Protest, Oppression and the Politics of Citizenship in Bahrain and Kuwait

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ABSTRACT

This thesis shows citizenship granting and revocation as a ruling class strategy in the wider historical and political context. This strategy is aimed at the conservation of the monarchy, and manifests itself differently in Bahrain and Kuwait. In Bahrain, they have been at the core of the uprisings against the government since these began, while in Kuwait they mostly share a history of supporting their monarchy. Kuwait has for a long time refused to consider its stateless population worthy of citizenship, while Bahrain has naturalized most at the beginning of the century. I argue that the reason why is condensed from many aspects, ranging from the different opportunities of the rentier system, the structure of the political set-up, historical heritage and the involvement in external and internal warfare.

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INTRODUCTION

As the events of the Arab Spring unfolded, a crucial question was „Who will be next?"
in the line of overthrown rulers, and whether there is a type of state that will be able to remain
untouched by the rebellions of the people. The monarchies of the Arab/Persian Gulf were
thought to be politically stable and not susceptible to troubles, as they have been able to use
the profits from abundant natural resources, primarily oil and natural gas, to enable their
citizens to live a wealthy, comfortable life with a variety of welfare benefits (including no or
very low taxes, free or cheap utilities). This is only a part of their story though, as unrest is
neither new to nor rare to the region.

The two countries of the Gulf that have been touched the most, in different ways, by the
revolutionary wave are Bahrain and Kuwait. Although Kuwait remains an important producer
of oil worldwide, and Bahrain is rather considered a "post-oil" economy now, their state
systems are similar. Both are monarchies that might be called constitutional in a way, as they
have parliaments that are enabled to exercise, though limited, power – but the ruling family,
headed by the respective monarchs, is the final and active decision maker. They are also the
two countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council with the highest percentage of Shi'a, and both
had to or are still managing a numerous stateless population.

The political role of the Shi'a communities is different in the two countries. In Bahrain,
they have been at the core of the uprisings against the government since these began, while in
Kuwait they mostly share a history of supporting their monarchy. Kuwait has for a long time
refused to consider its stateless population worthy of citizenship, while Bahrain has
naturalized most at the beginning of the century.

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I will examine the situations of these communities especially through the angles of citizenship and conflict. The granting and withdrawing of citizenship is a way for the state to directly engineer the voting population, a strategy of keeping the monarchy stable. Who takes which side in a conflict has a great influence on this: on one hand an unfavorable stance towards the government leads to repression, on the other, the governments fearing for their stability and when eyeing the turmoil unfolding in the wider region can be convinced to give concessions in exchange for legitimacy from their populations.

Theoretical framework

„The Gulf monarchies are not immune against the Arab Spring," writes David Anderson in his book "After the Sheikhs." His main argument is based on the idea that Bahrain projects the future of the rest of the region, as it was the first one that largely depleted its oil reserves, now relying on Saudi Arabia, and is subject to unrest that is always flickering in the background even when not overtly present. As the resource reserves are starting to wear thin, more countries will be forced to reconsider their generous welfare programs. Davidson argues that somewhere along this process, if the unemployment and social inequality reach wider masses, not only will the uprisings reach wider areas of Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province that is inhabited by Shi'a, but also will include Sunni populations.[1] The important consideration for this essay is how the regimes are trying to prevent exactly that.

J. E. Peterson foreshadows that what happens in Bahrain will be a sign of what is not come in the rest of the Gulf. It is the first country in the region that is faced with oil revenues running dry; in addition to problems of sectarianism, corruption, migration and economic

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[1] David Anderson, *After the Sheikhs: The Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies* (Hurst & Company, 2012).

imbalance.[2] If and how the Al Khalifa ruling family will be successfully able to handle the situation might become a model for the others to follow. This is one of the reasons I chose Bahraini cases to examine.

Oren Yiftachel's model on ethnocratic regimes could be applied to the Gulf. The aim of this kind of regime is "to maximize ethnic control over a contested multiethnic territory and its governing apparatus."[3] The Gulf citizens are not descendants of settlers, they are the "indigenous", and they do not wish for territorial expansion − but the methods of retaining power are characterized by an ethnocracy's stratified society, the tension between wanting to be seen as not authoritarian but partly democratic (constitutional monarchic) states, the domination of all policy making by one certain ethnoclass, one single major religion. This model can give political scientific reasoning as to why the Gulf citizenship policies have evolved in the way they did.

Ahn Nga Longva describes the Kuwaiti system as an ethnocracy, as she considers the words "democracy" or "autocracy" inadequate to describe the political situation. Features that are characteristic to the two arrangements that she dismissed in this case are entangled in an unique mix in Kuwait. Ethnocracy, according to her, "describes the tendency for an elite to posit their own physical characteristics and cultural norms as the essence of the nation over which they rule, thus narrowing its definition and excluding all those within the polity who do not exhibit the same characteristics or embrace the same norms."[4] Longva focuses on the migrant workers to highlight the focus on citizenship as the basis of exclusion (termed by her as "civic ethnocracy") but acknowledges that the distinguishing feature can be of various

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[2] J.E. Peterson, "Bahrain: Reform - Promise and Reality," in *Political Liberalization in the Persian Gulf* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), 158.

[3] Oren Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 15.

[4] Anh Nga Longva, "Neither Autocracy nor Democracy but Ethnocracy," in *Monarchies and Nations: Globalisation and Identity in the Arab States of the Gulf* (I. B. Tauris, 2005), 119.

nature, such as race or religion. As per her observations, the citizenship-based differentiation rarely draws attention except for in extreme cases, as it is considered to be the usual way of affairs in any state. In this thesis I will use elements of Longva's theory to apply to Bahrain as well.

Bank et al.'s empirical research claims that the most important factors in monarchic survival in the Gulf are the rentier system and the ruling family members' "monopolization" of government positions.[5] Not having a high family involvement in decision making is the common factor they found in their model for the breakdown of monarchies.[6] Their coding of the US military assistance is strange though, as they only consider financial military aid, not for example other measures such as support by equipment, sales, or the stationing of troops. Kuwait has received all of the latter (Bahrain also a significant amount of the former), but this factor is not included in their analysis. Despite of this error, their theory shows the threat the current monarch face when their rule is questioned; they perceive their absolute rule as vital to prevent the collapse of the whole system, resulting in them engaging in desperate measures.

In Rolf Schwarz's article on the connections of rentierism, state-formation and participation in war, he found that in the Arab world, war-making results in weaker and collapsing states. Even though the article was written in late 2011, he excludes Bahrain from the states with involvement in war-making although he includes Saudi Arabia for partaking in domestic repression measures.[7] Bahrain's military spending has increased steadily and has more than doubled since 2001, the time of the conception of the National Action Charter.[8] In

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[5] André Bank, Thomas Richter, and Anna Sunik, "Long-Term Monarchical Survival in the Middle East: A Configurational Comparison, 1945–2012," *GIGA Research Programme: Legitimacy and Efficiency of Political Systems* (n.d.): 20.

[6] Ibid., 22.

[7] Rolf Schwarz, "Does War Make States? Rentierism and the Formation of States in the Middle East," *European Political Science Review* 3, no. 3 (2011): 6.

[8] This is not meant to imply causation.

the same time frame, Kuwait's is like a rollercoaster, but it shows a sharp spike and continued increase since 2010,[9] the beginning of the Arab Spring.[10]

„In a migratory world, citizenship is no longer a symbol of exclusivity and permanence; rather, it has become portable, exchangeable and multiple," wrote Aleksandra Maatsch.[11] This is a quote that shows that Western citizenship theory is difficult to apply in the Gulf. There the development has not (yet?) reached post-nationalism, and is still not separated from a territorial basis although being a major hub of migrations. On the other hand, she offers two theories on why citizenship policies might converge in a region: either because of an external, top-down pressure (in her case studies, the European Union); or because of domestic politics. In the latter case, the countries realized that they were facing similar challenges and responded in the same manner, leading to what she calls "parallel path-dependencies."[12] It is not clear why these ideas should be contradictory; in the Gulf countries, the second theory is more obviously prevalent, but as domestic affairs are under scrutiny of for example the Gulf Cooperation Council, reacting to the same challenges the state faces, a combinatory approach is needed to provide and explanation.

"The citizenry of the modern state is internally inclusive," wrote Rogers Brubaker.[13] In the Gulf though, this assumption is not correct: not all citizens possess equal rights. This should mean that the Gulf States are not modern in the societal sense, although they now are in the economic meaning of the word. Their focus is more on the "externally exclusive" aspect, preventing foreigners from having easy access to citizenship and the rights that come

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[9] "Military Expenditure by Country, in Constant (2011) US$ M., 1988-2012" (SIPRI, 2012).

[10] This upward moving trend is noticeable in all Gulf states, with similar spikes in Saudi Arabia and Oman (No data for 2012 available for the Emirates and Qatar.)

[11] Alexandra Maatsch, *Ethnic Citizenship Regimes* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 1.

[12] Ibid., 11.

[13] Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Harvard University Press, 1998), 21.

along with it, creating an almost impassable boundary in the societies between nationals and foreigners. Much of the research on this internal stratification has been done on the case of women, although religious (sectarian as well as Muslim versus non-Muslim) boundaries exist as well, as I will show.

Claire Beaugrand asserts that keeping the stateless without citizenship is economically advantageous, as they do not fall under the strict labor regulations citizens do, therefore they can be paid much less and are easier to fire.[14] As rent revenues lessen and welfare benefits become a burden, a tactic of keeping the citizenry as small as possible is applied; though Beaugrand's idea seems to apply more to migrant workers who possess even less political pressure power than the Arab *Bidoon*.

Rainer Bauböck, in the preface to Gianluca P. Parolin's Citizenship in the Arab World, writes that the citizenship constellations that can be found in the region are not unique, but can even be found in European countries today, not to mention the in continent's past. The problems of exclusion of minorities, of considering ethnicity and religion fundamental criteria of naturalization are weaved through many legislative frameworks.[15] This argument works in favor for applying Western theories to the Gulf case.

Michael Mann's idea stemming from a critique of T.H. Marshall's classic model of citizenship development[16] that five different ruling class strategies of citizenship exist is interesting as one of them, the one of authoritarian monarchies,[17] has implications that can be

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[14] Claire Beaugrand, "Nationality & Migrations Control in the Gulf Countries," *Informationsprojekt Naher Und Mittlerer Osten* 47 (2006): 6.

[15] Gianluca Parolin, *Citizenship in the Arab World: Kin, Religion and Nation-state* (Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 10.

[16] Although the Gulf was greatly influenced by British concepts of state, his model contradicts what has happened there. Civil and political rights of citizenship are shaky at best, and the social part is what seems to have developed and firmed first.

[17] Michael Mann, "Ruling Class Strategies and Citizenship," *Sociology* 21, no. 3 (1987).

applied to Bahrain and Kuwait. "The tactics were divide-and-rule: negotiate with the moderate sections excluded groups, then repress the rest; play off incorporated interest groups and classes against each other; and preserve a vital element of arbitrary regime discretion."[18] – this quote is the essence of their regimes. He asserts that the clue points to keeping power for monarchies is a mix of the "coherence of the *ancien régime*" and modernization.[19] The specific aspects of the civic-social-political triad are unfit for the Gulf; but the theory would suggest that there might be parallels between the early European development of citizenship rights and the current Gulf system. The authoritarian model did survive, just in territories not examined by Mann.

Terms and Methodology

I do not wish to take a stance in the debate whether the region in question should be called Arab or Persian Gulf, I will from now on use the designation "Gulf" and "Gulf states" in this thesis. The countries that usually fall under the umbrella of this term are the ones located on the Arab Peninsula, with the exception of Yemen[20]: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

The terms "Sunni," "Shi'a" and "stateless" will not be used in the meaning implying a homogenous acting group, but as a category that makes analysis easier. Especially the religious designations are not only sectarian in meaning, but also designating the result of social/class-based strife as it is the result of the colonial ruler's "divide et impera" strategy. The divides are not always necessarily ingrained in the everyday lives of people as is

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[18] Ibid., 345.

[19] Ibid., 347.

[20] It is generally thought to be culturally, politically and economically different; nor it is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

sometimes presented in the media (for example, intermarriages are common) – except in times of political crisis, when such identities are easy to draw on and exploit.

I will mostly use the terms "citizenship" and "nationality" in a strict sense of legal status, as Aleksandra Maatsch has defined it: "a legal status that binds a person to a particular state under the provisions of domestic law, regulate by specific legal norms concerning acquisition and loss of this status."[21]

The rulers are allowed to exercise discretion on behalf of whomever they consider worthy when granting citizenship. This power is allotted by the respective nationality laws, and creates discrepancies in their practical use. The question might arise that why Bahrain and Kuwait even have the laws if they are not applied the way they should, the exception becoming the regular proceeding. States in general are hesitant to share information on the granting and revocation of citizenship, and so I will rely on government and media reports on the cases and numbers; as well as the constitutions and relevant legal frameworks to examine the normal way of proceeding in such issues.

I will use tools of discourse analysis to highlight specific cases where the governments used citizenship granting and revocation for a specific political purpose. This will be placed in context of a wider strategy of monarchic resiliency.

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[21] Maatsch, *Ethnic Citizenship Regimes*, 3.

It is of course important to first understand the specificities of the region and the countries to be able to place the occurring phenomena. This chapter will give an overview of not only the important historical milestones and current characteristics of the region and the states, but also show the international processes that governed the events of the recent times.

1.1 The region

All Gulf states are some form of monarchy; with different amounts of power being relegated to a parliament of consultative council. These structures have developed along the times as the then-current regional great powers such as the Ottoman and British Empires came and went; one dynasty has proved victorious in the struggles for power. These ruling families retain their all-encompassing influence, not solely through the monarch himself but through the positioning of relatives in positions of importance, whether in the government or strategic sectors.

Generally, nowadays the Gulf states want to present a modern, cosmopolitan image to the world that compels investors to spend their money in the region.. There is also desire to become a cultural as well as an economic center: just think of for example the international universities such as Georgetown, Carnegie Mellon and New York University that have opened campuses in the last few years in various Gulf locations; the planned Louvre museum in Abu Dhabi; or the upcoming 2022 football World Cup in Qatar. They need the revenue to become ready for the depletion of the oil reserves, to be able to invest internationally for

example in food production enterprises to assure the future of their populations. Keeping up a positive image in the world is crucial.

Gulf countries can be called "rentier societies," an economic situation where a large part of the citizenry has a steady income without actually working because of fossil fuel revenues (or foreign aid.)[22] The fossil fuel of choice here is oil or natural gas; discovered in the first third of the 20th century. Especially since the huge rise in demand and soaring oil prices during the crises in the 1970's, the abundant supplies have insured the wealth of the states. Characteristics of such states include very low or no taxation and very generous benefits automatically granted to the citizens by the government. A consequence of this is the lack of rights for political participation and representation, since the people do not contribute to the costs of governing and upkeep: "no taxation, no representation." The result is not only a weak civil society, but a fragile future: what if the resources are depleted? This is of essential importance to the rulers who want to retain their power.

The International Monetary Fund predicts that if the Gulf states keep up their current economic policies, in a few years they will face budget deficits. Justin Gengler suggests that the monarchs' sole goal is not only to be able to buy off their citizens with the rent revenues, but to do this "in a way that guarantees the survival of the regime while at the same time maximizing the state's own share of the resource wealth." As surveys from the area have found, the people see their economic standing in a relative and not an absolute comparison – the regime strategy is often thus to create a privileged stratum that benefits most from the handouts and opportunities; a stratum that will support the ones who enabled their advantageous status.[23]

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[22] Onn Winckler, "Labor and Liberalization: The Decline of the GCC Rentier System," in *Political Liberalization in the Persian Gulf* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), 59.

[23] Justin Gengler, "Political Segmentation and Diversification in the Rentier Arab Gulf," *Religion and Politics in Bahrain*, 2013.

The private sector is dominated by the extensive migrant labor force – as much as almost 90% of the resident population in Qatar, the lowest being almost 30% in Oman and Saudi Arabia.[24] Another consequence of the high rates of non-citizens is the strengthening of nationalist sentiments and traditionalism. To counter the cacophony of influences, local culture and customs are emphasized. This heightens the anxiety that the indigenous are or will become a minority in their own country.[25]

The discourses surrounding the liberalization of citizenship thus often center on the negative aspects of foreign influence. Foreigners, being able to acquire citizenship easier and thus develop ties to the host country and absorb its culture, are less likely to contribute to the feared over-foreignification. For example, the prevalence of foreign household servants and caretakers of children has caused the citizen children to not learn the local dialect of Arabic perfectly. Mouawiya Al Awad argues that the immigration even "threatens national identity" and impose overburdening costs on government of the Emirates, for example in the area of security and social services.[26]

In all countries a large part of the citizenry is employed in the state sector. The workers, being dependent on the wages from the government-as-employer as many are either under-qualified or considered too expensive to hire in the private sector, might be more supportive of its policies. The over-reliance on foreign work is considered to be a threat by the governments; therefore various nationalization programs were started. These require for

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[24] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "International Migrant Stock: The 2008 Revision Population Database," 2010. The data is based on estimates.

[25] John Chalcraft, "Migration Politics in the Arabian Peninsula," in *Transformation of the Gulf* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 77.

[26] Mouawiya Al Awad, "The Cost of Foreign Labor in the United Arab Emirates," *Institute for Social & Economic Research* (2010): 4.

example that a certain percentage of workers in a company must be nationals.[27] While it might be favorable economically, this raises a few questions. It seems to be a dilemma whether regime stability is better served by having a large part of the citizenry employed by the state, or encouraging less such ties.

1.2 Bahrain

Bahrain was ruled by several different powers since ancient times until its independence in 1971. The Al Khalifa family moved there from Kuwait in around 1797, and entered into a treaty with Great Britain in 1820.

The first parliamentary elections were held in 1973. It lasted two years: the Emir was furious that he could not push through a law concerning national security that would, in the eyes of the opposition, give disproportionate and unfair powers (such as allowing detention without trial) to the security services, and suspended it.[28]

The 1990's saw an economic crisis, topped by the uprising starting in 1994. Reformist inclinations from the side of the ruling family appeared after Hamad bin 'Isa Al Khalifa became King. He allowed exiles to return and women to vote, political prisoners to be set free, started dialogue with the Shi'a opposition among others. He commissioned the creation of the National Action Charter, to define the political system of the coming years and introduce more democratic measures, like free elections. In the referendum, this proposal was

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[27] Kasim Randeree, "Workforce Nationalization in the Gulf Cooperation Council States," *Center for International and Religious Studies* (2012).

[28] Later he passed the law with a decree.

positively voted for by over 98% of the population.[29] Instead of fulfilling the promise of allowing public debate on the new, amended constitution, the King forced the Charter to be recognized as such. Then, voting districts were changed to give more chances to pro-government candidates; the appointed upper house of the parliament was given equal powers to the elected lower house.[30]

The 2002 elections resulted in Shi'a candidates winning four more parliament memberships than the Sunni Islamists, although their main society, the Wefaq, and three other parties decided on a boycott. In 2006, despite of Wefaq engaging in a controversial decision to nominate candidates, Shi'a only succeeded in taking 18 of the 40 parliamentary seats,[31] like in the next, 2010 elections (All of those were from Wefaq.) After the protests and violent repression began, Wefaq withdrew all of its representatives – they were replaced in new elections by independent, pro-government candidates.

Things began to change on the 14th of February, 2011. As many in the West enjoyed Saint Valentine's Day, protesters filled the streets in the capital of Bahrain, Manama. It was a special day: The tenth anniversary of the National Action Charter, voted on in a referendum, enacted by King Hamad ibn Isa Al Khalifah – a milestone to end the uprisings of the 1990's and a return to constitutional rule.

The demonstrations were initially peaceful; the people were even in favor of consolidation in the beginning and there was no talk of overthrowing the King's regime. The prime demand was the release of hundreds of political prisoners. However, the security forces' violent crackdowns and the relentless protesters' return repeated in cycles for one month. On the 15th of March, troops from the Gulf Cooperation Council's Peninsula Shield

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[29] It was also preceded by an extensive government campaign to encourage popular support.

[30] Fred H. Lawson, "Intraregime Dynamics and Uncertainty," in *Debating Arab Authoritarianism* (Stanford: Stanford Unviersity Press, 2007), 121.

[31] Peterson, "Bahrain: Reform - Promise and Reality," 168.

force entered Bahrain on a plea by King Hamad, to subdue the uprising. For a while, it seemed that they succeeded: the demonstrations became sporadic, concentrated in smaller towns – but in 2012, their numbers and strength increased again, and are still ongoing.

During the 2011-2013 period, attempts at forming a National Dialogue to resolve the differences in opinion and address grievances on all sides were made. The progress has been hampered by boycotts and the escalation of violence.

The ruling family is far from united in its views. Differences in opinion are great between conservative branches of the ruling family and the rest. Some of the former argue that King Hamad should not repeat the mistakes that the rulers made with suspending the parliament in the 1970's.[32] The now influential *khawalid*[33] though are known for securitizing the problem of the Shi'a, instigating for example the calling upon of the GCC military forces.[34] The King himself is considered a pragmatist, settling for peace and stability rather than threading the uncertain path of reforms.[35] His son, Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad bin 'Isa Al Khalifa and his followers are the ones advocating a moderate approach, with engaging in meaningful dialogue with the opposition.[36]

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[32] Ibid., 170.

[33] Referring to Khaled bin Ali Al Khalifa, brother of the Emir and mastermind behind the massive crackdowns against Shi'a. Now the powerful „triumvirate" consists of the Prime Minister, the Royal Court Minister, and the commander of the Defense Forces.

[34] Gerome Taylor, "Bahrain's Royal Family Infiltrated by Hardliners Hostile to Britain and US," *The Independent*, 2013.

[35] Peterson, "Bahrain: Reform - Promise and Reality," 181.

[36] Reza H. Akbari and Jason Stern, "The Triangle of Conflict: How Bahrain's Internal Divisions Inhibit Reconciliation," *GWU The Institute of Middle East Studies* (2012).

1.3 Kuwait

Kuwait's now "original" inhabitants started settling in the area from around the 18th century. Louer considers the Kuwaitis and inherently diasporic population, who were enchanted to stay by the good, peaceful trading opportunities.[37]

The al-Sabah family started its rule in the area in 1716, with a power sharing agreement among the most prominent families that relegated to them affairs of government and military. In the 19th century, Kuwait came under Ottoman and then British rule, until the independence in 1961 (the first among the Gulf states.) As soon as this was declared, Iraq tried to claim the territory for itself, quoting Ottoman provisions that placed it under their rule decades ago.

Despite of this, in the Iran-Iraq war Kuwait decided to support Iraq in fear of the Islamic Revolution spreading. Iraq went on to annex and invade Kuwait in 1990. The invaders were removed and the independence reinstated in 1991 by and international coalition led by the United States.

In January 2011, the Emir gave all Kuwaiti citizens around four thousand dollars worth of dinars, along with food grants given out for the length of a year.[38] The *Bidoons* were obviously excluded from this attempt to preempt popular protest by financial means – but this move of the government resulted exactly in that. The demonstrations and clashes between police forces and the stateless lasted for around a year.

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[37] Laurence Louer, *Transnational Shia Politics: Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf* (Columbia University Press, 2008), 46.

[38] Carl Schramm, "After the Revolution, Economic Reform," *Wall Street Journal*, 2011.

Davidson argues that even Kuwait seemed to abandon its more democratic ways of dealing with dissent in favor of increased police repression.[39] In 2013, a new media law punishing any insult to the Emir drew controversy, as well as the sentencing of Member of Parliament Musallam al-Barrak to jail for "undermining the status of the Emir" with a speech at a rally that included the passage: ""We will not allow you, Your Highness, to take Kuwait into the abyss of autocracy."[40]

1.4 The wider geopolitical situation

The regional and recent context of the Shi'a of the Gulf is of crucial importance to understand their situation in both Bahrain and Kuwait. Some hold that Iran still considers Bahrain to be its 14th province[41] that was separated from it by force, despite of officially relinquishing its claim in 1979. Ever since the Islamic Revolution, Iran was not shy about trying to export its newfound political and religious model to places where Shi'a live in large numbers. In 1981, the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, sponsored by Tehran, attempted a coup on Bahrain's national celebration day. Three alleged other coup attempts, in 1996, 2008 and 2011 followed. Since the 1990's, suspicions have arisen that Iran was the one inciting the Shi'a to protest; and that it also financed and trained terrorists against the

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[39] Chrisopher M. Davidson, "Why the Sheikhs Will Fall," *Foreign Policy*, 2013.

[40] Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Kuwait: Political Crisis at Critical Juncture," *BBC News*, 2012.

[41] For example, in 2009, an advisor to Grand Ayatollah Khomeini publicly declared that this was the case.

government.[42] The Bahrain Independent Commission of Enquiry, and international body set up to investigate the 2011 protests, there is no proof that Iran was involved in the recent unrest.[43]

For Saudi Arabia, quelling Shi'a unrest in the whole region it has influence on is not only a matter of principle, but also one of sheer necessity. It fears that any uprising's success will spread like wildfire to empower the protesters in its own Eastern Province and on the southern borderlands close to Yemen. The Saudi Kingdom is based on an alliance of the Al Saud ruling family and the Wahhabi clerics, representing a very conservative interpretation of Islam. The Wahhabi are inherently disdainful of the Shi'a, whom they consider deviants or even apostates.

On the quest to acquire regional power status, Saudi Arabia considers its main rival to be Iran. It thinks that Iran is ready to undermine its status by supporting the Shi'a in the Gulf with for example military training, weapons and money. Iranian officials have spoken up in support for the protests in Bahrain and against the treatment of the Shi'a there. To prevent further escalation, Saudi Arabia sent soldiers as part of the GCC Peninsula Shield force not only to help the Bahraini government that was taken by surprise by the force of the unrest, but also to send a clear signal to others who dreamed of taking the streets that the same fate awaits them should they choose to move.

In 2012, Kuwaiti Shi'a, including Abd al-Hamed al-Dasthi, a citizen of Iranian origin and Member of Parliament, pledged almost a hundred million dollars worth dinars to the

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[42] Mitchell A. Belfer, "The Fourteenth Province: The Irano-Bahraini Conflict in Perspective," *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies* (n.d.).

[43] "Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry" (Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, November 23, 2011), 383.

Assad regime of Syria.[44] Bashar al-Assad and the most stable base of his supporters belong to the Alawi Shi'a branch of Islam. The government has been repressive to Sunnis for a long time, resulting in the backlash that now comes from many Sunni-dominated opposition and armed rebel groups. Assad also receives material and personnel support from Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah for the fight against the various rebel factions.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was initially formed in 1981 to counter-balance the Iranian threat and give the Gulf states appropriate defense cooperation capabilities.[45] Its military force is called the Peninsula Shield, and similar to the NATO's 5th article, provisions allow it to step in whenever a member state comes under attack – as it was seen by the deployment in 2011, even if that attack comes from within the state itself. From a mere security cooperation organization, the GCC became much more, for example in the field of economy. A monetary union is planned, the common market was established in 2008.[46] In 2011 the GCC decided that it would roll out a set of financial aid measures, dubbed a "Marshall plan" in reference to the US efforts to encourage rebuilding Europe after the Second World War. The plan is to grant ten billion dollars over the period of ten years – Kuwait for example promised a 2,5 billion share – to Bahrain for projects related to for example housing, health, or education.[47]

More than that, talks are commencing about a possible merger of all GCC states, starting with Bahrein and Saudi Arabia; and the founding of a common GCC citizenship. The

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[44] *Kuwaiti Shia Donate 23 Million Dinar to Bashar Al-Assad in Syria*, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Me0it469nP4.

[45] It is sometimes jokingly referred to as the Gulf Counterrevolutionary Council.

[46] Neil Patrick, "Nationalism in the Gulf States," in *Transformation of the Gulf* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 32.

[47] Mohammed al-Jayousi, "'GCC Marshall Plan' Offers Funding for Bahraini Projects," *Al-Shorfa*, 2012.

smaller states however are reluctant to express positive views about this level of integration, as they fear the over-dominance of Saudi Arabia.[48]

The United States keep a large military presence in the Gulf because of their strategic considerations. More recently Iran is considered to be the primary threat in the area, but the proximity of available bases to Iraq was crucial in successfully conducting the 1991 and 2003 invasions. The US stations its 5th Fleet in Bahrain; and still retains a presence in Kuwait. It also provides considerable support in form of defense contracts, weapon shipments and monetary aid.

Many have criticized its lax stance on for example the human rights violations in Bahrain. The upkeep of the base is seen as a sign of trust in and legitimating of the Al Khalifa rule.

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[48] "Gulf Leaders to Discuss 'GCC Union'," *Al-Jazeera*, 2012.

CHAPTER 2 – CONCEPTS AND SYSTEMS

This chapter will describe how concepts of citizenship, nationhood, governance and democracy came to be in the Gulf; and how the current legislations and systems have emerged.

2.1 Citizenship and nationhood

2.1.1 Views in Islam

There are debates on whether memberships in Islam and in a national community per law are reconcilable. Islam supports the notion of Umma, of all Muslims belonging together in the same community[49] no matter which ethnicity they are of or which territory they live on. Some consider that submitting to an authority other than Allah (accepting the primacy of a state and its government) is contrary to the teachings.

The emergence of political Islam was considered a threat to monarchies for this reason, and they were moved to incorporate Islamist elements and to try to influence their views through for example commissioning government-friendly Friday sermons.[50]

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[49] This is the general idea – but for example some Sunni fundamentalists, for example the Salafis consider Shi'a and Sufi apostates and thus not Muslim.

[50] Patrick, "Nationalism in the Gulf States," 15.

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The approach of citizenship policies encourages behavior that is in a way symmetrical with the teachings of Islam: Muslim women are not allowed to marry non-Muslim men - although the following policies have not only been applied to non-Muslim husbands. They are also traditionally dependent on and cared for by their husbands – this is why for example in Kuwait, the welfare benefits are not given to married women.[51]

The Shari'a remains an important source of law. Such courts currently only hold power in civil matters such as marriage and inheritance, neither in Bahrain nor in Kuwait are the penal codes solely based on it. This is also a result of the British considering Shari'a inadequate at best, vying to minimize its role.[52]

2.1.2 Views in the Gulf

Citizenship in the Gulf is connected with a variety of benefits. Usually, these include free education, healthcare and housing programs, lack of taxation. In many places, Non-citizens on the other hand have to pay for everything, and are not allowed to own property except in special designated areas.

Bahrain and Kuwait were both periodically part of the Ottoman Empire: Bahrain until 1861, Kuwait until the end of the First World War and the subsequent collapse of the Ottoman rule. Therefore the Kuwaiti legal system was influenced in greater extent by the Ottoman

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[51].Mary Ann Tetreault and Haya al-Mughni, "Gender, Citizenship and Nationalism in Kuwait," *British Journal of Middle-Eastern Studies* (1995): 73.Nathan J. Brown, *The Rule of Law in the Arab World* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.

[52] Ibid., 145.

reforms aimed to establish civil courts alongside Shari'a ones.[53] The British who ruled afterwards implemented a code based on their experience with the similar colonial project in India; they were primarily concerned with foreigners, and left the local rulers to develop their own laws with their assistance.[54]

Brown argues that all former colonies and protectorates had their legal systems vastly influenced by the imperial rulers.[55] "Autocratic regimes have increasingly operated in a legalistic manner, able to bend the institutions of liberal legality to serve non-liberal ends," he asserts, shedding light on why he thinks the system is inherently flawed so it cannot be used to promote liberal aims.[56]

Before the British, administrational structures were underdeveloped. Before being centrally codified, the rules in Gulf societies were based on customs, mostly defined by the tribe or other form of local constituency one was affiliated with.[57] The British carved out states from an area that hitherto did not really know traditional borders. Beduin for example were free to traverse the entire region.

In the 1950's, Great Britain attempted to unite its own courts with the local ones, all over the Gulf in a comprehensive, joint system.[58] This is one of the reasons for the many similarities in the Gulf legal structures. The only ruler the British actually consulted for this was the ruler of Bahrain; and even then, the resulting penal code resulted in vast criticism and the implementation had to be postponed, and was a failure even later on. The new approach

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[53] Nathan J. Brown, *The Rule of Law in the Arab World* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.

[54] Ibid., 4.

[55] Ibid., 6.

[56] Ibid., 160.

[57] Parolin, *Citizenship in the Arab World: Kin, Religion and Nation-state*, 36.

[58] Brown, *The Rule of Law in the Arab World*, 139.

was softer, relying on providing merely a model for the local authorities to follow.[59] Therefore, while the base of the Gulf legal systems lies in imperialist models, the domestic factors, for example the role of the opposition in Bahrain in resisting the British attempts to coerce the codification of their views in the pre-independence period should not be underestimated. Not only the legal frameworks were sought to become common by the British, but the long-term plan was to form a single state in the Gulf. This was subverted by the declarations of independence that started in 1961 with Kuwait.

Citizenship was essentially an externally imposed legal concept; ideas of Western-model statehood and nationality first arose during Ottoman rule. The French model, based on the *Code Napoléon*, inspired the first Ottoman nationality law.[60] As of 1869, Ottoman citizenship was based on *ius sanguinis*, the father being the one who confers the citizenship onto his children. Those who were born on the lands of the empire from foreign parents had to wait at least until three years after their coming of age to be able to receive Ottoman nationality. Naturalization was also possible, after five years of residence or by special provisions for those achieving distinguished merit. As a rarity in the area at the time, conversion to Islam was not required for citizenship for followers of other faiths.[61] An other Ottoman invention was a form of local, „indigenous" nationality. With these provisions, all inhabitants of an autonomous area were eligible for benefits and had duties imposed on them – Ottoman nationality was not a requirement.[62]

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[59] P. 144

[60] Parolin, *Citizenship in the Arab World: Kin, Religion and Nation-state*, 78.

[61] Ibid., 74.

[62] Ibid., 75.

Palestinian journalist Rami G. Khouri thinks that citizenship in the Arab world is inherently "dysfunctional", because the states „have never negotiated a sensible and equitable relationship that defines the use of state power for the wellbeing of all in society."[63] "Citizenship is not established in the practice of the state or in the attitudes of the people," commented Baqer al-Najjar, a professor from Bahrain.[64]

Abdulhadi Khalaf said that "the authorities are acting as if citizenship is not a right for citizens, but rather a grant from the ruler to his people, therefore he is entitled to revoke it whenever he desires."[65] Khouri thinks that the root of the failure to establish an idea of citizenry that is not in conflict with Western ideals lies in these multiple layers of control the person is subjected to, starting from the lower level of family and up to the all-encompassing religious interpretations of proper behavior; in between there are for example tribal codes and state regulations. All these considerations an individual is pressured to comply to have made him or her a mere consumer, controllable and passive.[66]

2.2 Governance and democracy

Michael Herb defined something he called the 'king's dilemma': "Reform undermines the patron-client system on which the regime rests. Faced with a choice of abdication or

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[63] Rami G. Khouri, "For Arabs, a State of Abandonment," *The Daily Star*, 2012.

[64] Patrick, "Nationalism in the Gulf States," 55.

[65] Haifa Zaaiter, "Bahrain Revokes Nationality Of 31 Opposition Members," *Al-Monitor*, 2012.

[66] Khouri, "For Arabs, a State of Abandonment."

repression when revolutionary pressure builds, the leader represses."[67] The systems of Bahrain and Kuwait are semi-democratic, but still authoritarian constitutional monarchies. This part shows more detail about how they work.

2.2.1 The current political systems

In Bahrain, parties are officially not allowed to be formed, so they are just called political groups or societies – their function is the same.

The Parliament is bicameral; the lower chamber of 40 representatives is elected per vote of the population, the upper chamber, also consisting of 40 people, is appointed by the King. The ministers are also selected and approved by the ruler, the majority of them are members of the ruling family. The Prime Minister has been the same person since Bahrain achieved independence, Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa. The lower chamber is allowed to reject a proposed law, although this happens rarely.

In Kuwait, the main venues of political organization are the *diwaniyyas*, events held in private homes to discuss current issues.[68] Parties are formally outlawed, but named political blocs, such as Sunni and Shi'a Islamists, the Muslim Brotherhood, and so forth are present – in the elections though, most candidates run as independents.

The Kuwaiti constitution allows the parliament, the National Assembly a relatively great amount of power according to its system of constitutional monarchy. The unicameral

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[67] Michael Herb, *All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies* (SUNY Press, 1999), 15.

[68] Mary Ann Tetreault, "Kuwait: Slouching Towards Democracy?," in *Political Liberalization in the Persian Gulf* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), 124.

parliament is allowed to block a law from coming into power (though if it is supported by the government, it needs a super-majority to do so), and it can oust a minister from his position after initiating a questioning process, which culminates in a vote of confidence. The Emir is the one who can appoint a Prime Minister; the Prime Minister chooses the members of his government. The parliament can reject the cabinet, although it has no say in who will be chosen in the next round. The Emir is required to oblige to either dismiss the Prime Minister if he loses the trust of the parliament – or he can choose to dismiss the parliament itself and call for new elections; or even suspend it in extreme cases.[69] The parliament is regularly dissolved by the Emir, for various reasons, sometimes unconstitutionally. On the other hand, as for example events in 2006 proved, even the parliament can remove the Emir is he is for example too sick to rule, and vote on the new ruler proposed by the ministers.

The ruling family usually possesses the post of the Prime Minister and the important ministries, but any citizen can run for candidacy.

Kuwait sought to abolish so-called tribal primaries before the elections, but failed as they are still being held despite of the law. These are pre-election activities staged to reduce the number of the candidates one tribe sends to the elections – if there is no competition between numerous rivals, the representation of the clan is more ore less secured. The power of these sub-state allegiances also shows when for example tribes demand more government funds in exchange for their votes on specific issues.[70]

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[69] Michael Herb, "Kuwait: The Obstacle of Parliamentary Politics," in *Political Liberalization in the Persian Gulf* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009).

[70] Tetreault, "Kuwait: Slouching Towards Democracy?," 113.

The election law was changed recently, before the 2012 elections. Previously, each voter could vote for four candidates. Upsetting that order caused large street protests to be organized throughout the country.[71]

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[71] Ian Black, "Kuwait Emir's Change to Election Rules Stirs Signs of Arab Spring," *The Guardian*, 2012.

„Revoking citizenship is not only a gross human rights violation that goes against all norms of civilized modern statehood; it is also a pathetic abdication of responsibility by government officials who panic in the face of their own fellow citizens who question how the government is exercising its authority and power," writes Khouri.[72] The sampling of cases of this chapter from Bahrain and Kuwait will illustrate specific strategies in connection with citizenship that are used with the aim of strengthening the position of the governments. I look mostly at cases that deal with two communities that tend to be marginalized - the Shi'a and the stateless, and also examine the general make-up of citizenship structures and provisions in the mentioned countries.

3.1 Bahrain

"[Bahrain's] people are the Arab people," declares the constitution of 1973. The 2002 constitution changed this passage, saying that Bahrain is an "Islamic Arab State whose population is part of the Arab nation and whose territory is part of the great Arab homeland."

"No person enjoying citizenship by origin may be deprived of it except in cases of high treason and dual nationality, and in accordance with the conditions specified by the law" stands in the 1973 constitution. Only changes in wording but not in the essence were made to this in 2002. The details are delegated to the specific nationality law.

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[72] Khouri, "For Arabs, a State of Abandonment."

Bahrain had a nationality law as early as 1937, but the current one is based on the one from 1963. The former is the date which is being referred to as the boundary for determining "original" and later citizens.

Citizenship at birth is either determined by both *ius sanguinis* and *ius soli* – if the child is born in Bahrain, the father needs to be Bahraini – or in case of those born on foreign soil, both the father and the grandfather have to be citizens already. The mother can confer citizenship if the identity of the father is unknown; *ius soli* is used exclusively in case the parentage cannot be determined.

The time of residence required for naturalization is 25 years, or 15 years in case of Arabs. The applicant has to be fluent in Arabic; be "of good conduct;" and possess real estate in the country. This all is not needed if the King decides to grant nationality to someone, for example for "great services."

There is a ten year waiting period until a naturalized citizen can vote and be chosen as a candidate for parliament.

Bahrain automatically strips citizenship from the descendants of those who had their citizenship involuntarily taken. The same thing happens to a woman who marries a foreigner and tries to take on dual citizenship, which is forbidden – she can regain it though even in case of loss, if she divorces the husband.

Citizenship could only be revoked if it was acquired fraudulently; or in case the person commits a crime related to honor or honesty within five years of acquisition. It is lost if someone serves in a foreign military, aids an enemy country, or "causes harm to the security of the state."

The 1981 amendment lengthens the period in which the newly naturalized citizen is required to refrain from committing crimes related to honor or honesty to ten years.[73]

The Shi'a are mainly made up of the Bahrani – people, claiming Arab heritage, who are indigenous to the islands (meaning here that they have settled there before 1782); the Hussawi, who immigrated from what is now eastern Saudi Arabia in the 19th century; and the 'Ajam – people of Persian descent who immigrated into Bahrain later on.[74]

The Iranian Revolution signaled a change in their status. From focusing on class-based politics, which allowed a common platform with the Sunni, a more sect-based division was reached.[75]

Despite of continuous criticism of the government, the Shi'a are usually not anti-monarchy. According to Uzi Rabi and Joseph Costiner, they feel an amount of gratitude to the government who protects them from further attacks by the Sunni and provides them prosperous handouts.[76]

Estimates on the number of Shi'a in both countries vary widely. In Bahrain, the usually cited proportion is two-thirds Shi'a and one third Sunni, but for example researcher Justin Gengler found in his 2009 survey that the percentage is more likely to be between 52 and 62

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[73] "Bahrain Citizenship Act" (Bahrain Government, September 16, 1963), http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,LEGAL,,LEGISLATION,BHR,4562d8cf2,3fb9f34f4, 0.html.

[74] Although even many of the Baharna have some Persian heritage.

Eric Andrew McCoy, *Iranians in Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates: Migration, Minorities, and Identities in the Persian Gulf Arab States* (ProQuest UMI, 2008).

[75] Uzi Rabi and Joseph Kostiner, "The Shi'is in Bahrain: Class and Religious Protest," in *Minorities and the State in the Arab World* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 185.

[76] Ibid.

in his extensive empirical exploration of Bahrain's population and their attitudes.[77] A study commissioned by the Bahraini government even puts them in a minority status: 49%.[78]

Mitchell A. Belfer claimed that assuming that the Shi'a are in clear majority is wrong, since after 1947 no census has asked a question related to the interviewee's sect; similarly, election results are a meager measure since not all Shi'a vote for declaredly Shi'a political societies and not all who do vote for these are Shi'a. For example, the Ajam's leader has issued a statement that they "follow in the steps of [their] fathers and forefathers in [their] allegiance to the Kingdom of Bahrain."[79] Belfer considers marriage certificates to be a more accurate tool to see the proportions of the sects[80], since the couples are married in the mosque of their faith. While he refrains from applying his information to the whole population, he asserts that the government's and major businesses' employees are overall roughly half Shi'a and half Sunni – and he denies that employment discrimination exists against the Shi'a.[81] He also considers the naturalization policies to be "designed in a way to provide political safety and economic opportunity for those that require it most."[82]

The pro-government daily *Akhbar al-Khaleej* (Gulf News) devoted a page to this study, with the headline: "The opposition societies are liars."[83] Justin Gengler noted that Belfer is the

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[77] Justin Gengler, *Ethnic Conflict and Political Mobilization in Bahrain and the Arab Gulf* (University of Michigan, 2011).

[78] "Wathiqa Bahrayniya: Al Shi'a Aqall Min Alnusuf [Bahraini Document: The Shi'a Are Less Than Half]," *Al-Jazeera*, 2011.

[79] "All Should Unite To Stop Radicals And Put an End to Violence," *Bahrain Information Affairs Authority*, 2012.

[80] He excludes those who are not married and those who did not marry in Bahrain

[81] Mitchell A. Belfer, "Demographic Warfare," *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies* (2013): 11.

[82] Ibid., 12.

[83] "Juma'at Alm'arada Kadhibun [Opposition Societies Are Liars]," *Akhbar al-Khaleej*, 2013.

first researcher to be allowed in Bahrain for a while; and that the reason might be that he is sponsored by the government.

The demographic issue highlights the difficulties in dealing with such a sensitive subject in an area where information is scarce and almost always partial. This needs to be considered when reading this chapter: my aim is to explore the levels of the discourse; not evaluate the accuracy of the presented facts.

The newspaper *Sawt al-Manama* (Manama Voice) cites a figure showing that between the February of 2011 (the start of the latest uprising) and the August of 2012, 86% of newly appointed government officials were Sunni.[84] Mansur al-Jamri noticed a decrease of Shi'a in the leadership of government-controlled companies since the country's independence, according to his data. [85]

Two English-language interviews with King Hamad highlight the image the monarchy is trying to present to the outside world. In one from February 2012, he considers the Arab Spring to be the "business of other countries." Interestingly, here he says that "democracy also means to guarantee the rights of the minorities," mentioning Christians and Jews – but not for once the majority that has grievances in these areas, the Shi'a. He also asserts that "there is no opposition," because the establishment of political groups is not ruled by the constitution, therefore only individual opinions can be talked of.[86] In the other from 2013, the King emphasizes one side, the positive aspects of events that have happened. For example,

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[84] "Abd al-Jalil Khalil: 14% Mn T'yyanat Almunasib Al'liya Lilshi'a Wa 86% Lilsunna...wakfana Tamayyiz [14% of Senior Appointment Go to Shi'a and 86% to Sunni...We Had Enough of Discrimination]," 2012.

[85] Mansur al-Jamri, "Ray Sarih Aamal an Yasil Ila Jalala Almalik [Frank Opinion That I Hope Will Reach His Majesty the King]," *al-Wasat*, 2011.

[86] Alexander Smoltczyk, "Es Gibt Keine Opposition," *Der Spiegel*, February 13, 2012, http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-83977247.html.

Bahrain hosts the Formula One race and has been heavily criticized by the opposition that it is a tool to mask the crackdowns with the glitz and glamour. The King comments that the most recent race was successful, and that "things are moving in the right direction," mentioning its economic benefits to all Bahrainis. He considers the protests of the opposition as supporting terrorist acts and losing importance; he emphasizes the united Muslim aspect of Bahrain and not the sectarian character of society. On the topic of the Arab Spring, he says that "many ordinary people are heart-broken to find their lives worsened as a result of the destruction of institutions. It is easy to destroy, but it is difficult to build," implying that a worse fate could happen if the monarchy is dismantled.[87]

The strategy is not only keeping out or removing those from the citizenry who might endanger the government in any way, but also to ensure an influx of people who would be grateful and supportive of the policies. A notable case is the recruitment of Pakistanis into the security forces of Bahrain. The caveat is that those who are hired are Sunnis. Their naturalization not only contributes to raising the percentage of Sunnis in the country, but also gives the regime an effective tool to combat Shi'a protesters. The soldiers, usually coming from low financial backgrounds, are grateful for the opportunity Bahrain provides and thus are easier to keep loyal. An estimated 10.000 people of Pakistani origin serve in the army and police.[88] The amount of Sunnis in the public sector is higher in most institutions than that of the Shi'a – less dependence on the government as a bread giver could in theory lead to more independence and dissent from the excluded populations.

Mass political naturalizations started around between 2001 and 2007. Gengler quotes a Sunni politician who noticed a jump in population growth in that period. According to the

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[87] Souad Mekhennet, "Terrorism Has No Religion," *Nieman Reports*, 2013.

[88] Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Bahrain Agrees to Augment Defence Ties with Pakistan," *Dawn*, 2011.

unnamed man, based on statistical information and a statement from the interior minister, 1,8% of the annual increase can be attributed to naturalizations, meaning around 9.000 people per year. This is much higher than the rates of Western immigration target states with liberal policies.[89]

"Bahrain's naturalization procedures are apolitical," claimed Rashid Bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, the interior minister in 2006, and that "there is nothing political about the issue which is in fact being portrayed as such by those who have political aims."[90] The previously mentioned government-commissioned population ratio study asserts that only about 1% of the citizens are accounted for by recent naturalizations – thus it is not a political engineering project. It also claims that people of Persian origin were the ones who benefitted most by the naturalization policies, and highlights that between 2000 and 2003 more than 10.000 previously deported people were allowed to return to Bahrain.[91] Later on, the Central Informatics Organization, Bahrain's main statistical center denied that it had anything to do with issuing the documents.[92] A committee was formed in 2010 to examine the irregularities in Bahrain's naturalizations,[93] but its work was unable to be completed because of the events in early 2011.

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[89] Justin Gengler, "Facts on the Ground: A Reliable Estimate of Bahrain's Sunni-Shi'i Balance, and Evidence of Demographic Engineering," *Religion and Politics in Bahrain*, 2011.

[90] Habib Toumi, "4,971 Asians 'Given Bahrain Nationality in 56 Years'," *Gulfnews*, 2006.

[91] "Wathiqa Bahrayniya: Al Shi'a Aqall Min Alnusuf [Bahraini Document: The Shi'a Are Less Than Half]."

[92] "Wathiqa Bahrayniya Tahaddad Alnasab Altaifiya [Bahraini Document Delineates the Ratio of the Sects]," *Al-Jazeera*, 2011.

[93] "Discrimination In Granting Citizenship In Bahrain," *Bahrain Center for Human Rights*, 2004.

Earlier, Bahrain has naturalized members of the Al al-Dawasir in 2002. This Sunni group, although they inhabited the Bahrain area since the Al Khalifas came to power, eventually settled in Saudi Arabia after disagreements with the British rule.[94]

In May 2013, the King announced that 240 British living in Bahrain would be rewarded with citizenship for their "loyal service."[95] The United Kingdom's government has been a staunch supporter of the Al Khalifas, signaled by numerous high-ranking official visits from both sides. Although this is not an attempt to change demographics or engage in large-scale polity engineering, and the names were not released, it seems to demonstrate that Bahrain is giving away passports solely to amiable people with low potential to cause trouble. In contrast, for example Indian expatriates and migrant workers who have been laboring in the country for also a long time don't seem to have a chance at a privilege like this.

The other face of the coin is the strategy to revoke nationality. In November 2012, the King withdrew citizenship from 31 Shi'a for "causing damage to state security," including several former Members of Parliament and other politically active men.[96] One of them, Saeed Shehabi was already living in exile in the United Kingdom; Jalal and Jawad Fairooz belonged like him to the Wefaq society.

In an interview, Adbulhadi Khalaf, who was a victim of citizenship revocation in 1978 describes what he went through for expressing his dissenting opinions against laws that came before the parliament when he was a representative. He was travelling abroad, when he was informed that his passport will not be renewed. At the time, students on trips outside of Bahrain were restricted in the duration of their stay: the passports they were issued had the validity of only a year. Khalaf had only such a short-validity pass that he did not renew

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[94] Parolin, *Citizenship in the Arab World: Kin, Religion and Nation-state*, 117.

[95] Shane McGinley, "Bahrain King Grants Citizenship to 240 Brits," *Arabian Business*, 2013.

[96] "Statement by the Ministry of Interior," *Bahrain News Agency*, 2012.

earlier, before the decision making it impossible. He is now a Swedish citizen, and says that most of the revocations are in violation of the law, as the authorities are supposed to provide an opportunity for fair trial where the victim can defend him- or herself.[97] This has not been offered in the recent cases.

The consequences of citizenship revocation can backfire: After the deportation of Hadi al-Mudarrisi, an organizer of protests for the release of political prisoners in 1979, he eventually traveled to Iran. There he founded the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, allegedly responsible for multiple coup attempts and terrorist attacks against the Bahraini regime.[98]

In Bahrain, deportation of the stateless for example to Iran was the standard procedure until the early 2000's. In 1995 and 1999, large cohorts were naturalized by the King – according to Bahraini information, during a fifty year period, around 30.000 people of "Iranian origin" were granted citizenship overall.[99] According to McCoy, the stateless were considered to be Persian, therefore they are meant by the interior minister's declaration.[100]

In 2002, regulations to allow for dual citizenship in case the other nationality was from an other Gulf country were introduced though a decree by the King. Rashid Al Khalifa commented that it would increase the "feeling of unity" among people in the Gulf. Bahraini Shi'a on the other hand did not support the change at all, fearing that it was applied before the

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[97] Zaaiter, "Bahrain Revokes Nationality Of 31 Opposition Members."

[98] Louer, *Transnational Shia Politics: Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf*, 159.

[99] Toumi, "4,971 Asians 'Given Bahrain Nationality in 56 Years'."

[100] McCoy, *Iranians in Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates: Migration, Minorities, and Identities in the Persian Gulf Arab States*, 48.

fall elections to alter the demographic make-up. Issa Qassim said that the new provision has "electoral aims" and only "marginalizes citizens."[101]

3.2 Kuwait

The Kuwaiti constitution of 1962 also makes it clear that "the people of Kuwait are a part of the Arab Nation." The preamble by Amir Abdullah al-Salim al-Sabah states that "faith in the role of this Country in furthering Arab nationalism." The constitution does not express views on citizenship; all regulations are confined to the Nationality Laws.

In 1948 the point of delineation for "original" and "naturalized" citizen is put at 1920. This is the year of the decisive Battle of Jahra, when Kuwait was able to fend off the attempt of Saudi annexation. It is assumed that those who came to the country afterwards are enjoying the peace without having contributed to the fight for it.[102] This included the ruling family, all residents after 1899, those either born to a Kuwaiti father or in the territory of Kuwait by a father who was either Arab or Muslim.[103]

The 1956 Nationality Law, the basis of the currently valid one, removes the latter provision allowing children of non citizens to become citizens; saying instead that only in case of foundlings is *ius soli* applicable.

Citizenship can be granted in extraordinary circumstances by Emiri decree, in the following cases: the person is of the age of majority; he/she resided in the territory of Kuwait

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[101] Habib Trabelsi, "Bahrain's Shiite Muslims Cry Foul over Dual Nationality Plan," *Khaleej Times*, 2002.

[102] Louer, *Transnational Shia Politics: Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf*, 56.

[103] Parolin, *Citizenship in the Arab World: Kin, Religion and Nation-state*, 89.

for at least 20 years, or 15 if he/she is "an Arab from an Arab country;" is fluent in Arabic; has the means of sustaining him- or herself financially; possesses "good character" and was not convicted of crimes relating to honor or honesty.

In cases other than these, the Emir can still decide to naturalize a person. Grounds that he can choose from to justify this can be for example that a person can prove Kuwaiti ancestry before 1930, or 1945 if he/she is Arab; or as a reward for "extraordinary services."

In case of a woman's marriage to a Kuwaiti citizen, she has to declare her renewed intent to receive the nationality within one year it was conferred upon her; but the waiting period is 15 years of valid marriage.

Double citizenship is forbidden, proof of renouncing the previous one is needed upon naturalization. There is a possibility though to reacquire Kuwaiti nationality in case the Cabinet and the Minister of Interior accept the claim for redress, and renounced the second nationality.

Otherwise, nationality can be stripped if it was acquired by fraud; a honor or honesty related crime is committed in 15 years from receiving the citizenship, or in ten years if a public office is lost because of such an act; or if "authorities have evidence that a naturalized person has disseminated opinions which may tend seriously to undermine the economic or social structure of the State." If the head of police so recommends, revocation can also happen if a person joins and refuses to leave a foreign army or security service; if he/she works for a state with which the diplomatic relations have been suspended; if he/she is a member of a foreign organization that "may tend seriously to undermine the social or economic structure of Kuwait." Redress for revocation can be sought here too.[104]

[104] "Kuwait Nationality Law" (Kuwait Government, 1959),
http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b4ef1c.html.

The 1966 amendment requires "professional competence" for granting nationality. This is aimed at the low-skilled migrant workers who flocked to Kuwait in search of jobs that paid more than in their home countries. It also extends the period that has to be spent without political rights from ten to twenty.

The 1982 amendment added the criteria of being Muslim as a condition for naturalization. In case of converts, a waiting period of five years needs to be applied. If the person renounces Islam and becomes guilty of "apostasy," the citizenship is revoked and the decree granting it nullified. Not only explicit statements denying Islam are enough to fulfill this condition; behaving in a manner that indicates intent to leave the religion is sufficient. This is a rather flexible provision this way. Khalil al-Saleh, a Shi'a Member of Parliament has recently called for the erasure of this "racist" clause, as he considers it to be contrary to the constitution that allows for freedom of faith.[105] Before, in 1993, the Graduates Society of Kuwait argued for the easing of naturalization and the internal equalization of citizenship.[106]

The 1986 amending decree further increased the time until which voting is not allowed for naturalized citizens to thirty years. Naturalized citizens are also not allowed to be elected to or candidate for seats in parliament.

In 2006, before the National Assembly was disbanded yet again, representatives were getting ready to vote for an other amendment extending the ability to confer citizenship to mothers whose husbands are foreigners, but in the end they did not have time to do this and

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[105] Courtney Trenwith, "Kuwaiti MP Calls for Rethink on Citizenship Rules," *Arabian Business*, 2013.

[106] Gender p. 240 Haya al-Mughni and Mary Ann Tetreault, "Citizenship, Gender and the Politics of Quasi States," in *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East* (Syracuse University Press, 2000), 240.

the idea was scrapped.[107] So as of now, only the Emir can allow by decree the transfer of nationality from mother to child, and only if the identity and whereabouts of the father is unknown; or if the foreign father either died or has divorced from the mother.

Although in 1999, women were granted the right to vote and run for office by the Amir „in return for their great sacrifices they had made during the various challenges the country faced,[108] for example women who marry foreign men for example are usually not entitled to any welfare benefits. Their precarious conditions even led to some of them renouncing their citizenship.[109] The quote exemplifies the Kuwaiti discourse that citizenship is a reward won for loyalty, that it is something that needs to be fought for.[110]

Generally, the official limit of fifty per year on naturalizations tends to be ignored. For example, one calculation puts the number of naturalizations between 1965 and 1981 at 220.000, making the average per year almost 14,000. According to Shafeeq Gabra, who presented this figure, 80% of the new citizens were tribal peoples – thought to be more loyal than urban Arab residents. The redrawing of the constituencies for the next elections emphasized the growing number of supporters for the government even more.[111]

Although Kuwait is not part of what is usually described as the "Shiite crescent," it has a considerable population belonging to that branch of Islam. The usual estimate is that around 30% of the population is Shi'a. Other figures put their number as ten percent higher, resulting

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[107] Parolin, *Citizenship in the Arab World: Kin, Religion and Nation-state*, 90.

[108] al-Mughni and Tetreault, "Citizenship, Gender and the Politics of Quasi States," 244.

[109] Ibid., 246.

[110] Not neccessarily in the military sense.

[111] al-Mughni and Tetreault, "Citizenship, Gender and the Politics of Quasi States," 142.

from the reluctance of some to declare their religious affiliation, fearing its consequences.[112] Kuwaiti Shi'a share two of the same categories as Bahrain because of regional affiliation: the 'Ajam and the Baharna, except the latter are also considered immigrants to the territory (though long ago.) The third group, the Hasawiyyin are originally from the Saudi Region of Hasa. According to Louer, Kuwaiti Shi'a share strong ties to relatives in other countries, sometimes resulting in common political mobilization for a case (for example, a Saudi Shi'a municipal election candidate was funded by a Kuwaiti Shi'a.)[113]

In 1938, during a political contest for power between the al-Sabah family and its allies versus wealthy merchant classes who wished to create an assembly with legislative, including full budgetary, powers, the Shi'a stood on the side of the former. This happened for the simple reason that there were no influential merchants among them, their voice in governing was almost non-existent – the al-Sabahs offered them more, and until the Islamic Revolution they could be found occupying several government positions.[114] The re-drawing of districts in 1980 reduced their number in the Assembly.[115]

Under the occupation of Saddam Hussein's forces, the majority of those who decided to stay were Shi'a. Some say that they were eager to defend the country and resist the invaders, others allege this was because they were too poor to leave for extended periods of time. The Shi'a population with so far minor political role established its systems in this period, to be used in the future to carve out a larger portion of influence in the future. While the al-Sabahs were in exile, Shi'a religious leaders were organizing for example the food

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[112] Zaki Taleb, "The Actual Percentage of Kuwaiti Shiites Is 40 Percent," *Arab Times Online*, 2013.

[113] Louer, *Transnational Shia Politics: Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf*, 47.

[114] Trabelsi, "Bahrain's Shiite Muslims Cry Foul over Dual Nationality Plan," 67.

[115] Herb, "Kuwait: The Obstacle of Parliamentary Politics," 141.

supply of the Kuwaiti people.[116] According to Laurence Louer, this provided them legitimacy after the war was over and cemented their status as loyal to the government. They managed to shed the doubts that they were more loyal to Iran; proving their commitment to Kuwait's independence.[117] Kuwait was at first reluctant to send forces for the Peninsula Shield intervention in Bahrain; and the Shi'a members of parliament, fearing another such an opportunity, protest against the signing of a new GCC Security Pact. Rumors spreading around that eventually it might even be used to suppress Kuwaiti internal dissent contribute to the hesitation. On the other hand, Kuwait also refused to let Bahraini activists enter its territory.[118]

Kuwait itself was never directly threatened by Iran's border revisionism; it left Kuwait alone except for its fervent campaigns to spread the Islamic Revolution in the 1980's.[119] Its relationship to Saudi Arabia was historically not without difficulties: for example in the 18th century onward, the Emir sought to defend Kuwait from regular Saudi or Wahhabi attacks and refused to become a part of the emerging Saudi state. Although the exact role the Shi'a played during these battles is contested, the Shi'a insist that they played a large part.[120]

Although not at the level of Bahrain, Kuwait's regime also used the withdrawing of citizenship as a tool to weaken those whose opinions it considered uncomfortable. A specific prominent example is the 2010 revocation of Yasser al-Habib's nationality. The Shi'a politician has been accused of inciting sectarian strife and abusing Islamic symbols. During an

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[116] Louer, *Transnational Shia Politics: Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf*, 228.

[117] Although, the two might not be contradictory, as Hussein was notorious for oppressing Shi'a; and Iran had its own enmity with Iraq, therefore it would seem clear that the Shi'a population would choose their government's side instead of a dictator known to hate their kind and wanting to annex their country.

[118] Wafa Alsayed, "Controversy after Kuwait Signs GCC Pact," *IISS Voices*, 2013.

[119] Louer, *Transnational Shia Politics: Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf*, 53.

[120] Ibid., 55.

event in London, he insulted Aisha, the Prophet's wife – a few years earlier he was sentenced to prison for a similar charge.[121]

Although not citizens, those residents who were nationals of countries sympathetic to Saddam Hussein's regime, such as Palestine, were deported and not allowed entry again in the 1990's.[122] Withdrawal of citizenship on grounds of authorities finding out that the individuals possess dual nationality is not uncommon, though the affected are usually given the choice as to which one they desire to keep.[123]

Granting citizenship has been used to weaken Shi'a, urban merchant and Nasserist influence. From 1961 on, estimates say that around 200.000 Bedouin Sunni were naturalized.[124]

As more and more foreigners flowed into Kuwait in the 1960s, and the Kuwaiti nationals themselves started to become the minority, naturalization of other Arab nationals and Bedouin[125] became a way to break the course of this development. Some did not accept the offer of naturalization, and more were rejected. The latter became the base of the stateless community in Kuwait.[126]

The most important issue concerning citizenship in Kuwait though is a problem with stateless people, who are referred to as *Bidoon* (The Arabic word means "without.") They are

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[121] "Kuwait Strips Shiite Activist of Citizenship," *The Seattle Times*, 2010.

[122] Brown, *The Rule of Law in the Arab World*, 164.

[123] Habib Toumi, "Dual Nationality Holders Could Lose Kuwaiti Citizenship," *Gulf News*, 2010.

[124] John Warner, "Questioning Sectarianism in Bahrain and Beyond: An Interview With Justin Gengler," *Jadaliyya*, 2013.

[125] al-Mughni and Tetreault, "Citizenship, Gender and the Politics of Quasi States," 241.

[126] Ibid., 142.

the victims of the process of creating states where there were none before – especially Bedouins did not want to be documented and regarded citizenship a foreign, colonialist construct. They are found in most Gulf states as well as for example Iraq, though they are most present in Kuwaiti discourse, since their estimated numbers are the highest there.[127] Until 1980, the Kuwaiti state attempted to naturalize some of its stateless population, a course of action that drew much discontent from those already citizens.[128] Afterwards, they essentially had no rights because they lacked any kind of legal status ever since 1986, when the government decided to withdraw their privileges because of fear that illegal immigrants, refugees or draft dodgers from Iraq could hide in their midst.[129] Their status was considered their own fault, since the governments tried to shift the blame to neighboring countries as their places of origin – and the *Bidoon* failed to reclaim citizenship there. The actual belonging of the stateless is often disputed. During the invasion by Iraq, stateless were forcibly recruited into Iraqi militias and coerced into collaboration.[130] Kuwait saw this as treason, and called martial courts into existence. These operated with, for example, the use of torture to gain confessions. Outside the legal framework, suspects were rounded up by armed men – only some of the security forces members involved were brought to justice for their deeds.[131]

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[127] Brad K. Blitz and Maureen Lynch, "Statelessness and the Benefits of Citizenship: A Comparative Study," *Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights* (2009): 85.

[128] Longva, "Neither Autocracy nor Democracy but Ethnocracy," 122.

[129] Helen Rizzo, Katherine Meyer, and Yousef Ali, "Extending Political Rights in the Middle East: The Case of Kuwait," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* (n.d.): 179.

[130] John H. Cushman Jr., "1,200 Kuwaiti Refugees, Fearing Collaborator Charges, Flee to Iraq," *The New York Times*, 1991.

[131] Brown, *The Rule of Law in the Arab World*, 163.

In 2009, Kuwait drafted a proposal to handle the issue.[132] An immigration officer, Mohammed al-Waheeb has been quoted saying that "There is no difference in treatment between illegal residents and legal residents in the country in terms of health care, employment and education," therefore changing the Nationality Law to better facilitate naturalizations is not needed.[133] As the Arab Spring commenced, the stateless took inspiration and marched to the streets. The opposition noted their bravery, and followed with protests of its own, among others calling for less autocratic rule and the resignation of government members.

Abd al-Hamed al-Dashti, a member of the Central Agency for Addressing the Status of Illegal Residents, asked the stateless in May 2012 to stop their protests until the Parliament has finished drawing up a detailed plan on the continuing process for naturalizing them.[134] The perseverance of the *Bidoon* bore fruit, in March 2013 all members of parliament with the exception of two voted to pass a law which would be the "foundation for resolving the Bidoon problem" and allow for naturalizations to begin. The initial batch consists of 4.000 people allowed per year (although the law refers to "foreigners," the commentary makes it clear that the stateless are the intended beneficiaries.) It was also mentioned that 34.000 of the overall stateless population might qualify to receive citizenship in the future.[135]

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[132] Wanda Krause, "Gender and Participation in the Arab Gulf," in *Transformation of the Gulf* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 18.

[133] "'Naturalisation Is Sovereign Issue', Kuwait Tells UN," *Al-Shorfa*, 2011.

[134] "Kuwaiti Parliamentary Committee Draws up Roadmap for Naturalizing Bidoons," *Al-Shorfa*, 2012.

[135] "Kuwait MPs Pass Law to Naturalise 4,000 Stateless Bidun," *BBC News*, 2013.

3.3 Results

The Arab Charter of Human Rights, written in 1994 and adopted by the Arab League in 2004, declares that no one can be deprived of his/her nationality for arbitrary or unlawful reasons.[136] Among the individual states, Bahrain and Kuwait have yet to ratify it – although its application would even then be open to interpretation as the citizenship laws of both countries are built very flexibly, allowing the monarchs to have much leeway on how they want to apply it.

The constitutions and interviews show that the two states try to present themselves in a positive light and conform to Western norms of democracy, at the same time keeping the traditions.

They have not signed the 1954 UN Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness either, for example – although Bahrain and Kuwait have ratified the 1966 UN Covenant on Civil and Political rights, as only two countries in the Gulf.

This might indicate indifference to and non-acceptance of international norms and conventions; that Bahrain and Kuwait in general to not succumb to the top-down pressure of the international community, refusing such Western interference into their internal affairs, choosing to determine the course and speed of reforms themselves, although these obviously impacted by the current climate and geopolitical situation.

The provisions in the laws of both countries that require a waiting period before the new citizen can vote mean that aside from quickly changing the demographic make-up, mass naturalizations are a long-term strategy for possibly changing election results as well. The

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[136] "Arab Charter on Human Rights" (Arab League, 1994).

process of socialization, for example in the military, during this time might facilitate the development of state and regime loyalty, to a greater effect.

The ruling family of Kuwait has managed to convince the majority of the Shi'a that it is more advantageous for them to support the regime than to openly rebel. On the contrary in Bahrain, protests are still prevalent and escalating as of the middle of 2013. On the other hand, Kuwait is only slowly allowing itself to handle the problem of the stateless, something Bahrain did years ago. Where does the essential difference lie?

Jean Bodin wrote that "the best way of preserving a state, and guaranteeing it against sedition, rebellion and civil war, is to keep the subject with amity with one another, and to this end, to find an enemy against whom they can make a common cause." [137] For the Kuwaiti Shi'a, this was the Iraqi invasion: they could prove their loyalty, thus removing themselves from the list of counter-regime elements. Bahrain did not experience such large scale international conflict; its violent strife was always internal, and so divisive instead of uniting.

Byman and Green argue that one of the six strategies employed by monarchies successful in retaining power is co-opting their potential dissidents.[138] In the case of the Shi'a, Bahrain rather seems to be using the "divide and rule" method. It seems that there because of the inherent connection of the Shi'a to opposition movements, developing discourses positively addressing their loyalty is very difficult. There is no sense of determination from the side of the Bahraini Shi'a to desire belonging in the way there is in Kuwait; and on the side of the government that striving for inclusion and more rights can have a positive effect.

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[137] Jean Bodin, *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, ed. M.J. Tooley (B. Blackwell, 1955), 207.

[138] Daniel L. Byman and Jerrold D. Green, "The Enigma of Political Stability in the Persian Gulf Monarchies," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no. 3 (1999): 28.

Laurence Louer writes about "pragmatic sectarianism," describing a situation when the state draws upon the sectarian differences only in the case it is in their interest to do so.[139] Such pragmatic states do not essentialize the religious differences; the conflicts may still exist but are described in other terms (simply political, or for example class- or economic status-based.) In Bahrain and Kuwait, where a significant part of society belongs to one sect and the rest to an other, it is very convenient to take that as a characteristic in the case divide-and-rule becomes the preferred way of action by the government.

Is Kuwait able to quell unrest because of still remaining a strong rentier economy based on oil? The monetary hand-outs have there, on the contrary, encouraged disenfranchised strata to rebel against its unfairness. Geingler found in his empirical research that in the case of Bahrain, the state fails to "buy off" the citizens because economical well-being is not the sole determinant of political attitude. He argues that if the King tried to give the Shi'a more benefits, such as allowing them employment in sensitive sectors such as the military, it would just encourage more instability.[140]

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[139] Laurence Louer, "The State and Sectarian Identities in the Persian Gulf Monarchies: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in Comparative Perspective," in *Sectarian Politics in the Gulf* (Center for International and Regional Studies, 2012).

[140] Gengler, *Ethnic Conflict and Political Mobilization in Bahrain and the Arab Gulf*, 336.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis was aimed to explore a specific method of ensuring monarchic resiliency, the use of citizenship. In the Gulf, everything is in a way interconnected; using some kind of empirical methods to see this in more concrete terms instead of just highlighting it in history, political system and discourses around the Shi'a, the stateless and others would have been extremely useful .

Duplicity and ambiguity are terms that came to my mind often when writing about Bahrain and Kuwait. One side of the coin is the determination, at least superficially, to not let the monarchical model become an anachronism when in other Arab states rulers were overthrown and more democratic structures tried to be implemented. Any attempt at reform was slow, tedious, and hindered by violence or political stalemates – the rulers feel the need to keep the stability by pacifying the people. Seeing their population inspired by the growing protest movements, they also, despite of attempts at censorship with various methods, haven't and will not be able to resist the emerging mobilizing tool and force that is the World Wide Web.[141]

The ruling families have to choose between diminishing their own political and social power, or face ever increasing dissent. It will be an interesting development to observe whether (or when) the large masses of migrant workers will realize that there is power in their sheer numbers, and start to ask for more rights for themselves. Their political attitudes, and also that of those accepting political naturalization for would be a direction future research could take

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[141] Davidson, "Why the Sheikhs Will Fall."

Naturalization of large number of people would be of course a very costly affair, as more have to be provided with the benefits that other citizens enjoy, for example free housing, education and so forth – the state cannot afford this in face of the future, bleaker economic situation unless it can be sure that it is at least politically advantageous, meaning the naturalized will come to cement their power. The granting and revocation of citizenship has the potential to continue to be used as a tool to engineer stability, not as a method to ensure inclusion and integration of people.

As in Kuwait war has played a large role in determining the political status of the Shi'a, if it ever comes to armed conflict with Iran, it will be fascinating to see how the situation in Bahrain will play out. If Iran realizes its claim on Bahrain as a province, like Iraq did with Kuwait, would this unite the whole population of Bahrain and in the end re-determine who is considered loyal and who is not?

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