus inter pares*. In *majālis*, every public issue is discussed [...] free discussion in the majlis gets to the prince, and he has to take this into consideration.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Interview with Hassan al-Ibrahim.

<sup>49</sup> Hamid, “There Aren’t Protests in Qatar.”

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Hassan al-Ibrahim.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with ‘Azmi Bishara.

Although Qataris seem to have faith that their complaints in *majālis* will be passed on to the leadership, there is no indication of how exactly this happens, as the system remains uninstitutionalised and largely based on personal relationships.<sup>54</sup>

Political life in Qatar is, by its very nature, informal. In fact, the three states under study can be placed along a continuum of formal and informal, with Kuwait the most formalised and Qatar farthest towards the informal end. As such, the fact that the Qatari Brotherhood lacks an institutionalised framework does not mean it is politically irrelevant, as a great deal of politics is displaced into the social sphere in super-rentiers, making political life there look very different from elsewhere in the region. Qatar in particular is “intensely political but not democratically political. The amir deals with loads of politics every day but tribal politics.”<sup>55</sup> The experience of the 1990s demonstrates the political vitality inside Qatar, as the regime faced opposition from both liberal and Islamist segments of the population, yet outside of institutionalised means of political participation.

### *The Turbulent 1990s*

In April 1992, when the Qatari Muslim Brotherhood was undergoing internal examination, 54 prominent Qataris signed a petition<sup>56</sup> addressed to Shaykh Khalifa demanding “an elected council with real legislative and investigatory powers and [...] a constitution to guarantee democratic freedoms.”<sup>57</sup> It also called for freedom of speech and the expansion of citizens’ political and legal rights.<sup>58</sup> While the petition was not an

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<sup>54</sup> Interview with Hassan al-Ibrahim.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Patrick Forbes.

<sup>56</sup> For the full Arabic text see Nas ‘Arida 1991 wa-Asma ‘ al-Muwaqi‘yyin ‘aliha [Text of the 1991 Petition and Names of Signatories of it], dr-alkuwari.net, December 21, 1991, <http://akak.nsms.ox.ac.uk/node/151>.

<sup>57</sup> Crystal, “Political Reform in Qatar,” 120.

<sup>58</sup> Commins, *The Gulf States*, 282

Islamist one, it did state that the signatories' demands were "in accordance with our Islamic faith, which directs us to adopt consultations and to abide by them."<sup>59</sup> Writers of the petition thus recognised the importance of justifying their call for reform through religion, reflecting the pervasive influence of Islam in Qatar's political discourse.

Because "[t]he petitioners lacked a broad social base,"<sup>60</sup> Shaykh Khalifa ignored their demands, despite the fact that he had promised to establish a legislative assembly.<sup>61</sup> The amir also "ordered the telephones of the signatories to be tapped, confiscated their passports, barred some from leaving the country, and even arrested a few. After that, all the signatories faced government harassment and were strongly pressured to withdraw their signatures from the petition and to personally apologize to the emir."<sup>62</sup> Crown Prince Hamad, unimpressed with his father's response, seized power through a nonviolent coup while Khalifa was out of the country in June 1995.<sup>63</sup> Shortly after Shaykh Hamad took power, a counter-coup attempt by the former amir, allegedly with Saudi support, led to the arrest of some 100 al-Thani members and "only reinforced Hamad's determination to present himself as a guarantor of Qatar's progress, modernity, and democracy."<sup>64</sup>

In 1998, following the announcement of elections to the CMC under universal suffrage for nationals, a group of 22 Islamist scholars, under the leadership of 'Abd al-

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<sup>59</sup> 1992 petition, Qtd. in Youssef M. Ibrahim, "54 Qatar Citizens Petition Emir for Free Elections," *The New York Times*, May 12, 1992, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/05/13/world/54-qatar-citizens-petition-emir-for-free-elections.html>.

<sup>60</sup> Commins, *The Gulf States*, 283.

<sup>61</sup> Sean Foley, *The Arab Gulf States: Beyond Oil and Islam* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010), 108.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>63</sup> Commins, *The Gulf States*, 283.

<sup>64</sup> Kamrava, "Royal Factionalism and Political Liberalization," 415.

Rahman al-Nu‘aimi, presented a petition to the Advisory Council.<sup>65</sup> It objected to Shaykh Hamad’s reforms – primarily his granting women the right to vote for and run as candidates in the CMC, “where they would have ‘public authority’ and the potential for ‘leadership over men’.”<sup>66</sup> The petition, which was signed by three members of the ruling family,<sup>67</sup> also expressed discontent about the state’s relatively lenient policies regarding alcohol.<sup>68</sup> As a result, al-Nu‘aimi was jailed for three years. Most significantly, Shaykh Hamad’s reforms were maintained.<sup>69</sup> Al-Thani, in this instance, insisted on implementing a liberal policy in the face of Islamist ideological resistance. Still, the regime faced non-ideological opposition as well.

In June 1999, Qataris again became vocal about their complaints with the existing system, yet not in the form of a petition or even an organised political movement. Instead, grievances were aired on the government-owned radio programme *Watani al-Habib Sabah al-Khair* (*Good Morning, My Beloved Nation*), which allows callers to voice a wide variety of complaints. In one June 1999 edition, discussion centred on what callers considered to be excessive privileges of the royal family and other inequities in Qatari society. ‘Aisha al-Muhannadi’s comments were particularly cutting, stating that “[t]he ruling family has become a...big emotional and financial weight on the nation and its people.”<sup>70</sup> Others echoed her opinion, calling for a decrease in allowances paid to al-

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<sup>65</sup> Rosman-Stollman, 191.

<sup>66</sup> Bahry, “Elections in Qatar,” 126.

<sup>67</sup> Rosman-Stollman, 199.

<sup>68</sup> Crystal, “Political Reform in Qatar,” 122.

<sup>69</sup> “Qatar,” *Countries at the Crossroads*, Freedom House, 2004, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/countries-crossroads/2004/qatar#.VRmZxkbndKo>.

<sup>70</sup> ‘Aisha al-Muhannadi, Qtd. in Jaber al-Harmi, “Qataris Criticize Royal Funds,” Associated Press, June 19, 1999, <http://www.apnewsarchive.com/1999/Qataris-Criticize-Royal-Funds/id-2c814d2de83d9708694248284bbff17e>.

Thani family members.<sup>71</sup> Further, “[t]he Doha newspaper, *al-Raya*, followed up the radio programme by publishing an editorial on the same subject. It said: ‘While Qataris are suffering from unemployment, lack of adequate housing and reduction of government subsidies...the ruling family continues to enjoy privileges’.”<sup>72</sup> The most vocal complaints were thus not ideological, but rather focused on the one thing rentier state theory predicts that citizens would bemoan: the distribution of rent money. The voicing of such grievances did not form the basis of organised or long-term opposition, however.

Although Shaykh Hamad instituted a series of political reforms, including limiting privileges of members of the royal family, the political and economic sectors remain dominated by al-Thani and their allies.<sup>73</sup> “The family still wields power and gains wealth through state mechanisms, even if many of the processes of this have changed over time.”<sup>74</sup> While economic prosperity in Qatar is undeniable and absolute poverty is virtually non-existent among nationals, there remain inequities within Qatari society.

#### *Arab Spring Reaches Qatar*

Barring complaints about disbursements to nationals, the domestic political scene remained stable during the Arab Spring. In fact, some speculated that Qatar supported the uprisings in other countries largely because there was no domestic threat of rebellion. Still, internal dissent was expressed. At the beginning of 2011, local newspaper *The Peninsula* reported on Qataris’ postings on internet fora about the need for increased state support, particularly as Kuwait granted its citizens free food for 14 months in addition to

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<sup>71</sup> Naomi Sakr, “Dynamics of GCC Press-Government Relations in the 1990s,” in *Good Governance in the Middle East Oil Monarchies*, eds. Tom Pierre Najem and Martin Hetherington (London: Routledge, 2003), 107-108.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 107-108.

<sup>73</sup> Bahry, “Elections in Qatar,” 118.

<sup>74</sup> Gray, *Qatar*, 56.

a payout for nationals.<sup>75</sup> Qataris charged that additional government aid was needed, specifically for “low-income families who are living off [a] meagre monthly state dole.”<sup>76</sup> Others argued that, despite receiving high salaries, “resources got exhausted by the middle of the month since rents and food prices were skyrocketing.”<sup>77</sup> As a result, they cited an increasing need to cross the border to the nearby Saudi city of Hassa to purchase cheaper household goods.<sup>78</sup> The government responded to these grievances, though they were not lodged through any institutionalised means or even by an organised political bloc.

In September 2011, civil employees gained a 60 percent increase in pay and social allowances, with defence staff receiving raises of 50-120 percent.<sup>79</sup> In addition, civilian retirees gained a 60 percent increase in pensions, with retired military officers receiving a 120 percent raise and other ranks a 50 percent salary increase.<sup>80</sup> As rentier state theory predicts, citizens voice political complaints when their share of rent income is threatened. This does not preclude them, however, from also holding ideological beliefs. Because economic grievances are easily answered in a super-rentier state, they do not form the basis of long-lasting political mobilisation. In fact, after the latest disbursements, most domestic political complaint has centred on broader social issues in Qatar.

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<sup>75</sup> “Citizens Want Kuwait-like Govt Bounty,” *The Peninsula*, January 17, 2011, <http://thepeninsulaqatar.com/news/qatar/139495/citizens-want-kuwait-like-govt-bounty>.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Zamila Bunglawala, “Young, Educated and Dependent on the Public Sector: Meeting Graduates’ Aspirations and Diversifying Employment in Qatar and the UAE,” Brookings Doha Center, Analysis Paper no. 4, December 2011, 21, [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2011/12/15%20qatar%20diversify%20employment/1215\\_qatar\\_diversify\\_employment\\_bunglawala\\_english.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2011/12/15%20qatar%20diversify%20employment/1215_qatar_diversify_employment_bunglawala_english.pdf).

<sup>80</sup> Regan Doherty, “Qatar Hikes State Pensions,” Reuters, September 7, 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/07/qatar-salaries-idAFL5E7K70KY20110907>.

Though Qatar experienced no public protests and faces no sustained political opposition, some majlis gatherings discussed problems in Qatari society and politics. A Facebook page entitled “The Qatar Revolution 2011 Against Hamad bin Khalifa,” with over 5,000 followers, called for demonstrations against the amir, claiming that he had met with Israeli officials.<sup>81</sup> Despite the protest page and a planned “day of rage” in March 2011, no gatherings took place in Doha, as the effort appeared to be primarily supported by non-Qataris or Qataris outside of the state.

Beginning in March 2011, a more organised political grouping emerged, composed of some 60 Qataris, who began holding meetings to discuss political and economic reforms. These gatherings, “Monday Meetings,” led by liberal academic ‘Ali Khalifa al-Kuwari, resulted in the pamphlet *Qataris for Reform*, which “highlights key concerns, such as the lack of public consultation on domestic and foreign policy, lack of access to information on public affairs, and the lack of boundaries between the private and public, with policy recommendations for the Qatari state to address these shortcomings.”<sup>82</sup> Al-Kuwari and his cohorts later produced *Al-Sha‘ab Yurid Islah ... fi Qatar Aidan (The People Want Reform in Qatar... Too)*, in which they highlight what they consider necessary reforms for Qatar. Notably, the book focuses on four issues: the population imbalance between nationals and expatriates; economic underdevelopment stemming from the state’s reliance on the export of oil and natural gas; the absence of political participation; and the GCC-wide dependence on foreign powers for security.<sup>83</sup> Al-Kuwari’s recommendations thus involve reforming or amending, rather than

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<sup>81</sup> Fromherz, 30.

<sup>82</sup> Khatib, 430.

<sup>83</sup> ‘Ali Khalifa al-Kuwari, ed. *Al-Sha‘ab Yurid al-Islah fi Qatar...Aidan* [The People Want Reform in Qatar... Too] (Beirut: Al Maaref Forum, 2012).

upending, the existing system. They also clearly extend beyond the economic complaints anticipated by rentier state theory and foresee major problems with the system it describes. Notably, al-Kuwari, though often referred to as a secular figure, promotes enforcement of the government system described in the constitution – “a democratic system of government with Islamic law as the principle source for legislation.”<sup>84</sup> Al-Kuwari thus embraces portions of both government and Islamist agendas.

Al-Kuwari is undoubtedly the best-known Doha-based reformist ideologue, though he is not considered to be “fundamentally important to Qatari politics. He’s no Aung San Suu Kyi, Nelson Mandela.”<sup>85</sup> In fact, al-Kuwari refers to himself as “not an activist in political or social issues,” but “an academic, a researcher and a writer.”<sup>86</sup> On the whole, then, “there is no domestic opposition per se in Qatar but a call to reform. There is no war of ideology in Qatar. Al-Kuwari wants more transparency, more of a role for people in the constitution and in legislation. As for the Advisory Council, Qatar is moving toward it slowly but surely. The executive wing of the country is being reformed.”<sup>87</sup> The government is very careful to appear responsive to popular demands by reiterating its commitment to enhancing popular participation.

Perhaps for this reason, most political complaints do not aim to overturn the prevailing political system.<sup>88</sup> The Qatari government, aside from voicing its commitment to representative government, has also distinguished itself by not cracking down on the

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<sup>84</sup> ‘Ali Khalifa al-Kuwari, *Qataris for Reform*, dr-alkuwari.net, 2011, 7, <http://dr-alkuwari.net/sites/akak/files/qatarisforreform-translation.pdf>.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Michael Stephens.

<sup>86</sup> ‘Ali Khalifa al-Kuwari, Qtd. in “Interview with Dr. Ali Khalifa Al Kuwari, Author of ‘The People Want Reform...In Qatar, Too’ – Statehood and Participation,” Heinrich Boll Stiftung Middle East, March 3, 2014, <http://lb.boell.org/en/2014/03/03/interview-dr-ali-khalifa-al-kuwari-author-people-want-reform-qatar-too-statehood>.

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Hassan al-Ibrahim.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Justin Gengler.

scant existing dissent, aside from a few notable episodes. Qatari poet Muhammad ibn al-Dhib al-‘Ajami was famously arrested in early 2011 after he posted a video of himself reciting a poem that was considered to incite overthrow of the regime and insult Shaykh Hamad.<sup>89</sup> Originally sentenced to life in prison, his term was reduced to 15 years. Qataris interviewed supported the government’s decision, with one stating that “the reaction should be severe [...] It’s a strong lesson for him and anyone else who may come behind. He shouldn’t have said what he said.”<sup>90</sup> Qatari blogger Sultan al-Khulaifi was also arrested in March 2011 and detained for one month, allegedly due to his writings about censorship in Qatar.<sup>91</sup>

Aside from these isolated incidents, evidence of political arrests or widespread repression is lacking, or at least is not publicly available; Islamist groups seem to be safe from crackdown. More common is self-censorship or the state’s encouragement of it – in particular on expatriates. For instance, the Doha Centre for Media Freedom, established in 2008, became the focus of a scandal when Founding Director Robert Ménard left in May 2009, leading to the Centre’s temporary closure.<sup>92</sup> Ménard claimed that his work had been “suffocated,” as he was discouraged from criticising Qatar.<sup>93</sup> Most recently, in May 2015, members of the BBC who had been invited by the Qatari government to assess living conditions of labourers in newly constructed cities were arrested, on government claims that the team did not have permission to enter the private property;

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<sup>89</sup> “Qatar Court Upholds Poet Mohammed al-Ajami’s Sentence,” BBC, October 21, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24612650>.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with ‘Abdulaziz al-Mahmoud.

<sup>91</sup> “Freedom in the World 2012 – Qatar,” Freedom House, July 24, 2012, <http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=country&category=&publisher=&type=&coi=QAT&rid=4562d8cf2&docid=500fda332&skip=0>.

<sup>92</sup> Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Arab Spring* (London: Hurst and Company, 2014), 54-55.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

this incident followed the detainment in March of a West German Broadcasting team also reporting on workers' conditions.<sup>94</sup>

*Islamist Complaint and Responsiveness of the Qatari System*

As a whole, the Qatari population seems satisfied with the current system of government. Public opinion polls carried out by the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI)<sup>95</sup> revealed that, during the period between December 2010 and June 2011, "support for democracy and interest in political participation has dropped markedly among Qatari citizens. The proportion of survey respondents who report being 'interested' or 'very interested' in politics decreased by almost 20 percent over this period, while the proportion of Qataris who say that living in a democratic country is 'very important' to them dropped from 74 percent to 65 percent."<sup>96</sup> During the same period, Qatari citizens' confidence in the governing institutions saw increases of eight to 18 percent.<sup>97</sup> The Arab Spring seemed to reinforce Qataris' contentment with their own government system – particularly as neighbouring countries faced violent protests and unsteady transitions to democracy. In the words of political scientist Justin Gengler, "[t]he lesson: don't try to fix what isn't broken, for others will see to it that you wind up with something much worse."<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Adam Taylor, "Qatar Arrests Reporters Investigating Migrant Worker Conditions, Again," *The Washington Post*, May 18, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2015/05/18/qatar-arrests-reporters-investigating-migrant-worker-conditions-again/>.

<sup>95</sup> Although this institute is linked to government-funded Qatar University, SESRI is also a multi-year partnership with the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan and is transparent about its survey methodology and sources.

<sup>96</sup> Justin Gengler, "Qatar's Ambivalent Democratization," *Foreign Policy*, November 1, 2011, [http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/01/qataris\\_lesson\\_in\\_revolution](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/01/qataris_lesson_in_revolution).

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

Perhaps adding to this contentment, the government has also become more responsive to Islamist-leaning demands for social reform since the Arab Spring.<sup>99</sup> It has been particularly attuned to complaints about the availability of alcohol. In December 2011, alcohol was banned in restaurants throughout the Pearl-Qatar development. Shortly thereafter, objections from locals led to the closure, in a number of days, of a branch of the Qatar Distribution Company (QDC) in 2012, which sells pork and liquor, on the manmade island. Additional changes have also been made this year. In April 2015, Qatar Tourism Authority forbade hotels from serving alcohol in the nine days preceding ‘*Īd al-Adhā*, in observance of *Dhu al-Hijjah*, during which hajj is undertaken. Although alcohol is traditionally not sold in hotels during Ramadan or on the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, 2015 marks the first time it has been banned during the hajj period.<sup>100</sup> Such restrictions may signal the government’s efforts to balance the desires of national and expatriate populations. In the words of an advisor to Shaykh Tamim, “[a]lcohol is not essential to modernization.”<sup>101</sup>

A group of Qataris also took aim at the national airline, Qatar Airways, launching an online boycott campaign in 2012 due to the company’s sale of alcohol and pork products through its QDC subsidiary.<sup>102</sup> As former Justice Minister and human rights activist Najeeb al-Nu‘aimi tweeted, “[t]his is the Qatari spring against Qatar Airways. The people demand employment for Qataris, the people demand a reduction in rates, and the abolishment of the monopoly of Qatar Airways.”<sup>103</sup> An earlier online campaign, in

<sup>99</sup> Interview with Lolwah al-Khater, February 28, 2015.

<sup>100</sup> Lesley Walker, “Qatar Hotels Told Not to Sell Alcohol in Run-up to Eid Al-Adha,” *Doha News*, April 27, 2015, <http://dohanews.co/qatar-hotels-told-not-to-sell-alcohol-in-run-up-to-eid-al-adha/>.

<sup>101</sup> Interview with ‘Azmi Bishara.

<sup>102</sup> Gengler, “The Political Costs of Qatar’s Western Orientation,” 71.

<sup>103</sup> Elizabeth Broomhall, “Twitter Users Blast Qatar Airways, Call for Boycott,” *Arabian Business*, January 9, 2012, <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/twitter-users-blast-qatar-airways-call-for-boycott-439307.html>.

July 2011, targeted the national airline for similar reasons. A group of Qataris, using the hashtag #qatarairwaysfail, claimed that the airline favoured foreigners, serving alcohol and stopping the on-board *qibla* service to help Muslims face Mecca during prayers.<sup>104</sup> Although the boycott campaign seems to have had no major effect on the airline, the *qibla* service has returned, and Qataris continue in their efforts to change social policy from the ground up.

Other recent examples of the government taking a cue from the public complaints include the removal in 2013, after only three weeks, of a statue of football player Zinedine Zidane head-butting another player on the Doha Corniche. It was eliminated following complaints from locals about the inappropriateness of the statue, as the depiction of humans and animals is discouraged in the hadith and as the act portrayed was considered to be “morally wrong.”<sup>105</sup> A statue of an oryx marking what was once known as Oryx Roundabout was also removed in 2013, having provoked similar complaints since its construction in the 1980s.<sup>106</sup> Though values likely have not changed a great deal since the 1980s, the government has become more proactive in addressing such complaints in recent years, eager to maintain Islamic and Qatari culture in the face of an increasing expatriate population.<sup>107</sup>

The grassroots campaign to foster modest dress, launched in 2012 as “One of Us,” and recently rebranded as “Reflect Your Respect,” represents another effort by nationals

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<sup>104</sup> Ed Attwood, “Nationals Slam Qatar Airways over Poor Service,” *Arabian Business*, July 20, 2011, <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/nationals-slam-qatar-airways-over-poor-service-411509.html>.

<sup>105</sup> Interview with Darwish Al-‘Emadi.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Ibrahim ‘Arafat.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Lolwah al-Khater.

to maintain traditional values, fostering “modesty in all behaviors.”<sup>108</sup> Rather than singling out expatriates, this campaign hopes to appeal to them to monitor their behaviour, using the slogan “you matter in Qatar.”<sup>109</sup>

The above actions demonstrate that a vocal segment of the Qatari population, which favours conservative social policies, has considerable influence on the government’s domestic policy. Similar efforts elsewhere in the region could easily be led by the Brotherhood yet seem informal and spontaneous in Qatar. As the number of expatriates rises as more workers are needed to prepare for the 2022 World Cup and as the Qatari government attempts to cater to the needs of that population, locals have become increasingly vocal about their grievances, making it more difficult for the government to balance the demands of expatriate and local populations. It is fair to say that, in Qatar, “the amount of say people have depends on the question. If it is a question of how to allocate state budget, people have less of a say. If it is a local matter or something less political, people have more say in government [...] People are content to leave decisions to others but also to voice displeasure.”<sup>110</sup> Most recent complaints bemoan the growth of the expatriate population and the consequent loss of Qatari and Islamic culture. The government has attempted to answer such concerns, particularly as the proportion of Qatari nationals diminishes in the face of an upsurge in expatriates.<sup>111</sup> Islamist critique in the Gulf has revolved around such complaints, and the influx of non-Muslim expatriates has been a lightning rod for Islamist movements.

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<sup>108</sup> Umm ‘Abdullah, Qtd. in Lesley Walker, “Modest Dress Campaign Revived with New ‘You Matter in Qatar’ Slogan,” *Doha News*, May 4, 2015, <http://dohanews.co/modest-dress-campaign-revived-with-new-you-matter-in-qatar-slogan/>.

<sup>109</sup> Walker, “Modest Dress Campaign.”

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Justin Gengler.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

The *majālis* and popular radio show *Watani al-Habib Sabah al-Khair* grant Qataris the opportunity to voice their grievances while also allowing the leadership to hear about such complaints.<sup>112</sup> Because Qatar's native population is the smallest of the super-rentiers, at under 300,000 people, citizens are assured that their grievances are heard and oftentimes addressed.<sup>113</sup> "Qataris can get access to the channels of power; it is representative in that sense, but it's harder with more people and a more distant amir."<sup>114</sup>

In a context wherein politics remain largely informal and uninstitutionalised, it is perhaps unsurprising that the Brotherhood exerts political influence without a formal structure. In such an environment, it is also difficult to discern which political trends are most popular among nationals. While the above social policies suggest a leaning toward conservatism favoured by the Brotherhood, they could also reflect the desires of a traditional Wahhabi population. Either way, Islam clearly has political weight. Further, Qatar's foreign policy decisions, particularly those in recent years, seem to mirror such interests as well.

#### *Qatar's Role in Promoting the Muslim Brotherhood Abroad*

##### Ideologically Driven Foreign Policy?

Claims about Qatar's tilt toward the Muslim Brotherhood often centre on the state's foreign policy. The notion that Qatar has managed to squelch Brotherhood activity at home by promoting the organisation abroad has become particularly popular. Certainly, Qatari leadership was public about its willingness to accept Brotherhood movements that came to power during the Arab Spring. Former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Shaykh Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani, in a December 2011 interview, said

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Bari, 52.

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Michael Stephens.

that Islamists were likely to win elections in several countries that experienced political upheaval and that “we shouldn’t fear them, let’s cooperate with them.”<sup>115</sup> Promoting a similar standpoint, then Amir Shaykh Hamad said of Islamist groups in 2011: “I believe you will see this extremism transform into civilian life and civil society.”<sup>116</sup> While not open endorsements, such statements reveal some degree of trust in Islamist organisations and certainly a much more tolerant stance than that held by the UAE.

To the extent that links exist between the Qatari government and the Muslim Brotherhood, they are at the level of personal relationships, fostered through social relationships and *majālis*, involving high-ranking members of the cabinet and the Brotherhood, rather than any institutionalised strategy. “Support for the Muslim Brotherhood is a reflection of the personalised nature of foreign policy; it is case of who can help rather than a grand strategy.”<sup>117</sup> Because decisions are made by very few people at the head of the government, “it’s a question of who has access to the advisor for foreign policy because it is not an institutionalised system. The foreign ministry has a bureaucratic structure, but decision-making is at the top, formulated by five people at most.”<sup>118</sup> While such personality-driven policymaking affords Qatar flexibility, it also limits the capacity of the foreign ministry.<sup>119</sup> One Western diplomat explained that, in a meeting with members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, one of the officials admitted that no Qatari expert on the Muslim Brotherhood exists and had only vague answers to questions about how the government distinguishes violent Islamists from nonviolent

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<sup>115</sup> “Qatari Premier Says the West Should Embrace ‘Arab Spring’ Islamists,” Al Arabiya, December 1, 2011, <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/01/180189.html>.

<sup>116</sup> Shaykh Hamad, Qtd. in Khatib, 424

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Steven Wright, September 23, 2013.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with David Roberts.

<sup>119</sup> Interview with Sultan Barakat, October 30, 2013.

ones.<sup>120</sup> Such a lack of institutionalised capacity suggests that any tilt toward the Brotherhood in foreign policy is not due to an ideological leaning or structural linkage, but is likely to change depending on the person (or people) making foreign policy decisions.

The Qatari government has backed Brotherhood movements overseas, to a large extent, to advance the country's power globally. Instead of using its links to Islamists to influence domestic politics, where Islamism is supported from the grassroots, Qatar has attempted to increase its standing in the international order more broadly.<sup>121</sup> Pragmatism overrides ideology for the Qatari leadership.<sup>122</sup> "The Qatari government has and continues to behave internationally not out of an ideological commitment but out of a pragmatic assessment of how the region functions. Islam is important; the Muslim Brotherhood is the biggest group among Islamists and is considered to be effective, seen as not corrupt."<sup>123</sup>

Related to Qatar's willingness to engage with the Brotherhood to boost its international standing is the leadership's desire to distinguish itself from Saudi Arabia. This was particularly important for Shaykh Hamad, as the Saudis reportedly backed a coup attempt against him in 1996.<sup>124</sup> Further, Hamad's generation had "living memory of subservience to Saudi Arabia."<sup>125</sup> Backing the Brotherhood, or at least not cracking down on it, was a way to distinguish itself from the Kingdom which has been particularly

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<sup>120</sup> Interview with British Political Officer, British Embassy Doha, April 22, 2014.

<sup>121</sup> Rime Allaf, "Qatar's Influence Increases in the Middle East," *The Guardian*, December 15, 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/dec/15/qatar-influence-middle-east>.

<sup>122</sup> "The Rise of Qatar: Pygmy with the Punch of a Giant," *The Economist*, November 5, 2011, <http://www.economist.com/node/21536659>.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Gerd Nonneman, September 22, 2013.

<sup>124</sup> As'ad 'AbuKhalil, "Change in Qatar?" *Al Akhbar English*, July 2, 2013, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/16303>.

<sup>125</sup> Interview with Mehran Kamrava.

outspoken against the organisation. While Qatar has considered the organisation an important regional player, “Saudi Arabia has traditionally seen the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist group with political ambitions, as a potential political challenger, and thus has been cautious in its dealings with the group.”<sup>126</sup>

Under Shaykh Tamim’s leadership, the relationship with Saudi Arabia appears to be changing, reflecting how individualised the government system is. The new amir’s more conciliatory approach to Qatari relations with Saudi Arabia likely reflects a generational, rather than ideological, shift.<sup>127</sup> Tellingly, Shaykh Tamim’s first trip abroad was to Saudi Arabia, perhaps signalling a desire to reach a rapprochement.<sup>128</sup> He also acceded to conditions of the November 2013 GCC Agreement, which required Qatar to expel seven senior members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and to “stop attacking Egypt in al-Jazeera broadcasts,” largely by removing al-Qaradawi’s platform on the station and on Qatar TV.<sup>129</sup> Since implementation of the GCC deal, relations have improved immensely between Qatar and Saudi Arabia and the GCC more generally. Following Shaykh Tamim’s visit, and in the face of recent accusations from the Egyptian government that Qatar supported terrorism in Libya, the Secretary General of the GCC, ‘Abdul Latif al-Zayani, backed Qatar. He stated that the accusations are “unfounded, contradict reality, and ignore the sincere efforts by Qatar as well as the Gulf Cooperation Council and Arab states in combatting terrorism and extremism at all levels.”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Khatib, 422.

<sup>127</sup> Interview with Mehran Kamrava.

<sup>128</sup> Mourad.

<sup>129</sup> Black, “Qatar-Gulf Deal Forces Expulsion of Muslim Brotherhood Leaders.”

<sup>130</sup> ‘Abdul Latif al-Zayani, Qtd. in “GCC Backs Qatar in Row with Egypt over Libya,” Al Arabiya, February 19, 2015, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/02/19/GCC-backs-Qatar-in-row-with-Egypt-over-Libya.html>.

Willing to set aside its support for the Brotherhood after it became too controversial globally, Qatar's pragmatism has become clear. Ideological links exist only to the extent that the Qatari leadership is religious, as is the Brotherhood.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, because the organisation never openly challenged the government, the regime has no reason to bemoan its existence. "From the start Qatar has had very good relations with the Muslim Brotherhood. They put them in a frame where they are part of the system but cannot disrupt it."<sup>132</sup> Though Qatar's links to the Muslim Brotherhood dates back to the 1950s, there is "no sign that the regime is seeking to mark Qatar out in a religious sense except as a conservatively oriented but appropriately open Sunni society."<sup>133</sup> Ultimately, Qatar's actions in the international scene have been interest-driven, promoting regime survival above all else.<sup>134</sup> In the words of one Qatari, "[o]ur leadership is secular, nationalist. It has never been and will never be Islamist."<sup>135</sup>

#### Qatar and the Arab Spring: Policies Abroad

Qatar's policies during the Arab Spring distinguished it from neighbouring Gulf states, which were considered to lead a counter-revolution against the region's popular revolts.<sup>136</sup> Taking a proactive stance, Qatar was the first country to grant official recognition to the rebel-led Libyan National Transitional Council; in addition, Qatar hosted a meeting for the Libya Contact Group, and sent six fighter jets as part of the NATO-led no-fly zone in March 2011.<sup>137</sup> Qatar also stirred controversy in its backing of Libyan Islamists, as it hosted several key Islamist figures, primarily those from the

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<sup>131</sup> Interview with Professor of Gulf Studies, Qatar University, October 30, 2013.

<sup>132</sup> Interview with Jassim Sultan.

<sup>133</sup> Gray, *Qatar*, 210.

<sup>134</sup> Interview with Abdullah Baabood, October 30, 2013.

<sup>135</sup> Interview with Hamad al-Ibrahim.

<sup>136</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 226.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), most prominently ‘Ali al-Sallabi, who had been jailed in Libya for attempting to assassinate Colonel Mu‘ammar al-Qadhafi.<sup>138</sup> The link with al-Sallabi, who has lived in Qatar for nearly ten years, and his brother Isma‘il, who also fought with Qatar-funded militias in Libya, is “probably personal more than ideological.”<sup>139</sup> Even if it were ideological, this link would not be to the Muslim Brotherhood, as neither al-Sallabi brother was active in the organisation at this time. The Brotherhood notably rejected a proposal from ‘Ali al-Sallabi to form a coalition with his bloc in 2011.<sup>140</sup>

Qatar’s support for Libyan Islamists, however, had an impact on the ongoing Syrian crisis, with support going to Syria through former Libyan rebels who took over in the post al-Qadhafi era.<sup>141</sup> In November 2012, the Syrian opposition’s primary source of funding was revealed to be the new Libyan government, of which Qatar was the second largest funder.<sup>142</sup> Because the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood formed a major portion of the Syrian National Council (SNC), some suspected that behind Qatari support was meant to promote the Ikhwan.<sup>143</sup> Now that the SNC is no longer the primary representative of the opposition, the Syrian Brotherhood’s role has been dissipated. Still, the Qatari government maintains that its primary intention has always been advancement of the cause against Bashar al-Assad, rather than the promotion of any one (particularly Islamist) political bloc. In fact, Qatar has been an outspoken and active member of the

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<sup>138</sup> Khatib, 423.

<sup>139</sup> “The Rise of Qatar.”

<sup>140</sup> Omar Ashour, “Libyan Islamists Unpacked: Rise, Transformation, and Future,” Brookings Doha Center, Policy Briefing, May 2012, 4, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2012/5/02%20libya%20ashour/omar%20ashour%20policy%20briefing%20english.pdf>.

<sup>141</sup> Khatib, 424-425.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 424-425.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 424-425.

United States-led coalition against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), reiterating its ultimate aim of promoting regime change in Syria above all.<sup>144</sup> It has also taken measures, mentioned in the previous chapter, to hamper attempts at financing terrorist organisations outside of the state.<sup>145</sup>

Qatar's backing of Mohamed Morsi's Brotherhood-led government in Egypt was considered the clearest evidence of its Islamist leaning. During the year that Morsi was in power (June 2012-July 2013), Qatar gave or lent \$7.5 billion to Egypt.<sup>146</sup> Still, Qatar maintained its support not for the Muslim Brotherhood *per se*, but rather for a popularly elected Egyptian government. Qatar also condoned supporting the Egyptian Brotherhood as a means of expanding its regional power; it "was justified by reasons of realpolitik and not ideology."<sup>147</sup> Since the fall of Morsi, the military regime under 'Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi has suspended negotiations on the purchase of Qatari natural gas,<sup>148</sup> in addition to returning \$2 billion that Qatar had deposited into the state's central bank under Morsi's tenure, following Qatar's postponement of granting the aid and its imposition of new conditions for its receipt.<sup>149</sup>

Qatar's perceived support of Islamists certainly damaged ties with Egypt and marred its reputation regionally. Al-Sisi's government in Egypt very publicly closed Al Jazeera's offices, on claims that the station held an institutional bias because of Qatar's pro-Morsi stance.<sup>150</sup> Three Al Jazeera journalists were also arrested in 2013, as their

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<sup>144</sup> Jim Sciutto, "Qatar Knocks U.S.-led Coalition on ISIS," CNN, February 26, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/02/25/politics/isis-syria-qatar-blasts-us-coalition/>.

<sup>145</sup> "Stricter Rules to Regulate Charities."

<sup>146</sup> "Egypt Returns \$2 Billion to Qatar in Sign of Growing Tensions," Reuters, September 19, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/19/us-egypt-qatar-deposits-idusbre98i0n020130919>.

<sup>147</sup> Mourad.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> "Egypt Returns \$2 Billion to Qatar."

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

presence was said to be “damaging to national security,” due in large measure to alleged meetings with the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>151</sup> The journalists were held until February 2015.

In the aftermath of such public gaffes, Qatar has been dubbed “a mini Ikhwanistan.”<sup>152</sup> Despite international speculation about its institutional and ideological ties to the Brotherhood, to the extent that it has a vision, “Qatar is trying to promote what they call the ‘elements of strength’ of the Arab nation, that’s their vision – meaning Islamists and Arab nationalists [...] They think they have a historic responsibility to strengthen these elements in Arab societies. Tactics change, they can be on good or bad terms with this or that leader, but the broad vision is there.”<sup>153</sup> For a small country, Qatar’s active foreign policy has been a source of pride, as it is considered to defend the Arab and Islamic world.<sup>154</sup> Under the new amir’s leadership, though Qatar’s foreign policy has become less active, part of Shaykh Tamim’s vision has involved boosting the role of Islam more generally, promoting something of Muslim nationalism. In a February 2015 opinion piece written in *The New York Times* on the eve of his state visit to the United States, Tamim explained,

I know that many in the West look at the terrorist threat and say that the problem is Islam. But as a Muslim, I can tell you that the problem isn’t Islam — it’s hopelessness. It’s the kind of hopelessness that abounds in the Syrian and Palestinian refugee camps, and in war-weary towns and villages in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya and Gaza. It’s the hopelessness we see in the poorer neighborhoods of Europe’s great cities, and, yes, even in the United States. And it is this hopelessness, which knows no state or religion, that we need to address if we are to stem the tide of terrorism.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> “Egypt Crisis: Al-Jazeera Journalists Arrested in Cairo,” BBC, December 30, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-25546389>.

<sup>152</sup> Hammond, “Arab Awakening.”

<sup>153</sup> Muhammad al-Mukhtar al-Shangiti, Qtd. in Hammond, “Arab Awakening.”

<sup>154</sup> Interview with Obaid Younossi.

<sup>155</sup> Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, “Qatar’s Message to Obama,” *The New York Times*, February 24, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/24/opinion/qatars-message-to-obama.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/24/opinion/qatars-message-to-obama.html?_r=0).

Qatar's rulers endeavour to portray themselves as promoters of the Islamic faith by framing debate around Islam rather than attempting to diminish its presence or importance. Similarly, Shaykha Moza, in a May 2015 speech, spoke about the rise of "Muslim-phobia" and double standards faced by Muslims.<sup>156</sup> By fostering "a prevailing state of tolerance" and embracing some Islamist causes, the Qatari government has allowed for limited expression of Islamism within its borders and through its policies abroad.<sup>157</sup>

#### Balancing: A Signature of Qatari Foreign Policy

Qatar's foreign policy has long been characterised by a willingness to balance the interests of a number of different parties, often with competing agendas, to gain influence globally. Its backing of the Muslim Brotherhood during the Arab Spring is only one example of this policy, and its past actions demonstrate that no single ideology has governed its foreign policy decisions. As one Qatari official explained in the early 2000s, "[t]he idea is to try to keep everybody happy – or if we can't, to keep everybody reasonably unhappy'."<sup>158</sup> Qatar's support of Islamist groups, its historically cordial relations with Iran, and its former ties with Israel are often cited as proof of its ideological flexibility, borne out of political pragmatism. "By balancing Iran against Iraq in the pre-2003 era, Israel against the Arab world, and the US against all other regional actors, the Amir kept Qatar safe from aggression and also ensured that it attracted regional attention. True, this *modus operandi* did not find favor in the eyes of other GCC

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<sup>156</sup> Ian Black, "Qatar Emir's Mother Speaks out Over Treatment of Muslims by the West," *The Guardian*, May 26, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/26/qatar-emirs-mother-speaks-out-over-treatment-of-muslims-by-west>.

<sup>157</sup> "Islamic Leaders Describe Qatar's Moderation," Embassy of the United States Doha, *Wikileaks*, March 19, 2006, <https://wikileaks.org/cable/2006/03/06DOHA418.html>.

<sup>158</sup> Qatari official, Qtd. in Foley, *The Arab Gulf States*, 139.

members, but it was obviously quite satisfying for the Amir.”<sup>159</sup> Further, because Qatari foreign policy is formulated by very few people, it can take different turns depending on the time and the country’s prevailing interests.

By forging a strong relationship with the United States and by taking stances independent of the GCC, Qatar also managed to escape security dependence on Saudi Arabia – a policy it aimed to advance long before the Arab Spring.<sup>160</sup>

Qatar can therefore be seen as creating friends and avoiding enmities by appealing to all sides at once while remaining within the lines of ‘good neighbour’ conventions in the Gulf, namely *vis-à-vis* Saudi Arabia – a classic example of political pragmatism. Its wide and varied network of ‘guests’ and ‘partners’ can also be seen as an example of political aspiration: Qatar seeks to identify emerging trends (and actors) and create a place for itself within those trends in order to maintain political currency.<sup>161</sup>

Further, by involving itself in international dispute resolution in places ranging from Lebanon to Darfur, Qatar in the early 2000s made its security important on a global level.<sup>162</sup> Qatar’s image as an impartial arbitrator changed with the advancement of the Arab Spring and its perceived support for Islamists. Nonetheless, similar to its policy of taking in exiles, Qatar’s balancing abroad demonstrates that support for Islamists was not proof of an ideological affinity, but in fact a testament to flexibility and pragmatism. Qatar’s policy of balancing also mirrors its efforts in the domestic arena to pacify both national and expatriate populations, with a tilt toward Arab and Islamic causes. Al Jazeera, a critical arm of Qatar’s soft power, has at times held appeal among both segments of the population, though it has recently been accused of harbouring a Brotherhood tilt.

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<sup>159</sup> Rosman-Stollman, 205-206.

<sup>160</sup> Interview with Khaled al-Hroub.

<sup>161</sup> Khatib, 420.

<sup>162</sup> Interview with Sultan Barakat.

## Al Jazeera: An Ideological Outlet?

Among Shaykh Hamad's first reforms was the founding of Al Jazeera Arabic by amiri decree in February 1996. This action, along with the abolition of the Ministry of Information, suggested a commitment to encouraging free speech and was followed by the founding of Al Jazeera English in 2006. Despite its reputation as an independent media outlet, Al Jazeera has been run, since 2011, by an al-Thani chairman, and the station "is fully state owned, controlled by Qatar Media Corporation."<sup>163</sup> Though the channel's slogan, "the opinion and the other opinion," signals a desire to cover stories even-handedly, Al Jazeera's coverage has been largely outwardly focused, with several domestic stories, such as delayed Advisory Council elections, largely ignored by the channel.<sup>164</sup> Certainly, "the reformist nature of Al-Jazeera has never been absolute. Domestic political issues, especially controversies involving the royal family, such as Hamad's legal battles with the deposed father or issues of corruption, remain unaddressed by the channel. Moreover, there remains some censorship and bullying of the media."<sup>165</sup> When asked about the lack of coverage of local news, though, Al Jazeera officials charge that "Qatar is too small a story."<sup>166</sup>

In recent years, particularly in its coverage of the Arab Spring, Al Jazeera has been accused of granting "an open and accessible platform for the Muslim Brotherhood," as well as for other Islamist organisations.<sup>167</sup> In a similar vein, the station's airing of Usama bin Ladin's tapes beginning in the 1990s led some to speculate

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<sup>163</sup> Gray, *Qatar*, 167.

<sup>164</sup> Marc Lynch, *Voices of the New Arab Public: Iraq, Al-Jazeera, and Middle East Politics Today* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 80.

<sup>165</sup> Gray, *Qatar*, 168.

<sup>166</sup> Al Jazeera employee, Qtd. in Danna Harman, "Backstory: Qatar Reformed by a Modern Marriage," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 6, 2007, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0306/p20s01-wome.html>.

<sup>167</sup> Fromherz, 23.

about a possible association with al-Qa‘ida.<sup>168</sup> Claims that the station used its position to promote the Brotherhood are likewise misguided. The network insists that it merely grants a platform to important parties of the region, which were, during 2011-2012, Islamists; prior to that, during the initial uprisings of 2011, the spotlight had been on secular pro-democracy groups.<sup>169</sup> In giving such organisations a voice, Qatar gains influence over political debate. “There is perhaps no better way to subtly tune the ideas that will determine the future of the Arab and Islamic world than to own the stage upon which those ideas are expressed.”<sup>170</sup>

When the Ikhwan government under Mohamed Morsi was overthrown in Egypt, Al Jazeera was accused of retaining Brotherhood sympathies, almost immediately dubbing al-Sisi’s takeover a “coup” and giving the story considerable coverage.<sup>171</sup> Both the Arabic and English arms of Al Jazeera were also accused of releasing overly positive stories about Morsi’s rule, as well as failing to ask difficult questions of Brotherhood-affiliated guests.<sup>172</sup> This led some to believe that “Al Jazeera is perhaps an institutional bridge between the government and Islamists. It is a semi-structure.”<sup>173</sup> While supporting Islamists is by no means an institutionalised policy at Al Jazeera, individuals sympathetic to Islamist causes have influenced its broadcasts.

The resignation of four journalists from Al Jazeera Arabic in August 2013 complaining of bias, along with Al Jazeera English presenter Jane Dutton’s removal from

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid, 101.

<sup>169</sup> Interview with Ihtisham Hibatullah, October 30, 2013.

<sup>170</sup> Fromherz, 24.

<sup>171</sup> Interviews with employees of Al Jazeera English.

<sup>172</sup> Sultan Sooud al-Qassemi, “Morsi’s Win Is Al Jazeera’s Loss,” Al-Monitor, July 1, 2012, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2012/al-monitor/morsys-win-is-al-jazeeras-loss.html>.

<sup>173</sup> Interview with Ibrahim ‘Arafat.

her role as a news presenter, raised suspicions.<sup>174</sup> Executive producer Hany el-Konayyesi allegedly pulled Dutton off the air in the midst of an interview that reflected negatively on the Brotherhood.<sup>175</sup> Al Jazeera English staff have also complained about institutional bias in two instances:

- That several presenters were ‘moved around’ the rota [schedule] on short notice on the day of Dutton’s removal, to make way for inexperienced presenters who allegedly had more favorable views towards the Muslim Brotherhood; and
- That staff have felt uncomfortable about the number of days that the situation in Egypt has been at the top of the news agenda, even when they felt the story didn’t warrant it.<sup>176</sup>

In conversations with Al Jazeera English employees, they confirmed that certain editors would ask them to provide more sources for a story, in particular if it cast the Brotherhood in a damaging light.<sup>177</sup> Such censorship more likely reflects personal, rather than institutional, bias, however, as it is not enforced consistently.<sup>178</sup> Further, at the institutional level, Al Jazeera is “driven more by market share than by ideology [...] al-Jazeera rose to prominence by giving voice to public opinion rather than directly attempting to mobilize or lead it.”<sup>179</sup> Although Al Jazeera does not adopt a strictly pro-Brotherhood stance, it “has goals, and one is to support Arabic nations and Muslim nations – that’s why some think it supports the Brotherhood.”<sup>180</sup>

Aside from its role as a news broadcaster, Al Jazeera Arabic also promoted Shaykh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi through his programme *Al-Shari‘a wa-l-Hayat*, which was

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<sup>174</sup> “Al Jazeera Employees Complain of Editorial Bias with Egypt Coverage,” *Doha News*, September 5, 2013, <http://dohanews.co/al-jazeera-employees-complain-of-editorial-bias-with-2/>.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Interviews with employees of Al Jazeera English, September 24, 2013 and October 30, 2013.

<sup>178</sup> Interview with Shadi Hamid.

<sup>179</sup> Lynch, *Voices of the New Arab Public*, 36-37.

<sup>180</sup> Interview with Jamal Abdullah, October 23, 2013.

“the only specifically religious programme at al-Jazeera.”<sup>181</sup> Al Jazeera’s granting of a platform to Islamists like Qaradawi, which ended amid international complaints in 2014, did not necessarily demonstrate ideological leaning, but rather a desire to engage with Muslim populations. “Not everyone at al-Jazeera might agree with Qaradawi about the role that Islam should play in the world of today; but they do seem to agree that this question is absolutely necessary and crucial for the future of Arab societies. As such they have a common agenda: an agenda which through opinion formation creates what media researchers have called an opinion based community.”<sup>182</sup>

Al Jazeera’s position, similar to that of Qatar’s foreign policy more broadly, seems to be one of advocating for Arab and Muslim, though not necessarily Islamist, ideology. By sponsoring Al Jazeera, al-Thani family has helped to promote Arab culture and causes in a country greatly changed by modernisation and Westernisation. In granting members of the organisation access to media outlets, “Qatar has done a better job of managing the energies of the Brotherhood and channeling these towards the outside world.”<sup>183</sup> Certainly, Al Jazeera and websites like IslamOnline and IslamWeb are important outlets for Brotherhood sympathisers in Qatar.<sup>184</sup> By hosting such international platforms, Qatari rulers have managed “to direct its [Brotherhood] activities and energies overseas and to establish the clear understanding that domestic Qatari politics are off limits.”<sup>185</sup> While not completely independent media, nor is Al Jazeera an ideological outlet for the Brotherhood.

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<sup>181</sup> Galal, 157.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>183</sup> Haykel, 2.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 2.

*Islamism and a Changing Qatar*

Despite the lack of formal Islamist organisation inside Qatar, there is a sense that conservative Islam is on the rise in the country – in part as a reaction against the increasing Westernisation in the state, especially as the number of expatriates increases in preparation for the World Cup in 2022. Competing visions appear to exist even among the Qatari leadership about the future direction of the country. As one scholar put it, “Salafisation of the public sphere is driven by two forces driving the opposite direction: (1) Shaykha Moza and her modernist drive and (b) Salafis who aim to slow down the modernist drive. We see polarisation of the two sides especially with the anti-expat movement.”<sup>186</sup> Complaints about the lack of culture and religion in Qatar are widespread, with many nationals feeling that “society is developing too quickly.”<sup>187</sup> The Qatari nationals’ dilemma is described as follows: “we are caught between two worlds. Qatar will have development, a good life and income, but we can’t build it on our own because we lack the number of people. So, like it or not, we have to rely on expatriates. Elements in society will be upset.”<sup>188</sup> While there is no organised Islamist backlash, discussions in *majālis*, calls to the aforementioned radio call-in programme, and editorial columns reflect this attitude.<sup>189</sup>

It is remarkable that Qatar, a Wahhabi country, is as socially permissive as it is. In the late 1990s, laws concerning the availability of alcohol were relaxed, allowing its sale and consumption in five-star hotels, managed by the state-owned Qatar National Hotels

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<sup>186</sup> Interview with Khaled al-Hroub.

<sup>187</sup> Interview with Steven Wright.

<sup>188</sup> Interview with Darwish al-‘Emadi.

<sup>189</sup> Interview with Mehran Kamrava.

Company.<sup>190</sup> Qatar, under Shaykh Hamad, also came to house Christian churches, with Shaykh Qaradawi instrumental in promoting interfaith dialogue.<sup>191</sup> “Qatar is not like Dubai or Aden – this was a Wahhabi shaykhdom. What Hamad did is remarkable. Tamim and Hamad are not committed to religious ideology.”<sup>192</sup> Further, the highly public and influential stance of Shaykh Hamad’s wife Shaykha Moza as “First Lady” of Qatar is unprecedented in the Gulf, yet has sparked fierce internal debate about her advocacy of Western policies. “She is disliked by Qataris, seen as moving the country toward the U.S. Qataris think she’s selling the country.”<sup>193</sup> Other al-Thani women have taken on public roles in government, with Shaykh Hamad and Shaykha Moza’s daughter Shaykha Ahmad al-Mahmoud becoming the first female minister in the GCC following her appointment as minister of education in 2003.<sup>194</sup> As mentioned above, when a group of clerics addressed a petition to the Shaykh Hamad in June 1998, complaining about the granting of female suffrage, the government’s response was unequivocal. Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Nu‘aimi, leader of the movement, was jailed, and women’s voting rights were not revoked, demonstrating the regime’s willingness to fight the Islamist backlash on certain large-scale issues.<sup>195</sup>

Criticism from nationals about social policies is likely to persist, as they become a smaller minority in the country, making it more difficult for the government to balance its preferences with those of the much larger expatriate population. Fortunately, such socially based backlash has seldom turned violent. In 2005, a suicide car bomb, rigged by

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<sup>190</sup> Gray, *Qatar*, 178-179.

<sup>191</sup> Interview with Steven Wright.

<sup>192</sup> Interview with ‘Azmi Bishara.

<sup>193</sup> Interview with Wanda Krause.

<sup>194</sup> Louay Bahry and Phebe Marr, “Qatari Women: A New Generation of Leaders?,” *Middle East Policy* 12, no. 2 (2005): 110.

<sup>195</sup> Rosman-Stollman, 199.

an Egyptian expatriate, destroyed the Doha Players theatre, killing one British citizen and injuring 15.<sup>196</sup> Previous attacks included a shooting in 2001 of two military contractors, perpetrated by Qatari ‘Abdullah Mubarak Tashal al-Hajiri, and an attempt by an unnamed attacker to ram the gate of American base al-Udeid in 2002, signalling disapproval of Qatar’s close ties with the United States.<sup>197</sup> Some claim that members of the ruling family support extremism, with former Interior Minister Shaykh ‘Abdullah bin Khalid al-Thani allegedly having granted shelter to 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaykh Muhammad, who worked for the Qatari government in the 1990s.<sup>198</sup> Former government employees, including Salim Hassan Khalifa Rashid al-Kuwari of the Ministry of Interior, have also been accused of funnelling money to jihadist organisations in the past year.<sup>199</sup> ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Nu‘aimi is also accused of sending money to jihadists in Iraq and Syria.<sup>200</sup> Meanwhile, Khalifa Muhammad Turki al-Suba‘i, imprisoned for six months for his help in funding Khalid Shaykh Muhammad, appears to have been permitted to continue fundraising after his release.<sup>201</sup> Even in wealthy Qatar, then, extremism has found limited support – an outcome that rentier state theory would not predict – and a challenge to a Qatari government that hopes to appear at least somewhat sympathetic to political Islam to maintain religious legitimacy and popular support. It remains unclear, however, the extent to which such violent activity constitutes opposition to the government or to the prevailing global order more broadly.

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<sup>196</sup> “The Advent of Terrorism in Qatar.”

<sup>197</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman and Khalid R. al-Rodhan, “The Gulf Military Forces in an Era of Asymmetric War: Qatar,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 28, 2006, 158.

<sup>198</sup> Mendick.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

Just as Qatar balances foreign interests against each other to maintain relative peace, it does the same in weighing the interests of locals and expatriates in the domestic sphere. The Qatari leadership is particularly careful about appearing supportive of Islam. As Mohammed al-Mukhtar al-Shangiti puts it, Qatar's policies are "more realpolitik and balancing than promoting a specific group. The Awqaf Ministry is in the hands of the Salafis and part of society has this tendency. You find a big presence of Brotherhood in some institutions like Al Jazeera, but not just the Brotherhood, Islamists in general. The Qatari ministry of culture is dominated by Arab nationalists."<sup>202</sup> It is difficult to determine what is meant by "Brotherhood presence" or what constitutes a supporter in a state lacking a Brotherhood organisation. Nonetheless, the regime balances gains for one group against the other in social issues. While pork is allowed at the Qatar Distribution Company, alcohol is banned in the Pearl.<sup>203</sup> While Qatar Foundation conducts study in English, Qatar University is run in Arabic. This balancing also takes place at the level of the ruling family as well, as it contains liberal strands that many consider too Western, along with conservative, traditionally minded elements.<sup>204</sup> It is still uncertain, however, whether such balancing will continue to satisfy a frustrated national population.

### *Conclusions*

Muslim Brotherhood influence in Qatar's religious and education sectors is palpable, yet like much else in the country, uninstitutionalised and largely informal. "There is influence of Muslim Brotherhood in justice, education, *awqāf* – not in terms of policies but in terms of influencing people who do make policy; this influence is not

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<sup>202</sup> Al-Shanqiti, Qtd. in Hammond, "Arab Awakening."

<sup>203</sup> Interview with Abdullah al-Arian, September 26, 2013.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

institutionalised.”<sup>205</sup> As a result, studying the Brotherhood as a movement in Qatar is difficult, especially because its ideology shares many common points with conservative Islam of the Gulf, which retains considerable social influence. Although personal ties undoubtedly exist with Brotherhood members, some at high levels of government, Islamist influence is not necessarily nefarious. As explained by one Qatari, “it’s not that these ties don’t exist but that they are more benign than people realise.”<sup>206</sup>

Overall, Qatar’s strategy of managing and co-opting the Islamic sector, rather than seeking to limit it, has allowed it to maintain a placid political environment. Further, the state has never had a confrontational relationship with the Brotherhood. “Although Qatar subscribes officially to Wahhabism and adheres to the Hanbali School of Islamic Law, whose emphasis on political obedience of subjects to their ruler differs radically from the populist and activist nature of the Muslim Brotherhood movement, close ties nevertheless built up between them. These had historical depth.”<sup>207</sup> By using tools like social policy, media, and foreign policy, the Qatari government maintains religious legitimacy while subtly channelling debate about Islamist politics outside of the country, something its neighbours, particularly the UAE, have been unsuccessful in doing.<sup>208</sup> We next turn to the Emirati experience, where the government has taken a much harsher stance against the Brotherhood in an effort to stem the tide of Islamism, which it considers an existential political threat, rather than a potential ally.

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<sup>205</sup> Interview with Hassan al-Ibrahim.

<sup>206</sup> Interview with Michael Stephens.

<sup>207</sup> Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Arab Spring*, 101-102.

<sup>208</sup> Haykel, 2.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **Brotherhood Ideology in the UAE and the Foundation of Islah**

#### *Introduction*

In the UAE, as in Kuwait and Qatar, during the 1950s and 1960s, large numbers of Muslim Brotherhood members from outside the Gulf were hired for various professional positions. The small population of educated nationals at independence (only some 39 university graduates were in the country in 1971<sup>1</sup>) necessitated the import of experts to fill a variety of posts. Brotherhood sympathisers who took on roles in education had substantial influence on the country's cultural development and became prominent members of Emirati society, thereby creating a local group of Ikhwan. "The Brothers flourished in the UAE: They were educated, professional, and upwardly mobile individuals who gained employment in various public and private posts, including the judicial and education sector."<sup>2</sup> These roles allowed Brotherhood supporters to influence Emirati society and some of its political leaders until the most recent crackdown beginning in 2012.

The Emirati Brotherhood became formally organised in 1974 under the banner of Jam'iat al-Islah wa-l-Tawjih al-Ijtima'i (Reform and Social Counseling Association, hereafter Islah) in Dubai, Fujraiah, and Ras al-Khaimah, with Jam'iat al-Irshad wa-l-Tawjih al-Ijtima'i (the Association of Guidance and Social Counseling, hereafter Irshad) a less formal representative in Ajman. These groups, like Ikhwan affiliates elsewhere in the Gulf, engaged in a variety of youth, charity, and educational activities. While it initially enjoyed the support of Emirati rulers concerned about the region-wide spread of

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Francis Matthew, February 12, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Sultan Sooud al-Qassemi, "The Brothers and the Gulf," *Foreign Policy*, December 14, 2012, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/12/14/Muslim\\_Brotherhood\\_Gulf\\_UAE\\_Qassemi](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/12/14/Muslim_Brotherhood_Gulf_UAE_Qassemi).

Arab nationalism, the Brotherhood today is widely vilified in the UAE, having been designated in November 2014 as a terrorist organisation.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, Brotherhood ideology remains influential– in some emirates more than others – due to its emphasis on restoring Emirati heritage to the UAE in the face of an expanding expatriate population.

In this chapter, we examine the unique structure of the Emirati government and the effect of its arrangement into seven separate emirates on the development of the Ikhwan, while also tracing the federal government’s increasing attempts at centralisation and co-optation. We then analyse the history of the Brotherhood until the first crackdown on its activities in the 1990s. As in Qatar, this history of the Muslim Brotherhood in the UAE goes beyond the bounds of the study of the state’s institutionalised politics.

*Economic Tensions: Relative Deprivation among the Emirates*

Each emirate, aside from having a local ruler, experiences a different standard of living and social environment. “The main distinction between the emirates is their varying levels of prosperity, with Abu Dhabi and Dubai the wealthiest at one end of the scale, and the small backwaters of Fujaira, RAK [Ras al-Khaimah], and UAQ [Umm al-Quwain] at the other. In the middle are Ajman and Sharja located close enough to Dubai to benefit from its modern amenities but with few resources of their own.”<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, each emirate contributes a different amount to the federal treasury. The disparity has become so extreme that in 2008, Abu Dhabi underwrote 56 percent of the total national budget, while Dubai gave 32 percent, with the remaining five emirates financing the

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<sup>3</sup> “UAE Lists Muslim Brotherhood as Terrorist Group,” Reuters, November 15, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/15/us-emirates-politics-brotherhood-idUSKCN0IZ00M20141115>.

<sup>4</sup> Andrea B. Rugh, *The Political Culture of Leadership in the United Arab Emirates* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 4.

outstanding 12 percent.<sup>5</sup> This imbalance has led to feelings of relative deprivation, unexpected in a super-rentier. It also affirms the mechanism predicted by Gwenn Okruhlik and referred to in Chapter Two whereby the disbursement of rentier wealth, when done inequitably, can in fact lead to greater political discontent, rather than assuring stability.<sup>6</sup>

To assist the poorer northern emirates, in particular Ajman, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, and Umm al-Quwain, the federal government has enhanced those emirates' rentier package, announcing in 2011 that it would grant \$1.6 billion in additional aid to such areas, following a grant for \$4.3 billion in 2008.<sup>7</sup> "The federal government also claims that it has a twenty year plan in place that will address some of the 'gaps and other issues such as healthcare, education, housing, roads, and water.' It also promised to build more than 100 kilometres of new rural roads, and doubled the funding for a small business development programme that aims to increase job creation in the region."<sup>8</sup> Although large sums of money have been earmarked for development of these emirates, they remain markedly less advanced than the leading emirates and Sharjah.

Despite assistance from the central government, "blackouts have continued in the emirates, often forcing businesses to close due to lack of air-conditioning."<sup>9</sup> Charges of corruption are common, making many citizens of the northern emirates sceptical about the efficacy of government aid, while others consider delays in aid to reflect a policy of intentional underdevelopment<sup>10</sup> to keep the peripheral emirates dependent on the central

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<sup>5</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 131.

<sup>6</sup> Okruhlik, "Rentier Wealth, Unruly Law, and the Rise of the Opposition," 297.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-133.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-133.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>10</sup> For theoretical groundings in the deliberate underdevelopment of the periphery by the core, see literature on dependency theory, in particular Charles Lemert, "Wallerstein and the Uncertain Worlds," in *Uncertain*

government's largesse.<sup>11</sup> One interviewee in Ras al-Khaimah insisted that the emirate has not received adequate aid, with the central government publicly supporting development yet privately voting down schemes for its advancement, even vetoing a proposal for a new electricity grid to stop blackouts in the emirate.<sup>12</sup> Certainly, "[m]oney is not trickling down as much."<sup>13</sup> Umm al-Quwain, Ras al-Khaimah, Ajman, and Fujairah together accounted for less than ten percent of national GDP in 1998.<sup>14</sup> One 2011 *Financial Times* report aptly described Ras al-Khaimah as feeling like "a different country" from the state's capital.<sup>15</sup> Due to such economic inequities, "there is a greater pool of dissent in the northern emirates."<sup>16</sup> The economic comparison in Figure 6 reveals the level of discrepancies among the emirates.

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*Worlds: World-Systems Analysis in Changing Times*, eds. Immanuel Wallerstein, Carlos Aguirre Rojas, and Charles Lemert (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 151-193; Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 132.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with researcher based in Ras al-Khaimah, March 3, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Dubai-based Gulf correspondent, March 6, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Sean Foley, "What Wealth Cannot Buy: UAE Security at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century," in *Crises in the Contemporary Persian Gulf*, ed. Barry Rubin (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 36.

<sup>15</sup> Sarah Mishkin, "UAE Acts to Bridge Northern Divide," *Financial Times*, June 22, 2011, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b80064ba-9cef-11e0-8678-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3TJrgNtCk>.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Dubai-based Gulf correspondent.

**Figure 6: Economic Comparison of Constituent Emirates**

Emirate	Total Population	GDP	GDP Per Capita	Land Area
Abu Dhabi	2.4 million (2013) <sup>17</sup>	\$259 billion (2013) <sup>18</sup>	\$44,269 (2007) <sup>19</sup>	67,340 square kilometres <sup>20</sup>
Ajman	262,186 (2011) <sup>21</sup>	\$990 million (2012) <sup>22</sup>	\$11,577 (2007) <sup>23</sup>	259 square kilometres <sup>24</sup>
Dubai	2.1 million (2013) <sup>25</sup>	\$88 billion (2013) <sup>26</sup>	\$41,726 (2007) <sup>27</sup>	3,885 square kilometres
Fujairah	191,190 (2013) <sup>28</sup>	\$3.5 million (2012) <sup>29</sup>	\$16,845 (2007) <sup>30</sup>	1,300 square kilometres <sup>31</sup>
Ras al-Khaimah	416,600 (2012)	\$8.4 billion (2013) <sup>32</sup>	\$16,624 (2007) <sup>33</sup>	1,700 square kilometres <sup>34</sup>
Sharjah	946,000 (2013)	\$24 billion (2013)	\$21,133 (2007) <sup>35</sup>	2600 square kilometres
Umm al-Quwain	Approximately 80,000 (2014) <sup>36</sup>	\$974 million <sup>37</sup>	\$16,509 (2007) <sup>38</sup>	770 square kilometres <sup>39</sup>

<sup>17</sup> ‘Anwar Ahmad, “Abu Dhabi Population Doubles in Eight Years,” *The National*, November 4, 2014, <http://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/abu-dhabi-population-doubles-in-eight-years>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> “United Arab Emirates: Statistical Appendix,” International Monetary Fund Country Report 09/120, April 2009, 5, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2009/cr09120.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> “About UAE,” Abu Dhabi Chamber, 2015, <https://www.abudhabichamber.ae/English/AboutUs/Pages/About-UAE-Country.aspx>.

<sup>21</sup> “Ajman Population Crosses the 262,000 Mark,” *Emirates 24/7*, August 16, 2011, <http://www.emirates247.com/news/ajman-population-crosses-the-262-000-mark-2011-08-16-1.413624>.

<sup>22</sup> “Annual Economic Report Ajman 2013,” Department of Economic Development - Ajman, 2013, <http://www.ajmanded.ae/Portal/userfiles/2013%20ADED%20Annual%20Report%20EN.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> “United Arab Emirates: Statistical Appendix.”

<sup>24</sup> “About UAE.”

<sup>25</sup> Vivian Nereim, “Population of Dubai Rises 5 Per Cent to 2.1 Million,” *The National*, February 13, 2013, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/population-of-dubai-rises-5-per-cent-to-2-1-million>.

<sup>26</sup> Tom Arnold, “Dubai Economic Expanded at Fastest Rate in Six Years in 2013,” *The National*, June 18, 2014, <http://www.thenational.ae/business/industry-insights/economics/dubai-economy-expanded-at-fastest-rate-in-six-years-in-2013>.

<sup>27</sup> “United Arab Emirates: Statistical Appendix.”

<sup>28</sup> Sarah al-Deberky, “Fujairah Population up by 5.5 Per Cent,” *Khaleej Times*, April 8, 2014, [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/inside.asp?xfile=/data/community/2014/April/community\\_April7.xml&section=community](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/inside.asp?xfile=/data/community/2014/April/community_April7.xml&section=community).

<sup>29</sup> “Market Pulse: Fujairah,” HVS Consulting, March 2014, <http://rss.hsycindicate.com/file/152005343.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> “United Arab Emirates: Statistical Appendix.”

<sup>31</sup> “About UAE.”

<sup>32</sup> “RAK’s GDP at Dh90.9b in 2013: Report,” *Gulf News*, October 9, 2014, <http://gulfnews.com/business/economy/rak-s-gdp-at-dh30-9b-in-2013-report-1.1396508>.

<sup>33</sup> “United Arab Emirates: Statistical Appendix.”

<sup>34</sup> “About UAE.”

<sup>35</sup> “United Arab Emirates: Statistical Appendix.”

<sup>36</sup> Rezan Oueiti, “Businesses in Umm Al Quwain Struggle to Survive,” *The National*, August 4, 2014, <http://www.thenational.ae/uae/tourism/businesses-in-umm-al-quwain-struggle-to-survive>.

Support for Islamist organisations has often arisen due to frustration with socioeconomic and political status in some areas: “economic deprivation, social exclusion, and political under-representation [have] encouraged the development of Islamist movements not only in Algeria but also in many other Muslim countries.”<sup>40</sup> Such disillusionment, however, is not expected in rentier states. Nonetheless, when problems of underdevelopment are not shared equally by all members of a society, or remedied by a wealthy government, Islamist groups, perceived to be morally upright, often hold appeal.<sup>41</sup> “Lack of socioeconomic justice combined with official corruption and failure of political elites to mold strong identities through socialization has produced a crisis of legitimacy, where the moral bases of authority are in question.”<sup>42</sup> Although such feelings of disillusionment with the government certainly exist in the UAE, they have limited impact on nationwide policymaking. The emirates whose citizens are least content are those with smaller populations in the periphery.<sup>43</sup> The northern emirates remain “completely marginalised” and subject to policies formulated in the leading emirates, yet discontent there does not appear widespread enough to constitute a challenge for the

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<sup>37</sup> “Haqa’iq wa-Arqam,” [Facts and Figures], Government of Umm al-Quwain, 2015, <http://www.uaq.gov.ae/web/guest/32>.

<sup>38</sup> “United Arab Emirates: Statistical Appendix.”

<sup>39</sup> “Seven Emirates,” His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, [www.sheikhmohammed.com/vgn-ext-templating/v/index.jsp?vgnnextoid=7dbb4c8631cb4110VgnVCM100000b0140a0aRCRD](http://www.sheikhmohammed.com/vgn-ext-templating/v/index.jsp?vgnnextoid=7dbb4c8631cb4110VgnVCM100000b0140a0aRCRD).

<sup>40</sup> Layachi and Haireche, Qtd. in Mark Tessler, “The Origins of Popular Support for Islamist Movements,” in *Islam, Democracy, and the State in North Africa*, ed. John P. Entelis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 109.

<sup>41</sup> Tessler, 99.

<sup>42</sup> R. Hrair Dekmejian, “Islamic Revival: Catalysts, Categories, and Consequences,” in *The Politics of Islamic Revivalism: Diversity and Unity*, ed. Shireen T. Hunter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 8.

<sup>43</sup> Lori Plotkin Boghardt, “The Muslim Brotherhood on Trial in the UAE,” The Washington Institute, April 12, 2013, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-muslim-brotherhood-on-trial-in-the-uae>.

federal government.<sup>44</sup> In fact, a 2014 survey among Emirati citizens conducted by market research firm TNS MENA found that 97 percent consider themselves to enjoy good quality of life, with most responding they were “very satisfied” or “fairly satisfied.”<sup>45</sup>

*Social Tensions among the Emirates*

Perhaps part of the reason for overall contentment in the UAE is the variety of social environments available in different emirates, granting nationals the opportunity to live in more cosmopolitan or traditional areas, depending on their preferences. Abu Dhabi “in its origins, governance, and ethos was very much more an emirate of the tribal desert than that of a seaside city: the *bedu* predominated. Dubai, by contrast, is resolutely centered on the port, with a desert hinterland that received little attention from the rulers. The northern emirates had substantial tribal populations, but these were tribes of the mountains rather than the pastoral nomads of the Arabian deserts.”<sup>46</sup> Each emirate also consequently has a distinct political culture. Abu Dhabians, more influenced by tribal traditions, embrace the use of direct petitions to governors to effect change in issues ranging from greater representation in government and the level of federal integration to matters of social reform and public administration.<sup>47</sup> “Dubayyans and Sharjans, on the other hand, relatively more cosmopolitan and less tribal, may find such traditional expressions anachronistic or irrelevant,” engaging instead with local councils.<sup>48</sup>

Reflecting different cultural environments of each emirate, policies regarding alcohol range considerably. In Sharjah, alcohol consumption is prohibited even in hotels

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with Emirati academic, March 18, 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Neil Halligan, “Citizens Rank UAE High on Quality of Life Survey,” *Arabian Business*, July 20, 2014, <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/citizens-rank-uae-high-on-quality-of-life-survey-558474.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Herb, “Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates,” 352.

<sup>47</sup> J.E. Peterson, *The Arab Gulf States: Steps Toward Political Participation* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 100.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

and private residences. The emirate has also imposed a series of decency laws, contrasting greatly with Dubai's social liberalism. These measures "have covered matters such as dress codes, public conduct, gender separation, and promiscuity. At one point Sharjah even attempted to encourage federal immigration officials to deny residence visas to single women under the age of thirty in an effort to curb the influx of prostitutes into the UAE."<sup>49</sup> Ruling al-Qasimi family of Sharjah has been "historically more conservative and outspoken," in large measure due to its close financial ties with Saudi Arabia.<sup>50</sup> Some analysts thus consider Sharjah to be "more likely to have Islamist opposition."<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, it did not house a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood and remains more closely linked to the Saudi Arabia than to Ikhwan groups.<sup>52</sup> This is not to say that it has not contained influential Islamist figures, namely Shaykh 'Abdullah bin 'Ali al-Mahmud, discussed below.

In contrast, Umm al-Quwain, along with the other poorer emirates of Ajman, Fujairah, and Ras al-Khaimah, houses large liquor shops open to the public, in an effort to raise funds and encourage inter-emirate tourism.<sup>53</sup> While Dubai remains focused primarily on business and Abu Dhabi on the development of its natural resources, Sharjah is known as the UAE's intellectual hub, and the northern emirates are considered "more backward."<sup>54</sup> Such variations arguably allow Emiratis the freedom to choose which

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<sup>49</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 254.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with researcher based in Ras al-Khaimah.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with 'Abdul Majeed al-Mojalid, March 17, 2014.

<sup>52</sup> 'Abdullah al-Rashid, "Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun fi al-Imarat... Judhur al-Fikr wa-l-Tanzim" [The Muslim Brotherhood in the Emirates... The Roots of Thought and Organisation], *Al-Majalla*, February 10, 2013, <http://www.majalla.com/arb/2013/02/article55242417/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%85%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%AC%D8%B0%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81>.

<sup>53</sup> Davidson, *Dubai*, 256.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

environment suits them, creating something of a balance between the Western and traditional.<sup>55</sup> Although this variety may help to diffuse social tensions to a certain extent, the national economy and federal politics remain centred on the leading emirates.

Ras al-Khaimah has perhaps been the most troubled of the emirates, reliant on few sources of income and rocked by instability due to a fractious ruling family. Such conditions have made it fertile ground for opposition movements, sometimes even violent organisations. In fact, one member of the emirate's dominant Shehhi tribe piloted an airplane involved in the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States.<sup>56</sup> The emirate also housed, until 2007, al-Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, a Wahhabi institution, whose Saudi branch one of the 9/11 attackers attended.<sup>57</sup> This university was funded through aid money provided by Saudi Arabia, which has recognised the need for assistance in the northern emirates and has provided it "often with religious strings attached."<sup>58</sup> Following 9/11, the Emirati government found additional links between Ras al-Khaimah and al-Qa'ida, "with claims being made that recent terror plots in the UAE, including a 2009 attempt to blow up Dubai's then incomplete Burj Khalifa skyscraper, had originated in Ra's al-Khaimah."<sup>59</sup> In response to such threats, the federal government, led by Abu Dhabi, is trying to prevent such extremism largely through centralisation, particularly of its State Security Directorate. "Now Abu Dhabi is taking a very strong hand, trying to control everything everywhere because security is centralised. The security apparatus is getting stronger and stronger and more centralised."<sup>60</sup> Still, each

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<sup>55</sup> Interview with Rima Sabban, March 30, 2014.

<sup>56</sup> Davidson, *Dubai*, 260.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with researcher based in Ras al-Khaimah.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 185.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Rima Sabban.

emirate retains a unique local environment. Segments of populations in some emirates undoubtedly favour Brotherhood influence yet struggle to find institutionalised means of changing policy: “it’s not a question of whether they exist; it’s if they have any political capital – and the answer is no.”<sup>61</sup>

*Emirati Politics: Stability above All*

By and large, the Emirati political scene resembles that of Qatar more closely than of Kuwait: “When the politics of Kuwait are raucous, freewheeling, and at least partially democratic, the politics of the UAE are subdued, largely hidden, and not at all democratic.”<sup>62</sup> Because politics remains top-down, even at the local level, it is difficult to determine the level of Islamist sentiment in the country unless sympathetic individuals have links to ruling families or hold ministerial positions. The state’s only elected federal body, the FNC, is chosen by a small fraction of the Emirati population and remains “a purely advisory body and more of a civilized ‘talking shop’ than anything else.”<sup>63</sup> Nonetheless, it is considered to hold a large number of tribal figures and, as such, has often favoured conservative policies of the type traditionally supported by the Ikhwan.<sup>64</sup> In 2014, for example, the FNC called for legislation to ban women from working late at night in shisha cafes and advocated for the addition of a mandatory breastfeeding clause in a child’s rights law.<sup>65</sup> One member also famously called for a federal law banning

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<sup>61</sup> Interview with Francis Matthew.

<sup>62</sup> Herb, “Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates,” 348.

<sup>63</sup> Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*, 194.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with researcher in Ras al-Khaimah.

<sup>65</sup> Ola Salem, “FNC Passes Mandatory Breastfeeding Clause for Child Rights Law,” *The National*, January 21, 2014, <http://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/fnc-passes-mandatory-breastfeeding-clause-for-child-rights-law>.

revealing clothing in 2012.<sup>66</sup> Even in its elected body, then, the UAE has experienced backlash challenging the liberal vision of the leading emirates.

At the local level, plans to expand the participatory nature of emirate-level councils have been rejected, largely due to fears that they would promote Islamist influence. In February 2007, a proposal for an elected Dubai-based District Council was denied in favour of an appointed council, after its announcement in April 2003 was met with considerable fanfare.<sup>67</sup> Mohammed al-Gergawi from Dubai ruler and Vice President Shaykh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum's Executive Office explained that "the decision was taken mainly to ensure that 'extremists' and other disruptive elements were not given a platform. He added that, in his opinion, UAE society was not mature enough to deal with the inherent instability of an electoral free-for-all, even at the local/district level."<sup>68</sup> The ruler of Sharjah, Shaykh Sultan bin Mohammed al-Qasimi, expressed similar concerns in a meeting with American officials in Abu Dhabi, stating that "holding elections now could result in the election of members of radical Islamist organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood."<sup>69</sup> Fears of independent Islamist political actors, then, have stunted the growth of participatory government in the UAE, despite the fact that they have never formed a major UAE-wide political bloc.

For leaders of the UAE, political stability remains of utmost importance. In Minister of FNC Affairs Anwar Gargash's words, "stability is what built this country,"

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<sup>66</sup> Ola Salem, "Call for Federal Dress-Code Law in the UAE," *The National*, June 12, 2012, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/call-for-federal-dress-code-law-in-the-uae>.

<sup>67</sup> "Local Views on Prospects for UAE Democratization," Embassy of the United States Abu Dhabi, *Wikileaks*, September 16, 2004, <http://cables.mrkva.eu/cable.php?id=20666>.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

and is, and will remain, a top priority for the UAEG [UAE Government].”<sup>70</sup> In a divided environment, the primary means of retaining a placid political environment has been through enhancing central government control. The leading emirates have guided such policies to marginalise independent political figures, especially Islamists. Nonetheless, in the 1960s and 1970s, ruling families welcomed the presence of Brotherhood members.

### *Origins of the Emirati Muslim Brotherhood*

At the beginning of the 1970s, when Emirati students began returning from studying abroad, particularly in Egypt and Kuwait, they brought with them the idea of establishing a group to organise activities similar to those conducted by the Muslim Brotherhood in countries where they had studied.<sup>71</sup> As described by Islah member and human rights lawyer Mohammed al-Roken in a short history compiled by *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, students returning to the UAE, having been exposed to and become sympathetic to Brotherhood ideology, “held out hope of setting up a group to practice its activities and of establishing its institutions and incubators of *tarbīa* in the country, to attract the youth to thoughts of the group and to prepare them to be influential cadres in newborn Emirati society.”<sup>72</sup>

A strong relationship between the Emirati and Kuwaiti Brotherhood in particular aided the establishment of an Emirati Brotherhood. Shaykh ‘Abdullah bin ‘Ali al-Mahmud, one of the most prominent icons of Islamic *da‘wa* in the UAE, was instrumental in forging these ties. He had a major presence in Islamist activities, working

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<sup>70</sup> Anwar Gargash, Qtd. in “FNC Elections: ‘Political Participation, Not Democracy’,” Embassy of the United States Abu Dhabi, *WikiLeaks*, June 27, 2006, <https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=06ABUDHABI2655>.

<sup>71</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 60.

<sup>72</sup> Mohammed al-Roken, Qtd. in “Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun fi al-Imirat...Al-Qisat al-Kamila” [The Muslim Brotherhood in the Emirates...The Whole Story], *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, February 1, 2013, <http://classic.aawsat.com/details.asp?article=715512&issueno=12484&section=4#.VGtRRofBZKp>.

in the organisation of *awqāf* and mosques in Sharjah throughout his career.<sup>73</sup> Al-Mahmud became Sharjah's first Director of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, with Shaykh 'Abd al-Wadud Shalabi, an al-Azhar graduate and Brotherhood icon in Egypt, as his deputy.<sup>74</sup> Al-Mahmud visited the Kuwaiti Brotherhood in the early 1970s and met with, among others, Yusuf al-Hajji and 'Abdullah 'Ali al-Mutawa.<sup>75</sup> In fact, al-Mutawa and al-Mahmud together helped promote Islamic *da'wa* and vied for support by participating in Islamic activities and by converting British churches into mosques.<sup>76</sup> "The newborn [Emirati] group received parental care and symbolic contribution from the Kuwaiti Brotherhood, where the Islah group in Kuwait contributed to the establishment of its headquarters."<sup>77</sup> This interdependence continued through meetings, visits, organised trips, and summer camps.<sup>78</sup>

Growth of the Brotherhood in the UAE was facilitated by two additional external forces: teachers, professors, lawyers, and researchers from the Egyptian Brotherhood to the UAE as seen elsewhere in the Gulf;<sup>79</sup> and envoys such as teachers and administrators, many of Palestinian and Syrian descent, who came from Qatar and helped formulate educational curricula.<sup>80</sup> 'Abdul Ghaffar Hussein claims that the Qatari educational mission's Dubai headquarters, which was established as an aid contribution to the UAE

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<sup>73</sup> "Al-Qisat al-Kamila."

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Al- Noqaidan, 60.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Nasser bin Ghaith, April 19, 2014.

<sup>80</sup> "Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun fi al-Amirat... Al-Hasim fi Muwajihat Atma' al-Jama'a" [The Muslim Brotherhood in the Emirates... Decisiveness in the Face of the Group's Ambitions], Bawabat al-Harakat al-Islamiyya, July 9, 2014, <http://www.islamist-movements.com/2980>. Bawabat al-Harakat al-Islamiyya is an Arabic language online publication run by Cairo-based researcher of Islamist movements, 'Abdul Rahim 'Ali.

in 1962, was in fact the root of Brotherhood activity in the Emirates.<sup>81</sup> It has also been posited that the Qatari Brotherhood actively aimed to expand its organisation into the UAE, particularly Dubai.<sup>82</sup> Shaykh ‘Abd al-Badi Saqr, one of the leaders of the Egyptian Brotherhood residing in Qatar, was involved in the establishment of the mission and recruitment of its teachers.<sup>83</sup> He also founded al-Iman School in al-Rashidiya neighbourhood of Dubai, which continues to operate as a private school with strong emphasis on Islamic studies.<sup>84</sup> Saqr, along with Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, both of whom often travelled to Dubai from Qatar to lecture at the Public Library, founded by the municipality in 1963, spreading Brotherhood ideology in this way.<sup>85</sup> While the Muslim Brotherhood benefitted from the backing and sympathy of many Emirati elites, particularly businesspeople and members of the ‘ulama’, an indigenous movement did not emerge until the mid-1970s.<sup>86</sup>

### *The Establishment of Islah*

Islah was established in Dubai in 1974, three years after the UAE’s independence, as only the second civil society organisation to receive approval from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.<sup>87</sup> Notable members from throughout the emirates included Sultan bin Kayed al-Qasimi, Muhammad bin ‘Abdullah al-‘Ajlan, ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Bakr, Hamad Hassan Raqit al-‘Ali, Hassan al-Diqqi, and Sa‘id ‘Abdullah Harib al-Muhairi, who together filed the request to Dubai leader and Vice President Shaykh

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<sup>81</sup> “Al-Qisat al-Kamila.”

<sup>82</sup> “Al-Hasim fi Muwajihat Atma‘ al-Jama‘a.”

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, February 10, 2014.

<sup>87</sup> Said Nasser al-Teniji, “The UAE’s Descent into Oppression,” *The Guardian*, October 2, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/oct/02/uae-descent-oppression?INTCMP=SRCH>.

Rashid bin Sa'eed al-Maktoum (r. 1971-1990) for the founding of the organisation.<sup>88</sup> Shaykh Mohammed bin Khalifa al-Maktoum assumed the role as first chairman of the organisation's management council, while Shaykh Rashid donated money toward the establishment of the group's headquarters in that emirate, signalling the government's willingness to patronise an Islamist group as a bulwark of Arab nationalism.<sup>89</sup> "The initial drive of the Muslim Brotherhood was that the UAE is not Islamic enough, not about justice/injustice, or reform."<sup>90</sup> The government thus did not contest the organisation's formation.

After the founding of Islah in Dubai, branches were established in Ras al-Khaimah and Fujairah, with Shaykh Rashid donating toward the cost of their establishment.<sup>91</sup> Emirati President and Abu Dhabi ruler Shaykh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan (r. 1971-1994) also contributed land for the establishment of a branch of the group in that emirate at the end of the 1970s, yet an affiliate ultimately never gained permission to form there.<sup>92</sup> Interestingly, a branch also never opened in Sharjah. Former vice-chairman of Islah in Ras al-Khaimah and lawyer Mohammed al-Mansoori considers the Sharjan government's refusal to allow for the opening of a local branch of Islah to be a reflection of the prevalence, at that time, of Arabism and nationalism, rather than Islamism, in Sharjah.<sup>93</sup> Its aforementioned connections to the Saudi Arabian government, with which it has strong financial ties, also likely squelched any potential Brotherhood movement in that emirate, with the Kingdom a likelier source of religious inspiration. In

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<sup>88</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 60-61.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Abdulkhaleq Abdulla.

<sup>91</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 61.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 61.

Ajman, though a branch of Islah was not established, “the Brotherhood settled for subordination to the Association of Guidance and Social Counseling [Irshad].”<sup>94</sup>

The organisational structure of the Brotherhood in the UAE was far more complicated than in Kuwait and Qatar due to the state’s federalist form. Each is “broken down according to emirate with a further hierarchy of sections and subsections, typically classified according to emirate cities and rank of members, each with different *halaqas* having different curricula. Each subsection becomes relatively small.”<sup>95</sup> When the government turned against the organisation in the 1990s, its decentralised structure, with many loosely coordinated small networks, actually aided its survival for decades after the government became suspicious of the group.

Like Brotherhood affiliates elsewhere in the region, the Emirati Ikhwan was involved in social and cultural activities, namely sporting and charity events.<sup>96</sup> “Internal activities include those related to Ramadan fasts, such as sponsoring and holding *iftars* (dinners to break the fast), as well as courses in members’ houses for their *halaqas*. The women hold *halaqas* in masjids (mosques) as well as in their homes”<sup>97</sup> Emirati political scientist Abdulkhaleq Abdulla describes the 1970s as a period during which the Brotherhood aimed to influence two areas on a national level: educational institutions and civil society organisations. As one interviewee put it, “the Muslim Brotherhood used that [the education sector] as a sea they could fish in.”<sup>98</sup> Outside of that sector, the

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>95</sup> Wanda Krause, *Women in Civil Society: The State, Islamism, and Networks in the UAE* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 98.

<sup>96</sup> Al-Qassemi, “The Brothers and the Gulf.”

<sup>97</sup> Krause, 98.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Francis Matthew.

Brotherhood operated through charity as well as teacher and student organisations, from which a new generation of Ikhwan leaders was derived.<sup>99</sup>

Further aiding the Brotherhood's growth was the relative lack of widespread Arab nationalist sentiment in the UAE. A nationalist faction had emerged among merchants in Dubai before independence, as early as 1938, urging more representative government and checks on foreign influence.<sup>100</sup> Following the decline of that movement and a similar one in 1953, however, nationalism did not re-emerge as strongly as it did in the other super-rentiers, remaining "firmly in the background of Emirati politics" since its last outbreak in 1953 with Dubai's National Front.<sup>101</sup> Schools in Dubai, like those in Qatar, remained sites of ideological contestation into the 1950s, yet by the time the Brotherhood had formed in the UAE, nationalism had comparatively little influence.<sup>102</sup>

The UAE's federal structure may have made nationalism less relatable, as Emiratis remained primarily loyal to local rulers for the first years of the union. "It was said of the UAE thirty years ago that, 'political loyalty to one's tribe has not as yet given way to loyalty to the state as an abstract political concept.' That the state is made even more abstract by being made up of seven emirates in an ambiguous and ill-defined relationship with each other plainly does not help."<sup>103</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood, on the other hand, held ideological appeal as well as social standing in important segments of Emirati society. "The Muslim Brotherhood had a good understanding with government and good backing from business. Arab nationalists hadn't had the same support because

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<sup>99</sup> Interview with Abdulkhaleq Abdulla.

<sup>100</sup> Davidson, "Arab Nationalism and British Opposition in Dubai," 882.

<sup>101</sup> Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*, 81.

<sup>102</sup> Davidson, "Arab Nationalism and British Opposition in Dubai," 885.

<sup>103</sup> Neil Patrick, "Nationalism in the Gulf States," Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States, no. 5, October 2009, 17, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/programmes/kuwait/documents/NeilPatrick.pdf>.

they were seen as Western, not genuine.”<sup>104</sup> This critique in itself shows the conservatism present in Emirati society.

### *Islah in Government*

Islah enjoyed peaceful ties with the central Emirati government for its first decades, having received state support for its establishment. Regime patronage of Islamist groups was common in the Gulf during this period, as governments feared the influence of Arab nationalism and hoped to promote their own religious legitimacy through backing Islamist organisations. Indeed,

in the UAE and Kuwait, where Muslim Brotherhood organisations or ‘reform associations’ have existed for many years, there was a tacit understanding in place that these groups would be tolerated and given some influence over the religious and educational establishments. In the UAE this led to the Brotherhood’s de facto control over the Ministries for Education and Social Affairs, with its members presiding over curriculum committees and – for many years – dominating the UAE’s principal university [UAEU].<sup>105</sup>

Appropriately, then, in the formation of the first-ever independent Emirati government in 1971, founding member of Islah from Ras al-Khaimah Shaykh Sa‘id ‘Abdullah Salman was named minister of housing, and Muhammad ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Bakr was appointed minister of justice and Islamic affairs and *awqāf* in 1977, becoming the second member of Islah to take on a post in a government ministry.<sup>106</sup> Both were appointed on the recommendation of Vice President Shaykh Rashid.<sup>107</sup> In 1979, Salman became minister of education and chancellor of UAEU.<sup>108</sup> In the same year, Saif al-Jarwan of Ras al-Khaimah took the post of minister of labour and social affairs.<sup>109</sup> From 1977 until 1983,

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<sup>104</sup> Interview with Abdullhaleq Abdullah.

<sup>105</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 194.

<sup>106</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 63.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>109</sup> Marta Saldana, “Rentierism and Political Culture in the United Arab Emirates: The Case of UAEU Students” (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 2014), 138.

Shaykh Sultan bin Kayed al-Qasimi, head of Islah in Ras al-Khaimah, directed the national curriculum division.<sup>110</sup>

Because Brotherhood members in the UAE, as in Kuwait and Qatar, came largely from among the educated classes, many having become involved in Ikhwan activities in university, they were strong candidates for such government posts, particularly in a young country with a small population. Further, “*al-Islah* members with Law studies, who were the best prepared at the time, became influential within the Ministry of Justice. For more than 20 years *al-Islah* worked side by side [with] the Emirati government, cooperating in areas of social and cultural development.”<sup>111</sup> Though they enjoyed less representation following the Iranian Revolution in 1979, when it was considered potentially dangerous to employ Islamists, Brotherhood members still held some important public roles. The government used such inclusion as a means of moderating Islamist complaint. Indeed, “it was assumed that the public engagement of Islamists by inclusion in the Kuwaiti parliament, and as officials in the *Awqaf* (Islamic affairs), education and justice ministries in the UAE, for example, would incorporate them politically and by extension, aid the state in its projection of a conservative and Islamic image.”<sup>112</sup>

By granting Brotherhood members positions in government, the state allowed them a platform through which they could enact policies that remained in place for decades – particularly in the education sector. In its early stages, the Emirati Brotherhood resembled the Ikhwan elsewhere in the super-rentiers with its initial focus on the social and cultural. Once the Brotherhood gained a following mainly through its involvement in

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<sup>110</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 63.

<sup>111</sup> Saldana, 138.

<sup>112</sup> Patrick, 15.

education, however, the government understood the degree to which such cultural posts are politically significant.

*Brotherhood Influence in the Emirati Education System*

Facilitating the spread of Islamist ideology even before independence, the UAE received considerable foreign aid for the promotion of education and became guided by the Kuwaiti system, which, as discussed earlier, had been shaped by many Ikhwan sympathisers and members. Kuwait financed several educational institutes in all emirates except Abu Dhabi,<sup>113</sup> with the Kuwaiti government providing books and teacher training courses.<sup>114</sup> In the first years of Emirati independence, Kuwaiti inspectors supervised primary education in all emirates aside from Abu Dhabi, providing curriculum (consisting of Qur'an, Arabic, arithmetic, geography, history, music, science, art, physical education, and, at the intermediate level, English), school uniforms, stationery, and meals.<sup>115</sup>

In later years, influence from Egypt became more prominent. In 1979, of 5,500 primary school teachers, the majority was Egyptian, and only 361 were Emirati.<sup>116</sup> Most notably, Egyptian religious scholar 'Izz al-Din Ibrahim, who had previously worked in Qatar, held the post of Vice Chancellor of UAEU from its founding in 1976 until 1985, further influencing higher education.<sup>117</sup> Under his control, "the university emphasize[d] law and Sharia studies, with more than 10 percent of the student body (including thirty-two women) enrolled in that faculty."<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Abu Dhabi had its own system of education, with state education beginning in 1960/1961, when the first three schools were opened in that emirate. (Kevin G. Fenelon, *The United Arab Emirates: An Economic and Social Survey*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Longman, 1973), 100).

<sup>114</sup> Raga'ei El Mallakh, *The Economic Development of the United Arab Emirates* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 64.

<sup>115</sup> Fenelon, 99.

<sup>116</sup> El Mallakh, *The Economic Development*, 67.

<sup>117</sup> Malcolm C. Peck, *The United Arab Emirates: A Venture in Unity* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 76.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

The newly independent UAE government endeavoured to limit the influence of foreign ideologies in education, yet the sector remained a battleground for competing ideologies, as elsewhere in the Gulf. The appointment of nationalist-leaning ‘Abdullah ‘Umran Taryam as minister of education in 1972 was part of this effort, as he oversaw an extensive review of curricula.<sup>119</sup> Taryam’s reforms were overhauled, however, when he was replaced in 1979 by Shaikh Sa‘id ‘Abdullah Salman, whose preferences of hiring Brotherhood sympathisers quickly became clear. The new minister created a committee to review existing curricula, under the leadership of Ishaq Farhan, whom Emirati Arabic daily *al-Khaleej* described as “a well-known religious activist and the leader of a religious party in Jordan.”<sup>120</sup> Unsurprisingly, Taryam’s curriculum draft was set aside in favour of the versions privileged by Salman, who “gave priority to the Islamic element in education.”<sup>121</sup> Shaykh Sultan bin Kayed al-Qasimi also came to oversee curricula for the entire UAE from 1977-1983. During this period, the Brotherhood managed “to control the curriculum committee, by issuing 120 courses, which the Brotherhood considered one of its biggest achievements.”<sup>122</sup> Meanwhile, Salman’s educational guidelines “were regarded as ‘distorted’ by the nationalists, who criticised the Minister particularly for abolishing national history and society as subjects and for banning the daily flag-saluting ceremony as ‘idolatrous’.”<sup>123</sup>

Under Salman’s leadership, the Ministry of Education was greatly influenced by Muslim Brotherhood ideology in terms of culture and curricula.<sup>124</sup> During his tenure, the

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<sup>119</sup> Fyfe, 324.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 325.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 325.

<sup>122</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 64-65.

<sup>123</sup> Fyfe, 325.

<sup>124</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 64.

ministry banned gender-mixing beginning in the fourth grade, with classes taught by teachers of the same gender.<sup>125</sup> Music was also prohibited, and girls could not participate in sports.<sup>126</sup> In addition, teachers sympathetic to the Brotherhood were hired in large numbers.<sup>127</sup> Indicative of Islah's concerns regarding education during this period is this excerpt from *al-Islah* magazine.

We should not be satisfied with the academic degree alone as the basis for selection of university lecturers. The behavior aspect must be given a basic role. No enemy of Islam should join the university even if he only considers Islam a backward concept unfit for twentieth century. This is not ideological terrorism. This will only protect the nation from corruption and to bring up a generation who believes in his religion and loyal to country.<sup>128</sup>

The Emirati Brotherhood aimed not only to revise education itself, but hoped to adjust Emirati culture more broadly, reflecting the doctrine of *tawhīd*.

As one Emirati political scientist described the Brotherhood's influence in the education sector, "[g]enerations were brainwashed because the Islah education minister exploited his position to recruit Muslim Brotherhood [members] as teachers and kick out others. He recruited the whole ministry as based on ideology. [There were] no posts if you were not Muslim Brotherhood."<sup>129</sup> Though this statement may be exaggerated, the Brotherhood undoubtedly retained a strong advantage in the Education Ministry. In fact, in May 1980, Education Minister Salman dismissed six popular professors from al-Ain University, two from Politics, two from Sociology, and two from History.<sup>130</sup> These professors claimed that their removal was related to their ideological leanings.

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<sup>125</sup> Andrzej Kapiszewski, *Nationals and Expatriates: Population and Labour Dilemmas of the Gulf Cooperation Council* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2001), 165.

<sup>126</sup> Interview with Ebtesam al-Ketbi, February 24, 2014.

<sup>127</sup> W.A. Rugh, 17.

<sup>128</sup> "The University between Hope and Social Impact," *al-Islah* 50, no. 49 (1982), in *The Roots of Conspiracy Against the UAE*, ed. 'Ali Salem Humaid (Dubai: Al Mezmaah Studies and Research Centre, 2013), 1: 105-106.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with Ebtesam al-Ketbi.

<sup>130</sup> Fyfe, 324.

All six complained that no routine disciplinary procedures had been followed before their summary dismissal. All believed that their downfall was due to their refusal to toe the fundamentalist line. *Al-Azmena al-Arabia*, the only journal to carry the story, quoted one as saying that at al-‘Ain, ‘to speak the word ‘Arab’...was to blaspheme.’ Another accused the University of wanting preachers, not teachers, and claimed to have been told that al-‘Ain was not an Arab Islamic university but purely an Islamic one. The historians complained that archaeology had been struck out of the history syllabus as ‘idolatrous’. Some students agitated for the professors to be reinstated and petitioned the Chancellor, but to no avail.<sup>131</sup>

Islah’s education policies had long-lasting cultural and social implications, as the group hoped to stop the instruction in English language at elementary levels and opposed music education, inciting students and their parents to not attend dance and music events.<sup>132</sup> In addition, Islah organised lectures and seminars in schools about the dangers of Westernisation, and youth groups held festivals to gather donations to support the Palestinian intifada and the mujahidin in Afghanistan.<sup>133</sup> By the beginning of the 1980s, the Brotherhood controlled the management of curricula, authoring a great deal of it and working through the Ministry of Education.

The government noted the Brotherhood’s dominance of education, and prominent businessman Ahmed Humaid al-Tayer replaced Salman as minister of education in 1983. The Ikhwan took immediate dislike to the new minister, with *al-Islah* magazine campaigning fiercely against his decision to shift 25 Ikhwan-linked employees in the National Curriculum Committee to other positions.<sup>134</sup> *Al-Khaleej* newspaper reported that Islah leader Mohammed al-Mansoori in Ras al-Khaimah had even, during a Friday sermon, accused al-Tayer of being a non-Muslim, provoking the education minister to accuse al-Mansoori of misusing his platform.<sup>135</sup> Al-Tayer remained undeterred, however,

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 324.

<sup>132</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 66.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 67-68.

issuing new educational objectives that highlighted the importance of modern education in promoting national and Islamic loyalties.<sup>136</sup>

These changes provoked backlash from Abu Dhabi's National Consultative Council (NCC), which demanded a meeting with al-Tayer, in March 1987.<sup>137</sup> The NCC, though by no means Brotherhood-linked, often represents interests of the emirate's major tribes that tend toward social conservatism. The body has long "campaigned against allegedly unIslamic practices in the schools such as the failure of some women teachers to wear full hajib, visits by male inspectors to girls' schools, insufficient emphasis (in the NCC's eyes) on religious education and, its particular bugbear, the teaching of music and physical education to girls."<sup>138</sup> The group failed to win major concessions, though, and al-Tayer's reforms continued. Efforts to reorganise primary and secondary education faced further resistance during this period in Sharjah, with Shaykh Sultan bin Mohammed al-Qasimi publicly opposing the changes.<sup>139</sup> In fact, then Under Secretary for the Ministry of Education and Youth Khalifa Bakhit al-Falasi said that when he attempted to reassign some 300 Saudi teachers who were considered "too religiously conservative," a Saudi cleric released a fatwa against him, and the government had to arrange his safe exit from the country.<sup>140</sup> Outrage thus came not only from Islah, but also from traditional elements of society more broadly, demonstrating that Islah promoted widely held attitudes.

In 1988-1989, Islah began another campaign, this time against the education minister's decision to institute standardised basic education for all students entering

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<sup>136</sup> Fyfe, 327.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>139</sup> "UAE Minimizing Influence of Islamic Extremists," Embassy of the United States Abu Dhabi, *WikiLeaks*, November 10, 2004, [http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/04ABUDHABI4061\\_a.html](http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/04ABUDHABI4061_a.html).

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

UAEU, which would require instruction in subjects such as sports, English, and Arabic before enrolment in university.<sup>141</sup> Members of Islah began distributing leaflets and organising speeches about the ministry's plans to corrupt students' morals through the basic education curriculum, which they claimed was designed by Westerners seeking to dissolve the country.<sup>142</sup> One of the most popular cassette tapes in 1989, "Tragedies of Islamic Education," distributed by Arabic language teacher Ahmad Saqr al-Suwaidi, expounded upon these issues.<sup>143</sup> Following their campaign against the educational system after the removal of Islah members from the National Curriculum Committee, Islah leaders resolved in mid-1989 to take a more subdued approach to altering the education sector.<sup>144</sup> Having failed to effect change in curricula through direct attacks on government policy, Islah opted for de-escalation, not releasing *al-Islah* for six months, from October 1988 until April 1989, after which point it used a more conciliatory tone in its discussions of government policy.<sup>145</sup> Still, by 1988, the Brotherhood had become the most prominent voice in the country's educational institutions and its first institute of higher education, UAEU.<sup>146</sup>

*Beyond Education: The Spread of Brotherhood Ideology in the UAE*

By the end of the 1980s, the federal government had become concerned about the amount of influence of Islamism even outside of schools. Dubai's Ministry of Awqaf specifically referenced the "excessive extremism' among some religious organizations whose conduct needed to be reviewed."<sup>147</sup> Two decrees from that ministry reflected its

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<sup>141</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 67.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 67-68.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 68-69.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>147</sup> Fyfe, 326.

desire to contain the religious sphere. The first, enacted in 1986, “asked preachers to steer clear of contention.”<sup>148</sup> The second, issued in January 1988, demanded that preachers “deposit written, advance copies of their Friday sermons with the Ministry and to avoid all areas of controversy and sectarian sensitivity, limiting their remarks to guidance on Islamic practice.”<sup>149</sup>

Islamist leanings, evident in the judicial sector, also worried the government. In January 1978, the Council of Ministers issued a resolution to Islamise UAE legislation.<sup>150</sup> By aligning the state’s penal code with shari‘a, the government endeavoured to unify the criminal system, as well as to reinforce national identity and integration.<sup>151</sup> The decision had serious social consequences, however. Between 1983 and 1984, the Federal Supreme Court was asked thrice “to declare the imposition of non-Shari‘a sentences for drinking alcohol to be unconstitutional, since the Constitution obliges judges to use the Shari‘a as their principle guide.”<sup>152</sup> In each case, emirate-level courts (one in Abu Dhabi, one in al-‘Ain, and one in Sharjah) sentenced Muslims convicted of drinking alcohol to short prison terms.<sup>153</sup> Three public prosecutors challenged such sentences, stating that Abu Dhabi’s 1976 law and Sharjah’s 1972 law about the consumption of alcohol did not comply with shari‘a and thus were unconstitutional. “In all three cases, the Supreme Court found that the Rulers, in their temporal capacity, had the right to impose temporal punishments for the temporal aspects of drunkenness and that the two laws in question

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 326.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 326.

<sup>150</sup> Butti Sultan al-Muhairi, “The Islamisation of Laws in the UAE: The Use of the Penal Code,” *Arab Law Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (1996): 354-355.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 362.

<sup>152</sup> Fyfe, 325.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 325.

were therefore not unconstitutional, but that the imposition of such a temporal penalty did not preclude a prisoner's subjection to the Shari'a punishment as well."<sup>154</sup>

Even after such incidents, Brotherhood-leaning immigrants held sway in the judiciary for decades. In fact, in a 1993 case, an Egyptian judge, presiding in Fujairah, sentenced two convicted smugglers to *hudūd* punishment,<sup>155</sup> as "he apparently assumed, incorrectly, that he could and should apply Islamic law strictly."<sup>156</sup> Although an appeals court overturned the sentence, Emirati officials noted with increasing alarm the influence of Islamists in the judiciary.<sup>157</sup> Centralisation of the UAE-wide security has helped prevent such misunderstandings more recently.

An integral part of the Emirati Brotherhood's outreach outside of its government positions was its aforementioned magazine, *al-Islah*, established in 1978. The publication attacked leftist and nationalist opponents, with writers suggesting on more than one occasion that communists had penetrated state apparatuses.<sup>158</sup> *Al-Islah* thus cultivated the organisation's image as a preserver of traditional social values and fighting the invasion of outside ideologies.<sup>159</sup> While archives of the magazine are not readily available, a study by Al Mezmaah Studies and Research Centre published a number of excerpts from the magazine in the 1970s and 1980s. Examination of these documents demonstrates that the

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 325-326.

<sup>155</sup> *Hudūd* refers to the portion of shari'a that concerns the most egregious crimes, "crimes against God," such as adultery, fornication, apostasy, consuming intoxicants, murder, and theft. Punishments for such crimes are physical and include amputation, flagellation, and beheading. The UAE Penal Code has upheld the *hudūd* punishment for apostasy, while Qatar has also, in Law 11 of 2004, incorporated such punishments. In practice, however, *hudūd* punishments have not been applied. "Laws Criminalizing Apostasy in Selected Jurisdictions," Law Library of Congress, May 2014, <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/apostasy/apostasy.pdf>.

<sup>156</sup> W. A. Rugh, 17.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>158</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 62.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 63.

most commonly discussed topics concerned the development of Islamic education,<sup>160</sup> censorship of Western materials such as magazines and television programmes,<sup>161</sup> restriction of the sale of alcohol,<sup>162</sup> corruption in government spending,<sup>163</sup> and the encroachment of foreign (particularly Western) businesses and culture in Emirati society.<sup>164</sup> First and foremost, “Islah tapped into issues of Emiratis drinking, social issues.”<sup>165</sup>

In a less institutionalised way, Brotherhood organisations in the UAE influenced youth through student activities like summer camps and scout groups.<sup>166</sup> In 1982, as President of UAEU, Sa’id ‘Abdullah Salman established the Union of Emirati Students in the institution in al-Ain.<sup>167</sup> Having done well in the elections of university student committees beginning in 1977, Islah dominated student union elections until 1992.<sup>168</sup> At that time, the government made an effort to depoliticise campuses, replacing the union in 2012 with student council polls contested by individuals, rather than political blocs; even these are only partially elected.<sup>169</sup>

Through its educational and cultural activities, Islah fostered a following among the Emirati population.

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<sup>160</sup> See “Readings into Some Curricula of Private Schools in the Emirates,” *al-Islah* no. 57 (1982), in *The Roots of Conspiracy Against the UAE* 2: 180-188.

<sup>161</sup> See “Our Children and the Lovely Pig,” *al-Islah* 34, no. 49 (1982), in *The Roots of Conspiracy Against the UAE* 1: 48.

<sup>162</sup> See “We Are Waiting for Final Ban,” *al-Islah* 7, no. 50 (1982), in *The Roots of Conspiracy Against the UAE* 1: 69.

<sup>163</sup> See “Frugality and Extravagance,” *al-Islah* 50, no. 51 (1982), in *The Roots of Conspiracy Against the UAE* 1: 98-99.

<sup>164</sup> See Omar Abdul Rahman, “The Devil Kai and the English Language,” *al-Islah* 26-27, no. 49 (1982), in *The Roots of Conspiracy Against the UAE* 1: 40.

<sup>165</sup> Interview with Dubai-based Gulf correspondent.

<sup>166</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 62.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>169</sup> “UAE University Hosts Elections for First Student Council,” *The National*, October 18, 2012, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/uae-university-hosts-elections-for-first-student-council>.

The Ikhwan's discursive spaces take root in concrete settings, such as in the organizations in which they participate, the *halaqas* they control, the lectures they hold, or their places of work. Their agenda is pursued by speaking through their jobs and positions of influence. Teachers attempt to sway the youth through advice, giving their opinions, or less subtly, infusing programs with political ideas. Local and other Arab professors in local and Western universities, some Ikhwan, some Salafi, some from other strains, have access to literally thousands of young minds. Their mode of action is to play the father figure, give advice, and teach the implications of globalization in classes. The theme of the inescapability of globalization, and how locals, Arabs, and Muslims must shape their own identities, is popular among university classes, lectures, speeches, and conferences, not to mention the media. Ikhwan members hold various media positions [...] While the curriculum and agendas will be planned for the *halaqas* and lectures among Islamists, their modes of action within spaces of employment is largely dependent upon individual initiatives.<sup>170</sup>

Though the government initially did not consider Islah to be a threat, granting its members ministerial positions until the early 1980s, its attitude decisively changed in the early 1990s, when the organisation became powerful enough to pose a political threat. "The government really trusted Muslim Brotherhood because they never posed as opposition. The government saw them as providing another layer of legitimacy."<sup>171</sup> By the 1990s, though, the government came to consider the Ikhwan too powerful to be trusted and took steps to diminish the Emirati Brotherhood's organisational capacity. Even in the face of rising profits from oil wealth and a growing non-oil sector in Dubai, ideological complaint continued to influence political opposition. In an effort to maintain control of political dialogue, the Emirati government, like others in the region, has endeavoured to monitor the religious sector, as this was an area in which the Brotherhood held sway. Aiming to limit the impact of independent Islamism, the government has endeavoured to enhance central control of religious discourse.

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<sup>170</sup> Krause, 99.

<sup>171</sup> Interview with Abdulkhaleq Abdulla.

*Government Control of the Religious Sector*

The UAE, similar to the other countries under study, has attempted to contain the possible emergence of an independent religious sector.<sup>172</sup> While it lacks institutionalised state ‘ulama’, Emirati ruling families “have been solicitous of their relations with the *ulema*,” by granting them privileged government positions.<sup>173</sup> Despite efforts at modernisation and liberalisation, Emirati rulers also try to appear supportive of Islam: “if they can at least be seen to openly promote Islam then they will be held in high esteem. Since the first oil booms the simplest way to carry out such promotion has been to build mosques and pay the salaries of all ulema or preachers.”<sup>174</sup> As one Emirati interviewee put it, “the sovereign created a church for himself, created an Islamic establishment.”<sup>175</sup>

Aiding Emirati rulers’ ability to control the religious sector is the fact that, as in Qatar, most imams are expatriates and therefore risk deportation if their sermons are met with government disapproval.<sup>176</sup> In addition, 95 percent of Sunni mosques in the UAE are state-owned, while the remainder (excluding Shi‘i mosques) receives government subsidies.<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, “[a]lmost all clerics are government employees, and these are quite closely monitored. Most have to carry photo identification cards, and their sermons usually have to be chosen from an official list of approved topics, drawn up by the relevant government body each week.”<sup>178</sup> Granting an additional incentive to imams to remain loyal to the regime is the government’s provision of substantial salaries.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Peck, *The United Arab Emirates*, 126.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>174</sup> Davidson, *Abu Dhabi*, 135.

<sup>175</sup> Interview with Nasser bin Ghaith.

<sup>176</sup> Interview with researcher in Ras al-Khaimah.

<sup>177</sup> Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*, 275.

<sup>178</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 74.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

Government-approved sermons, printed in local newspapers, often cover social topics and only touch on the political arena peripherally or through inference.<sup>180</sup> “The UAE government controls all of the mosques. Friday sermons are centrally prepared. There is no free speech in mosques.”<sup>181</sup> Such government influence in the religious sphere dates back to the beginning of the union. One historian of the UAE and long-time resident of Abu Dhabi related a story of the shutdown of a mosque in the 1970s because it was patronised by many Yemenis who expressed anti-Western views.<sup>182</sup> Since that time, “[t]he government has removed some clerics for re-education purposes after they used their Friday sermons inappropriately.”<sup>183</sup> Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs Mohammed al-Dhaheeri, in a September 2004 interview, explained that providing guidance to imams is necessary because “experience has shown that many of the people who applied to the Awqaf department for the posts of Imams in the mosques were far below the required standards.”<sup>184</sup> Al-Dhaheeri also highlighted the need for greater oversight of mosques, recognising that some sermons are not aligned with the ministry’s preapproved topics and that the government has removed imams for incorrect use of their Friday sermons.<sup>185</sup>

A 2006 cable from the American embassy in Abu Dhabi confirms that sermons are meant to discourage what the government considers extremist behaviour, in particular after September 11, yet they have also diminished the ability of any independent strand of Islam to develop.<sup>186</sup> “There are proponents of a reinvigorated assertion of Islamic values.

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<sup>180</sup> Interview with researcher based in Ras al-Khaimah.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Interview with Frauke Heard-Bey, April 7, 2014.

<sup>183</sup> “UAE Minimizing Influence of Islamic Extremists.”

<sup>184</sup> Mohammed al-Dhaheeri, Qtd. in Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*, 275.

<sup>185</sup> “UAE Minimizing Influence of Islamic Extremists.”

<sup>186</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 74.

But generally, in the UAE, Islam serves more to support the political system than to threaten governmental stability or survival.”<sup>187</sup> The only mosques with messages differing slightly from those appointed by the government are small and largely insignificant. “Some imams are Egyptians. Abu Hail on the Sharjah-Dubai border has mosques with a Brotherhood feel. These mosques are not as infiltrated by the government because they are not a threat and are not seen as such.”<sup>188</sup> It is difficult to determine the degree to which such mosques are linked to the Brotherhood on an organisational level or simply represent a conservative strand of Islam; it is therefore uncertain whether they are politically relevant, particularly for Emiratis. Due to central government controls, it is ethnicity or nationality, rather than ideology, that distinguishes most imams in the UAE.<sup>189</sup> The only means by which major mosques could become centres for political discussion is through private conversation and debate after sermons, yet fears of government informers infiltrating mosques limit even these conversations.<sup>190</sup> “The [UAE] government controls virtually all Sunni mosques and places general restrictions on freedom of assembly and association, including for religious purposes.”<sup>191</sup> Using the pretext of rooting out extremism, the government has succeeded in limiting freedom of the religious sector.

In one departure from a government policy of promoting so-called “moderate” Islam, Egyptian Islamic scholar ‘Omar ‘Abd al-Kafi, director of the Qur’anic Studies Centre associated with Dubai International Holy Qur’an Award, has been allowed to

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<sup>187</sup> Peck, *The United Arab Emirates*, 61.

<sup>188</sup> Interview with Richard Gauvain, March 2, 2014.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Interview with ‘Abdul Majeed al-Mojalid.

<sup>191</sup> “United Arab Emirates: International Religious Freedom Report 2008,” U.S. Department of State, September 19, 2008,

<http://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108495.htm>.

retain a prominent public role inside the UAE. In addition to his official role, al-Kafi has hosted a number of radio and television programmes and helps organise and judge heavily publicised government-sponsored Qur'anic recitation contests. He "is seen as a link between the Egyptian Salafis and Muslim Brotherhood,"<sup>192</sup> and is useful as such, appealing to a largely conservative population of Emirati nationals. Notably, al-Kafi's sermons tend to highlight cultural issues like whether Muslims should greet Christians on Christian holidays.<sup>193</sup> He thus engages with debates about maintaining the Emirati and Islamic nature of the state without being prescriptive in political matters. By allowing a voice to such a figure, Emirati rulers enhance their own religious legitimacy while also helping to control the religious narrative, similar to the Qatari government's approach, yet pursued on a much more limited scale.

The government also augments its religious credentials by sponsoring a variety of Islamic events, charities, and scholarship, activities that super-rentiers are easily able to sponsor.<sup>194</sup> Qur'anic recitation competitions, mentioned above, have become particularly popular. The most famous is an annual contest, in which prisoners are released from Dubai jails if they can recite the entire Qur'an.<sup>195</sup> The federal government also quite visibly donates a great deal of money for the hosting of religious conferences and events. In 2004, Dubai hosted a symposium on the Prophet's Way of Da'wa and Guidance with several hundred people, including the Grand Imam of al-Azhar.<sup>196</sup> During Ramadan 2008, Shaykh Khalifa invited 30 religious leaders to Abu Dhabi to "expose the UAE to

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<sup>192</sup> Interview with Richard Gauvain.

<sup>193</sup> Andrew Hammond, *Pop Culture Arab World!: Media, Arts, and Lifestyle* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 226.

<sup>194</sup> Patrick, 15-16.

<sup>195</sup> Davidson, *Dubai*, 174.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

the latest learned debate on Islam.”<sup>197</sup> The office of Shaykh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, “also sponsored lectures during Ramadan, including esteemed Saudi scholars and a number of non-Muslim lecturers and dignitaries. Delivered in Arabic and English, they were held in the crown prince’s majlis twice a week.”<sup>198</sup> The Dubai International Holy Qur’an Award Committee is another government-sponsored initiative, and it aims to create a collection of books to be dubbed the Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahyan Mushaf.<sup>199</sup>

Even more conspicuously, Emirati rulers have gone to great expense to construct lavish mosques. The most famous is Abu Dhabi’s Shaykh Zayed Mosque, third largest in the world, which was completed in 2007 at a cost of over \$540 million.<sup>200</sup> In Dubai, mosques are increasingly less visible, reflecting that emirate’s largely expatriate population.<sup>201</sup> Nonetheless, the Dubai government has made considerable efforts to promote Islamic banking in its financial markets, perhaps in an attempt to maintain the support of its conservative national population while also retaining the Western façade that appeals to a growing number of expatriates and tourists.<sup>202</sup>

Complicating centralised government co-optation of the religious sphere is the variation in schools of Islamic jurisprudence in different emirates of the UAE. While Abu Dhabi and Dubai officially recognise the Maliki School (also dominant in Kuwait), adherents to the Hanbali School (predominant in Qatar and Saudi Arabia) are found

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<sup>197</sup> Shaykh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahyan, Qtd. in Davidson, *Abu Dhabi*, 136.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>199</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 75.

<sup>200</sup> Davidson, *Abu Dhabi*, 135.

<sup>201</sup> Davidson, *Dubai*, 198.

<sup>202</sup> Davidson, “The United Arab Emirates,” 231.

elsewhere, while Fujairah follows the Shafi'i School.<sup>203</sup> Divisions between Malikis and Hanbalis reflect rifts among tribal confederations in the emirates, making them more difficult to overcome.<sup>204</sup> The government, by imposing its own vision of “moderate,” and largely apolitical, Islam, tries to override such differences. In one measure to promote such a strand of Islam, “[m]embers of the UAE armed forces are under orders to keep their facial hair short to demonstrate their non-secular piety.”<sup>205</sup> The pragmatic Emirati rulers thus endeavour to promote Islam that is not politically threatening. “In the UAE it is alright to be religious, but to organize yourself as a political party has not been done in the UAE before.”<sup>206</sup> Nonetheless, a variety of religious outlooks have emerged, ranging from the more moderate to the extreme.

The UAE has experienced limited violent Islamist reaction in large measure due to its liberal social policies. In April 1981, a bomb planted in Dubai's Hyatt Regency Hotel killed two people and was meant to protest the hotel's policy of serving liquor to Emiratis wearing national dress, a major taboo in Gulf countries.<sup>207</sup> In February 1999, authorities found two bombs at shopping centres frequented by Western expatriates.<sup>208</sup> The September 11, 2001 attacks raised international suspicions about the UAE's commitment to countering extremism, as two hijackers were Emirati nationals, one from Ras al-Khaimah and one from Fujairah, and most funding for the attack had been wired through Dubai banks.<sup>209</sup> In late 2002, Saudi citizen 'Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, who planned attacks on the *USS Cole*, *USS The Sullivans*, and the *SS Limberg*, was also

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<sup>203</sup> Peck, *The United Arab Emirates*, 60.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>205</sup> “UAE Minimizing Influence of Islamic Extremists.”

<sup>206</sup> Interview with Sulayman al-Khalaf, April 7, 2014.

<sup>207</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 61.

<sup>208</sup> Neil Quilliam, “The States of the Gulf Co-operation Council,” in *Good Governance in the Middle East Oil Monarchies*, 54.

<sup>209</sup> Davidson, “The United Arab Emirates,” 10-11.

arrested in Abu Dhabi. At the time of his arrest, al-Nashiri was planning attacks on “vital economic targets” inside the UAE.<sup>210</sup> A June 2008 report from the British government’s Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre warned of planned terrorist attacks inside the UAE, leading the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office to increase the terror threat warning to the highest possible level for the country.<sup>211</sup> Most recently, in December 2014, an Emirati woman, accused of planting a homemade bomb at the home of an American doctor’s house, stabbed to death a female American teacher in a mall bathroom in Abu Dhabi.<sup>212</sup> The U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi had released a statement in October, alerting Americans about an internet posting that “encouraged attacks against teachers at American and other international schools.”<sup>213</sup> Clearly, tension with the West exists within the UAE and has spurred limited extremist action.

Few terrorist acts have succeeded inside the UAE, yet, because known terrorists have come from the country and because many claim the UAE has been used as a base for operations, it has been accused of “turning a blind eye to terror organisations within its country.”<sup>214</sup> In recent years, the Emirati government has used the threat of extremism to justify its crackdown on peaceful Islamist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood. As noted in a U.S. diplomatic cable, “in their diplomatic activities, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed [Abu Dhabi Crown Prince] and his brothers Hamdan [Deputy Prime Minister] and Hazza [National Security Adviser] rarely fail to tell high-level USG interlocutors about the threat to stability posed by the ‘Muslim Brotherhood,’ their generic term for

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<sup>210</sup> Davidson, *Abu Dhabi*, 148.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>212</sup> Nicola Goulding and Jason Hanna, “UAE Woman Arrested in U.S. Teacher’s Mall Restroom Stabbing,” CNN, December 5, 2014, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/12/04/world/meast/uae-us-mall-killing/>.

<sup>213</sup> Security Message for U.S. Citizens 8: Teachers at International Schools, U.S. Citizens Services, Embassy of the United States Abu Dhabi, October 29, 2014, [http://abudhabi.usembassy.gov/sm\\_102914.html](http://abudhabi.usembassy.gov/sm_102914.html).

<sup>214</sup> Davidson, “The United Arab Emirates,” 10-11.

extremists.”<sup>215</sup> The conflation of Brotherhood figures with violent Islamists has proven dangerous, as it has granted the Emirati government a security excuse for crackdown on nonviolent Islamists.

*Islamism and Emirati Society*

While organised political opposition does not exist, on the social level, “it’s everywhere.”<sup>216</sup> The advocacy of certain social policies undoubtedly informs political opinions and views about the proper role of governments; as such, support of certain social policies has translated into political complaint. The UAE, Dubai in particular, has made less of an effort than neighbouring Kuwait and Qatar to maintain its traditional image and values, with alcohol in easy supply and with the promotion of Western tourism ubiquitous. The situation was described by Mohammed al-Roken to *The Washington Post* in 2006:

The itinerant city Roken sees today is unrecognizable, not even Arab. All that remains of the neighborhood of his youth is the mosque. When he goes to a mall, he estimates that 99 percent of the patrons are foreigners, and he rarely hears Arabic. Despite religious prohibitions, drinking is unabashed, and he fears public wine-tasting parties are on the way. The beaches of his youth were either taken over by hotels and their occasionally topless sunbathers or frequented by Westerners whose dress he deems inappropriate. He grimaces at women jogging in the streets, sometimes with their dogs, considered unclean under Islamic law. The celebration of Islamic holidays and the country’s national day on Dec. 2 pale before the more commercialized commemoration of Christmas.<sup>217</sup>

Al-Rokn described his situation as “internal exile,” as he has moved farther away from Dubai “[t]o maintain his identity as an Arab and Muslim.”<sup>218</sup> This feeling seems widespread in the UAE, particularly in Dubai. Such complaints are unique to the Gulf’s super-rentiers and fuel support for Islamism.

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<sup>215</sup> “UAE Minimizing Influence of Islamic Extremists.”

<sup>216</sup> Interview with Ebtesam al-Ketbi.

<sup>217</sup> Anthony Shadid, “The Towering Dream of Dubai,” *The Washington Post*, April 30, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/29/AR2006042901457.html>.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

There is certainly a sense among the local population that the business-minded Emirati rulers “want to Westernise people here.”<sup>219</sup> Despite the fact that the constitution affirms Islam as the official religion and shari‘a as a principal source of legislation,<sup>220</sup> doubts remain about the commitment of the ruling families, especially those of the leading emirates, to such ideals. The leading emirates’ policy on alcohol is particularly telling, as it is significantly more lax than that of neighbouring countries, with some hotels in Abu Dhabi and Dubai serving alcohol during Ramadan and with bars remaining open before major holidays or during mourning periods.<sup>221</sup> Limited steps have been taken to address complaints, Dubai introduced a series of new decency regulations in 2009, primarily concerning proper dress and public displays of affection, and in summer 2011 restrictions prohibited the display of alcohol in full view.<sup>222</sup> Nonetheless, one Emirati went so far as to say that “[i]f it were up to the rulers of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, they wouldn’t have Islam as part of our culture at all. In public they have to keep this persona, but they’re chipping away at that slowly. They sponsor parties with alcohol. They’re trying to get people to change how they view the line between what is acceptable and not.”<sup>223</sup> Complaints about the ruling families of the increasingly wealthy leading emirates often concern their un-Islamic behaviour and creeping Westernisation. In such an environment, groups like the Ikhwan hold appeal as moral watchdogs, and monitoring social policies becomes the primary cause for Brotherhood movements in super-rentiers.

The leading emirates’ efforts at catering to their large expatriate populations have become more controversial in recent years and indicate a lack of cultural sensitivity. For

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<sup>219</sup> Interview with Emirati academic.

<sup>220</sup> Article seven, United Arab Emirates Constitution.

<sup>221</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 157.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>223</sup> Interview with Emirati academic.

example, Abu Dhabi's Emirates Palace Hotel displayed a 43-foot-tall Christmas tree adorned with diamonds and costing nearly \$10 million in 2010.<sup>224</sup> Facing complaints, the hotel "was forced to admit that it had 'taken the holiday spirit a bit too far' and removed the tree."<sup>225</sup> Prostitution is also rather common in Dubai. "Although there are occasional crackdowns, usually preceding Ramadan, in practice the police rarely intervene and soliciting and kerb crawling is usually left unchecked."<sup>226</sup> Locals also bemoan the inappropriate dress of many expatriates and tourists. In 2012, a grassroots social media campaign emerged to promote modest dress, using the Twitter hashtag #UAEDressCode; "the campaign has seen large numbers of UAE nationals criticise the inaction of their government to enforce basic standards."<sup>227</sup> Dubai has taken Westernisation the furthest in an effort to appeal to tourists who fuel a large portion of its economy. Remarkably, beginning in 2006, Dubai taxi drivers were fined if their cars had Arabic rather than English signs, and nowhere in the emirate can nationals receive a university education in Arabic.<sup>228</sup>

As the imbalance between expatriates and nationals becomes more extreme, the two communities become increasingly polarised. Dubai's outspoken Chief of Police General Dhahi Khalfan described the situation: "if the Gulf governments do not take bold steps to check the inflow of foreign workforce, a day could come when locals would be marginalised in their own countries and become like Red Indians [*sic*] in the US."<sup>229</sup> Discussion about infringement of non-nationals has been much more heated in the UAE

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<sup>224</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 159.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>228</sup> Davidson, *Dubai*, 202.

<sup>229</sup> Dhahi Khalfan, Qtd. in Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 161-162.

than elsewhere in the Gulf largely because the central government is considered unresponsive to concerns of nationals. Having been a key cause for *Islah*, the expatriate imbalance in the UAE, “unites all ideologies. It’s now difficult to find a *majlis*; there is little Arabic; there are more business opportunities [...] The issue of national identity terrifies everyone.”<sup>230</sup> Social policies that alienate the national population have spurred Islamist movements throughout the Gulf, as citizens fear the loss of their influence as increasingly Western policies are advocated. Political mobilisation through the informal sector, then, becomes the primary means of expressing disapproval of social policies, which constitute the major grievances in the super-rentiers.

The Muslim Brotherhood in the UAE gained popular appeal primarily as a vehicle for complaint against increasing Westernisation. In the words of Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, “one-third of the population probably thinks this way, that the state could be more Islamic.”<sup>231</sup> The Emirati government has understood the influence of Brotherhood organisations to be primarily political and thus threatening to their ruling system. In the face of such ideological competition, they hope to promote secular nationalism and establishment Islam that will harbour loyalty to the regime.

### *Conclusions*

Having granted the Brotherhood government positions in the 1970s, the UAE has come to realise the organisation’s political weight, though its members only ever held limited institutionalised influence. The government has failed to co-opt opposition stemming from the *Ikhwan* in recent years, due to the appeal that its ideology holds for a population largely opposed to the state’s increasing Westernisation. The Emirati

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<sup>230</sup> Interview with Francis Matthew.

<sup>231</sup> Interview with Abdulkhaleq Abdulla.

government has thus turned its attention to forcing the organisation's closure by vilifying its ideology and by framing the Ikhwan as a political and security threat. Ironically, the more the government cracked down on the Brotherhood as a political bloc, the more politically involved it became in the UAE, until the most recent clampdown halted its domestic activities.

In the next chapter, we discuss the means by which the Emirati government has moved against the Muslim Brotherhood and assess its success in, as well as reasons for, doing so. We also postulate the next steps for Brotherhood groups inside the UAE, as they continue to face heavy restrictions.

## **Chapter Nine**

### **Brotherhood Behind Bars: The Emirati Ikhwan Today**

#### *Introduction*

Although the Emirati affiliates of the Muslim Brotherhood benefitted from government support for their first two decades in existence, the tide turned decisively against the Ikhwan in the 1990s, amidst fears that the organisation held too much power in the educational arena and in the aftermath of accusations from the Egyptian government that Islah's charity organisation was involved in terrorist activities in that state.<sup>1</sup> By that time, Islah had become "the most organized nonstate actor in the country," granting it considerable political capital due to its members' prominent positions in the education and judicial sectors.<sup>2</sup> Emiratis associated with Islah also became "key participants in calls for political reform despite the government outlawing political organizations and discouraging political debate."<sup>3</sup> As the group garnered increasing popularity and became progressively more vocal, the government framed it as a danger to national stability.

By couching the Brotherhood's goals in terms of a security threat, the government has justified its crackdown against the organisation. The super-rentier government was unable to stem the tide of Islamist sentiment with payouts in 2011 and thus inflated the movement's political strength as a means of justifying its actions. As historian and former French diplomat Jean-Pierre Filiu put it,

'rulers became well versed in their routine of no alternative argumentation: towards the West, they posed as the only ones able to deter an Islamist takeover'. Moreover, it was argued that there is a now a '...sad irony that the powers in place have ended up believing their own fantasies about the Islamist threat; they not only displayed that card

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<sup>1</sup> See "Al-Qisat al-Kamila."

<sup>2</sup> Plotkin Boghardt, "The Muslim Brotherhood in the Gulf."

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

for external consumption, but they also fed their own masses with gory stories about the inevitability of ...ruin.”<sup>4</sup>

In an environment of fear and increasing paranoia, after the arrests of over 100 Brotherhood members and sympathisers since 2012, the movement has been driven underground.<sup>5</sup> As a result, meeting with self-described members of the Emirati Brotherhood was impossible inside the country. Nonetheless, meetings with Islamist sympathisers and activists helped shed light on the contemporary role of the organisation. In this chapter, we trace the government’s crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood, beginning with its less coercive efforts to encourage the disbandment of the organisation in the 1990s to its campaign of arrests beginning in 2012.

#### *Government Suspicion and Takeover in the 1990s*

Originally tolerated due to its nonthreatening stance, the Emirati Muslim Brotherhood, because its members exerted considerable influence on Emirati society through positions in the educational and judicial systems, provoked government suspicion in the 1990s. At that time, “the UAE’s judicial and education sector was effectively a state within a state: The Brotherhood would make sure that those who qualified for educational scholarships and grants were either Brotherhood members, affiliates, or sympathizers.”<sup>6</sup> As a result, student councils as well as teachers’ and judges’ professional associations became “outposts dedicated to advancing their [Brotherhood] interests.”<sup>7</sup>

The organisation also developed a political reform agenda alongside its social programme, pressing for more representative government and more equal distribution of

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<sup>4</sup> Jean-Pierre Filiu, Qtd. in Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 195.

<sup>5</sup> “‘There Is No Freedom Here,’” 6.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Qassemi, “The Brothers and the Gulf.”

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

wealth.<sup>8</sup> As early as March 1979, *Islah*'s UAE management council wrote a letter to the local rulers ahead of a meeting of the Supreme Council of Rulers, supporting the government's attempts to diminish corruption and to spend oil money in a "pious" way.<sup>9</sup> Statements like the following, from *al-Islah* magazine as early as 1982, were more explicit about the organisation's potential role as political opposition, in the context of government bans on Islamic magazines: "Why are they afraid of Islam? They know that with Islam we are everything. With Islam we liberate lands of Islam, we stop injustice to Islam. Tyrants are afraid of us because of Islam."<sup>10</sup> Further, UAEU's student union voiced disapproval of the UAE's ties with the United States, urging an end to foreign military bases in the Gulf at the beginning of the 1980s.<sup>11</sup> *Islah* even tried to gain more say in government at the local level.

In one of the emirates [...] the Emirati Ikhwan approached their sheikh declaring that while the group held the utmost respect for the ruling sheikh, its members did not seek any power, and that they requested cooperation with him. Thus, despite their marginal position in the power hierarchy, and perhaps their grudging willingness to work within the status quo, they envisioned a possibility for an incremental step toward power-sharing. The ruler responded by allowing the group to do charitable work, teaching of Qur'an, and organizing youth camps, and banning them from practicing politics of any nature or talking as a group in public.<sup>12</sup>

In the absence of organised political action, which is difficult in the Emirati system, the Brotherhood's all-encompassing ideology had the potential to subvert the system and certainly became a basis for questioning it. Just as the Brotherhood expected to have more sway in the political realm, the government also anticipated its turn toward

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<sup>8</sup> Pekka Hakala, "Opposition in the United Arab Emirates," Directorate-General for External Policies, Policy Department, European Parliament, November 15, 2012, 2, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/studiesdownload.html?languageDocument=EN&file=78691>.

<sup>9</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 65-66.

<sup>10</sup> 'Abdullah 'Abu al-Hadi, "Why Ban Islamic Magazines?," *al-Islah* 30 50 (1982), Qtd. in *The Roots of Conspiracy Against the UAE 2*: 172.

<sup>11</sup> "The First General Conference of Emirates Students," *al-Islah* 32 (1982), in *The Roots of Conspiracy Against the UAE 2*: 58-61.

<sup>12</sup> Krause, 99.

the political. Perhaps fearing that the Emirati Brotherhood could gain a broader following as a political bloc, as in Kuwait, the government resolved to squash it before the Ikhwan became too powerful to influence politics on an institutionalised level. Allegations about Islah's misconduct provided the perfect opportunity for the Emirati government to move against the organisation.

In the early 1990s, investigations by Egyptian security services allegedly proved that individuals involved in Egyptian Islamic Jihad had received monetary donations from Islah's Committee for Relief and Outside Activities.<sup>13</sup> The prevailing argument became that the Brotherhood is, at its core, an international organisation, "imported by Egyptians," and so used outside groups to further its cause, the establishment of a single Islamic state.<sup>14</sup> As a consequence, the group has been considered to have "international goals – to create a caliphate state."<sup>15</sup> The Emirati government viewed the oath of *bay'a* or loyalty to the Brotherhood's General Guide to be a direct challenge to loyalty to the UAE and demanded that members of Islah pledge loyalty to their country alone.<sup>16</sup>

During the same period, the government began investigating the influence of Brotherhood members within the education sector when promising scholarship applications were rejected and found that the Brotherhood members largely controlled the distribution of educational awards.<sup>17</sup> Trying to regain control, the government dissolved the Brotherhood's previously elected boards of directors in 1994,<sup>18</sup> placing them under supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs. This body cannot take punitive action,

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<sup>13</sup> "Al-Qisat al-Kamila."

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Ebtesam al-Ketbi.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Mohamed Binhuwaidin, February 17, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 77.

<sup>17</sup> Saldana, 139.

<sup>18</sup> Hakala, 2.

which is the Ministry of Justice's purview.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, the Emirati Brotherhood's internal actions were under surveillance, and its external activities were frozen, reflecting additional concerns about its links to other countries, especially Egypt.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the government restricted the political activity of the Brotherhood's members, banning them from holding public office.<sup>21</sup> This decision affected the branches of Islah in Dubai and Fujairah, in addition to the more loosely affiliated Guidance Group in Ajman.

Abu Dhabi was the first emirate to encourage crackdown on the Brotherhood in 1988, having already denied permission for the establishment of a branch in that emirate.<sup>22</sup> Aware of the Brotherhood's eagerness to participate in political debate, that emirate's government promoted the emergence of other, more politically quietist, Islamic ideologies instead, specifically Sufism, Jama'at al-Tabligh, and Salafism.<sup>23</sup> The Brotherhood was thus stymied, while its members were individually marginalised.

There was a change in the mid-1990s when Islah individuals were sent to early retirement from the government; their kids had obstacles getting jobs. They were moved from the education sector to service-oriented ministries. This separation in the mid-1990s was instigated by [Egyptian President Hosni] Mubarak after assassination attempts. He started a tour of the GCC to turn rulers against the Muslim Brotherhood. In Kuwait it didn't work. The Muslim Brotherhood were exorbitantly peaceful in the UAE, didn't even raise their voices against harassment, which led the government to crack down more.<sup>24</sup>

The clampdown coincided with the deportation of prominent Egyptian and Syrian Brotherhood sympathisers, many of whom had worked in the education sector.<sup>25</sup> The most renowned was Iraqi Brotherhood ideologue 'Abd al Mun'im al-'Izzi (also known as

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<sup>19</sup> "Al-Qisat al-Kamila."

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Hakala, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Ahmed Mansoor.

<sup>25</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 78.

Muhammad Ahmad Rashid), who authored a great deal of the Brotherhood literature and had once served as an advisor in Dubai's Ministry of Awqaf.<sup>26</sup>

Notably, the Ras al-Khaimah branch of Islah was exempted from ministerial control, though it did have to curtail its external activities.<sup>27</sup> Until the most recent crackdown, it remained independent under the protection of its sympathetic ruler Shaykh Saqr al-Qasimi (r. 1972-2010),<sup>28</sup> who "rejected the dissolution of al-Islah because he felt it played a role in preserving the youth."<sup>29</sup> Further, the head of Islah in Ras al-Khaimah, Shaykh Sultan bin Kayed al-Qasimi was the cousin of the ruler at that time.<sup>30</sup> Al-Qasimi family's relationship with Islah, while granting the Brotherhood protection, led to tension with the central government after its issuance in 1996 of a warrant for the arrest of Islah member Mohammed al-Mansoori. Shaykh Saqr refused to dismiss al-Mansoori from his position in Islah in Ras al-Khaimah.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, al-Mansoori was briefly arrested in 2006 without a judicial warrant for "insulting the Public Prosecutor," was placed on a travel ban in 2007, and was stripped of his passport in 2008.<sup>32</sup> He was also dismissed in 2009 from his position as legal advisor to the ruler of Ras al-Khaimah after criticising the lack of free speech inside the UAE on al-Hiwar television station.<sup>33</sup> Al-Mansoori was most recently arrested in July 2012 along with other members of Islah, including Shaykh Sultan bin Kayed al-Qasimi, and received a 10-year sentence for his involvement in Islah, in addition to 15-month sentence in January 2014 after standing trial with nine other

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>27</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 69.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>29</sup> Mohammed al-Roken, Qtd. in Yara Bayoumy, "UAE Islamist Group Had No Desire to Topple Government: Families," Reuters, July 3, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/02/us-emirates-trial-islam-idUSBRE9610PT20130702>.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 71.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>32</sup> "There is no Freedom Here," 46.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 46.

Emiratis and 20 Egyptians.<sup>34</sup> Ultimately, then, the central government's policy toward the Muslim Brotherhood prevailed, its actions demonstrating the degree to which security has been centralised and the extent to which the Muslim Brotherhood is perceived as an existential political threat. The strengthening of control over the periphery, particularly in the troubled northern emirates, is considered crucial to maintaining peace.

*September 11 and Crackdown on Islamists*

The tense relationship between the Emirati government and the Muslim Brotherhood became more confrontational following the attacks of September 11, 2001. The fact that two Emiratis were involved in the terrorist acts made the government eager to prove to the international community that it would not tolerate religious extremism or in fact any independent religious movement. As part of this effort, Emirati authorities increased internal security.<sup>35</sup> The State Security Directorate arrested over 250 individuals accused of terrorism, mainly harbouring Islamist sympathies, in 2002, yet most had been released by 2004.<sup>36</sup> As Abdulkhaleq Abdulla explained,

After 20-25 years of penetration, the security-conscious UAE found out that the Brotherhood have their own organisation. That is not fitting with laws. The government began tracking them, but it was too late because they had power. 9/11 was very important, a wakeup call that Islamists could lead the younger generation down a bad path and bring pressure from the U.S.<sup>37</sup>

The government attempted to persuade Islah to disband following September 11, but the organisation refused, also declining to divulge names of their members.<sup>38</sup>

Following its failure to convince Islah to dissolve, the central government began, in 2003, hosting talks between Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Shaykh Mohammed bin Zayed

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Abdulkhaleq Abdulla.

<sup>36</sup> Saldana, 140.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Abdulkhaleq Abdulla.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

and the Brotherhood to persuade the organisation to stop activity inside the UAE and to sever its ties with the international Ikhwan.<sup>39</sup> In exchange, the government would support the group and allow it to continue its work only in Islamic *da'wa*. Emirati officials requested that Islah follow Qatar's example because, in their view, if it were not a politically subversive group, it would not require independent organisational capacity.<sup>40</sup> After months of talks, Islah rejected the government's invitation to continue engaging in *da'wa* without an organisational structure.<sup>41</sup> In an effort to calm Emirati concerns about the Ikhwan's loyalty, Mohammed al-Mansoori announced in 2003 that the Emirati Brotherhood had stopped pledging allegiance to the General Guide in Cairo, a declaration that ultimately "only confirmed people's doubts of the strength of the relationship."<sup>42</sup> The government's primary objection to the organisation, according to Emirati political scientist Ebtisam al-Ketbi, was its foreign funding, which made it loyal not to its nation but to the organisation and its ideology.<sup>43</sup> In her view, "[n]o country would accept such an organisation."<sup>44</sup>

Realising that it could not force the group's disbandment, the government tried to mitigate the Ikhwan's influence. It transferred some 170 Brotherhood members, including 83 officers from the Ministry of Education, to other government departments.<sup>45</sup> Saudi researcher Mansour al-Noqaidan claims that the central Emirati government, at this time,

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<sup>39</sup> "Al-Qisat al-Kamila."

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Jamal Khashoggi, October 23, 2013.

<sup>41</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 72.

<sup>42</sup> Sultan Sooud al-Qassemi, "Will Egypt's New President Rebuild Ties with the UAE?," *Gulf News*, June 27, 2012, <http://gulfnews.com/opinion/thinkers/will-egypt-s-new-president-rebuild-ties-with-the-uae-1.1040772>.

<sup>43</sup> Ola Salem, "94 Emiratis Charged with Compromising UAE Security," *The National*, January 28, 2013, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/politics/94-emiratis-charged-with-compromising-uae-security>.

<sup>44</sup> Ola Salem, "Islah 'does not represent UAE interests'," *The National*, October 5, 2012, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/islah-does-not-represent-uae-interests>.

<sup>45</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 70.

offered three options to those Islah members holding jobs in the education sector: they could retain their positions in education if they abandoned their oath of loyalty to the General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood and agreed to contribute to the promotion of so-called “moderate” Islam; they could continue supporting the ideology of Islah, as long as they left the organisation, did not promote it, and did not teach or have direct interaction with students; or the government could provide employment opportunities outside of educational institutions for those who chose to retain their group affiliation.<sup>46</sup>

When many Islah members refused,

the previous concessions granted to the Muslim Brotherhood were soon reversed, with hundreds of teachers, academics, and ministry employees being fired in 2006 from their jobs on the grounds of Islamist affiliations. Some have since been accused of ‘dual loyalties’ or threatening ‘violent acts in the occupied Arab emirates’, and in 2008 a large number of activists were imprisoned and accused of being part of an ‘underground movement in the UAE trying to promote their own strict view of Islam’.<sup>47</sup>

Despite this setback, the remaining three branches of Islah (Dubai, Fujairah, and Ras al-Khaimah) and the Guidance Society in Ajman continued with their activities of hosting discussions, lectures, and Qur’an recitation competitions, in addition to the publication of *al-Islah* magazine.<sup>48</sup> Islah responded to the 2006 crackdown with protest rallies, internet postings, and media appearances.<sup>49</sup> In a November 2008 article, one of the leaders of the group, Hamad al-Raqit, claimed that Islah never had the opportunity to speak to the government about its decision to remove the management board of the Dubai and Fujairah branches and place them under ministerial controls in the 1990s, which he said revoked leadership from those entitled to it.<sup>50</sup> By the mid-2000s, it had become clear that “[t]he regime in the UAE is not friendly toward Islamists, and prominent Islamists

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>47</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 194-19.

<sup>48</sup> Al-Noqaidan, 74.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 70.

have been arrested, barred from teaching at university, and otherwise harassed by the government.”<sup>51</sup> In such an environment, it became increasingly difficult for members of Islah to pursue their independent activities. Still, the Brotherhood’s brand of conservative Islam remained attractive, especially for those suffering from unequal economic conditions in the poorer emirates and for those resentful of Western influence more broadly, fuelling government fears of an Islamist takeover.<sup>52</sup>

Islah inspired the creation of other Islamist organisations as well, making it even more dangerous in the government’s eyes. The Emirates People’s Rights Organisation (EPRO) was established in 2004 as an independent human rights group under the leadership of former Islah member and self-proclaimed Sharjan human rights activist Hassan al-Diqqi.<sup>53</sup> “It was clear from the website that al-Diqqi had Islamist views and was vociferous in his criticism of the UAEG [UAE government].”<sup>54</sup> In fact, he had left Islah, preferring “more Islamist ideas about development.”<sup>55</sup> The federal government refused to recognise the organisation, instead establishing the Emirates Human Rights Association (EHRA) in 2005, which primarily included members of government or people closely allied to it.<sup>56</sup> The government also demanded that al-Diqqi shut down his group’s website ([www.emiratespro.com](http://www.emiratespro.com)), on which he had “denounced the UAE’s lack of civil liberties and alleged political abuses and human rights violations.”<sup>57</sup> He also decried

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<sup>51</sup> Herb, “Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates,” 359.

<sup>52</sup> “UAE Minimizing Influence of Islamic Extremists.”

<sup>53</sup> “Ministry of Education Dismissed Eighty Three Emirati Teachers,” Embassy of the United States Abu Dhabi, *WikiLeaks*, December 22, 2008, <https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=08ABUDHABI1440>.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

the construction of Christian churches and Hindu temples and Western, especially American, universities in the UAE.<sup>58</sup>

Al-Diqqi, though he had left the Brotherhood, became a victim of government intimidation. Shortly after establishing the organisation, he was arrested on charges of raping a housekeeper and went into hiding.<sup>59</sup> Al-Diqqi was sentenced to death in absentia, was arrested in Sharjah in July 2006 on the rape charge, and ultimately spent nine months in prison.<sup>60</sup> More recently, in 2012, al-Diqqi tried to launch a political party inspired by Salafism called al-Umma,<sup>61</sup> which has since been dubbed a terrorist organisation in the November 2014 list.<sup>62</sup> The group has branches in Saudi Arabia, where it is also outlawed, and Kuwait, where it operates openly.<sup>63</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered the development “surprising and regrettable.”<sup>64</sup> In the face of such attempts to promote Islamist thought, the federal government has taken the lead on the crackdown against any independent religious thought that could undermine its sovereignty.

### *Escalating Tensions and Political Reforms*

Following its confrontations with the government in the 1990s and 2000s, Islah had far less freedom to exercise political influence yet continued agitating privately for enhanced participation in government. The website [www.uaehewar.com](http://www.uaehewar.com), founded in

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> United Arab Emirates (UAE): Events of 2008, Human Rights Watch, <http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2009/united-arab-emirates-uae>.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> “UAE Criticises US Human Rights Report,” *The National*, March 10, 2014, <http://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/uae-criticises-us-human-rights-report>.

<sup>62</sup> “UAE Blacklists 82 Groups as ‘Terrorist’,” *Al Arabiya*, November 15, 2014, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/11/15/UAE-formally-blacklists-82-groups-as-terrorist-.html>.

<sup>63</sup> Joseph Braude, “The Muslim Brotherhood’s More Frightening Offshoot,” *The Atlantic*, July 15, 2013, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/07/the-muslim-brotherhoods-more-frightening-offshoot/277786/>.

<sup>64</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Qtd. in “UAE Criticises US Human Rights Report.”

summer 2009 by a diverse group of Emirati students and activists, resurrected the reform movement among Islamists and secular Emiratis alike. It “quickly gained the reputation as being the best place to put forward grievances, challenge the authorities, and discuss the country’s future.”<sup>65</sup> In early 2010, the government blocked the website within the UAE, yet it remained an active discussion board outside of the country. The website, though not explicitly linked to Islah, brought to the fore a number of concerns, shared by the Brotherhood, about the increasingly authoritarian nature of the Emirati government, as well as corruption within it. “By January 2010, the website’s most controversial debate had gathered pace: thousands of users accessed posts related to the acquittal of [a] member of Abu Dhabi’s ruling family who had been accused of torture and sodomy. Most of the threads touched on the concerns of nationals regarding the application of the rule of law to the ruling families and the broader impact of the verdict on the UAE’s international reputation.”<sup>66</sup> Attempts to hold the central government accountable for its policies largely went unanswered.

Still, the opinions expressed on the website were not outrageous or particularly surprising. In fact, a 2010 survey conducted by *al-Emarat al-Youm* newspaper showed that 73 percent of respondents wanted to increase the FNC’s power.<sup>67</sup> Further, President Shaykh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahyan has repeatedly stated his intention to grant the FNC greater decision-making power, saying that it will have a “bigger role...by empowering it to be an authority that will provide great support and guidance of the executive.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 220.

<sup>66</sup> Christopher M. Davidson, “Fear and Loathing in the Emirates,” *Sada*, September 18, 2012, <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2012/09/18/fear-and-loathing-in-emirates/fdw2>.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Ahmed Mansoor.

<sup>68</sup> Shaykh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahyan, Qtd. in Davidson, *Abu Dhabi*, 155.

Frustrated with its inability to use institutionalised means to voice its grievances, Islah took a more oppositional stance.<sup>69</sup> One analyst explained the Emirati government's reaction to this change:

You can be here and believe whatever you want but don't bring your politics here. Brotherhood supporters became politically active during the Arab Spring, and this led to the crackdown. Every few years there were arrests, deportations, trials because the Brotherhood has been a perennial problem for the UAE since its inception. The Arab Spring and election of [Mohamed] Morsi brought the Muslim Brotherhood issue to a head, so there were much more public arrests and deportations, as well as subsidising the Egyptian state under Sisi and driving the Muslim Brotherhood underground.<sup>70</sup>

The reform movement, tacitly supported by Islah for years, became stronger and more active during the Arab Spring, as the government continued to promise (yet failed to deliver on) greater political participation to citizens. As in Qatar, though, Emirati citizens have only been able to use uninstitutionalised means to voice political concerns.

#### *The Petition Movement and First Government Crackdown*

A petition, addressed to President Shaykh Khalifa and the Supreme Council of Rulers in March 2011 and endorsed by 133 intellectuals, among them Islah members, led to the most significant government crackdown on all strands of opposition. The immediate catalyst for the petition was the government's failure to introduce legislation to increase the pool of voters for the FNC, which many members of the Council had advocated since March 2010.<sup>71</sup> The petition garnered support from a variety of political groups, as it called for universal suffrage in an elected legislature, with expanded constitutional powers to produce legislation and supervise the executive.<sup>72</sup> Notably, four

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Ebtessam al-Ketbi.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Theodore Karasik, February 19, 2014.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Ahmed Mansoor.

<sup>72</sup> Text of the petition can be found at: "Al-Imiratiyyun Yarfa'un Risala li-Hukkam al-Imirat Tatalib bi-Islah Kolli li-l-Tanzim al-Barlamani" [Emiratis Address Message to the Rulers of the UAE Calling for Holistic Reform of the Parliamentary System], ipetitions, March 3, 2011, <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/uaepetition71/>.

professional organisations (the associations for jurists, teachers, national heritage professionals, and university faculty), all of which were traditionally known for their Brotherhood ties, signed the petition. They also issued a joint statement, announcing “civil society in the UAE considers that the time has come to ensure the right of political participation of every citizen, with direct elections for a council with full federal oversight and legislative powers, and lamented ‘the lack of involvement of citizens to choose their representatives, decades after the establishment of the state’.”<sup>73</sup>

The petition marked the first time that liberal and Islamist opposition had come together in such a public political undertaking and “gathered signatures from across the political spectrum, including nationalists, Islamists and others.”<sup>74</sup> Liberal human rights activist Ahmed Mansoor explained that the petition’s goal was “to bridge the gap between different factions – to get liberals, Islamists, and nationalists to get together on a national course.”<sup>75</sup> Cooperation among various factions led to a number of compromises. Mansoor described the process: “We decided to limit the petition to improvement of the FNC to get the maximum number of people to sign. Islamists did not start this petition [...] We wrote the petition in very soft language, very diplomatic and fatherly language to attract more signatures.”<sup>76</sup> Despite signatories’ efforts to strike a balance between demanding reform from the government and maintaining ties with it, the petition provoked a crackdown. Still, it did not advocate much reform beyond what had been previously promised by the state authorities regarding increased representation in the FNC.

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<sup>73</sup> Joint statement from civil society organisations, Qtd. in Davidson, “Fear and Loathing in the Emirates.”

<sup>74</sup> Abdulaziz Alhies, “Concerns in the Gulf,” *Al-Ahram*, December 19, 2012, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/Print/620.aspx>.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Ahmed Mansoor.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

In early April 2011, five of the 133 signatories of the petition (the so-called UAE5),<sup>77</sup> said to be its primary backers, were arrested. They were charged with “‘publicly insulting’ the UAE’s President, Vice-President and Crown Prince in comments posted on an online discussion forum [UAEHiwar] [...] All five were convicted in November 2011 after a trial that failed to satisfy international standards of fair trial, and sentenced to prison terms of up to three years.”<sup>78</sup> Shortly after their sentencing, the five (one of whom was an Islah member) were released through a presidential pardon due in large measure to international media attention and a November 2011 report by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention condemning the arrests.<sup>79</sup> Economist and lecturer at Paris-Sorbonne University in Abu Dhabi Nasser bin Ghaith, one of the UAE5 who has since been rearrested,<sup>80</sup> expressed shock at the crackdown: “I am politically neutral and well-connected, so it was surprising what happened to me—people were shocked. It shows the rising power of state security in our country.”<sup>81</sup> Having been released (yet not formally cleared of their charges), the activists continued voicing their political opinions, primarily through social media.<sup>82</sup>

In attempts to bolster domestic support for the government, a widely publicised “statement of allegiance,” released in May 2011 and sponsored by a lawyers’ association, voiced support for the monarchy; several pro-government rallies were arranged; and the

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<sup>77</sup> The five included human rights activist Ahmed Mansoor, economist Nasser bin Ghaith, and online activists Fahad Salim Dalk, Hassan ‘Ali al-Khamis, and Ahmed ‘Abdul Khaleq.

<sup>78</sup> “‘There Is No Freedom Here,’” 6

<sup>79</sup> Opinion no. 64/2011 (United Arab Emirates), United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Alkarama Foundation, September 13, 2011, [http://en.alkarama.org/documents/WGAD64-2011\\_UAE\\_ALK2011-2768\\_AhmedMansoor\\_2211211\\_EN\\_Onlineversion.pdf](http://en.alkarama.org/documents/WGAD64-2011_UAE_ALK2011-2768_AhmedMansoor_2211211_EN_Onlineversion.pdf).

<sup>80</sup> Rori Donaghy, “UAE Arrest Prominent Economist and Pro-Democracy Activist,” Middle East Eye, August 19, 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/uae-arrest-prominent-economist-and-pro-democracy-activist-2147452605>.

<sup>81</sup> Nasser bin Ghaith, Qtd. in “Whispered Dissent in UAE: No Sheikh-up Here,” *The Economist*, March 17, 2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/21550288>.

<sup>82</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 225.

authorities attempted to persuade tribal leaders to release statements denouncing the opposition movement.<sup>83</sup> Hoping to stifle dissent from the civil society sector, the government also disbanded the boards of the independent Jurist Association and Teachers' Association in 2011, both of which had supported the petition movement. The government had become more explicit than ever about denying the civil society sector a political voice. "By summarily dismissing their executive boards and appointing government nominees to replace them, the authorities compromised the independence of the two organizations and effectively sent a warning to other NGOs to toe the line or risk opening themselves to similar government intervention."<sup>84</sup> Further restricting civil society, in 2012, the government closed the local offices of four foreign NGOs, including two whose remit is to promote democracy (National Democratic Institute and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung), as well as the RAND Corporation in Abu Dhabi and Gallup Center, in addition to denying the renewal of the Gulf Research Centre's business licence,<sup>85</sup> due to "objections by the Dubai government to various aspects of [its] work."<sup>86</sup>

Hoping to deflect attention from incidents like the UAE5, the government made limited efforts to respond to domestic political opposition, while also boosting financial disbursements, in an effort to "buy off" dissidents. The government thus expanded the FNC electorate to 12 percent of the national population for the September 2011 elections<sup>87</sup> and stated that universal suffrage could be introduced by 2019.<sup>88</sup> It also granted huge public sector pay increases (in some cases up to 100 percent) and boosted

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>84</sup> "'There Is No Freedom Here,'" 7.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>86</sup> "LSE Cancels Arab Spring Forum in UAE, Citing Local Curbs," Reuters, February 23, 2013, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/02/23/uk-uae-university-conference-idUKBRE91M0AI20130223>.

<sup>87</sup> "Turnout in UAE's Second Election Low."

<sup>88</sup> "The United Arab Emirate: Getting Twitchy about Democracy," *The Economist*, June 30, 2011, <http://www.economist.com/node/18898137>.

welfare benefits by up to 20 percent, in addition to signing a \$2.7 billion agreement to help poorer nationals pay off outstanding loans.<sup>89</sup> Shortly after the petition, in March 2011, the federal government also announced a new investment of \$1.6 billion to improve infrastructure in the northern emirates.<sup>90</sup> In addition, several supermarkets within the UAE agreed with the Ministry of Economy to slash prices for food and other essential items by up to 40 percent for one month.<sup>91</sup> The expansion of the FNC electorate was the primary political reform, yet resulted in no substantial change: only half of the FNC is elected; the body itself still lacks legislative power, and a meagre 28 percent of the eligible voters took part in the election.<sup>92</sup> The government's largely economic response to political opposition reflects the regime's understanding of politics as primarily pecuniary, considering citizen approval to be determined by the distribution of resources rather than the state's adherence to or crackdown on any ideological tendency. Nonetheless, Islamist complaint remains a viable independent voice in super-rentiers, as its supporters are not swayed by government handouts.

Islah supported the UAE5 and other imprisoned activists as the crackdown continued into 2012. Although liberal and Islamist activists had worked together on the petition, the government exaggerated links between them in an effort to dramatise the danger to the system. "The government wanted to conflate the two to show it's a big threat. The government never took liberals very seriously. The government saw Islamists as more dangerous due to links with the Muslim Brotherhood."<sup>93</sup> The government, in

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<sup>89</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 224.

<sup>90</sup> "UAE to Invest in Poorer Northern Emirates," Reuters, March 2, 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/03/02/oukwd-uk-emirates-utilities-idAFTRE72121720110302>.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> "Turnout in UAE's Second Election Low."

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Kristian Alexander, March 13, 2014.

turn, charged that Islah exploited the controversy surrounding the UAE5 to increase its own influence, “using the umbrella of reform to reach their goals” of larger government takeover.<sup>94</sup> While the first wave of crackdown focused on the petition, the second was directed at Islah.

### *Government Crackdown on Islah*

In 2012, the government launched a campaign of arrests targeting the Muslim Brotherhood, which it considered to be the primary political threat. The group “was more popular and well-known [than the liberal movement] due to its social activities. Many of its members were seen as the cream of society [...] with good reputations and important positions.”<sup>95</sup> In April 2012, seven Islah members (the so-called UAE7),<sup>96</sup> who were signatories to the March 2011 petition and whose citizenship had been stripped in December 2011, were sent to prison after they did not leave the country as the government requested.<sup>97</sup> “They claimed that they were ‘unjustly targeted for their political views’” since they had signed the petition on behalf of Islah.<sup>98</sup> These arrests marked only the beginning of the crackdown on Islah.

By the end of July, 54 Islamists had been arrested, including academics, activists, and even Shaykh Sultan bin Kayed al-Qasimi from the ruling family of Ras al-Khaimah.<sup>99</sup> Attorney General ‘Ali Salim al-Tunaiji announced “the country’s national security was under threat from a group of people with ties to ‘foreign organizations and agendas’ – a clear reference to Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood organization. Al-Tunaiji

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<sup>94</sup> Interview with Ebtessam al-Ketbi.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Ahmed Mansoor.

<sup>96</sup> The seven included Shaykh Mohammad ‘Abdul Razzaq al-Siddiq, Ahmed Ghaith al-Suwaidi, ‘Ali Hussain al-Hammadi, Shaheen ‘Abdullah al-Hosani, Hussain Munif ‘Abdullah al-Jabri, Hassan Al-Jabri, and Ibrahim Hassan al-Marzouqi.

<sup>97</sup> “‘There Is No Freedom Here’,” 7.

<sup>98</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 225.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

accused this group of plotting ‘crimes against state security’ and of opposing ‘the UAE constitution and ruling system’,” yet presented no evidence to that effect.<sup>100</sup> Later that month, he confirmed that Islah members in custody were accused of creating and operating a secret organisation whose “undeclared objectives were to seek to succeed in taking over the authority in the country and oppose the fundamental principles on which it is based.”<sup>101</sup> Al-Tunaiji went on to say that Islah had aimed to tarnish the government’s image and that the trial for these suspects would be held in Abu Dhabi at the State Security Chamber of the Federal Supreme Court.<sup>102</sup>

In September 2012, the government claimed to have received confessions from imprisoned Islah members, admitting that their organisation had an armed wing and aimed to overthrow the existing order to re-establish the caliphate, a claim not substantiated by any independent Islah documents or public statements.<sup>103</sup> Still, one government report claimed that “investigations have revealed that the structure of the organization included committees and local branches in every emirate, as well as consultative and executive councils and a military wing.”<sup>104</sup> Other sources added that Islah coordinated its efforts with Brotherhood organisations elsewhere in the region and even received financial assistance from Brotherhood affiliates in other Gulf countries.<sup>105</sup> Because Islah had an organisational structure, the Emirati government considered it to necessarily harbour nefarious political aims. Islah denied all charges, stating that the organisation is “pacifist, civilian and moderate and has never, and will never, choose to

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<sup>100</sup> “‘There Is No Freedom Here’,” 7.

<sup>101</sup> ‘Ali Salem al-Tunaiji, Qtd. in “‘There Is No Freedom Here’,” 7-8.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>103</sup> “UAE Islamists Deny Forming Military Wing,” *Ahram Online*, September 22, 2012, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/53525.aspx>.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

take up arms.”<sup>106</sup> By the end of 2012, 94 alleged members of Islah had been arrested. In response to this government crackdown, “the opposition seemed to have broadened, with the government facing further criticism.”<sup>107</sup>

In January 2013, 13 women were arrested, many of whom were relatives of men previously jailed.<sup>108</sup> The 94 arrested in 2012 were tried together, eight in absentia, beginning in March 2013. In July 2013, 69 of the defendants, including the eight outside the country, were convicted and received sentences ranging from seven to 15 years, while 25 were acquitted, including the 13 women.<sup>109</sup> The UAE7 had been added to the UAE94 trial and were convicted of posing a security threat due to their membership in Islah; they were sentenced, aside from 25 who were found not guilty, to ten years in prison each, with three years of probation to follow.<sup>110</sup> The UAE94 were denied the right of an appeal, and the prosecution used evidence primarily of confessions that were allegedly obtained through ill treatment or torture.<sup>111</sup> Although seven international human rights agencies urged Emirati authorities to make UAE94 trial proceedings open to the public,<sup>112</sup> authorities did not allow entry to international media or independent observers, making it difficult to discern how fair the trial was.<sup>113</sup>

In addition to the series of arrests, “there was a massive media campaign; businesses, bank accounts were suspended, and people were threatened.”<sup>114</sup> Using both the trials and the State Security Directorate, “[a]t one stroke, the authorities removed their

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<sup>106</sup> Islah statement, Qtd. in “UAE Islamists Deny Forming Military Wing.”

<sup>107</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 225.

<sup>108</sup> “‘There Is No Freedom Here,’” 7.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>112</sup> “Calls for UAE to Open Islamist Trial,” *News24*, April 3, 2013, <http://www.news24.com/World/News/Calls-for-UAE-to-open-Islamist-trial-20130403>.

<sup>113</sup> “‘There Is No Freedom Here,’” 8.

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Ahmed Mansoor.

most prominent critics and the country's leading advocates of reform from the public arena, while signalling to other potential dissenters that they will not tolerate open political debate in the UAE."<sup>115</sup> Since 2011, the UAE has become increasingly insular and restrictive. Aside from the closure of international NGOs mentioned above, the government has become more selective in allowing non-nationals inside the country. In February 2012, the residency permits of approximately 60 Syrian citizens were cancelled after they staged a protest outside their country's embassy, reflecting the Emirati government's intolerance of expatriates participating in politics inside the state.<sup>116</sup> Certainly, "the action against Syrian protesters, despite strong public sympathy with their plight, points to a broader intolerance for political activism of any kind, including internal dissent. This is particularly so if it is perceived to involve the Muslim Brotherhood."<sup>117</sup> Following the UAE94 trial, another security trial was held in November 2013, wherein ten of the 94, along with 20 Egyptians (six tried in absentia), were charged for creating an international branch of the Muslim Brotherhood and for stealing and circulating classified state documents.<sup>118</sup> They were convicted in January 2014, despite complaints of being forced to make confessions under torture, and were granted sentences of one to five years, with the Egyptians to be deported immediately after serving their sentences.<sup>119</sup>

In February 2013, Qatari doctor Mahmoud al-Jaidah was arrested for supporting Islah as he was transiting through Dubai International Airport. The State Security Chamber of the Federal Supreme Court "convicted Mahmoud al-Jaidah under Article 180 of the Penal Code for allegedly providing financial support to families of the members of

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<sup>115</sup> "'There Is No Freedom Here,'" 9.

<sup>116</sup> "Whispered Dissent in the UAE."

<sup>117</sup> Hudson, "The Incremental Approach to Political Reform," 57.

<sup>118</sup> "'There Is No Freedom Here,'" 9.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

al-Islah who were detained following their arrests in 2012. The court sentenced him to seven years of imprisonment.”<sup>120</sup> Another public gaffe occurred in February 2013, when the London School of Economics cancelled an academic conference co-hosted with the American University of Sharjah “in response to restrictions imposed on the intellectual content of the event that threatened academic freedom.”<sup>121</sup>

Further cementing the Emirati government’s stance against the Brotherhood and in fact any independent organisation, a new anti-terrorism law passed in August 2014 updated the 2004 legislation, allowing for expanded use of the death penalty and other severe punishments.<sup>122</sup> The legislation, though cracking down on violent extremist groups at a time of regional fear about an resurgence of violent jihadist activity in Syria, also “has the potential to be used against peaceful activists and government critics due to the broad ambit of its provisions, their vague definition, and the range of actions that may be considered under the law to amount to terrorism.”<sup>123</sup> As Sarah Leah Whitson of Human Rights Watch put it, “[i]n the UAE it’s now a case of ‘you’re with us or you’re a terrorist’.”<sup>124</sup> In November 2014, the UAE released a list of 82 organisations that it considers terrorist groups. Although this record includes violent groups such as al-Qa‘ida and ISIS, it also comprises nonviolent groups like Islah and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, in addition to advocacy organisations like the Council on American-Islamic Relations.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>121</sup> “LSE Cancels Arab Spring Forum in UAE.”

<sup>122</sup> “‘There Is No Freedom Here’,” 10.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>124</sup> “UAE: Terrorism Law Threatens Lives, Liberty,” Human Rights Watch, December 4, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/12/03/uae-terrorism-law-threatens-lives-liberty>.

<sup>125</sup> “UAE Blacklists 82 Groups as ‘Terrorist’.”

Many Emiratis insist that the government's swift crackdown intentionally created "the impression of political dynamism that doesn't exist."<sup>126</sup> Others support this response as the government enforcing laws that restrict the formation of any independent political organisation, under the penal code.<sup>127</sup> Still others consider it a means of promoting Emirati national security. Ultimately, within the UAE, "people value stability."<sup>128</sup> Government rhetoric has been instrumental in promoting the authorities' narrative about Islah as a dangerous international organisation intent on dismantling the prevailing order.

*Divide and Conquer: The Government's Rhetoric about the Muslim Brotherhood*

The Emirati government has been surprisingly outspoken in its recent criticism of the Muslim Brotherhood, dismissing the organisation's calls for reform as attempts to dismantle the regime. Although the government's actions against the Ikhwan only made headlines during the Arab Spring, members of the government had expressed concerns about the organisation in conversations with American officials as early as 2007. At that time, they used "quiet marginalization" and support for reintegrating MB [Muslim Brotherhood] members back into mainstream society. Members of the ruling families often got personally involved in this process."<sup>129</sup> The UAE ruling families long feared Brotherhood influence, despite their massive wealth, demonstrating the salience of ideological politics in a super-rentier. Having failed to "buy off" such movements, the government resolved to squash it.

Some Emiratis claim that the government's new, harsher response is a reaction to a "more radical" younger generation of Islamists "fired up" to take over power after the

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<sup>126</sup> Interview with Francis Matthew.

<sup>127</sup> Interview with Abdulkhaleq Abdulla.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ingo Forstenlechner, Emilie Rutledge, and Rashed Salem al-Nuaimi, "The UAE, the 'Arab Spring' and Different Types of Dissent," *Middle East Policy* 19, no. 4 (2012): 55.

successes of Islamists in Egypt and Tunisia during the Arab Spring.<sup>130</sup> Even so, the rhetoric used about the organisation appears to have greatly exaggerated Islah's popularity and political aspirations. During the January 2012 GCC National and Regional Security Conference sponsored by the Bahrain Centre for Strategic, International and Energy Studies, Dhahi Khalfan went so far as to state: "The Muslim Brotherhood is a security threat to the Gulf, and is no less dangerous than Iran."<sup>131</sup> Emirati Foreign Minister Shaykh 'Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan similarly denounced the Brotherhood as "an organization which encroaches upon the sovereignty and integrity of nations" and called on Gulf governments to work against its expanding influence.<sup>132</sup> Such language illustrates government attempts to use fears about emerging Islamist political parties in the region as an excuse to dismiss such groups' demands for political reform within the UAE. Rather than attempting to quietly co-opt the religious sphere or stifle civil society, the Emirati government has embarked on a public offensive against Islamist reformers, raising their profile in the process. It perhaps recognised the power of the Brotherhood's ideology and its ability to garner support from amongst the Emirati citizenry and thus came to consider a full-scale crackdown its only option.

The UAE's crackdown has garnered international attention, in addition to provoking a clash with Qatar, considered to be sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood. In February 2014, Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, on his programme *Al-Shari'a wa-l-Hayat*, accused the Emirati leadership of "standing against every Islamic rule, punishing

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<sup>130</sup> Interview with Abdulkhaleq Abdulla.

<sup>131</sup> Abdullah al-Rashid, "The Brothers and the Emirates," *The Majalla*, February 14, 2013, <http://www.majalla.com/eng/2013/02/article55238281>.

<sup>132</sup> Ian Black, "Emirati Nerves Rattled by Islamists' Rise," *The Guardian*, October 12, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/on-the-middle-east/2012/oct/12/uae-muslimbrotherhood-egypt-arabspring>.

Islamists and sending them to prison.”<sup>133</sup> These remarks led to a major rift between the UAE and Qatar. The Emirati Foreign Ministry summoned the Qatari Ambassador to the UAE to lodge a formal complaint, and the UAE, along with Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, withdrew their ambassadors from Qatar shortly thereafter on grounds that Qatar had failed to meet requirements of their November 2013 agreement.<sup>134</sup> Dhahi Khalfan even opined that Interpol should issue an arrest warrant for Qaradawi.<sup>135</sup> In April, al-Qaradawi took a more conciliatory stance, also making clear that he does not speak for the Qatari government and stating: “I love all the countries of the Gulf, and they all love me: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Bahrain. I consider them one country and one house.”<sup>136</sup>

As the inter-Gulf conflict continued, *The New York Times* revealed in September 2014 that the UAE hired American consulting firm Camstoll Group to plant stories critical of Qatar, particularly its alleged support for the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>137</sup> The feud became bitter, pitting two opposite approaches to handling Islamist complaints against each other, yet seemed to be resolved in November 2014 after al-Qaradawi was taken off the air and after seven Egyptian members of the Brotherhood were expelled from Qatar. In the international standoff, the Emirati position seemed to prevail, especially after the fall of Islamist governments in Egypt and Tunisia, which fuelled criticism of the organisation more broadly. In a recent signal of rapprochement, the UAE pardoned

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<sup>133</sup> Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Qtd. in “Qatar Distances Itself from Al-Qaradawi’s Remarks against UAE,” Middle East Monitor, February 1, 2014, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/9538-qatar-distances-itself-from-al-qaradawis-remarks-against-uae>.

<sup>134</sup> “UAE Summons Qatar Envoy over Qaradawi Remarks,” Al Jazeera, February 2, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/02/uae-summons-qatar-envoy-over-qaradawi-remarks-20142215393855165.html>.

<sup>135</sup> “Al-Qisat al-Kamila.”

<sup>136</sup> Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Qtd. in Bakr.

<sup>137</sup> Kirkpatrick “Qatar’s Support of Islamists.”

Mahmoud al-Jaidah in May 2015, with the state news agency calling this pardoning a means to “strengthen the close fraternal relations between the leaderships and peoples of the two brotherly countries.”<sup>138</sup> Nonetheless, five Qataris were fined or sentenced in absentia in May 2015 after an Emirati court convicted them of insulting the Emirati leadership through social media platforms.<sup>139</sup>

In the domestic sphere, the government has faced minimal public backlash, despite its crackdown. Among Emiratis, rhetoric about the Muslim Brotherhood within the UAE has become extreme, with interviewees comparing the organisation and its members to Nazis,<sup>140</sup> the Ku Klux Klan,<sup>141</sup> and the Taliban.<sup>142</sup> Newspapers throughout the country have run stories about the Brotherhood’s plans to take over the state, claiming that it “infiltrated societies, schools, universities, ministries and families under the pretence of doing social work to conceal their actions and ‘divert their loyalty to the organisation and its leadership after preparing a general climate in society to accept this by turning public opinion against all the authorities of the state’.”<sup>143</sup>

Aside from state news agencies, institutions like Al Mezmaah Studies and Research Centre, described by one Gulf analyst as “government-centred civil society,” are instrumental in spreading government propaganda about the Brotherhood – in particular on university campuses where the Brotherhood has traditionally found support.<sup>144</sup> Al Mezmaah promotes the notion that the Muslim Brotherhood uses the

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<sup>138</sup> Shabina S. Khatri, “UAE Pardons Qatari Doctor Jailed for Supporting Banned Islamist Group,” *Doha News*, May 24, 2015, <http://dohanews.co/uae-pardons-qatari-doctor-jailed-for-supporting-banned-islamist-group/>.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with Fadwa al-Mughairbi, February 17, 2014.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with Emirati academic.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> O. Salem, “94 Emiratis Charged.”

<sup>144</sup> Interview with Theodore Karasik.

façade of an Islamic programme to shroud its real goal of dismantling the nation state in order to create a caliphate.<sup>145</sup> ‘Ali Salem Humaid, founder of Al Mezmaah, went so far as to claim that “those who follow the Muslim Brotherhood are not humans but machines.”<sup>146</sup> Such extreme remarks demonstrate attempts to dehumanise, in an effort to strip legitimacy and appeal of, Brotherhood organisations. Had such groups not been politically influential, the government would not have embarked on such a public and wide-ranging crackdown. Further, because it could use grassroots social outreach to expand its support base, the Brotherhood was seen as ever more dangerous to the Emirati authorities and to the existing order.

*The Extent of the Emirati Brotherhood’s Popular Support*

The UAE government’s harsh crackdown and extreme rhetoric are puzzling, considering that the Emirati Brotherhood never seemed to pose a major political threat, and certainly not the existential threat the government has portrayed it to be. Examination of its internal documents reveals that Islah held few political aspirations beyond enhancing the role of Islam in Emirati society, adjusting government spending, and, more recently, enhancing popular participation in government. Perhaps most worrying to the government is the difficulty in determining how much popular support Islah held among nationals. A report submitted to the last meeting of the international Muslim Brotherhood in Medina in 2008, cited in a *Gulf News* article yet not independently corroborated, indicated that the Brotherhood held great appeal among the UAE’s expatriate community.<sup>147</sup> It claimed that the Emirati Brotherhood had 1,700 expatriate members,

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<sup>145</sup> Interview with ‘Ali al-Ghafli, February 17, 2014.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with ‘Ali Salem Humaid, March 4, 2014.

<sup>147</sup> Sami Salama, “Rise and Fall of Muslim Brotherhood in UAE,” *Gulf News*, April 13, 2013, <http://gulfnews.com/news/region/egypt/rise-and-fall-of-muslim-brotherhood-in-uae-1.1170002>.

including 300 initiates (younger members being taught about the group), 300 novices (who have already pledged allegiance to the supreme guide), 150 associates, 500 regular associates, and 350 working members (who can vote and run for office in the Egyptian organisation).<sup>148</sup> As far as Emirati members, estimates of Brotherhood membership range from 400<sup>149</sup> to 20,000.<sup>150</sup>

Shaykh Mohammed bin Zayed, in a 2004 U.S. Department of State diplomatic cable, estimated that the UAE contained up to 700 Brotherhood members and claimed the State Security Directorate had identified 50-60 Emirati Brotherhood members in the military.<sup>151</sup> He also explained efforts to co-opt Islamists in the military: “when the Armed Forces discovered Muslim Brotherhood sympathizers within their ranks, they were arrested and given a form of reverse brainwashing. All but one of the 40 military personnel detained were subsequently released, convinced that they had been led astray.”<sup>152</sup> Shaykh Mohammed also estimated that some 50 to 80 percent of the 60,000 UAE armed forces “would respond to the call of ‘some holy man in Mekkah’,” going on to say that he would be “‘stoned’ by his own citizens if he pushed some subjects too openly.”<sup>153</sup> Shaykh Mohammed’s fears directly disprove rentier state theory: hydrocarbon wealth cannot “buy off” political competitors, particularly ideological ones. Further, Islah’s primary mode of expression was social, yet the Abu Dhabi government considered it a political threat, demonstrating the ability of the Brotherhood to function in

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with Dubai-based Gulf correspondent, March 6, 2014.

<sup>150</sup> Plotkin Boghardt, “The Muslim Brotherhood on Trial.”

<sup>151</sup> “UAE Minimizing Influence of Islamic Extremists.”

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> “U/S Burns’ January 22 Meeting with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince and UAE Foreign Minister,” United States Embassy Abu Dhabi, *Wikileaks*, January 24, 2007.

<https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=07ABUDHABI97>.

both spheres in super-rentiers that do not allow institutionalised means of political participation.

Inspired by Shaykh Mohammed bin Zayed's distrust of the Brotherhood, the government of Abu Dhabi has advocated the toughest stance of any emirate toward Islamists. Dubai's government, on the other hand, has focused primarily on "tracking" individuals known to be sympathetic to the Islamist agenda."<sup>154</sup> In an effort to dissuade Dubai citizens from Islamism, Shaykh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, until the recent crackdown, met with them "to explain to them the error of their ways, and to tell them that if they are looking for a job, or land, or any other assistance, they should not hesitate to ask. Apparently, this approach (direct appeal from the ruler) is often effective, especially for younger devotees. Those who are resistant to change, however, are locked up, sometimes repeatedly, for months at a time in hopes that this will dissuade them from acting on their Islamist tendencies."<sup>155</sup> Abu Dhabi, meanwhile, prefers a security-led approach and has always been cautious about the Muslim Brotherhood, having denied the organisation permission to operate in the emirate as early as the 1990s.

While determining the number of Islah members in the UAE is difficult, perhaps more challenging is defining what it means to be a member of Islah in the UAE today. Even before the most recent crackdown, the majority of those who supported the organisation would admit to it only behind closed doors, and mainly in an informal capacity, much like in Qatar.<sup>156</sup> Due in part to the imposition of restrictions beginning in the 1990s, "most Islamists and Islamic activists in the UAE do not operate within structured groups, but as individuals connected through networks based on a Muslim

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<sup>154</sup> "UAE Minimizing Influence of Islamic Extremists."

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with 'Abdul Majeed al-Mojalid.

identity.”<sup>157</sup> In terms of group activities in which Islamists participate openly, charities and *ḥalaqāt* have been most prominent.<sup>158</sup> The government has found means of infiltrating *ḥalaqāt*, of which there were said to be over 600 in one emirate alone in 2008.<sup>159</sup> Such meetings “enable the ruler to place circles of religious study in places of potential gatherings that would otherwise be independently run; thus, they operate as massive apparatuses of control.”<sup>160</sup>

Government crackdowns have certainly influenced the means in which Brotherhood organisations operate. “Existing Islamist groups are not necessarily growing in number because they risk state interference by seeking recruits to join the group. Thus, while a lot of activity is halted in the UAE under great pressure, much simply goes further underground and thus is much harder to observe and detect. In effect, networking is becoming the dominant mode of action among those wanting to effect change and make a difference.”<sup>161</sup> The Brotherhood’s move toward secrecy in turn has made the Emirati government more suspicious, as it assumes that the organisation has gone underground to conceal its nefarious plans of government takeover.

The central government, having used the petition movement and the Arab Spring as an excuse to ramp up security, has strengthened its control throughout the country. “The Muslim Brotherhood were no real security threat, but the way the security system is built here is to always be on alert [...] the petition was a trigger to be used.”<sup>162</sup> For its part, *Islah*, now formally disbanded and designated a terrorist group, insists that it is “an

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<sup>157</sup> Krause, 104.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>162</sup> Interview with Rima Sabban.

independent, patriotic group that has received no funds from abroad ... [and] is loyal to the Emirati government.”<sup>163</sup> The organisation continues, primarily from abroad, especially from the United Kingdom and Turkey. The London-based Emirates Centre for Human Rights has been particularly outspoken in its criticism of the government’s crackdown. Islah also uses its website to demand the release of its detained members and has called for the prosecution of government officials whom it believes to have tortured Islah detainees to obtain false confessions from them about the group’s militant nature.<sup>164</sup> Irshad in Ajman, under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, has been renamed Ajman Association of Social and Cultural Development to “keep pace with vision and goals of the future assembly and responsibilities of active participation in development.”<sup>165</sup> It also changed its logo to reflect its new mission, which adheres to provisions of Federal Law 2 of 2008 on associations and public interest groups, described in Chapter Three.<sup>166</sup> Now that Islah is organisationally defunct, and membership to it has been criminalised, it is extremely difficult to determine the degree to which the organisation’s ideology remains influential inside the UAE.<sup>167</sup>

The government’s crackdown on the Brotherhood may indicate that the organisation held more popular support than was previously believed. “Abu Dhabi’s crown prince provides a good insight into the strategy, having been recorded in a 2006 US diplomatic cable referencing a meeting with US diplomats as stating that ‘if there were

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<sup>163</sup> “UAE Islamists Deny Forming Military Wing.”

<sup>164</sup> “Nashitun Yutalibun Shuyukh al-Dawla al-Ahrar bi-l-Tadakhkhul li-Waqf Hamaqat Jihaz al-Aman bi-Haq Ahali al-Mu‘taqalin” [Activists Demand the Shaykhs of the Free State to Intervene to Stop the Follies of the Security Apparatus against the Detainees’ Families], *Jam‘iat al-Islah wa-l-Tawjih al-Ijtima‘i*, April 4, 2013, <http://www.aleslaah.net/site/showthread.php?id=4493>.

<sup>165</sup> “‘Al-Irshad wa-l-Tawjih’ Tughayyir Masamaha ila ‘Jam‘iat Ajman li-l-Tanmia al-Ijtima‘iyya wa-l-Thaqafiyya’” [‘Guidance and Counseling Changes its Name to ‘Ajman Association for Social and Cultural Development’], *al-Ittihad*, February 28, 2014, <http://www.alittihad.ae/details.php?id=18234&y=2014>.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Interview with Ebtesam al-Ketbi.

an election [in the UAE] tomorrow, the Muslim Brotherhood would take over’.”<sup>168</sup> These fears disprove the notion that the Brotherhood acts solely as a cultural or social organisation. The administration clearly considered Islah to be an existential threat and has effectively used the method of divide and conquer, making its citizens turn against the Brotherhood and becoming more willing to accept increased central government control to counter the so-called Muslim Brotherhood threat.<sup>169</sup>

What remains puzzling is the question of whether the crackdown on Islah was necessary, especially if Emiratis are as satisfied as the government claims they are. As Abdulkhaleq Abdulla put it, “trust is high, and confidence in the government is high.”<sup>170</sup> The Brotherhood’s push for more representative government should not have been considered a threat to the government if it truly held control of the population as it claims to do.<sup>171</sup> In the words of Ahmed Mansoor,

The Muslim Brotherhood had an influence on the social level in the UAE for quite a long time, even though the Emirati rulers are popular – because they have been historically good to the people, so there was no threat to the people. There was no need to make the Brotherhood an enemy. I, as a liberal, have more radical views on the government than those Islamists, yet I am not facing the same challenges. The Brotherhood is popular and the only group in the region that could challenge the rulers [...] The Islamists had the ground to establish themselves, share some views more than liberals because they had legitimacy through the street [...] During the Arab Spring, nations were jumping forward, and governments stepped back, so the government began to bribe people with wages and infrastructure improvements, etc. Bribes will put off demands for some time, are only a temporary extinguisher.<sup>172</sup>

Despite seeming an extreme reaction, the crackdown has become a source of pride for many Emiratis, who boast of their country’s security services’ ability to “eradicate the Muslim Brotherhood all at once,” something they claim Saudi Arabia and

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<sup>168</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 14.

<sup>169</sup> Interview with Ahmed Mansoor.

<sup>170</sup> Interview with Abdulkhaleq Abdulla.

<sup>171</sup> Interview with Ahmed Mansoor.

<sup>172</sup> Interview with Ahmed Mansoor.

Kuwait cannot accomplish due to the organisation's prevalence in those countries.<sup>173</sup> Try as it might, the Emirati government can never fully eradicate the Brotherhood's ideology, however; "Islah was a viable and very prominent opposition."<sup>174</sup> Further, simply because it is organisationally defunct does not mean that its ideology is unappealing, illustrated by the Qatari case. As Emirati rulers endeavour to promote UAE nationalism under their own control, they come into conflict with any organisation that promotes traditional Islamic values yet specifically cite the Brotherhood as primary Islamist political actor. As Shaykh Mohammed bin Zayed put it in his discussion of Islamist influence over curricula in the UAE, "[w]e are having a (culture) war with the 'Muslim Brotherhood' in this country."<sup>175</sup> The Emirati stance, then, differs greatly from that taken by Qatar, as the UAE's leadership refuses to engage with the Brotherhood on any level.

Those inside the UAE who remain sympathetic to the Brotherhood "are very careful and keep it quiet."<sup>176</sup> In terms of policy output, there is little evidence of Brotherhood influence outside of the Ministry of Education in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>177</sup> Still, the government remains "very nervous," having seen the appeal of the Brotherhood and the ability of its members to influence government ministries in the past.<sup>178</sup> In fact, a 2011 report by *The New York Times* revealed that Shaykh Mohammed bin Zayed put together an 800-member mercenary force, which is meant to "conduct special operations missions inside and outside the country, defend oil pipelines and skyscrapers from

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<sup>173</sup> Interview with 'Ali Salem Humaid.

<sup>174</sup> Interview with Dubai-based Gulf correspondent, 6 March 2014.

<sup>175</sup> Shaykh Mohammed bin Zayed, Qtd. in "UAE Minimizing Influence of Islamic Extremists."

<sup>176</sup> Interview with Dubai-based Gulf correspondent, 6 March 2014.

<sup>177</sup> Interview with Richard Gauvain.

<sup>178</sup> Interview with William Gueriache, March 10, 2014.

terrorist attacks and put down internal revolts.”<sup>179</sup> Such an action suggests that the Emirati government remains vigilant about any possible threats to its authority.

*Brotherhood Influence in Education Today*

Education has been reformed considerably since the 1970s, when Brotherhood members held sway in that sector. The central government has exercised increasing control over public education, in terms of hiring and curriculum development, to prevent an outside ideology from taking hold there as in the 1970s and 1980s, promoting state-based nationalism instead. “Despite massively improved access and a large number of schools and universities being established, educational curricula have usually been tightly monitored or even shaped to support directly the state or the ruling family in question.”<sup>180</sup>

The government considers its efforts to modernise education critical to fighting Islamist influence. Shaykh Mohammed bin Zayed estimated in 2007 that it would take 25-50 years to root out extremism from the education system, claiming that, in the western part of Abu Dhabi emirate alone, the government shut 80 percent of 262 “talebani Quran schools.”<sup>181</sup> In an effort to root out Islamist influence of any type, the central government has strictly overseen hiring decisions; “teachers deemed extremists have been quietly dismissed or given non-teaching positions.”<sup>182</sup>

The highest-profile incident involving reassignment took place in September 2007, when 83 Emirati teachers, who represented 10-15 percent of the citizen teaching population, were dismissed, allegedly due to their Islamist leanings.<sup>183</sup> The teachers

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<sup>179</sup> Mark Mazzetti and Emily B. Hager, “Secret Desert Force Set up by Blackwater’s Founder,” *The New York Times*, May 14, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/15/world/middleeast/15prince.html>.

<sup>180</sup> Davidson, *After the Sheikhs*, 196-197.

<sup>181</sup> “U/S Burns’ January 22 Meeting.”

<sup>182</sup> “UAE Minimizing Influence of Islamic Extremists.”

<sup>183</sup> “Ministry of Education Dismissed Eighty Three Emirati Teachers.”

protested in front of the Ministry of Education, demanding that their official complaints be reviewed by President Shaykh Khalifa and Prime Minister Shaykh Mohammed bin Rashid.<sup>184</sup> The teachers also contended that their spouses working in the ministry had been refused promotions, while their children were penalised with the denial of scholarships.<sup>185</sup> Meanwhile, “[t]he UAE Government’s view on the dismissals is that the teachers represented a creeping Islamist threat to the UAE’s traditionally tolerant approach to Islam.”<sup>186</sup> Most of the 83 Emirati teachers who were dismissed were affiliated with Islah or the EPRO and considered themselves to be “human rights activists and political reformists with Islamist leanings.”<sup>187</sup>

One of the dismissed teachers, Ahmad Rashid al-Nua‘imi, posited that the government used the teachers’ Islamist leanings as an excuse to root out debate about political reform of the type supported by the EPRO and other Islamist movements, blaming the State Security Directorate rather than the Ministry of Education for his dismissal.<sup>188</sup> Education Minister at that time, Hanif Hassan ‘Ali, conceded that reforms in the Emirati education sector are “designed to bring Islamic studies (which are mandatory for all Emirati and Muslim students) in accordance with UAE traditions, rather than imported ones.”<sup>189</sup> Although dozens of Islamist-leaning teachers held a sit-in outside Dubai’s Education Ministry, the decision was not reversed, and the ministry maintained

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

that the shuffling of the teachers to other ministries was “in accordance with the requirements of the ministry’s strategic plan.”<sup>190</sup>

In terms of curricula reform, the number of courses in culture or religion has been limited, a measure that has provoked backlash from a large number of nationals.<sup>191</sup> Interestingly, Arabic and Islamic Studies courses were first revised in the overhaul of university-level curriculum, and inspectors visit classrooms to ensure that guidelines are being adhered to strictly.<sup>192</sup> Further, “[t]eachers of Islam have had to be re-trained as part of the reforms instituted by the Education Ministry.”<sup>193</sup> Reflecting local discussions about the need to promote Emirati heritage while maintaining international educational standards, the FNC recommended in 1998 that educational curricula place

more emphasis on themes related to the homeland as well as Arab heritage and culture. The Council called for the imposition of more controls over imported print and audio-visual materials, as some of them have a negative influence on society. It also recommended the establishment of a ‘higher council for culture, arts and literature’ to be responsible for developing a federal strategy to preserve the nation’s culture and heritage. One of the main duties of the council would be ‘to eliminate the influence of foreign satellite television channels and to confront alien cultures that contradict Islamic values’.<sup>194</sup>

The request for such measures resembles complaints by Islah about the introduction of foreign materials into Emirati education.<sup>195</sup> Even in the absence of an organised group, then, Islah’s ideology is espoused. Certainly, ongoing educational “reforms are contentious; increasing reliance on Western instructors and the dilution of Arabic and Islamic studies allows the MB [Muslim Brotherhood] to play on widespread fears that

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<sup>190</sup> Muhammad bin Hendi, Qtd. in Claire Ferris-Lay, “Islamic Teachers Strike over Removal,” *Arabian Business*, June 16, 2008, <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/property-test/article/522140-islamic-teachers-on-strike>.

<sup>191</sup> “UAE Minimizing Influence of Islamic Extremists.”

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Kapiszewski, 165-166.

<sup>195</sup> See, for example, “Readings into Some Curricula of Private Schools in the Emirates,” 180-188.

such changes will threaten the Emirati identity and traditional values.”<sup>196</sup> The fact the FNC voiced such a complaint also demonstrates the degree to which Islam has been de-emphasised in the Emirati public school system. Certainly, the UAE’s public schools and universities “have seen some of the most sweeping aspects of the crackdown against Islamists.”<sup>197</sup> Perhaps in an effort to strengthen the local character of Emirati education, in the face of concerns about Westernisation of the education sector, a law passed in 1999 made the teaching of Arabic mandatory in all private schools – even those for non-Arab expatriate students.<sup>198</sup> In addition, the government has attempted to gradually replace expatriate Arab instructors with Emiratis; in 2002, 90 non-Emiratis were released from their positions or given non-teaching roles.<sup>199</sup>

As in Qatar, there has also been considerable popular backlash against the increasingly imported (and Western) policies implemented in the 1990s and still in place in higher education. The faculties of the national university, UAEU, were modelled on the American system, with many professors American-educated and some lectures given in English.<sup>200</sup> In addition, “each student is required to take general courses in basic English as well as statistics, Arabic, Arabic society, and Islamic thought. Thus, at the university level, many Emiratis are significantly exposed to Western, particularly U.S., modes of research and intellectual discourse.”<sup>201</sup> Also in an effort to promote Western education at UAEU, several Arab (including Emirati) deans and one Arab-American, have been replaced by non-Arab Americans due to the government’s theory that

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<sup>196</sup> Forstenlechner, Rutledge and al-Nuaimi, 55.

<sup>197</sup> “UAE Minimizing Influence of Islamic Extremists.”

<sup>198</sup> Kapiszewski, 166.

<sup>199</sup> “UAE Minimizing Influence of Islamic Extremists.”

<sup>200</sup> Peck, *The United Arab Emirates*, 76.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

Americans would be better equipped to oversee reforms and conduct classes in English.<sup>202</sup> Furthermore, a number of high profile and highly funded branch campuses have been established in the UAE, including New York University and the Masdar Institute of Science and Technology, built in partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. There are 40 branch campuses in total, with 27 in Dubai alone<sup>203</sup> – an emirate that lacks any Arabic institution of higher education.<sup>204</sup>

Although the Education Ministry still faces limited criticism from religious conservatives for its reforms, it has continued to implement such changes, while also ensuring that the student union does not become influenced by political Islam again. The Emirati government has thus made sweeping reforms in education to annul residual influence from the period of Muslim Brotherhood control in that sector. Nonetheless, the government still promotes the study of religion and has upheld gender segregation in public schools. In fact, the six core values of the Ministry of Education reflect the importance of religious values, as they are listed as “citizenship and responsibility; the principles and values of Islam; commitment and transparency; contribution and accountability; right to education for all; and quality and innovation.”<sup>205</sup> The government has thus endeavoured to promote Islam, but solely of the type it deems nonthreatening. It has also tried to balance the interests of a growing expatriate population and a much smaller national population, which is complicated by the fact that each of the seven emirates boasts a distinct social environment and political culture. The government has

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<sup>202</sup> “UAE Minimizing Influence of Islamic Extremists.”

<sup>203</sup> Melanie Swan, “International Branch Campuses’ Key Role in the UAE,” *The National*, September 18, 2013, <http://www.thenational.ae/uae/education/international-branch-campuses-key-role-in-the-uae>.

<sup>204</sup> Davidson, *Dubai*, 202.

<sup>205</sup> “Vision and Mission and Values of MoE,” United Arab Emirates Ministry of Education, <https://www.moe.gov.ae/English/Pages/AboutUs/VisionMission.aspx>.

also taken measures in the charity sector, another area once dominated by Islamists, to ensure that it is focused on state nationalist, rather than on Islamist ideology.

*The Brotherhood in the Charity Sector*

The agenda of the Muslim Brotherhood has traditionally included emphasis on philanthropic work. As mentioned above, Islah's largest charity group in the UAE, the Committee for Islamic Relief established in 1987, became embroiled in conflict following charges that it had funded a terrorist organisation in Egypt. To this day, scepticism remains about the political motives of Islamist charity endeavours. The aforementioned list of terrorist organisations published in November 2014 included charities like the Islamic Relief Organisation in London and the Islamic Relief Organisation as an affiliate of the Muslim Brotherhood, indicating the government's seriousness in taking control of the sector, particularly as charities are increasingly linked to financing militias in Syria.<sup>206</sup> A study by Falah 'Abdullah al-Mdaires reveals that groups like the Dubai Charity Association and the Charitable Society for the Memorisation of the Qur'an in Umm al-Quwain have been suspected of maintaining links with the Ikhwan.<sup>207</sup> Such mistrust about the use of Brotherhood-affiliated charities for political ends has led to a greater government presence in the sector.

At the federal level, the Cooperative Society Department at the Ministry of Social Affairs receives applications for charitable societies and refers them to the cabinet for a

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<sup>206</sup> "UAE Publishes List of Terrorist Organisations," *Gulf News*, November 15, 2014,

<http://gulfnews.com/news/uae/government/uae-publishes-list-of-terrorist-organisations-1.1412895>.

<sup>207</sup> Falah 'Abdullah al-Mdaires, "Darasa hawla al-Harakat wa-l-Jama'at al-Siyasiyya fi al Bahrain (1938-2001): Al-Juz' 12: Jam'iat al-Islah Tutalab bi-I'adat al-Nazar fi al-Qawanin allati Sadarat fi Zul Ta'til al-Dustur" [Study on the Movements and Political Groups in Bahrain: Part 12: Islah Association Calls for a Restoration of the Laws Passed under the Suspended Constitution], Gulf Centre for Development Policies, 2011, [https://www.gulfpolicies.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=676:-1938-2001-12-&catid=147:2011-04-09-07-47-31](https://www.gulfpolicies.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=676:-1938-2001-12-&catid=147:2011-04-09-07-47-31).

decision.<sup>208</sup> The other bodies capable of approving of a charitable association include Dubai's Islamic Affairs and Charitable Activities Department, the International Humanitarian City in Dubai, and the Community and Development Authority of Dubai.<sup>209</sup> The Islamic Affairs and Charitable Activities Department of the Government of Dubai, in its regulations, stipulates that a charitable society "may practice both religious and charitable activity."<sup>210</sup> In fact, it provides eight examples of the accepted activities of such societies: construction of mosques, schools, health care facilities; building of roads; collection and distribution of zakat; engaging in da'wa; caring for those in need such as orphans and the elderly; preparing people for hajj and *umra*; performance of religious sacrifice; and gathering of people in charitable meetings.<sup>211</sup> All of these activities closely resemble those that Islah previously organised in the UAE yet have been subsumed under government authority in the UAE.

The central government also expressly prohibits charities from participating in political activities, supporting a political cause, or adopting political attitudes; fomenting sectarian, racial, or ideological divisions; taking part in any commercial business independently, aside from the investment of its endowments; trying to gain profits; or using funds in another way than is intended.<sup>212</sup> Further aiding state support, charitable and religious societies are required to provide the emirate-level government with detailed information about their organisational structures and activities both inside and outside of the UAE, in addition to their annual budget and the names of people invited to the UAE

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<sup>208</sup> "Charity and Humanitarian Work," government.ae, 2015, <http://www.government.ae/en/web/guest/charity-and-humanitarian-work>.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Section 1, Article 3, no. 2, Rules for Licenses of Religious and Charitable Societies and Organization of their Activities in the Emirate of Dubai, Islamic Affairs and Charitable Activities Department, Government of Dubai, 2006, <http://www.iacad.gov.ae/admin/storage/other/htmlDocs/Rules%20of%20Religious.pdf>.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Section 1, Article 4, "Rules for Licenses of Religious and Charitable Societies."

for events.<sup>213</sup> If it does not abide by the Islamic Affairs and Charitable Activities Department's standards, a society's licence can be revoked.<sup>214</sup>

Federal and emirate-level governments, in particular Abu Dhabi and Dubai, have taken a lead in charity efforts in recent years. By funnelling charity money through government agencies, state largesse is re-emphasised. Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation "donates to a wide range of causes, and the Emirates Foundation which is chaired by Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed and has recently focused on distributing grants for nationals with special needs. In fact, giving money to the poor directly and thereby bypassing such state-sanctioned charities is difficult, and actually frowned upon."<sup>215</sup> Dubai's government similarly funds large charity organisations, namely Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation and the Mohammed bin Rashid Charitable and Humanitarian Establishment, which fund projects inside and outside the UAE.<sup>216</sup> The clearest example of government co-optation of the charity sector is the UAE Red Crescent Society, which "receives considerable financial and organisational support from the various ruling families and, predictably, serves as an umbrella organization for other smaller charities."<sup>217</sup> While Abu Dhabi's government dominates the Red Crescent Society, with Shaykh Hamdan al-Nahyan its president, Shaykh Mohammed bin Rashid's Humanitarian Charity Foundation in Dubai is a smaller complement, focused on the northern emirates.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Section 2, Article 37, "Rules for Licenses of Religious and Charitable Societies."

<sup>214</sup> Article 41, "Rules for Licenses of Religious and Charitable Societies."

<sup>215</sup> Davidson, *Abu Dhabi*, 129.

<sup>216</sup> Davidson, "The United Arab Emirates," 230.

<sup>217</sup> Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*, 276.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

The government similarly grants funding to other UAE-based charities, thereby binding them to the state through financial ties.<sup>219</sup> Despite government controls, one of the most prominent charities in the UAE today, Dar al-Birr Society, is a “Salafi foundation linked to Saudi Arabia,” active in funding a number of education institutions within the UAE; it also circulates a magazine, broadcasts a radio show, and runs several retail businesses.<sup>220</sup> Islamism thus remains popular in the charity sector, though its expression is regulated through the UAE’s legal framework.

### *Conclusions*

In its recent crackdown on local Muslim Brotherhood affiliates, the Emirati government actually contributed to the Ikhwan’s political influence, openly describing it as a serious threat to the existing order. This response has been distinct among the super-rentiers. While Kuwait has accommodated the Muslim Brotherhood, within a restricted scope, and while Qatar has backed an Islamist agenda to a limited extent, the UAE has taken an active, and far more repressive, approach. “Radicals are drummed out. Islamists, even those with mild views who would be allowed on the air in Qatar and Kuwait, are frozen out of public debate [...] ‘We don’t have radicalism,’ [Nabil] al-Yousuf [from Dubai’s Executive Office] says. ‘It has been contained’.”<sup>221</sup> Having described the Brotherhood as a major security and political threat, the government was able to tout its victory over extremism after the crackdown, in an effort to advance nationalist feelings inside the country.

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 276.

<sup>220</sup> Noorhaidi Hasan, “Saudi Expansion, The Salafi Campaign and Arabised Islam in Indonesia,” in *Kingdom without Borders: Saudi Political, Religious and Media Frontiers*, ed. Madawi al-Rasheed (London: Hurst and Company, 2008), 275.

<sup>221</sup> Jim Krane, *Dubai: The Story of the World’s Fastest City* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009), 277-278.

By inflating the Brotherhood's political importance, the Emirati government forced the dismantling of the organisation and incited hatred toward it more generally. The crackdown also garnered negative international attention and threatened certain regional relations. As conservative Islam continues to be a force within Emirati society, the government will likely need to take a different tack toward handling Islamist opposition.

## **Chapter Ten**

### **Rentier Islamism: Explaining Ikhwan Politics in the Super-Rentiers**

#### *Models of Muslim Brotherhood Political Activity in the Gulf*

In the preceding analysis, we have demonstrated that Muslim Brotherhood organisations in super-rentiers operate through their successful integration into, and in some places domination of, the social and educational spheres. As their influence expanded through grassroots social outreach and their members' privileged positions in government ministries in the 1960s and 1970s, the Brotherhood attracted a considerable following and came to inspire a limited degree of political mobilisation. In such an environment where the Brotherhood stirs political commitment, "[g]rievances came to be cast not in terms of material demands but in the idiom of moral responsibility and ideological commitment."<sup>1</sup>

Ideology motivates members of super-rentier states to join Muslim Brotherhood affiliates, as such groups provide spiritual welfare through their informal networks and educational activities. Notably, most members of these groups come from the educated elite, a class which one would not expect to join political blocs out of a feeling of disenfranchisement. Economic motivations in super-rentier states, then, appear to hold limited appeal in spurring political action where ideology remains influential. In this conclusion, we examine the degree to which our findings, through three diverse cases, highlight the need to update the theoretical framework concerning political Islam in the Gulf by differentiating Brotherhood mobilisation in that region through development of the concept of rentier Islamism.

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<sup>1</sup> Lisa Anderson, "Fulfilling Prophecies: State Policies and Islamist Radicalism," in *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform?*, ed. John L. Esposito (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), 21.

*The Emergence of Rentier Islamism*

Gulf rulers have, using their vast hydrocarbon resources, “sought to make Islamic institutions into agencies of the state,” with government-sponsored religious scholars particularly important in “the states’ legitimation strategies, providing religious sanction to the political order.”<sup>2</sup> Despite government control over major institutions, independent imams and Islamist movements remain influential. Because Islamist groups exist outside the realm of formal politics or civil society, many scholars believe that the Gulf lacks any political actors whatsoever, relegating these Islamist actors to the social sphere.<sup>3</sup> Such informal organisations, however, hold ideological appeal and thus become important social and political groups. “Organized social movements have never been absent from the political life of the Gulf. But through the 1980s, they operated largely on the fringes of the political system, and their influence was based to a great extent on personal, client relations with important members of the government and ruling families.”<sup>4</sup> The question thus becomes not whether Islamism is politically relevant, but in what ways its influence is expressed in the prevailing political systems.<sup>5</sup>

That the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gulf does not resemble its affiliates elsewhere in the region should be unsurprising. In fact, there is no one form of Islamism even within states like the super-rentiers that feature striking economic, political, and social similarities. Certainly, “the fortunes of Islamism as a political movement are conditioned by the structures of opportunities, and by political configurations and

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<sup>2</sup> Gause, *Oil Monarchies*, 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>5</sup> Esposito and Piscatori, “Democratization and Islam,” 429.

contingent identities.”<sup>6</sup> The grassroots and primarily informal approach to politics taken by Muslim Brotherhood affiliates is sharply contrasted with the largely authoritarian governments under which they operate in the Gulf, yet their informal arrangement also aligns with the more personalised systems of government in the region.

The Muslim Brotherhood, as an organisation whose ideology dictates that Islam should be part of every aspect of life, exists in super-rentiers in the social and political realms. The movement in all three countries began with the goal of Islamising society in the face of Western encroachment. Since their establishment, these groups have altered their priorities to varying degrees. The Kuwaiti Brotherhood has come to privilege electoral success and political influence more broadly through wide-ranging reform over the initial social agenda that it pushed in the 1980s. The Qatari Brotherhood, on the other hand, has favoured the ideological and social elements of its platform over structural or institutionalised power. Even what appears to be social power in the Qatari case is hardly politically neutral, particularly in a super-rentier that allows few outlets for political debate. Finally, the Emirati Brotherhood, before the most recent crackdown began in 2012, operated in a space between the purely political, inhabited by the Kuwaiti Brotherhood, and the amorphous, represented by the Qatari Ikhwan. While it advocated for social reforms, the Emirati Brotherhood came to voice concerns about political freedoms more broadly, thereby leading to restrictions from the regime. The government thus made it unlikely for the Emirati Brotherhood to evolve to the state of its Kuwaiti counterpart, which has developed a clearly defined political platform and popularity.

*The Allure of Islamism in the Gulf*

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<sup>6</sup> Ismail, 176.

While wealthy super-rentier governments are able to deliver resources and services to their citizens, they do not offer a compelling ideological justification for their rule beyond the occasional use of symbols appealing to religion or shared heritage.<sup>7</sup> Islam, on the other hand, provides common and indigenous language for political ideas and thus becomes the central ideological pillar for independent movements in such states.<sup>8</sup> Due to its ideology's broad-ranging appeal among majority Sunni populations, Brotherhood members have managed to "recruit differentially along lines of class, gender, and age. But they are able to cast themselves as universal."<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, a political ideology based in Islamic principles remains attractive in environments wherein governments have at their disposal large sums of money. In such settings, "[t]he lack of articulation between the state and civil society has provided an opening for Islamic movements to attack governments, not on issues of the use of tax revenues, but on issues of corruption and moral turpitude in the governments' disposal of rents."<sup>10</sup>

Brotherhood affiliates in the Gulf also benefit from their ability to gather in seemingly apolitical areas, namely mosques and schools, some of the only social spaces in which free debate takes place in the Gulf. Due to the fact that super-rentier monarchs wish to appeal to national populations that are, on the whole, conservative and religious, they avoid cracking down on Islamist movements for fear that it harms their legitimacy as Muslim rulers. "Because Islam is part and parcel of the legitimation strategies of these regimes, they must support, and be seen to support, Islamic institutions."<sup>11</sup> As such, it is

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<sup>7</sup> Jill Crystal, "Civil Society in the Arabian Gulf," in *Civil Society in the Middle East 2*: 273.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>10</sup> John Waterbury, "From Social Contracts to Extraction Contracts," in *Islam, Democracy, and the State in North Africa*, ed. John P. Entelis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 152.

<sup>11</sup> Gause, *Political Opposition*, 16.

difficult for Gulf monarchies to dismantle Islamist parties without losing a degree of their credibility as Muslim rulers. The very fact that super-rentier governments spend a considerable amount of oil rent on Islamic causes highlights the degree to which religion is a primary part of their legitimation strategy and of rentier politics more broadly.

Grassroots social outreach programmes undoubtedly aid Brotherhood members in spreading their ideology and garnering support. Although they are not needed on the material level in the Gulf (aside from Iraqi-occupied Kuwait), such programmes have become popular in their provision of ideological guidance and social activities in societies that are often criticised for lacking indigenous intellectual or cultural vibrancy. They also link the Brotherhood to political life: “by engaging in hands-on activist work in popular neighbourhoods, they [Islamists] have learned the informal language of politics spoken by the people.”<sup>12</sup> Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated charitable and social organisations that appear to be divorced from political life prevail in a “quiet encroachment” toward political capital.<sup>13</sup>

The restrictive political environments of super-rentiers make the informal social sphere the most plausible arena for independent political activity. The Kuwaiti case presents something of an outlier, as the Brotherhood there can compete in institutionalised political life. Nonetheless, it began its activities in the informal social sphere and used social support to promote and develop its political agenda. This social sector, most often managed by tribes, has a long history in the Gulf. Since independence, super-rentier governments have taken on most material responsibilities that previously

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<sup>12</sup> Ismail, 176.

<sup>13</sup> Asef Bayat, “Un-Civil Society: The Politics of the ‘Informal People’,” *Third World Quarterly* 18, no. 1 (1997): 67.

lay with tribes whose authority predated their own.<sup>14</sup> In such environments in which tribal affiliations remain strong, Muslim Brotherhood organisations are traditionally thought to have difficulty garnering support, as tribal ties obviate the need for the social network provided by the organisation. Importantly, however, “[t]he strength of tribal social structures does not preclude citizen demands for a role in politics.”<sup>15</sup> In fact, tribes retain a great deal of political capital, perhaps most clearly seen in Kuwait through the (technically illegal) institution of tribal primary elections, in which tribes determine which parliamentary candidates they will back. As much as the state has co-opted tribes’ functions in terms of service provision, it has not removed their social and political relevance, similar to the state’s experience with attempting to co-opt the Islamic sector.

As expatriate populations increase, political Islam is likely to remain a powerful political force against increasing Westernisation. Super-rentier governments endeavour to balance their desires to modernise and to accommodate their overwhelming non-national populations with the need to address grievances of national populations that remain, for the most part, conservative. A division between the rulers of the super-rentiers and their citizens thus often emerges. In Kuwait, the only super-rentier with an active parliament, the government appears to be in tune with the population to a large extent, preserving the socially conservative environment favoured by its national population. Nonetheless, divisions between the two have become visible in recent years. Most notably, in 2005, Shaykh Jaber decreed the right of women to vote even after it was vetoed in parliament, thereby enforcing a move toward liberalism onto a population that had effectively rejected it. Electoral politics in the Gulf thus seems to favour the election of illiberal

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<sup>14</sup> Gause, *Oil Monarchies*, 11.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

legislatures, of which more liberal ruling families sometimes disapprove. “All of this prompts further skepticism about parliaments, and gives grounds to wonder if there is a serious disconnect between democracy and liberalism in the Gulf: Modestly democratic parliaments generate a good deal of illiberal policy.”<sup>16</sup>

Though it lacks a parliament, the same dynamic exists, to a limited extent, in the UAE. The FNC’s often vocal campaigns for the implementation of conservative social policies are a source of embarrassment for rulers, who hope to project an image of a modern and largely secular society. Considering these dynamics, it is perhaps unsurprising that Qatar has not instituted its elected Advisory Council. Still, the government overrode Islamist complaints, articulated in a petition in 1998, about the granting of female suffrage for its municipal council and the availability of alcohol. Islamist influence, then, is quelled in certain instances before it becomes institutionalised.

By and large, in the Gulf context, as throughout the Middle East, we can expect “[p]arliaments [to] reflect the illiberal views of the Islamists elected to them.”<sup>17</sup> We can also expect society more generally to reflect such views. Because Brotherhood members dissociate their opinions about democratic political reform from their views on social policy, this pattern of illiberal policies arriving through democratic processes is likely to remain. The fact that Brotherhood influence is felt even in states without elected legislatures demonstrates the degree to which religious ideology influences political belief in the super-rentiers.

The extent to which the political influence of Brotherhood affiliates in the super-rentiers is institutionalised depends on the degree to which the systems wherein they

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<sup>16</sup> Michael Herb, “Emirs and Parliaments in the Gulf,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 4 (2002): 42.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

operate are also formalised. The Qatari Brotherhood, for example, is the least overtly politically active of the three under study because its system allows the least institutionalised space for formal political participation. Though the means in which they exercise political pressure differ, the way in which Brotherhood affiliates in the super-rentiers gather political capital is the same, as illustrated in the preceding chapters and reviewed below.

*Kuwait: Muslim Brotherhood as Parliamentary Opposition*

The Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood undoubtedly boasts the most clearly developed political platform of all Brotherhood affiliates in the super-rentier states, as it is the only one that participates in electoral politics. It is also the only branch of the Brotherhood in the super-rentiers that was forced to take on the responsibility of service provision during the Iraqi occupation. This era represented a turning point in the development of the Kuwaiti Brotherhood, as it gained considerable popularity after showing itself capable of providing services to a population lacking a functioning government. Following the Iraqi occupation, the Kuwaiti Brotherhood also voiced its support for the restoration of parliamentary life and created a political bloc distinct from its larger social movement. The fact that the Kuwaiti Brotherhood divided itself into political and social blocs demonstrates the leadership's awareness of the different demands on each branch in a state with parliamentary elections, though both share a common ideology. "Where one is governed by more explicit religious concerns as well as an overwhelming concern with self-preservation, the other is driven more by political imperatives."<sup>18</sup>

While the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood before the Iraqi invasion focused on ensuring the Islamisation of society and the implementation of shari'a, the increasingly

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<sup>18</sup> Hamid, *Temptations of Power*, 83.

visible ICM has garnered popular support through its more flexible and pro-democracy agenda. It has become outspoken in its criticism of the regime and of the government system more broadly, pushing for the passage of a political parties law and the creation of a constitutional monarchy, and often allying with secular liberal groups to advance these aims. By forming coalitions with other opposition blocs, the Kuwaiti Brotherhood has become increasingly politically relevant and has continued to emphasise the need for reform above social Islamisation. The ICM also retains “political cover” in working with such forces, “making it harder for regimes to portray Islamists as extremists or terrorists.”<sup>19</sup> Notwithstanding the Brotherhood’s popularity,<sup>20</sup> the most elected seats it has ever won in parliament was six out of 50 seats in 2006. The Brotherhood has never contested a plurality of seats, preferring to form coalitions with other blocs that grant it a degree of political protection.<sup>21</sup> By tempering its demands for laws to Islamise society and for the implementation of shari‘a, the ICM has come to hold a more powerful political position as a leading opposition bloc. Its political capital, though, is not expressed solely through its representation in parliament, demonstrating the limited ability of government institutions in the Gulf to reflect popular opinion.

Regardless of government structure, Islam retains substantial social capital in Kuwait. “Islam prevails in all aspects of social, economic, and political life in Kuwait and has always done so. Islam imposes communal obligations on the faithful in this world. Politics is a function of religion.”<sup>22</sup> Even today, when it has not held a seat in parliament

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>20</sup> There is no official membership list, though some 100 people are in leadership positions, suggesting a broad following. Furthermore, regardless of official membership, non-members often vote for the ICM due to its involvement in broader political coalitions.

<sup>21</sup> Hamid, *Temptations of Power*, 51.

<sup>22</sup> Tawfic E. Farah, “Politics and Religion in Kuwait: Two Myths Examined,” in *Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World*, 176.

since the beginning of 2012 due to its boycotts of the last two elections, the Brotherhood remains a major social and political force through *Islah*, demonstrating the degree to which the informal sector influences institutionalised politics. The ICM also continues agitating outside of parliament along with secular liberal and Salafi movements for enhanced parliamentary powers and an independent judiciary, issues not traditionally backed by Brotherhood parties.<sup>23</sup>

*Qatar: The Muslim Brotherhood as Silent Partner*

Muslim Brotherhood affiliates are largely not discussed in nondemocratic states, since they have fundamentally different roles in such political environments. These organisations are, however, by their very nature, multidimensional, as they aim to influence all parts of a Muslim’s life in their pursuit of *tawhīd*. “Elections are just one facet – albeit the one most visible to outside observers – of what they do.”<sup>24</sup> Importantly, an ideological commitment and spiritual obligation are involved in joining the Brotherhood. This component is in fact what makes the Brotherhood so adaptable to various political systems. The Qatari Brotherhood recognised the power of the organisation’s philosophy over its formal structure, when it willingly dissolved itself in 1999. Even in the absence of an organisational structure, the ideology has remained and has retained political relevance inside Qatar.

In the Qatari system, though it is by no means democratic, mechanisms exist through which citizens, of whom there are only a small number, can voice their concerns to the government, which makes decisions based on the opinions of very few people. As an advisor to Shaykh Tamim explained, “free discussion in the majlis gets to the prince,

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<sup>23</sup> E.A.D.

<sup>24</sup> Hamid, *Temptations of Power*, 14.

and he has to take this into consideration.”<sup>25</sup> A great deal of debate within Qatari *majālis* deals with religious life and commitment inside the country, something that is reflected in the leadership’s broader policy decisions. Recent decisions to restrict the sale of alcohol, to remove statues considered religiously offensive, and to publicise a campaign for proper dress all indicate grassroots support for, as well as government backing of, conservative Islam. Whether it is specifically of the Brotherhood strand is less clear. Similarly, the government’s support of Islamist movements abroad of varying political strands reflects its desire to carve a place for Qatari foreign policy independent of other states in the region, or alternatively to support an ideology that resonates with much of the local population.

“A number of studies assume implicitly that religiosity feeds into political engagement.”<sup>26</sup> If religiosity is meant to serve as a predictor of political involvement, we should expect many more Qataris, and Gulf nationals generally, to become politically active – yet not necessarily in the ways that we may anticipate. There are no legislative elections to take part in; there are no parties to support; there are no political campaigns to be run. Politics is displaced into the social sphere, and, in this environment, religion becomes the central ideological pillar for political and social opinions. Ruling al-Thani family appears to understand the overarching significance of Islam in Qatar and therefore provides a number of political concessions to religiously conservative members of its national population through social policies and foreign policies, neither of which threatens the government’s central authority or regime security.

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with ‘Azmi Bishara.

<sup>26</sup> Ismail, 19.

*The UAE: The Muslim Brotherhood as Enemy Within*

The crackdown on Emirati branches of the Muslim Brotherhood that began in 2012 reflects the regime's understanding of the organisation as primarily a political threat, something that rentier state theory would not predict. In fact, recent Emirati government actions are in many respects reminiscent of earlier repression of the organisation in Egypt in the early 2000s after it had proven its strength as a political competitor. The Emirati regime's emphasis on maintaining national security as an excuse for taking drastic measures against civil liberties and civil society is particularly familiar.<sup>27</sup> Writing on Egypt in 2000 aptly reflects the present-day Emirati condition: "More stifling still is the government's paternalist claim to monopolize the middle ground of public discourse. What this means in practice is that while the state bureaucracy tries to consolidate a single national voice that it can present on television, at international conferences, and the like, dissonant voices are constantly pushed to the margins."<sup>28</sup> Certainly, the Emirati government, much like Egypt's Mubarak regime, has appealed to the international audience by playing up its commitment to social liberalism, so-called "moderate" Islam, and free speech, while contrasting its vision with the desires of Brotherhood supporters whom it describes as threatening to national security.

When the state attempts to serve as the primary arbiter of ideological inspiration, backlash often emerges from marginalised political and social forces. The fact that the UAE is divided into seven vastly unequal emirates makes relative deprivation prevalent, increasing the likelihood of an opposition build-up and leading to more severe government action. Recent crackdowns on free expression targeted both liberal and

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<sup>27</sup> Max Rodenbeck, "Witch Hunt in Egypt," *New York Review of Books*, November 16, 2000, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2000/nov/16/witch-hunt-in-egypt/>.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

Islamist critics of its policies, thereby uniting them against the government – a dynamic observed during periods of the suspension of parliamentary life and government crackdown in Kuwait. In the words of Shadi Hamid, “[t]he shared experience of repression [...] encourages opposition groups to focus on what they have in common. After all, they have a shared enemy – the regime. So they agree to prioritize the fight for basic freedoms and democracy. Ideological divisions are put to the side.”<sup>29</sup>

The fact that the Emirati government has endeavoured to conflate the previously distinct Islamist and liberal reform movements has had the opposite effect to what was intended, as the two have cooperated increasingly in the face of the regime’s crackdown. This cooperation complicates, rather than justifies, the Emirati government’s actions. “It was easier for them [autocratic rulers] to portray Islamists as a threat when they spoke of imposing Islamic law and keeping women locked up at home. It became more difficult when they spent much of the 2000s talking about human rights and political freedoms.”<sup>30</sup> In situations in which their freedom to operate as political blocs is threatened, Brotherhood organisations tend to stress the need for democratic, rather than Islamic reform, to garner broader-based support and international sympathy for protection, in something of an exclusion-moderation dynamic.<sup>31</sup>

In contrast to the Kuwaiti and Qatari systems, in which political life is greatly influenced by conservative understandings of Islam, in the Emirati system, the more liberal ruling families of Abu Dhabi and Dubai have taken the reins. Although the leading emirates are central in policymaking, ruling families of other emirates have closer ties to the Brotherhood, complicating the government’s unity on this issue and leading to a

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<sup>29</sup> Hamid, *Temptations of Power*, 54-55.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

backlash from segments of the national population in certain emirates. “The more regimes seek to present themselves as legitimate on newer lines and sponsor socioeconomic change, the more they lose credibility with the traditionalist elements of society and expose themselves to charges that they are un-Islamic.”<sup>32</sup> As the distance grows greater between the beliefs of the Emirati government and those of the nationals, Brotherhood complaint may again become politically vocal or, more likely, the crackdown will become more severe in the name of national security. While the Emirati government claims to have defeated the threat of political Islam inside its borders, it has in fact merely driven the movement further underground. As the Qatari experience demonstrates, the Muslim Brotherhood’s ideology does not disappear in the absence of a formal organisation.

#### *Rentier Islamism as Political Contestation*

Due to strict laws concerning civil society in Qatar and the UAE, Muslim Brotherhood affiliates are relegated to the social realm, while members of the Ikhwan can run for parliament in Kuwait. Islamists adapt their activities within the systems in which they operate. In none of the super-rentiers can Brotherhood ideology be “bought off” through government disbursements. Brotherhood organisations in the region were first established outside of the institutionalised political system as social, educational, and charitable associations. By creating ideological links at the grassroots, they amass long-term popular support that can be sustained even without institutionalised political roles.<sup>33</sup> Importantly, the Brotherhood’s social organisations, emphasising the unity, or *tawhīd*, inherent in Islamism, link the grassroots to political debates. “Within the Islamist

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<sup>32</sup> Peterson, 11.

<sup>33</sup> Larry Diamond, “Why Are There No Arab Democracies?,” *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 1 (2010): 100-101.

worldview is an understanding of Islam as a comprehensive system encompassing all things material, spiritual, social, individual, political, and personal.”<sup>34</sup> Super-rentier Brotherhood affiliates establish their potential for political leadership by demonstrating their appeal in this sector.

Because of the overarching relevance of Islam, the social and the political are strongly linked in the super-rentiers. Debates about culture and social values are highly politicised – especially in the Gulf where governments spend significant amounts to promote indigenous culture as a means of boosting national identity. Nonstate *da‘wa* activities are thus inherently political, as they compete with the state-supported institutions.<sup>35</sup> Brotherhood-run organisations inform their members’ views about a government’s duty toward its citizens as well as how political discourse should evolve. “Rather than directly confronting the state or participating in formal politics, Islamic NGOs are engaged in social struggle at the level of cultural discourse and values. It is not that Islamic NGOs necessarily seek to convert those who use NGO services to the Islamist cause; the political nature of Islamic NGO activities instead lies at the symbolic and discursive level.”<sup>36</sup> These symbols, which influence daily life, constitute a critical part of political debate.<sup>37</sup> In fact, Eickelman and Piscatori contend that symbols in fact lie at the heart of Muslim politics, defining the very phrase as “the competition and contest over both interpretation of symbols and control of the institutions, both formal and informal, that produce and sustain them.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> J.A. Clark, “Patronage, Prestige, and Power”, 70.

<sup>35</sup> Charles Hirschkind, “What Is Political Islam?,” in *Political Islam: A Critical Reader*, ed. Frédéric Volpi (London: Routledge, 1997), 14.

<sup>36</sup> Wiktorowicz and Farouki, 686.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 688.

<sup>38</sup> Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 5.

The fact that Brotherhood organisations take on such debates distinguishes them from purely political parties. Far from functioning solely to advance political aims, Brotherhood affiliates endorse social organisations, schools, charities, and businesses.<sup>39</sup> The structure of the Muslim Brotherhood in itself provides far more than merely a political affiliation. While rentier state theory is correct in describing Islamist complaint as “cultural or ideological,”<sup>40</sup> it fails to take into account the links between the political and cultural/social in states with under-institutionalised political systems. Certainly, in states which allow for limited political participation, politics is often displaced to the social sphere.

Beyond the strictly political, Brotherhood ideology specifies that the organisation should serve as “a training site for the pure, a synthesis between a political actor and a moral instructor.”<sup>41</sup> Rather than scheming to gain power, then, the organisation endeavours to transform the individual and to function as “a mirror of what the *umma* in general should be.”<sup>42</sup> Each member is obliged to follow certain moral standards upon joining the Brotherhood, and becomes part of an *usra*, or family, which holds weekly meetings to read Islamic texts as well as discuss personal life and religion.<sup>43</sup> Faith is therefore the backbone of the Muslim Brotherhood and is what will likely continue to fuel its growth.

Islamist groups historically privileged self-preservation over political contestation. Their electoral success is dependent on the success of their charity, educational, and preaching activities, rather than the other way around. Since Islamist groups are largely blocked from the national broadcast and print media, the avenues for disseminating their message

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<sup>39</sup> Hamid, *Temptations of Power*, 11-12.

<sup>40</sup> Luciani, “Allocation vs. Production States,” 78.

<sup>41</sup> Roy, 68.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>43</sup> Hamid, *Temptations of Power*, 14.

to voters are limited. Islamists compensate for this by attracting new supporters – and votes – through their grassroots outreach deep within local communities.<sup>44</sup>

Brotherhood affiliates in the super-rentiers exercise political influence primarily due to their ideological appeal and spread through the informal sector. In Kuwait, the Brotherhood influences political outcomes in a straightforward way through its participation in electoral politics and through its grassroots outreach, particularly in the youth and education sector, which influences new generations of voters. In Qatar, the Brotherhood maintains social influence, which is communicated to the political leadership largely through the informal sector of the majlis. The Emirati Brotherhood, though outlawed today, operated in the social sphere primarily yet also came to join forces with other political opposition movements in the efforts to expand popular participation in government.

#### *Whither Rentier Islamism?*

Rentier Islamism is a domestic political arrangement in which Muslim Brotherhood affiliates exercise political capital through informal means, despite (or perhaps due to) the presence of hydrocarbon wealth. In the super-rentiers of the Gulf perhaps more than anywhere else in the world, ideological affinity is powerful, and social capital translates into political influence. The presence of oil rents does not mitigate Islamist complaint, nor does it make such voices politically irrelevant. In fact, the availability of capital grants rulers of super-rentiers more opportunities to co-opt the religious sphere and to attempt to impose their own ideologies. Emirati rulers were particularly attuned to the political influence held by their domestic Brotherhood movements and even considered the Ikhwan an existential threat. Kuwait and Qatar, on

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 116-117.

the other hand, have granted the Ikhwan more freedom, reflecting those leaders' beliefs that co-optation and containment are more effective than crackdown. Perhaps due to the precarious nature of the UAE's unequal union of emirates, the state has been more concerned about the emergence of ideological politics. States that seem similar from the outside, then, have very different considerations when formulating policy toward the Muslim Brotherhood.

Rulers in the Gulf seem to be coming to terms with the fact that Islamist complaint will always form a part of political discourse in that region. Signalling modification of its previous hardline stance, Saudi Arabia hosted the International Union for Muslim Scholars, headed by Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi and dubbed a terrorist organisation by the UAE, for the Islamic Conference convened in February 2015 by King Salman.<sup>45</sup> Earlier that month, Saudi Foreign Minister Saud bin Faysal stated that his government has "no problem with the Muslim Brotherhood."<sup>46</sup> While Qatar's support of Brotherhood regimes in Egypt and Tunisia has been heavily criticised, its moderate approach toward the Ikhwan inside its borders may be inspiring a change in the Saudi stance. With the Brotherhood unlikely to disappear from the political scene, as it can maintain its position in the social sphere, a strategy of co-optation or cooperation is more sustainable than one of crackdown.

Because they gain appeal primarily through an ideology unaffected by the presence of wealth, Islamist organisations, in particular the Muslim Brotherhood, will not

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<sup>45</sup> "Saudi King Hosts Muslim Scholars Close to Brotherhood," Middle East Monitor, February 24, 2015, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/17159-saudi-king-hosts-muslim-scholars-close-to-brotherhood>.

<sup>46</sup> Saud bin Faysal, Qtd. in Mary Atkins, "Saudi Arabia Has 'No Problem' with Muslim Brotherhood: Foreign Minister," Middle East Eye, February 11, 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/saudi-foreign-minister-no-problem-muslim-brotherhood-230201904>.

become any less influential in the Gulf in the coming years, despite campaigns against them. Rather, they will take on different forms, depending on the political freedom afforded them. Further, because Ikhwan groups in the super-rentiers do not need to provide goods and services, as they do in poorer states like Egypt and Jordan, they have been allowed more freedom in terms of structural appearance.

Rentier Islamists will continue to hold sway primarily through the informal social sector. Indeed, the presence of vast amounts of wealth and the implementation of restrictions on political life have led Brotherhood affiliates in super-rentiers to use the informal sector as a means of enhancing their political capital. The means through which such Islamists gain support is not threatened by changes to the Ikhwan's strength elsewhere in the Middle East due to the power of their ideological message. Furthermore, as long as the state continues to politicise Islam, which seems likely as a legitimisation strategy, political Islam remain relevant. The super-rentiers of the Gulf have never been, nor are likely to become, purely secular states, and so Islam will remain a political force. When it comes to political Islam in the super-rentiers of the Gulf, ideas matter; people matter; and faith prevails. To think that the political weight of faith is contingent on the presence of hydrocarbon wealth is misplaced cynicism and grossly simplifies politics in super-rentiers.

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*Interviewees by Country*

Kuwait

Faysal al-Ahmad  
Kuwaiti academic, adherent to Salafism  
November 12, 2013  
Kuwait City

Falah al-‘Ajmi  
President, National Union of Kuwaiti Students (2013–2014)  
January 31, 2014  
Kuwait City

‘Abd al-Aziz al-‘Areedh  
Kuwaiti Academic  
November 13, 2013  
Kuwait City

Muhammad al-Dallal  
Partner, Al Khebra Legal Consultants and Lawyers; Head of Political Relations Office of  
the ICM; former ICM MP (February 2012)  
November 18, 2013  
Kuwait City

Shamlan al-Essa  
Chairman, Center for Strategic and Future Studies, Kuwait University  
November 17, 2013  
Kuwait City

Sami al-Faraj  
President, Kuwait Center for Strategic Studies  
November 13, 2013  
Kuwait City

Bader Nasser al-Mutairi  
Coordinator, Nohoudh Center for Development Studies, Gulf University for Science and  
Technology (GUST)  
February 5, 2014  
Kuwait City

Farah al-Nakib  
Assistant Professor of History and Director, Center for Gulf Studies, American  
University of Kuwait  
November 24, 2013  
Kuwait City

'Abdulla al-Nibari  
Former Democratic Forum MP (1971, 1975, 1992, 1996, 1999)  
February 2, 2014  
Kuwait City

Marzouq al-Nusf  
Programme Associate, Economy and Environment, UN Development Programme Kuwait  
February 4, 2014  
Kuwait City

Mohammad al-Rumaihi  
Professor of Political Sociology, Kuwait University  
November 25, 2013  
Kuwait City

Nasser al-Sane  
Chairman, Synergy Corporation Consultancy Company; Former ICM MP (1992, 1996,  
1999, 2003, 2006, 2008)  
November 21, 2013  
Kuwait City

Usama al-Shahin  
Lawyer; former ICM MP (February 2012); former President, National Union of Kuwaiti  
Students  
November 24, 2014  
Kuwait City

Abdullah al-Shayaji  
Chairman, Department of Political Science, Kuwait University; former ICM MP (2008)  
November 27, 2013  
Kuwait City

Omar al-Shehabi  
Director, Gulf Centre for Development Policies  
February 5, 2014  
Kuwait City

Tareq al-Suwaidan  
CEO, Innovation Group; Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood , intellectual, motivational  
speaker  
November 14, 2013  
Kuwait City

Jassim Muhalhal al-Yasin  
Former Secretary-General, ICM

November 16, 2013  
Kuwait City

Fahad al-Zumai  
Assistant Professor of Law, Gulf University for Science and Technology  
January 29, 2014  
Kuwait City

Salah Eddine Arkadan  
Assistant Professor of Humanities and Social Sciences, GUST  
Kuwait University

Mohammed ben Naji  
Director of Media Communications and Follow Up, International Media Section,  
Ministry of Information  
November 11, 2013  
Kuwait City

Cultural Affairs Officer, American Embassy Kuwait  
November 19, 2013  
Kuwait City

Elizabeth Dickinson  
Correspondent, Monitor Global Outlook  
November 18, 2013  
Skype interview from Kuwait City

Shafeeq Ghabra  
Professor of Political Science, Kuwait University  
November 21, 2013  
Kuwait City

Ambassador Edward W. Gnehm, Jr.  
Kuwait Professor of Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Affairs and Director, Middle East Policy  
Forum, Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University; U.S.  
Ambassador to Kuwait (1991–1994)  
December 16, 2013  
Telephone interview from Atlanta

Ibrahim al-Hadban  
Professor of Political Science, Kuwait University  
November 14, 2013  
Kuwait City

Khalil 'Ali Haidar

Writer and researcher, member of Kuwaiti Journalists' Association, Association of Writers, and board member of the Faculty of Arts, Kuwait University

November 17, 2013

Kuwait City

Nizar Hamzeh

President and Professor of Political Science and International Law, American University of Kuwait

November 10, 2013

Kuwait City

Michael Herb

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Georgia State University  
Atlanta, Georgia

George Irani

Associate Professor of International Relations, American University of Kuwait

November 12, 2013

Kuwait City

Officer at the Ministry of Information

November 11, 2013

Kuwait City

Political Officer, British Embassy Kuwait

November 14, 2013

Kuwait City

Qatar

Jamal Abdullah

Researcher, Al Jazeera Centre for Studies

October 23, 2013

Doha

Abdullah al-Arian

Assistant Professor of History, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Qatar

September 26, 2013

Doha

Darwish al-Emadi

Director, The Social and Economic Survey Research Institute

November 5, 2013

Doha

Khaled al-Hroub

Professor-in-Residence, Liberal Arts Program, Northwestern University in Qatar  
September 18, 2013  
Doha

Hamad al-Ibrahim  
Director of Planning and Strategic Initiatives, Qatar Foundation Research and  
Development  
October 24, 2013  
Doha

Hassan al-Ibrahim  
Chief Tourism Development Officer, Qatar Tourism Authority  
October 22, 2013  
Doha

Lolwah al-Khater  
Student, Qatar Faculty for Islamic Studies; former employee of RAND-Qatar Policy  
Institute  
February 28, 2015  
Oxford

ʿAbdulaziz al-Mahmoud  
Qatari writer and journalist; former Chief Editor, Al-Sharq and The Peninsula,  
Aljazeera.net; Member of Board of Directors of Islamweb.net  
October 28, 2013  
Doha

Saʿad Rashid al-Matwi  
Student, Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies  
February 23, 2015  
Oxford

Ibrahim Arafat  
Professor of Politics, Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies; former adviser to the Amiri Diwan  
December 4, 2013  
Doha

Abdullah Baabood  
Director, Gulf Studies Program, College of Arts and Sciences, Qatar University  
October 30, 2013  
Doha

Sultan Barakat  
Director of Research, Brookings Doha Center  
October 30, 2013  
Doha

'Azmi Bishara  
General Director, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies  
October 5, 2013  
Doha

Employees of Al Jazeera English  
September 24, 2013; October 30, 2013  
Doha

Patrick Forbes  
Founder and CEO, Forbes Associates  
December 6, 2013  
Doha

Justin Gengler  
Research Program Manager, Social and Economic Survey Research Institute  
October 23, 2013  
Doha

Shadi Hamid  
Fellow, Foreign Policy, Center for Middle East Policy, U.S. Relations with the Islamic  
World, Brookings Institution  
November 5, 2013  
Doha

Ihtisham Hibatullah  
Head of International Relations, Al Jazeera Media Network  
October 30, 2013  
Doha

Ambassador Nicholas Hopton  
British Ambassador to Qatar (2013-present)  
April 22, 2014  
Doha

Mehran Kamrava  
Professor, Government; Director of the Center for International and Regional Studies,  
Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Qatar  
September 19, 2013  
Doha

Jamal Khashoggi  
General Manager of Al-Arab News Channel; Saudi journalist and columnist  
October 23, 2013  
Skype interview from Doha

Wanda Krause

Consultant, Krause Consulting; former Assistant Professor and Coordinator of the Gulf Studies Program, Qatar University

November 7, 2013

Skype interview from Kuwait City

Gerd Nonneman

Dean, Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, Qatar

September 22, 2013

Doha

Political Officer, British Embassy Doha

April 22, 2014

Doha

Professor of Gulf Studies, Qatar University

October 23, 2013

Doha

Tariq Ramadan

HH Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani Professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies;

Research Fellow of St Antony's College, University of Oxford

October 21, 2014

Oxford

David Roberts

Lecturer, Defence Studies Department, King's College London; Former Director, Royal United Service Institute for Defence and Security Studies Qatar

September 23, 2013

Doha

Salman Shaikh

Director, Brookings Doha Center

September 8, 2013

Doha

Hussein Shobokshi

Saudi newspaper columnist; host of weekly current affairs program *Al Takreer* on Al Arabiya

October 9, 2013

Doha

Michael Stephens

Research Fellow for Middle East Studies, Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies London

November 1, 2013  
Doha

Jassim Sultan  
Founder of Nahda Project; former Supreme Guide of Qatar's Muslim Brotherhood  
October 9, 2013  
Doha

Steven Wright  
Associate Professor, International Relations; Associate Dean for Planning and Quality Assurance, College of Arts and Sciences, Qatar University  
September 23, 2013  
Doha

Obaid Younossi  
Senior Management Scientist at the RAND Corporation; former Director, RAND-Qatar Policy Institute  
September 24, 2013  
Doha

United Arab Emirates

Abdulkhaleq Abdulla  
Professor of Political Science, UAEU  
February 10, 2014  
Dubai

Kristian Alexander  
Assistant Professor of Political Science, Zayed University  
March 13, 2014  
Dubai

'Ali al-Ghafli  
Vice Dean for Social Sciences, UAEU; columnist for *Khaleej Times*  
February 17, 2014  
Al-Ain

Ebtesam al-Ketbi  
Chairwoman, Emirates Policy Center  
February 24, 2014  
Abu Dhabi

Sulayman al-Khalaf  
Expert in Intangible Cultural Heritage, Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority  
April 7, 2014  
Abu Dhabi

'Abdul Majeed al-Mojalid  
Saudi student, American University in Dubai  
March 17, 2014  
Dubai

Fadwa al-Mughairbi  
Assistant Dean of Research and Graduate Studies, College of Humanities and Social  
Sciences, UAE University  
February 17, 2014  
Al-Ain

Saif Salim al-Qaydi  
Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, UAE University  
February 17, 2014  
Al-Ain

Nasser bin Ghaith  
Economist and Lecturer, Paris-Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi; one of the UAE5  
April 19, 2014  
Dubai

Mohamed Binhuwaidin  
Head of Political Science Department, UAE University  
February 17, 2014  
Al-Ain

Dubai-based Gulf Correspondent  
March 6, 2014  
Dubai

Matthew J. Duffy  
September 16, 2014  
Atlanta, Georgia

Emirati Academic  
March 18, 2014  
Dubai

Fellow at Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government (formerly Dubai School of  
Government)  
February 19, 2014  
Dubai

Richard Gauvain  
Professor of Middle Eastern Studies, American University in Dubai

March 2, 2014  
Dubai

William Gueraiche  
Associate Professor/Chair of International Relations Department, American University in  
the Emirates  
March 10, 2014  
Dubai

Frauke Heard-Bey  
Historian and political scientist; board member of Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and  
Heritage (ADACH)  
April 7, 2014  
Abu Dhabi

'Ali Salem Humaid  
Chairman, Al Mezmaah Centre for Studies and Research  
March 4, 2014  
Dubai

Theodore Karasik  
Senior Advisor at Risk Insurance Management; former Director of Research and  
Consultancy at the Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis (INEGMA), Dubai  
February 19, 2014  
Dubai

Sulayman Khalaf  
Heritage Director, Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage, Intangible Heritage  
Department  
April 7, 2014  
Abu Dhabi

Ahmed Mansoor  
Human rights activist and member of Human Rights Watch Middle East and North  
Africa Advisory Committee, one of UAE5  
March 26, 2014  
Dubai

Francis Matthew  
Editor at Large, Gulf News  
February 12, 2014

Edmund O'Sullivan  
Chairman, Middle East Economic Digest  
April 3, 2014  
Dubai

Researchers in Ras al-Khaimah  
March 3, 2014  
Ras al-Khaimah

Rima Sabban  
Assistant Professor of Sociology, Zayed University  
March 30, 2014  
Dubai