

MONARCHICAL STABILITY IN THE GULF COAST STATES

by

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ABSTRACT

The monarchies of the Gulf Cooperation Council are thriving today, despite the decline of monarchies everywhere else in the world. I explore the significant factors that allow these countries to maintain monarchy as a viable governing system. I find that Gulf Cooperation Council states employ a diverse set of tools to control the populace and provide stability. These tools include generous social welfare programs, a repressive state security apparatus, a large guest worker population, and strong ties and cooperation with other gulf monarchies. Using these tools allows these states to overcome the political challenges that threaten monarchical stability in our time.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
HDI	Human Development Index

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

A group of monarchs in the *Khaliji*, or Gulf region of the Middle East, are thriving in the current world system. Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates all have monarchs who rule in name and in practice, a curious, and possibly exceptional, subset of authoritarian regimes. In fact, these monarchies are the *only* remaining regional monarchy set in the world, where the monarchs are indeed the acting heads of state, with real governing power and authority. These countries have banded together to form the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Most published political science and history literature regarding authoritarian states or resistance to democratization in the Middle East focuses on these countries' authoritarian status rather than their monarchical singularity. This thesis places the resilience of GCC monarchies as a central issue to be addressed.

The King's Dilemma illuminates that the centralized power of a monarchy will be very effective at promoting modernization, which in turn will lead citizens living in a modernized world to demand more participation in the government (Huntington 1968). These calls for greater political freedoms will force kings into a political dilemma: Give up power or clamp down on citizens with repression. It describes a world where monarchies eventually have no place, falling under the weight of their own success or losing many of the benefits of modernization that the monarchy was so effective at producing (Huntington 1968). Huntington's vision has been largely vindicated, as most monarchical powers have given way to either democratic or non-monarchy authoritarian

regimes. However, the Gulf Coast monarchs do not fit into Huntington's modernizing vision.

The spring of 2011 marked an era of change for many Middle Eastern regimes. Countrywide protests, commonly known as the Arab Spring, swept through the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, a spark in the tinderbox of government resentment and poverty that led to the toppling of governments and the start of civil wars. This movement led to the overthrow of governments in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt, as well as civil war in Syria and Yemen. Protesters demanded better living conditions and more representation in Morocco, Bahrain, Jordan, and Kuwait. However, movements in these countries were either brutally stamped out (Bahrain), or these movements were met with concessions designed to appease the protesters. In Kuwait, the monarchy dissolved and replaced parliament, but remained unaffected in power and position. Moroccan protesters won the right to a newly drafted constitution and increased power for the prime minister. In Jordan, the king dissolved parliament and called for early elections to bring in a new cabinet that would address the complaints of the people.

The Arab Spring provided us with a critical juncture through which we can observe the staying power of GCC monarchies. Yom and Gause argue that the "Arab Spring might just as well be called the Arab Republics' Spring" (Yom and Gause 2012, pg. 74), because monarchies remained relatively stable while republican regimes in the region collapsed or experienced extensive reforms. How did GCC monarchs maintain their authority in the face of shifting regional and international winds during the Arab Spring?

Although there has been academic and popular press coverage of authoritarian persistence in Gulf countries, most of the published literature focuses on authoritarianism more generally and not on the exceptional cases of monarchies in the region and their resistance to change. Current literature regarding these monarchies discusses the exceptionalism of the monarchy institution as a regional set but most do not address the elements that make it unique amongst other authoritarian regimes in the region. The literature that does address monarchies specifically misses out on some of the key elements of monarchical sustainment.

In this thesis, I explore why and how these monarchies are able to protect their institutions from the effects of the King's Dilemma. To do this, I identify and discuss elements and characteristics of GCC monarchies that are unique to the country set. As Lisa Anderson suggests, I will search where the light shines (Anderson 2006) when looking at GCC monarchies, hoping to glean some insight about the robustness of these systems by observation first, then to hold them up against other systems in comparison. In other words, by identifying key elements that these monarchies have in common, I hope to establish which elements contribute to their political stability and political uniqueness.

Somewhat surprisingly, I find that culture, specifically tribal/colonial histories and religious beliefs, are not significant factors that help us to account for the continued stability of the GCC monarchies. This is surprising because the broader debate in the US and Europe suggests that culture is a key element that undergirds authoritarian regimes in these countries.

Rather, I find that economic and institutional arrangements best explain regime stability. Key parts of my explanation include: (1) greater financial freedoms, (2) repressive state apparatus, (3) generous social policies for citizens, including an emphasis on state-provided educational plans, (4) presence of large numbers of low-skilled, expatriate workers, and (5) coordinated actions among the GCC.

Citizens in GCC monarchies experience greater freedom from state-imposed financial burdens than almost any other countries in the world and are provided sweeping social welfare programs (Index of Economic Freedom 2016). The state members of the GCC have some of the highest financial freedom ratings of all countries in the world. Corruption in GCC monarchies is lower than in other MENA countries, often much lower. GCC monarchies are also, on average, more educated than their neighbors and have a higher than world average literacy rate (World Bank Education Report 2015, Human Development Index 2014).

Part of Huntington's theory would expect a more educated populace to advance the cause of modernization and hasten the downfall of a monarchy. Following this idea, I examine the education rates of citizens/residents in the GCC monarchies. Populations of GCC countries, contrary to what Huntington might have surmised, are more educated than other Middle Eastern countries and above average in the world education standings.

GCC monarchies couple these social financial incentives with an effective, repressive state security apparatus that keeps budding political dissent in check. GCC states rank extremely low in the world for allowing political freedom or participation, and in the maintenance and provision of civil liberties.

In addition, GCC regimes are among the highest in the world in low-skilled, foreign contract expatriate workers (hereafter referred to as expatriates), allowing the monarchies to sidestep the King's Dilemma with a passive majority and economic stability.

Finally, GCC countries work together through security and economy to maintain stability and establish legitimacy, not only for their own regimes, but also for monarchy as a workable regime type in general.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Much of the academic literature written in regard to governmental systems in the MENA and GCC regions deal with the absence of democratization rather than the presence of monarchy. GCC monarchies are thus often banded together with other authoritarian regimes for analysis. Although this kind of study certainly adds to our understanding, it does little to identify if or why monarchies are exceptional in this set. Many ideas have been put forth, though, to explain the strength of illiberal governments in MENA and the GCC. I will address these ideas and their contributions and shortcomings in explaining the extraordinary stability of GCC monarchies.

Scholars point to a flexible blend of patrimonial control of the elite, extensive social programs for the masses, and an effective repressive state security system as the tools used by authoritarian regimes in the GCC countries as a good model for how to tame your citizens (Lucas 2004; King 2007; Bellin 2004; Schwarz 2008). But these characteristics are not unique to monarchies, as many Arab “republics” also utilize similar measures and systems. Additionally, this blueprint did not keep some of the Arab republics from falling during the Arab Spring. Despite extensive social welfare programs and an extremely robust state security apparatus, Ghaddafi’s Libya suffered a catastrophic failure. That is not to say that the GCC monarchies do not utilize these tactics, evidence suggests that they do, but there is something exceptional about the monarchies that makes them more effective at it.

Kamrava and O'Mara compare GCC countries with South American countries, claiming that it is a lack of historical civil society institutions that has prevented the spread of democracy (Kamrava and O'Mara 1998). They argue that civil society institutions provide a will and foundation for the types of institutional structures necessary for the transition to a successful democracy. But a lack of robust sets of civil society institutions has not stopped democratization in other regions. Former Soviet republics were largely without the independent, democratically operated civil society organizations that Kamrava and O'Mara cite as essential to democratic transition but these countries succeeded in maintaining democratic transition and sustainment. Because this comparison only looks at the Middle East and Latin America it missed the cases outside its analysis that seem to disagree. In other words, while Kamrava and O'Mara's observations certainly add much to the discussion of why some states successfully transitioned to democracy, it struggles to fully explain why others didn't.

Anderson argues that there is no exceptionalism to GCC monarchies, only that they are newer monarchies and have not yet reached the tipping point predicted by Huntington in *Political Order in Changing Societies* (Anderson 1991). This point is unique in that it denies that there could be any situation within the monarchical spectrum that might succeed in maintaining power. But a quarter of a century has passed since her assessment and the monarchs still rule. Additionally, if monarchies consistently maintain a higher threshold, this does seem to indicate some measure of exceptional status.

From 1991 to present, GCC countries have continued to use their power to push through extensive modernization and education efforts. Nearly every GCC country has seen its Human Development Index score increase since 1991, which is around the same

amount of modernization effort as seen in countries such as Mexico and Brazil (Human Development Index 2014). This makes it less likely that the Huntington's axe is still hanging over the heads of these monarchs and more likely that there is something unique about the way they operate. Finally, other monarchies established during the same period as GCC monarchies have toppled, while GCC monarchies have thrived, leaving little doubt that monarchical maturity is not the culprit.

Another popular theme in the discussion of political systems in the Middle East is the effect of culture on the suppression of democratization and the resilience of authoritarianism. Fukuyama claims "that what happens on the level of ideology will depend on developments at the levels of civil society and culture" (Fukuyama 1995, pg. 6). Huntington believed "as countries modernize they seek refuge from the modern world in their traditional, parochial cultures and religions" (Huntington 1996, abstract). Putnam explores whether culture has a hand in the success or failure of institutions (Putnam 1993).

However, these articles also highlight another problem with attempting to explain the lack of democratic movement in Arab states: The diverse cultural norms and societal institutions and varied interpretations of religion within Arab countries. To attempt to pass off all GCC countries as culturally homogenous ignores vast linguistic, religious, tribal, and historical differences. For instance, the shared tribal experiences of the desert Bedouin in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia vary greatly from the international trade centered cultures of Bahrain and Oman. Bahrain alone is only approximately 70% Muslim, and the majority of those Muslims practice Shi'a Islam, whereas neighboring Saudi Arabia is majority Sunni. Oman practices Ibadi Islam, which is separate from both Sunni and Shi'a

orthodoxy. This may not seem a significant cultural difference but these differing sects of Islam represent an ideological disagreement that affects historical analysis, governance, and everyday traditions. Therefore, a closer look at the culture of these six countries suggests that there is a significant diversity of culture and religious organization. As a result, it is not possible to identify a specific cultural trait that might explain the stability of these monarchies.

The littoral states of the GCC have thousands of years of history of international involvement and trade (albeit, not as states presently constructed) and have deep colonial ties. Although they may share a language with countries like Saudi Arabia, their religious, historical, and economic traditions and institutions vary greatly. And although their official languages are shared, gulf dialects of Arabic, while mutually intelligible, are very diverse. These differences are even more marked when comparing urban and rural dialects. Put simply, the substantial variation across religion and tribal culture means that there is not a simple variable that can be used to explain this variation. And if there was something about Arab culture and Islam that contributed to stability of patriarchal rule, it has done a poor job of it, historically with other Arab monarchies, and in the present political scene with authoritarian Arab republics.

Esposito and Piscatori refute the idea that Islam is incompatible with democracy, citing current marginal Islamic democracies like Turkey and the flexibility of religion in adapting to political systems (1991). They point out the non-democratic histories of Christianity and Judaism and the traditional liberalized *shura* councils found throughout Islamic history as evidence that Islam is not stuck on a non-democratic deterministic path (Esposito and Piscatori 1991). Certainly, acceptance of a single, omnipotent ruler in the

past does not preclude acceptance of democracy in the future. And, if belief in a vertical religious power structure and adherence to a single religious ruler would prevent a people to refute democracy, one would expect modern democracy to have budded from India or Africa instead of Christian (and monotheistic) Europe and North America.

Lucas and Anderson also refute the idea that the monotheistic focus of Islam and the traditional vertical tribal hierarchy of Arab culture serve as a buttress against political change by pointing out that the kingly system of GCC monarchies is a new invention and not a traditional institution. The monarchies were aided and assisted by the West to place monarchs who write themselves into the history of the state (Anderson 1991; Lucas 2004). Not only are the borders of most Arab countries a result of colonial interference such as the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916, but many current dynasties are in place either because of colonial ratification (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait) or direct colonial appointment (Jordan, Iraq). Some of these countries have been overthrown and others have not, with the monotheistic focus of Islam and the vertical tribal hierarchy having negligible effect.

The history of the ruling families of the GCC countries is one largely shaped by association with the United Kingdom. Although many of these dynasties have histories as rulers going back to the 17th century, they did not always rule as monarchs and certainly did not rule over the same territory that is claimed under their stewardship today. Even the names of their kingdoms differ now from tradition. Abdulaziz Ibn Saud would not have gained control of most of the Arabian Peninsula without the military and financial assistance of the British, as well as territorial concessions gained from them after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in World War One.

The British placed the sons of Hussein bin Ali (who had fought alongside T.E. Lawrence) as kings on the throne in Jordan and Iraq. Britain also helped establish the Sabah family as rulers of modern day Kuwait and the Al Khalifa family as rulers of Bahrain. Oman was labeled as a British Protectorate in 1891. French forces forced the abdication of one of Hussein's sons from Syria and helped establish the government there. The Treaty of Darin, Sykes-Picot agreement, and other Western-centric agreements largely determined the boundaries and rulers of these countries as little as one hundred years ago.

Other Arab countries, such as Egypt and Lebanon, share the same colonially influenced roots and histories as the GCC countries. Some of them have succeeded in finding governmental stability and others have not. Some of the monarchies have lasted and some have been overthrown to see republics formed. Most telling, as many Arab monarchies have failed since their colonially inspired or supported inceptions as have succeeded. Monarchies in Tunisia, North Yemen, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Libya, and Afghanistan all failed. Because of this, it seems that the tribal histories and cultural underpinnings do not provide the bedrock for monarchical stability.

Hinnebusch agrees that culture does not preclude democracy, but argues that it may lend support to authoritarian regimes under certain conditions by providing institutions that can be exploited by a ruler (Hinnebusch 2006). This speaks to the situation of GCC monarchies by expressing the idea that there may be exceptional circumstances under which GCC countries operate that allow them to use the same tools to achieve different ends. Hinnebusch does not elaborate on those conditions, however,

other than to state that the machinations of colonial and post-colonial powers may have helped to create the openings in which the conditions might exist.

Yom and Gause address the issue of Arab monarchical resilience specifically and not just authoritarianism, by refuting the ideas of influence by culture and institutional factors, and by advancing the theory that Arab monarchs are maintained by a mobilization of “cross-cutting coalitions,” high levels of hydrocarbon wealth, and patronage by wealthy foreign countries (Yom and Gause 2012). However, these same tools are also used by Arab republics, sometimes with a different result. Clearly there is something else at work.

The next section of the thesis turns to the issue of how we will measure the stability of these regimes.

CHAPTER THREE: MEASUREMENT FACTORS

To better account for the ongoing stability of the GCC monarchies, I incorporate five factors in my analysis: State Repression, State Imposed Financial Burdens, Education, Expatriate Populations, and the deliberate cooperation and interaction of GCC states. By examining these features together, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the uncommon stability of the GCC monarchies. I use these factors to explain some of the unique power they have to increase regime stability. Of note, I examine each factor for a one-year time period and for comparative purposes, so I am using a smaller sample size than traditional econometric techniques would permit.

Measuring State Repression

To measure the degree to which each state represses its population I use data from the Freedom House report “Freedom in the World 2016.” This report rates each country in the world, assigning two major scores to reflect the Civil Liberties and Political Rights of the citizens of those countries. Those scores are averaged to assign the country a polity score, which is meant to reflect the overall freedom that country offers to its citizens. Countries are rated from 1 to 7, with the designation of Free (1.0 to 2.5), Partly Free (3.0 to 5.0), and Not Free (5.5 to 7.0) reflecting an individual’s level of freedom in that country. As a reference, the United States holds a score of 1, while North Korea holds a score of 7. Brazil scores a 2, while Russia holds a score of 6. While not every element of the scoring is based off of government repression or lack of it, the polity score gives a

broad but overall accurate representation of the repressive (or liberal) experience of each country's citizenry.

Measuring State Imposed Financial Burdens

The Index of Economic Freedom is a database that measures the overall economic freedom that a citizen or business can expect to experience in a given country. States are measured in four main areas: Rule of Law, Limited Government, Regulatory Efficiency, and Open Markets. Each of these criteria is further broken down, making a total of ten conditional scores. These ten scores are rated from 0 to 100, with a higher score denoting more freedom in that respective area. The Index of Economic Freedom considers a score from 100 to 80 as Free, 79.9 to 70 as Mostly Free, 69.9 to 60 as Moderately Free, 59.9 to 50 as Mostly Unfree, and anything under 49.9 as Repressed.

I focus on the degree to which a state imposes a financial burden on the individual citizen. This burden is often felt in the forms of high taxes or a lack of significant social programs. To measure this, I take the Fiscal Freedom score, a sub-category of Limited Government. Fiscal Freedom is a reflection of the direct and indirect tax burdens imposed by the government. Like the overall Economic Freedom, the Fiscal Freedom score ranges from 0-100, with the higher score denoting a lower tax burden. For reference, the United States has a Fiscal Freedom score of 65.6, while North Korea scores 0. Brazil scores a 69.7, while Russia has a score of 82.2.

also explore the rate of corruption as presented by the Corruption Perceptions Index developed by Transparency International. While not all corruption is based off of economics, a high level of corruption would certainly increase the financial burden felt by a country's citizens and stifle trade and private opportunity. The Corruption

Perceptions Index ranks all countries in the world according to perceived levels of corruption, with top ranking countries exhibiting less corruption than lower ranking countries.

Measuring Expatriate Populations

When considering the effect of large expatriate populations in GCC monarchies I adopted three measurements. One is the percentage of a country's population that is made up of expatriates. The second is the percentage of that country's work force that is made up of expatriate workers. This gives us an idea of what percentage of the population is made up of expatriates and also how much of the country's work burden is shouldered by that population. The third is the percentage of expatriate workers who work in low-skilled jobs. This number helps us to see what percentage of the expatriate population lives on low income and with marginal rights. This data is from 2013.

Measuring Education in GCC Monarchies

To measure the education rates of GCC monarchies I consulted the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) and the 2015 World Bank Education Report. The HDI is an index based on the health (longevity), education (% of literate adults), and per capita income of a country. I singled out the education score for GCC monarchies. The United Nation Statistics Division explains that the education factor of the HDI is a calculation of the expected years of education of a school-age child and the average years of schooling in the adult population. This calculation is given in the form of a percentage, reflecting the percentage of the adult population who received the expected years of schooling. It gives an indication of the successfulness of educational efforts in the observed country.

The World Bank Education Report compiles raw data from many different educational fields. As a reflection of overall education rates in a country, I have chosen to use the Adult Literacy Percentage, which is simply a percentage of the country's adult population (age 15 and up) that are literate. Literacy rates are reflective not only of the state's ability to provide educational programs, but of the success of those programs. Since the statistics on literacy are collected by each individual country on their censuses, it is difficult to know whether the data refers to citizen or resident populations. While literacy rates might be more likely in some countries to contain expatriate worker populations, it is less likely that education score would contain this group since it is a statistic comparing years of education obtained compared to years of education planned by the state (since expatriate workers are mostly adults who are only allowed a limited stay).

CHAPTER THREE: OBSERVED INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Education

Huntington argues that a more modernized country would produce a more educated populace, which would lead to unrest under the chafing rule of a monarch (1968). If that is true, one might expect GCC monarchies to keep their citizens in check by limiting education and educational opportunities. Instead, GCC monarchies are, on average, as educated or more educated than other Arab countries. Data from the Education Index of the UN Human Development Report shows that GCC monarchies are some of the most educated peoples of the MENA region. The following are the education scores for GCC monarchies in the 2014 Education Index section of the UN Human Development Report:

Table 1 HDI: Education in GCC countries, 2014

Country	Education Index Score
Bahrain	.714
Kuwait	.646
Oman	.603
Qatar	.686
Saudi Arabia	.723
UAE	.673
Mean	.674
Lower Bound	.627
Upper Bond	.721

Source: UN Human Development Report 2014

Compare these with other regional countries:

Table 2 HDI: Education in other MENA countries 2014

Country	Education Index Score
Libya	.698
Lebanon	.631
Yemen	.339
Egypt	.573
Syria	.553
Iraq	.467
Tunisia	.621
Iran	.683
Algeria	.643
Mean	.579
Lower Bound	.490
Upper Bound	.667

Source: UN Human Development Report 2014

Although there is not always a huge disparity between Arab republics and monarchies in education scores, Arab monarchies on average scored higher (and in some cases much higher) when Huntington's theoretical approach would suggest that stable monarchies would otherwise be expected to score lower.

Perhaps monarchies simply have lower educational goals. To provide additional insight I decided to add the literacy rates of each country as well, to give a measure of the effectiveness of education in that country. These scores come from the UNESCO Literacy Report. The world average for literacy among adults (15 and over) is 86.3 per cent. This also gives us a more standardized benchmark for set comparison.

Table 3 Literacy Rates in GCC countries 2015

Country	%
Bahrain	95.7
Kuwait	96.1
Oman	94
Qatar	97.8
Saudi Arabia	94.8
UAE	93
Mean	95.2
Lower Bound	93.4
Upper Bond	97

Source: World Bank Education Report 2015

Table 4 Literacy Rates in other MENA countries 2015

Country	%
Libya	91
Lebanon	93.9
Yemen	70.1
Egypt	75.2
Syria	86.4
Iraq	79.7
Tunisia	81.1
Iran	87.2
Algeria	79.6
Mean	88.7
Lower Bound	76.8
Upper Bound	88.5

Source: World Bank Education Report 2015

This data seems to conflict with the idea that monarchies would be less stable with an educated citizenry. It is a possibility that the government collapses and instability caused by the Arab Spring might have skewed the numbers, but unlikely since the numbers were similar from 2005 until present.

Education is often viewed as a tool of modernization, though, and since monarchies are effective at modernizing countries it makes sense that stable monarchies would have higher education rates. This part of Huntington's theory seems to be supported by this data. So far, so good, Huntington says. The divergence appears when we consider the result of this piece of modernization. It does not appear, at least in the cases of GCC monarchies, that education has led to an unruly and restive populace.

Thus, increasing levels of education should not be viewed as a natural precursor to democratization or political change in the case of GCC monarchies. Perhaps education is used as an entitlement, where it can be another tool that keeps middle class and elites in their social places. For instance, the government of Saudi Arabia supported a generous scholarship program in 2015 that allowed around 200,000 Saudi citizens to study abroad, including over 300 here at Boise State University. This kind of generous social program fulfills the needs of an elite class and establishes a large population that might be less eager to put such benefits at risk. Regardless, it seems that a high average standard of education is a marker of GCC monarchies.

Expatriate Population

When we think of the term expatriate, we often imagine the US citizens who are living abroad pursuing a career outside the US. While there certainly are many of these types of expatriates, the percentage of them compared to total US citizenship is quite small. We have expatriates of other countries living in the US, of course, who are not immigrants, but foreign workers on contracts who will someday return to their countries and who do not consider themselves as Americans. Again, the percentage of these workers is quite small relative to the total population. In some parts of the world, though, there are mass amounts of foreign workers, brought in for specific industries or types of work.

After the discovery of massive oil reserves in the Gulf region, western oil companies (assisted by colonial powers) began massive infrastructure operations to take advantage of the new economic discovery. Following the economic model they had used in many other countries (and partly necessitated by the cultural taboo of manual labor in

the Middle East) oil companies began importing workers from Southeast Asia to work in the oil fields. This workaround provided the companies (and later, GCC regimes) with cheap labor and remained an essential part of the economic makeup of GCC regimes. As infrastructure and demand

A large expatriate population means that a significant population in a country is beholden to the state or businesses for basic needs and economic opportunities. Expatriate populations working in a country are less likely to risk losing their opportunity by demanding increased political rights or attempting to influence political change. Low-wage workers also generally have less education and often come from countries with equally repressive governments. If the percentage of expatriate population is high enough, they could prove to be a significant obstacle to political change and a boost to maintenance of status quo.

Four of the five countries in the world with the highest percentage of expatriate populations working within their borders are GCC monarchies. GCC monarchies import workers by the millions in order to provide unskilled labor and prevent their own citizens from having to do “demeaning” work. In Arab culture, it is often considered embarrassing or disgraceful to have others see you perform manual labor (Nydell 2012). Even if someone has a hobby (for instance, fixing cars or building furniture) they will perform their work in their own homes, away from the eyes of their neighbors. The importing of unskilled labor workers, especially from the Philippines, Southeast Asia, or Pakistan, provides GCC monarchies with a cheap way to provide necessary labor.

Expatriate workers do not just fill a cultural void, however, as they also provide an important economic tool. State-run resource companies and massive state-financed

infrastructure projects (which are part of the gamut of social provisions) demand low-skilled labor workers who will work long hours for significantly lower wages than GCC citizens. It also allows GCC citizens to employ housekeepers, cooks, gardeners, builders and other culturally taboo positions at a bargain rate.

However, the presence of a large expatriate population could also have significant political effects. Consider the expatriate percentages of the population of each GCC country.

Table 5 Expatriate Population in GCC countries (percentage of total population)

Country	%
Bahrain	55
Kuwait	70
Oman	46
Qatar	88
Saudi Arabia	33
UAE	85
Mean	62.8
Lower Bound	39.7
Upper Bound	85.8

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs report *Trends in*

International Migrant Stock: The 2015 Revision

Saudi Arabia is somewhat of an exception in this list, with only a third of their population coming from foreign contract workers. This is partly due to the large population (More than half of the GCC's approximately 52 million citizens live in Saudi Arabia) that would require more raw numbers of expatriates to dilute, and partly due to the higher rural Saudi population. Saudi Arabia has also recently introduced initiatives to

provide more working opportunities for Saudi citizens, especially in areas where Islamic fundamentalism has taken root with the young, unemployed male populations. However, most of the new employment opportunities are not provided by replacing foreign workers with Saudi citizens, but by creating new state-controlled positions. This anomalous, but still very high number of foreign workers, is made even more significant by the percentage of expatriate workers who make up the actual Saudi work force.

In some ways, GCC monarchies have found a way to bring back the serfdom conditions of monarchies in the Middle Ages, with a landed elite and a peasant class with no rights. If the King's Dilemma relies on the voices of a country's citizens to help bring about the social changes necessary to topple a monarchy, in many GCC monarchies it must rely on the voices of only 10-30% of its residents! Expatriate workers have few rights in GCC monarchies and can be expelled from the country for almost any reason.

This means that GCC monarchies have imported unskilled laborers who *rely* on the monarchy (or state supported businesses and private elites) for their lives, jobs, and well-being. These same workers also keep GCC citizens complacent by performing unseemly and unpopular work while at the same time providing the average GCC citizen with someone to look down on so that he might feel good about his position in life. This is reflected even more when we look at the expatriate percentage of the work force for each country.

Table 6 Percentage of GCC Work Force Made up of Expatriate Population

Country	%
Bahrain	79
Kuwait	83
Oman	80

Qatar	94
Saudi Arabia	56
UAE	93
Mean	81
Lower Bound	66.4
Upper Bound	95.3

Source: Forstenlechner and Rutledge

An average of 81% of the work force of GCC countries has no citizenship, no political rights whatsoever, and no prospect at influencing government change. Consider the economic effect that this might have. Think of the political power and influence wielded by unions and worker's rights groups in the United States. In essence, the people who are most impacted by a GCC monarchy's lack of rights have little or no ability to complain about it! GCC countries have essentially made citizenship itself an elite status and have ensured that non-elite non-citizens would have no ability to complain about it.

Passports are carefully controlled by the government and employers. Additionally, many of these laborers work to support large families in their home countries, providing for them in a way that would be impossible elsewhere. The opportunity to be in GCC countries and earn this kind of income coupled with responsibilities to families make dissent very unlikely.

The majority of these workers are imported to work in low-skilled positions. This low-skilled labor group is best illustrated by inspecting how much of the expatriate work force in each country is employed in positions that do not require education or special training.

Table 7 Percentage of Expatriate Workers in Low-Skilled Jobs in GCC Countries

Country	%
Bahrain	88
Kuwait	81
Oman	87
Qatar	83
Saudi Arabia	85
UAE	65
Mean	82
Lower Bound	72
Upper Bound	90

Source: IMF Report 2011

When I lived in Bahrain, I could call Dairy Queen and order an Oreo Blizzard and within minutes an expatriate worker on a motorbike would show up at my door with ice cream. This kind of convenience comes at a price, but it is not a price that burdens the citizens of GCC countries. When the working class consists of a majority population with no rights, depending on the government for even their existence in the country and the elite classes have access to cheap labor and government entitlements, what motivation do the people have to demand a change? This seems to be condition unforeseen by Huntington, which allows GCC monarchies to work around the King's Dilemma. Not only does it provide a politically passive majority, but it assists the monarchy in maintaining the economic power necessary to run a state security apparatus and guarantee essential social welfare programs.

Fiscal Freedom

Used hand-in-hand with state repression (the stick and the carrot), a low tax burden and generous social programs are also effective strategies that permit these monarchies to maintain control. A people who have nothing asked of them and everything provided by their government are in a much weaker position to ask for any type of representation. They are also much less likely to attempt any change of the status quo.

Citizens of GCC monarchies enjoy extraordinary fiscal freedom from state-imposed financial burdens. Taxes in GCC countries are extremely low and state-provided entitlements are high. All GCC monarchies place in the top 50 of GDP per capita, with Qatar ranking as the number one country in the world with a GDP per capita of \$102,100. This number includes the expatriate workers whose salaries are much lower than GCC citizens. For instance, taking the expatriate workers from the equation in Qatar, the GDP per citizen is closer to \$690,000. The 2016 Index of Economic Freedom illustrates just how exceptional these countries are by highlighting their lack of tax burden in the Fiscal Freedom score. This is scored from 1-100, with a higher score indicating a lower tax burden imposed by the government.

Table 8 Index of Economic Freedom Fiscal Freedom Score 2015

Country	Fiscal Freedom Score
Bahrain	99.9
Kuwait	97.7
Oman	98.5
Qatar	99.7
Saudi Arabia	99.7
UAE	95

Source: 2016 Index of Economic Freedom

In comparison, the United States scored a 65.6 in Fiscal Freedom, China a 69.7. From this we can see that citizens of GCC monarchies are not asked to contribute very much to the government in the form of taxes. This score, of course, goes hand in hand with the Freedom Index score, since citizens who are not asked to contribute to the state are in a weaker position to ask for representation. Keeping taxes low and providing sweeping entitlements can also be viewed as a tactic to keep the people complacent. If the state is providing for their immediate needs, what more could most citizens ask for and why bother to be politically involved? And if they did become politically motivated, what leverage would they have over their government? High fiscal freedom also serves to cater to elite classes, preventing them from using influence to threaten or affect the monarchy. GCC monarchies regularly use social programs as a buttress against social change.

A high fiscal freedom score almost always (and certainly in the cases of GCC monarchies) is accompanied by a high percentage of the GDP produced by a single or a few valuable resources. In the cases of GCC monarchies, this resource is oil, although some have begun to specialize in financial fields and tourism as a supplement or failsafe against single resource reliance. Bahrain, in particular, has been forced to step away from

oil reliance as Bahraini oil reserves have been used up. In this case, Bahrain has relied heavily on GCC subsidies and aid (mostly from Saudi Arabia) and from US and British support (in exchange for military cooperation and use of Naval Air Station Bahrain and Isa Air Base). Without these resource funds (or significant foreign aid), GCC monarchies would not be able to utilize the tools of fiscal freedom and state repression in order to stave off political instability.

Table 9 **Corruption Perceptions Rankings of GCC Countries**

Country	Corruption Perception Ranking
Bahrain	70
Kuwait	75
Oman	64
Qatar	31
Saudi Arabia	62
UAE	24
Mean	54.3
Lower Bound	31.9
Upper Bound	76.8

Source: Corruption Perceptions Index 2016, Transparency International

Table 10 **Corruption Perceptions Rankings of Non-GCC MENA Countries**

Country	%
Libya	170
Lebanon	136
Yemen	170
Egypt	108
Syria	173
Iraq	166

Tunisia	75
Iran	131
Algeria	108
Mean	137.4
Lower Bound	110.4
Upper Bound	164.5

Source: Corruption Perceptions Index 2016, Transparency International

Tables 9 and 10 illustrate that the perceived levels of corruption in GCC monarchies are far lower than their non-monarchy counterparts. In fact, the lowest MENA non-monarchy, Tunisia, while ranked far ahead of its peers, is still only equal to the worst ranked GCC country. Qatar and UAE both fall outside of the standard deviation for corruption perceptions of GCC countries (but on the higher-ranking side). UAE in particular, has the highest corruption ranking of all MENA countries, GCC or not. Heavy involvement in international banking require higher oversight, which may be a contributing factor. No one wants a corrupt government handling their money.

Outliers from MENA non-GCC countries include Tunisia on the high-ranking end and Syria and Libya on the low. Tunisia has weathered a fairly successful and smooth governmental transition as a result of the Arab Spring, while Syria and Libya are still locked in lawlessness and conflict.

The data suggests that monarchies are less corrupt than republics. Keep in mind that this “perceived” corruption is not necessarily a reflection of the opinions of its populace, but scored and determined by an unbiased NGO. Monarchies could be ripe for corrupt activities, including nepotism and kleptocratic activities, but seem to forego them in favor of more sound and acceptable policies. Perhaps as GCC countries have shown

more stability, this has eliminated the need for back channels and non-regulated markets. Or maybe monarchies simply have more effective security apparatus with a mandate for eliminating competition for government institutions.

Political Freedom

A low tax burden often translates into a lesser chance for political representation. The Freedom House Freedom Index measures political participation as well as civil liberties. Repression has long been used by resource-dependent countries to maintain elite power, suppress the agents of government change, and deter proponents of government transparency. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries rate poorly on the Freedom House Freedom Index. Kuwait scores best as the only GCC country rated “Partly Free”, while all other countries rate as “Not Free”. This is likely because of Kuwait’s legislature, which has more power and influence than any councils or legislatures in the other GCC countries, but is still quite limited and only marginally powerful in comparison to the royal family. The Freedom in the World index is scored on a scale from 1 to 7, with a lower score indicating more freedom.

Table 11 Freedom Index 2016 Scores

Country	Freedom Index Score
Bahrain	6.5
Kuwait	5
Oman	5.5
Qatar	5.5
Saudi Arabia	7
UAE	6

Source: Freedom in the World 2016

These scores indicate that GCC monarchies do not allow political participation on any significant level. Opposition parties, if they are allowed to exist, are persecuted, stymied, or co-opted by the ruling family (Norton 1993). Aside from Kuwait, legislatures are subject to dissolution by royal decree and constitutions are subject to revision or dismissal. Political protest is not allowed and sometimes met with violence (Bahrain) or criminalization (Saudi Arabia). Citizens are not allowed to criticize the government and especially not the monarchy, and these rules are often punishable by prison sentences or death. In Bahrain, it is a crime to even deface a photo of members of the royal family.

Political participation is not the only area where GCC monarchies score poorly. Monarchies in the Gulf also have generally poor human rights records. Minorities are routinely abused or neglected and extra-judicial punishments are common. Religious persecution is common, and regime leaders and political considerations often influence the decisions of courts.

A lack of political freedom is certainly not a factor unique to GCC monarchies, but it is certainly an identifying characteristic. Because every GCC country limits personal freedoms and civil liberties it may indicate that repression and lack of representation are key elements to the maintenance of a successful GCC monarchy. In other words, GCC monarchies are not the only governments limiting freedoms, but every GCC monarchy does.

Monarchical Diffusion

In 1996 O'Loughlin, Ward, Lofdahl, Cohen, Brown, Reilly, Gleditsch, and Shin produced a paper studying the spatial aspects of the spread of democracy and autocracy. They concluded that there are indeed clusters of democratic and autocratic regimes and

that study of governmental change should take place by viewing the world as “regional mosaics” (O’Loughlin et al 1996). GCC countries have self-sorted into a regional mosaic of monarchies, described by Yom as “pan-royal”, and who responded as a unified group in the face of shifting political ideas during the Arab Spring (Yom 2016). This indicates that cooperation between GCC countries and inter-operational dealings may have an influence on regime stability.

Some of this may simply be the legitimacy of similar institutions. Monarchies may seem strange and outdated to someone in the United States, but to a Qatari citizen, who is not only ruled over by a king, but surrounded by countries ruled by kings, this arrangement is quite normal. This is reflected not just in their country of citizenship but also in their regional trading, border-sharing, and military partners. Additionally, these countries are those with which they share the most culturally and linguistically. To many GCC citizens, non-monarchies represent a demographic of “others”.

This associative support of monarchies is not just passive, however, as GCC countries regularly take an active role in the support of stability for regional partners. During the Arab Spring, when Bahrain experienced a more significant political revolt at the Pearl Uprising (named so for the location of the demonstrations at the Pearl Roundabout), Saudi Arabia and the UAE sent a force of around 1500 military troops across the King Fahd Causeway (which links Bahrain and Saudi Arabia) to suppress the demonstrations and end any conversation about a new constitution or government overthrow.

GCC countries also enjoy unique trading status amongst other members and oil-poor countries (like Bahrain) receive huge sums of monetary support from other GCC

countries. In fact, not only do GCC countries support financial stability within the monarchies of the GCC, they also spend enormous sums helping to maintain stability in other monarchies. Two countries outside of the Gulf region enjoy significant financial support from the GCC and have even entertained overtures of GCC membership: Jordan and Morocco. Both are monarchies. Perhaps recognizing the value of stabilizing the legitimacy of monarchies as a ruling type, the GCC has reached out to these countries even though in many other ways (geography, resources) they are very dissimilar from current membership.

This suggests that part of the reason this set of monarchies has been maintained is because they *are* a set of monarchies. This explanation does not provide a full answer to the question, as there are monarchies in the region who have fallen through public action or military coup, but in line with the thinking of O'Loughlin et al, the GCC may derive some political legitimacy from their unique regional mosaic.

CHAPTER THREE: CONCLUSIONS

My goal in examining the GCC monarchies has been to identify key characteristics of these countries as a political group that explain monarchical regime stability. By doing this, I identified the unique features that contribute to their resilience, particularly in a region known for its instability. This list of features is not all inclusive, of course, as there are surely other factors singular to this set of countries and some singular to each country individually that assist in maintaining the regimes. There is something unique about this set, though, and by observing it for what it is we can better understand what holds it together.

I have found that GCC monarchs utilize a diverse toolset that enables them to avoid the King's Dilemma as presented by Samuel Huntington. GCC monarchs limit political freedoms, provide extensive social programs and above average educational opportunities, and employ a resident majority of expatriate workers. Their tactics can be very effective as either spot treatment tactics (Saudi Arabia placating the population with new financial incentives during the Arab Spring or Bahrain calling on GCC powers to crush a rebellion), or as long-standing stabilizing policies (Qatari and Kuwaiti citizen stipends) in the maintenance of regime control.

As I have discussed the interrelations of the GCC countries as an important factor contributing to stability, so too has the interoperability of the characteristics themselves been essential in maintaining monarchy. Sweeping social programs and a low tax burden (positive reinforcement) are most effective when paired with an efficient state security

apparatus limiting political dissent (negative reinforcement). Education seems to contribute to the stability of a monarchy, but perhaps only inasmuch that it is a reward or entitlement given to the citizenry by a patriarchal monarch. Education also represents a social delineation between the educated citizens and the less educated low-skill workers who make up the bulk of the work force.

Implicit to the success of these strategies, too, lies the economic factor. Without significant funding (provided mainly by oil revenue in the case of the GCC) the state would not be able to provide social programs or utilize the light touch of a minimized state imposed financial burden. Without deep government pockets regimes would also struggle to maintain a successful repressive security apparatus essential to maintaining political control. This stick and carrot approach provides a flexible spectrum of options when demonstrations or revolt appear, as in 2011 when Saudi Arabia rolled out new welfare and employment programs in the face of the Arab Spring in Saudi Arabia while sending troops to help quell political upheaval in Bahrain.

The expatriate population plays an important role in this balancing act, providing an army of cheap, low-skilled labor that keeps royal coffers full. Not only do regimes get cheap labor to help turn a profit but they get to do it without providing the same suite of programs and benefits that they provide to their citizens (which are, in some cases, a huge minority in their own country). Expatriate populations also provide the regime with bodies that work without presenting any significant threat to the status quo, as they can be removed from the country with almost no backlash.

This financial security is so important that GCC countries are willing to contribute huge sums of money to each other to ensure the system can be run as it is designed. GCC

countries will even contribute to like-minded systems outside of the GCC, as in the cases of Jordan and Morocco, in order to present the image of viability and legitimacy of the monarchical system. Perhaps this is because they see any weakness of any monarchy as affecting their own legitimacy.

To this effect, there may be little room for error. The system provides monarchs with a toolbox of political management that other authoritarian regimes may not have access to, but if there are significant enough economic troubles political spaces may have to be created. Jordan and Kuwait have both experienced financial troubles in the past, and in both cases, were forced to give power to parliaments and open new political dialogues. With oil prices crashing in the past few years Saudi Arabia has been forced to cut back or cancel some of the social programs that their citizens had previously enjoyed. This leads to fears that those political spaces could be filled by opportunistic Islamic extremist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, who have shown themselves more than willing to provide benefits to those whom the government has “forgotten.”

The bedrock of a strong and flexible monarchy appears to be a strong economy (heavily dependent on expatriate workers, and low tax burden) and elite institutions (security apparatus, education, social welfare programs, low corruption, and interregional cooperation). Culture may have an ancillary effect, in that it infuses the institutions with some understood legitimacy, but is in itself not a significant factor of monarchy maintenance. The survival of GCC monarchies very likely has to do with both the luck of exceptional resource availability and the opportunistic nature of this particular brand of monarchy. Cooperation and maintenance of a like-minded regional support system has

allowed GCC monarchies after the fact to react to threats and build legitimacy, establishing themselves as a flexible and durable regime type.

Ultimately, there seems to be a strong level of buy-in by GCC citizens regarding monarchies. This is illustrated by that critical juncture of the Arab Spring, where GCC countries (even Bahrain) saw significantly less political turmoil than most other countries in the region. Additionally, 5 of the 6 GCC countries were listed in the top 50 of the World Happiness Report 2013-2015 (Oman, the only GCC country not listed in the top 50, was absent from the report). Algeria was the only other MENA country in the top 50 and there were no other MENA countries in the top 65. This is not surprising, given the GCC's strong track record of stability in an increasingly unstable part of the world. Stability breeds stability and it could be that these countries, once reaching a benchmark of continuity, established their own legitimacy that others failed to achieve only because they failed to maintain the same continuity. This in itself is exceptional.

GCC monarchies have shown remarkable stability. This is why the recent tribulations in the Middle East have given us an opportunity to examine the exceptional preparatory and reactionary methods used by GCC monarchies. If stability is threatened, GCC monarchies have a diverse set of tools available to restabilize and reestablish the status quo. GCC monarchies have managed to use these tools to balance the benefits of modernization while maintaining flexibility of governance, and will continue to do so as long as they have access to them.

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