

## Democratic Politics in Kuwait

**AJAY KR. UPADHYAY**  
Associate Professor  
S.D. (PG) College, Ghaziabad (U.P.) India

**Key Words :** Democratic politics, Majlis movement, Gulf monarchies

Kuwait sets the standard for political development in the GCC States. Kuwait has the most liberal constitution of the Gulf monarchies, and it has the longest experience with elections and parliamentary politics. The Shaikhdom of *Kuwait*, a small state located in the North-eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula was artificially created with boundary *vis-à-vis* Iraq on the North. Bordered by Saudi Arabia on the south, southwest, it fronts the Arabian Gulf to the east. Kuwait is a geographically small (17,818 square kilometres) but wealthy country with a relatively open economy and self-reported crude oil reserves of nearly 105 billion barrels—about 9 percent of world reserves. Crude oil and refined products account for most of the country's exports. Kuwait is a constitutional monarchy governed by the Al Sabah family, the ruling family since 1756. The constitution, which was approved on 11 November 1962, authorizes the Al Sabah family council to select the emir, traditionally from the Al Sabah line. Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah is the current Emir of Kuwait. Sheikh Ahmed al-Jabir Al Sabah ruled Kuwait from 1921 until his death in 1950, a period in which oil was discovered and in which the government attempted to establish the first internationally recognized boundaries; On June 19, 1961, Kuwait became fully independent following an exchange of notes with the United Kingdom. Kuwait is a constitutional, hereditary emirate ruled by princes (Amirs) who have been drawn from the Al Sabah family since the middle of the 18th century. The 1962 constitution provides for an elected National Assembly and details the powers of the branches of government and the rights of citizens. Since the Iraqi invasion of 1990, the consensus in favor of *Kuwait's* pro-

democratic institutions has deepened. This consensus has historical roots. The first effort to constrain the aim's power came in appointed Consultative Council in 1921. The first sustained effort to formalize and institutionalize the historical constraints of merchants and other elites on the power of the ruling family occurred during the rule of Amir Ahmad in an uprising called the Majlis Movement in 1938. A recently signed oil concession agreement with the Kuwait Oil Company offered brighter economic prospects but also the fear that this new income would be monopolized by the ruling family. These concerns prompted a group of leading merchants to petition the ruler for a series of reforms and then to hold elections for a Legislative Assembly to implement them. This assembly ruled for half a year until finally closed down by the ruler and tribal backers.<sup>1</sup>

The short-lived assembly had an important legacy. Its popularity gave the idea of formal representation a privileged place in Kuwaiti popular history. The fact that the assembly was an indigenous, not colonial, creation (indeed, Britain opposed the assembly) gave the body legitimacy that the essentially colonial interwar parliamentary institutions of other states (Egypt, Iraq, Syria) lacked. In Kuwait, the Majlis Movement unified the pro-democratic and nationalist strands of thought, elsewhere sundered by colonialism. Abdallah Salim al-Sabah (1950-1965), oversaw Kuwait's transformation into a wealthy oil-producing state and also established the National Assembly that exists today. He played a foundational role in institutionalizing the participatory nature of Kuwait politics. In dealing with the new oil revenues that expanded rapidly after World War II,

Abdallah Salimal-Sabah made two critical decisions. The first was to distribute these revenues broadly throughout the population by expanding state employment and dramatically increasing expenditures on social services, notably in education and health care. The second was to introduce a greater degree of political participation to Kuwait in the form of a National Assembly.<sup>2</sup> The latter was partly in response to domestic pressure and partly to external pressure. Following World War II, merchants and progressive elements of the intelligentsia revived the pro-democracy impulse. In response, in the 1950s the Amir allowed elections to key government committees administering some of the new social services such as health and education, as well as to the department committee on religious endowments and to the Kuwait Municipality. Throughout the 1950s, the opposition put forward petitions and circulated pamphlets for a broader, elected National Assembly. In 1961, following independence and with an Iraqi territorial threat looming, the Amir responded to these demands, announcing that he would introduce a constitution and hold elections for a National Assembly. Kuwait's 1962 constitution gives the Kuwait parliament (the Majlis-al-Umma, or National Assembly) a substantial degree of power. The parliament, however, has not used its powers to the fullest in pursuit of greater democracy.

The Kuwaiti constitution of 1962, which laid the ground for election of a National Assembly, reflects the divisions between the ruler and the government on one hand and the leading social groups—the notables—as well as lower-ranking merchant families on the other. It is true that according to the constitution the ruler recognized the citizens' right to advise, even criticize the government and question its policies, and that this was a meaningful step towards citizens' participation in power politics, given the earlier history of Kuwait. In the past (the crises of 1921 and 1938) when the notable families initiated the formation of representative councils, the ruler, Shaykh Ahmed, rejected them, and in 1938 and 1939 he even tried to shut the councils down. However, Ahmed and later rulers acknowledged the ambitions of the notable families, and, for the sake of stability, were ready to accommodate these ambitions in the constitution.<sup>3</sup> The constitution, however, was presented to the Kuwaiti citizens as an instrument handed by the ruler, in his grace, to his people.<sup>4</sup> Hence the Kuwaiti constitution allowed citizens only to criticize the ruler's methods of using the power he was holding, or the policies by which he did so.

It was not intended to reshuffle the basic division of power by taking away power from the ruling family and the government and handing it to the citizens. Moreover, in practice, Kuwait's rulers made it absolutely clear that there were limits to the criticizing and questioning of government policies. When the National Assembly became too troublesome in its criticism of the government and started acting as a core of anti-government opposition movements, the ruler used his prerogative (which had been included in the constitution) and prorogued the assembly in July 1986. Kuwait had to wait until October 1992 for its ruler, under the impact of his country's liberation from Iraqi occupation, to permit elections for a new National Assembly.

Accordingly, four elections for the National Assembly in 1963, 1967, 1971 and 1975 were held before being suspended in 1976. The assembly reopened following elections in 1981. Elections were again held in 1985, but then the body was dissolved in July 1986. When in session, the assembly played an important role in mobilizing and articulating opposition to Kuwait's rulers. Its power was always limited. After the assembly was suspended in 1986, a cross-section of opposition leaders, including old parliamentarians, Islamists, merchants, and members of the intelligentsia, came together to form the Constitutionalist Movement of 1989-1990, a pro-democracy movement calling for the restoration of the assembly and the constitution.<sup>5</sup> In an effort to evade a state ban on public gatherings, in December 1989 a group of former assembly members began holding regular Monday night *diwaniyyas* (men's social gatherings)<sup>6</sup> with an explicitly political agenda. Another round of elections was held in June 1990 after negotiations with the opposition group and partly in response to the pro-democracy street rallies in December 1989 and January 1990. The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq took place in August 1990 and lasted until February 1991. Since the Iraqi invasion of 1990, the consensus in favor of Kuwait's pro-democratic institutions has deepened. Specially, the opposition became more critical of the royal family because the way emir of Kuwait had fled the country without any show of defiance, their poor management of the crisis, and their excessive reliance on Western might.<sup>7</sup>

The liberation of Kuwait from the subjugation of Iraq was followed by the greater demand for political liberalization. Yet, following liberation, the Kuwaiti regime managed to reinstate itself virtually intact. It spurned overtures from the secular opposition to cooperate on

liberalizing the economy, worked to defeat liberal candidates for parliament, and maintained alliance with Islamist and tribalist forces. Politics as usual seemed to be the order of the day, but beneath the façade of normality, long-term forces continued to press toward further political, economic, and social opening. Economics, civil society, gender politics and the media are worthy of attention as harbingers of politics liberalization in Kuwait.<sup>8</sup> Kuwait, with the oldest continuous and most firmly established pro-democratic institutions, has gone the furthest in expanding contestation. There the decade since the Iraqi invasion has seen free elections for a genuinely legislative body, accompanied by lively and open political debate covering a range of issues, from economic liberalization to women's suffrage. Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and the UAE have experienced more tentative political openings with elections for partially appointed advisory bodies with more limited mandates, although in these states more contestation has been accompanied by greater participation by extending suffrage to women. Saudi Arabia remains at the other end of the political continuum, with promises of political openings accompanied by greater repression. A snapshot of each state follows.<sup>9</sup>

These factors have facilitated (and others hindered) the emergence of a pro-democratic impulse in Kuwait. The first is the *nature and level of economic development*. Here the political inheritance is decidedly mixed. On the one hand, oil revenues, by promoting growth and raising the income of the population, have certainly facilitated the emergence of a democratic movement by creating a population with both the leisure and the education to engage in polite political activity. Indeed, the civil natures of political opposition, its nonviolent history, and its moderate, patient, and reformist tendencies are all partly a result oil-led prosperity. Because the rulers did not have to tax the population, they did not have to worry about taxpayers pressuring them for accountability, demanding to know how their tax dinars were spent, or demanding something in return for their contribution to the state. Other factors have contributed to greater openness. Kuwait is a signatory to treaties and conventions underpinning the global trade and investment regime, but economic liberalization is still very much in process. The domestic debate over bringing Kuwait into conformity with WTO-mediated norms is one attempt to use international institutions to democratize the economy and, through it, the regime.<sup>10</sup>

A relatively diverse *civil society*, one revitalized by

the Iraqi occupation, has been an element. A fairly pro-democratic political culture predating oil has played a role. Rooted in the marriage of the nationalist and pro-democratic impulses in the interwar period, this culture has deepened as a result of events (notably the Iraqi occupation), the practical experience in democratic institutions (e.g., the cooperatives), and the astute adaptation of traditional institutions (whether in the form of tribal primaries or *diwaniyya* (demonstrations) to pro-democratic ends.<sup>11</sup> Tribes are cohesive political factions and the larger ones, like the ruling family itself,<sup>12</sup> are relatively autonomous corporations with formidable negotiating power. Flouting the law on tribal primaries with impunity is one way in which the tribes show their power. The other is to apply that power to demanding material rewards in exchange for political support. The never-ending list of tribalist demands has heightened concern at top levels of the regime that structural impediments (such as salary and retirement payment commitments) will constrain its ability to rationalize the domestic economy.<sup>13</sup>

Newspapers and *diwaniyyas* are interdependent modes of political communication spreading information and opinion and creating precisely the kind of "imagined" national community that Benedict Anderson argues is the product of a literate population and a commercial print press.<sup>14</sup> Even more important for democratization, these uniquely Kuwaiti venues together form a "space of appearance" in which activists mobilize support, issues and personalities are nationalized and normalized, and coherent- though far from unitary-perspectives on social and political life are formed, criticized, adjusted, and propagated.<sup>15</sup> The regime wanted to control the press because of its history as a stronghold of the opposition. Kuwaiti merchants had originally launched newspapers and weekly magazine a constituency for political reform. During the 1930s, before Kuwait had its own print press, the opposition National Bloc, which had substantial support among Kuwait's leading merchant, used the Iraqi press to publish its reform program. Magazines blossomed after World War II, promoting modernism, offering articles on current national issues, and publicizing the new reforming trends elsewhere in the Arab world.<sup>16</sup> The print press became the premier institution of Kuwait's "political space" following the adoption of the constitution in 1962. To candidates in Kuwait's first parliamentary election (1963), newspaper offered a national forum for discussing the issues of the day in their myriad analyses

and opinion pieces. These publications still tend to reflect of their owners, mostly business, but because virtually every political grouping and major institution has its own magazine, taken as a whole the print press represents a broad range of perspectives. Most Kuwaitis read several newspapers, and magazine. They discuss what they read with family, friends, and neighbors, at work and at *Diwaniyyas*, regular meetings that take place in private homes.

Shifts in media consumption patterns threaten both pillar of the Kuwaiti information regime. First, the turn towards television as a sources of news, especially if the viewers watches only one network and that network offers limited- and biased- coverage, increase the tendency toward unquestioned acceptance of information due to the modality of television consumption and the danger of misperception arising from the quality of the broadcast sources. Second, should the trend away from *diwaniyyas* by young men continue into adulthood, the loss of this participatory venue for opinion formation could diminish the capacity of average Kuwaitis to develop reasoned judgments about national and international politics. Internet use among young people is growing rapidly, but despite its potential as a source of multiple political viewpoints and information, the Internet is not an adequate substitute for the unique space of appearance created by wide newspaper readership and mass participation in *diwaniyyas*. The proliferation of electronic media in Kuwait, like the enfranchisement of women, is a clearly democratic trend, but even here what the ultimate impact on democratization will be is unpredictable. If television were to displace newspapers and *diwaniyyas* as the primary medium of news and analysis, the results are likely to be retrogressive. Pressure to open up Kuwait, politically and economically, comes from domestic and outside forces. None is unambiguously democratizing while all carry the real possibility of increasing political polarization and domestic conflict. Opening could intensify the already nasty competition between young men and professional women, and between middle- and merchant-class forces. It is likely to increase competition between citizens and the foreign workforce they depend upon, and bring that mostly sublimated conflict into uncomfortable prominence. Whether and how well Kuwait's traditional participatory institutions can channel the results of expanding the national political universe in positive ways will determine whether the massive changes in gender relations, the

economy, and the parameters the massive change in gender relations, the economy, and parameters of public space it is undergoing will prove to be democratizing or not.

Enhancing fledgling political institutions is not new in the Gulf as the Kuwait experiment clearly illustrates. The Kuwaiti parliament experienced several jolts after the shaikhdom adopted its constitution in 1962. Parliamentary crises followed, especially in 1975-76 (directly tied to the Lebanese civil war as well as the presence of a significant Palestinian population in the country), in 1986 (with the rise of an Islamist tendency) and, of course, in the aftermath of the 1990 Iraqi invasion.<sup>17</sup> The core elements of political liberalization in Kuwait, the institutions around which there appears to be at least some consensus, consist of the constitution and a National Assembly. The consensus on the utility of these institutions is not complete- the assembly has been closed twice, and articles of the constitution likewise suspended-but it is substantial. National Council was primarily a consultative body, with fewer powers. But the constitutionality of this body was highly contested, and when, in June 1990, elections were held for the elected portion of the body, the opposition boycotted in protest, producing one of Kuwait's lowest turnouts. The new council nonetheless was formed and had just begun meeting when Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990. With the wheel in motion, election for the assembly duly took place in 1992, 1996, 1999, 2006<sup>18</sup> and 2010. Kuwait may not be the most progressive of Arab states, but the powers of its parliament are far-reaching. It has the ability to interrogate cabinet members, including the prime minister, on all administrative and financial affairs. Moreover, it is able to pass motions of no confidence in the government—a right it has frequently employed.<sup>19</sup> A cornerstone was established after the death of emir, Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmed (December 2005) in Kuwait's political history when the parliament by voting (unanimously) ousts the new emir on the ground of poor health. This was the first time within any of the GCC states that an elected body had overruled a ruling tribe's candidate for emir.<sup>20</sup>

In Kuwait, parliamentary life was resumed with a heated and spirited campaign during the summer and fall of 1992. Several new faces won seats in the National Assembly, where the opposition forces won a clear majority and Sunni and Shi'i Islamic forces won at least one third of the 50 seats.<sup>21</sup> The significance of the

Kuwaiti elections is that they were the first to be held after the experience of the Iraqi invasion and occupation, and the first since the 1986 suspension of parliament. The assembly continued its work, and second term elections after Gulf crisis were held in 1996. Observers considered the elections free and open, indicating again the government's continuing acquiescence in this element of the democratization process. Obviously, Kuwait is far from any democratic ideal. The selection of the ruler by popular mandate is not on the political agenda, and even those issues subject to popular discourse are lodged in an assembly vulnerable to closure by the emir and elected by a minority even of adult citizens. Nonetheless, the participatory impulse is both strong and deeply rooted in elections and institutions that embody commitments to, if not quite guarantees of, respect for participatory processes and civil and political rights that underlie processes.<sup>22</sup>

The 1999 elections are worthy of note as they resulted in a direct and dramatic stand-off between Kuwait's vocal and politically powerful national assembly and the government, controlled by the Al Sabah family. The assembly had been building up to this new muscle-flexing, in 1998 taking the bold step of quizzing the interior minister for allowing the publication of material considered by the Islamists in the assembly as contrary to Kuwaiti and Islamic cultural values. This caused a serious constitutional crisis in the country, in which the assembly was said to be testing the frontiers of its powers while the cabinet, chaired by Crown Prince Saad al-Abdullah (the prime minister), was hanging on to its powers and status.<sup>23</sup> Sheikh Jaber had little option but to try to defuse the crisis by dissolving the parliament and immediately announcing elections for a new assembly. As crown prince, the elderly Sheikh Saad al-Abdullah initially became emir upon the death of Sheikh Jaber in December 2005; however, his advanced age and poor state of health led to public rifts emerging in the parliament over his suitability. Here the parliament asserted itself by voting (unanimously) to oust the new emir on the grounds of poor health. Moreover, the new candidate (the dead emir's half brother, Sheikh Sabah) broke with the Kuwaiti tradition of power alternating between the two rival branches of the Sabah dynasty. This was highly symbolic and underlined the point that power now resided in the elected parliament—an assertion not lost on many of its members. Succession was no longer an internal family matter.

In this new political climate, the 'reformist' government pledged to seek a reduction of the number of electoral constituencies. A number of youthful activists gathered and protested outside the parliament, demanding that the government reduce the number of constituencies to five. Faced with this new wave of public protest, which was steadily intensifying, the government opted to submit a motion calling for a reduction of the number of constituencies to ten.<sup>24</sup> In the context of this unprecedented political activism, 29 MPs opted to withdraw from the session in protest while three others submitted a motion proposing that the prime minister be summoned before parliament for questioning. In light of this challenge, the emir opted to dissolve parliament on the grounds of national security. Fresh elections were scheduled under the original 25 constituencies for the end of June 2006. The results of the June 2006 elections caused another major shift in Kuwaiti politics, heralding a move towards the reformist camp. This election saw a loose alliance of reformists and Islamists gain almost two thirds of the seats.<sup>25</sup>

Gender politics is a frequent locus of analysis and contention in non-egalitarian societies. Interestingly, women played a major part in the elections, accounting for 57 per cent of the vote. Kuwait's electoral law permitted any male first-category citizen<sup>26</sup> twenty-one years of age or older to vote and run for office, but it denied political rights to Kuwaiti women. This changed in May 2005 when women attained full political rights. Yet legal discrimination between men and women extended beyond political rights, inscribed in laws limiting women's rights to travel, to qualify for some benefits, such as housing, and to pass their nationality to their children. This lack of political rights stimulated the development of women's organisations, leaving as an important legacy of the long struggle for political rights years of experience of organizing and building coalitions across disparate groups and interests. In April 2006, a by-election for the municipality of Salmiyya became Kuwait women's first opportunity to compete and to vote. Two women ran in the eight-person field and one of them, Jinan Bushahri, an engineer who works for the Kuwait municipality and the first woman to become an official candidate in Kuwaiti elections, came in second. 27 of the 275 candidates were women in June 2006 election but none of the female candidates won.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, the new parliament was quick to pass legislation, proposed by the council of ministers, reducing the number of

constituencies to five, as had been demanded by the reformists. An early parliamentary election was held in Kuwait on 17 May 2008 after the Emir Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah dissolved the National Assembly of Kuwait on 19 March 2008 over constant clashes between the government and the elected MPs. New rules introduced for this election have changed the 25 constituencies electing two to five electing 10. This was a demand of the reformist Kuwaiti Orange Movement, which led mass demonstrations in 2006, who believed the change would impede vote buying electoral frauds.<sup>28</sup> Many candidates in the election proposed increased governmental subsidies to be funded by oil profits.<sup>29</sup>

Kuwaitis have ambivalent feeling about democracy and about the role of their ruling family in political life. The opposition has recently won clear majorities in parliamentary elections, but the central opposition demands are not for a transition to democracy but instead for limitation on the power of the ruling family. The two are related, but they are not the same thing. And the opposition also wants to keep the ruling family in its place. At the same time, there is virtually no support in Kuwait for a republic. As a consequence the parliament, which enjoys substantial power under the constitution, does not fully use the full measure of its power to press the ruling family to democratize.<sup>30</sup> Young people are playing a greater role in political life, and there is good reason to conclude that Kuwait has begun to enter a new political era in which the concentration of power has moved to civil society away from the ruling elite. This is a key point that distinguishes Kuwait from the other oil monarchies.<sup>31</sup>

Kuwait obtains a substantial portion of its national revenue from the rent of its oil reserves. In the proposed budget for the years 2010-11, the total estimated revenue was KWD 9.72 billion; around 82 percent of this revenue was generated from oil exports (Al-Shall 2010a). While at first glance the political system of Kuwait seems to defy the typical descriptions of rentier states, it is deeply affected by rent-seeking attitudes.<sup>32</sup> Two features illustrate this point. First, it has been contended that the level of political freedom in Kuwait is higher than that of its Arab neighbours: the Press Freedom Index of 2011 classified Kuwait as one of the four Arab countries that were partly free.<sup>33</sup> In the last few years, Kuwait has experienced a notable political impasse. For example, over the period 2006–12, eleven governments were formed, and five National Assemblies were constitutionally

dissolved.<sup>34</sup> The year 2006 represented a milestone in the history of Kuwait's polity as the National Assembly voted to remove the ailing Amir Sheikh Sa'ed Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah and appoint Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. This event empowered the parliament in an indirect way, and subsequent events such as the interpellation of the prime minister show the evolution of the polity in Kuwait. Rent-seeking is becoming a contest to tilt the balance of power between the parliament and the ruling family. On 6<sup>th</sup> January, 2014, Kuwait announced its sixth government since Sheikh Jaber Mubarak al-Hamad Al Sabah assumed the premiership in 2011. The latest cabinet reshuffle appeared aimed at improving relations with the current parliament (the National Assembly), which is seen as more favorable to the government. The ruling family-led government is back in the driver's seat after a tumultuous few years, which saw a pronounced rise in opposition activity driven by youth-led street protests. The current parliament is seen as providing the best opportunity in years to serve the government agenda, or at a minimum, to survive its full term. Yet there are few signs that Kuwait's dysfunctional politics are at an end. Continued popular discontent provides a rich environment for populist politicians challenging the executive branch. Factionalism within the ruling family may be contributing to confrontations within the National Assembly.<sup>35</sup>

While seven new ministers were sworn in, there were new faces. Instead, ministers were selected with an eye to appease the current parliament and to consolidate key alliances. In seeking a better working arrangement with the mostly pro-government National Assembly, all ministers facing interpolation by legislators were dropped. This includes the two female ministers—Rula Dashti at the ministry of planning and development, and Dhikra al-Rashidi at the ministry of social affairs and labor—the latter of which was replaced with the new cabinet's sole female, newcomer Hind al-Sabeeh. The cabinet also saw a rise in the number of Islamist ministers, notably drawn from the Salafi trend. The Salafi movement in Kuwait has experienced sharp political disagreements between Salafi activists who followed the opposition into the parliamentary boycott and others who counseled greater loyalty to the government. Ali al-Omair, one of the most prominent members of the parliamentary Salafi Alliance, became the second MP brought into the cabinet, appointed to the plum position of oil minister. The Muslim Brotherhood, meanwhile, continues its stay

in the political wilderness, again shut out of top government posts. The Muslim Brotherhood once had members serve in the cabinet, but its relations with the ruling family have worsened under the current Emir. Led by a younger and more activist cadre, the Brotherhood's political arm, the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM), is now solidly in the opposition.<sup>36</sup>

Its own internal divisions and erratic decision-making have plagued the Opposition Coalition—which includes tribal populists, activist Salafis, new youth movements, and some leftists in addition to the Muslim Brotherhood—. The actions of the ruling family-led government, deploying both the carrot of state resources and the stick of legal prosecution, have encouraged defections. The government has also benefitted by a popular desire for stability and national unity as the more promising early years of the Arab Spring have fallen to violence and conflict in Egypt, Libya, and especially Syria. Still the clearly weakened Opposition Coalition has not yet collapsed. Its leader, the firebrand former parliamentarian, union official, and member of the powerful Mutair tribe, Musallem al-Barrak, has promised to announce a new political program on January 16, 2014. It is expected to include calls for constitutional amendments to support the goal of an elected government and full parliamentary system—a political path most Kuwaitis are not yet prepared to follow. The younger generation appears less tolerant of the old ways of doing business. They voice a desire for a new kind of politics: more open to innovation, more public-minded, and less beholden to private interests, or sectarian factionalism. Kuwait's current political formation—both the government and opposition—seem unable to deliver.<sup>37</sup>

## REFERENCES

1. Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany and Paul Noble and Paul Noble (1995). "Introduction: Theoretical Perspectives on Arab Liberalisation and Democratisation" in Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany and Paul Nobel (eds.) *Political Liberalisation and Democratisation in the Arab World*, Vol. II, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, pp.101-102
2. Abdallah Al-Shayehji (1988). *Democratization in Kuwait: The National Assembly as a Strategy for Survival*, Austin: University of Texas, p. 54.
3. J.E Peterson, *The Arab Gulf States, Steps Towards Political Participation* (Washington, DC: Prager, 1988), The Washington Papers No. 131, pp 35-41.
4. Teitelbaum, Joshua, (ed.), (2009). *Political Liberalisation in the Persian Gulf*, Hurst & Company, London, P.33
5. Jill Crystal (1990). *Kuwait: The Transformation of an Oil State*, Boulder: Westview, p.77.
6. *Diwaniya* is a place separate from the main house that is usually used by men for socializing. The general atmosphere of the diwaniya is like that of social clubs, cultural and literary forums and political salons. In other words, diwaniya has become one of the institutions of the civilized society that plays a prominent role in democratic and parliamentary life.
7. Ayubi (1995). *Over-stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*, p. 429.
8. Mary Ann Tetreault (2009). "Kuwait: Slouching Towards Democracy?" in Teitelbaum (ed.) (2009), *Political Liberalisation in the Persian Gulf*, p. 107.
9. Jill Crystal (1990). *Kuwait: The Transformation of an Oil State*, Boulder: Westview, p. 37
10. Mary Ann Tetreault (2009). "Kuwait: Slouching Towards Democracy?" in Teitelbaum (ed.) (2009), *Political Liberalisation in the Persian Gulf*, p.108
11. Brynen, Korany and Noble (1995). *Political Liberalization and Democracy in the Arab World*, p.108
12. The corporate organization and power of the Al Sabah and other "dynastic monarchies" are traced in Herb, Michael (1999), "Princes and parliaments in the Arab world".
13. Tetreault (2009). "Kuwait: Slouching Towards Democracy?", p. 113.
14. Benedict Anderson (1999). *Imagined Communities*, (rev. ed.), London: Verso; Ardents, Hannah (1959), *The Human Condition*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1959) cited in Teitelbaum (ed.) (2009), *Political Liberalisation in the Persian Gulf*, p. 125.
15. Ibid, p. 125.
16. Muhammad Rumaihi, *Beyond Oil: Unity and Development in the Gulf*, trans. James Dickins (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp 99.
17. Joseph A. Kéchichian (2004). "Democratization in Gulf Monarchies: A New Challenge to the GCC", *Middle East Policy*, Volume XI, No. 4, p.15.
18. Ehteshami, Steven Wright (2007). *Reform in the Middle East Oil Monarchies*, p. 923.
19. Fride (2006). "Political change in the Gulf states: beyond cosmetic reform?", *Democracy Backgrounders 05*, Madrid: Fride, pp. 5-7.

20. Ehteshami, Steven Wright (2007). *Reform in the Middle East Oil Monarchies*, p. 923.
21. S. Huntington (1984). "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" p 208. He cites Daniel Pipes (1983), *In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power*; New York: Basic Books.
22. Brynen, Korany and Noble and Paul Noble (1995). *Political Liberalization and Democracy in the Arab World*, pp.121-122
23. Ghanim Al-Najjar (2000). "The Challenges Facing Kuwaiti democracy", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 54, No. 2, p.247.
24. Ehteshami, Steven Wright (2007). *Reform in the Middle East Oil Monarchies*, p. 924
25. "Kuwait emir calls fresh elections", *BBC News*, Middle East, Wednesday, 19 March 2008. Accessed on 28 February 2011 [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7305262.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7305262.stm).
26. Citizenship categories are becoming less relevant since the National Assembly gave political rights to the sons of second-category (naturalized) Kuwaitis, who are eligible for all state benefits but are not permitted to vote or run for office. Naturalization is comparatively rare and the number of second-category Kuwaitis is small.
27. Poll snub for Kuwait women, *Gulf Daily News*, Monday, May 19, 2008. Accessed on 28 February 2011 <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=217873>.
28. "Kuwaitis elect new parliament", *Associated Press*, May 17, 2008.
29. Ulf Laessing, "Price debate dominates Kuwait election campaign", Reuters India, May 15, 2008. Accessed on March 1, 2011 <http://in.reuters.com/article/2008/05/15/kuwait-elections-inflation idINL0887648720080515>.
30. Michel Herb (2009). "Kuwait: The Obstacle of Parliamentary Politics" in Teitelbaum (ed.), *Political Liberalisation in the Persian Gulf*, Hurst & Company: London, p.145.
31. Mary Ann Tétreault (7 September, 2006). "Kuwait's annus mirabilis", *Middle East Research and Information project*, Accessed on 23 September 2010 <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero090706>.
32. Luciani (1990). In addition, a number of scholars have extended the remit of the classical rentier state theory to offer a theoretical foundation for the current status of rentier states and in particular Gulf States (Gray 2010)
33. [http://www.freedomhouse.org/images/File/fiw/FIW\\_2011\\_Booklet.pdf](http://www.freedomhouse.org/images/File/fiw/FIW_2011_Booklet.pdf).
34. Herb's (2013) database on Kuwaiti politics. Two governments were formed in 2006. The something took place in 2007. In 2008 there was only one government change, and since 2009 each year the country has had two governments introduced, with the exception of 2010. The changes tend to vary from minor amendments to the government's composition to a major reform.
35. Diwan, Kristin Smith, "New Government in Kuwait, but No New Politics", Atlantic Council, at <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/new-government-in-kuwait-but-no-new-politics> on 9 January, 2014.
36. Ibid
37. Ibid

\*\*\*\*\*