

Gulf Studies 8

Md Mizanur Rahman
Amr Al-Azm *Editors*

Social Change in the Gulf Region

Multidisciplinary Perspectives

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Preface

“Pearls, pirates, and petroleum,” this is how Sir Charles Belgrave summed up the story of Gulf region in his speech at the Royal Central Asian Society on June 28, 1967, upon winning the Lawrence of Arabia Medal. Since then, the region has undergone significant transformations in all spheres: social, cultural, economic, and political. Robert Barr’s assertions in his book, “The Unchanging East,” do not hold true today for places like the Arab Gulf States where the tides of change and development have been unparalleled in scope, depth, and speed. We at the Gulf Studies Center have felt the need to document the impact of these changes on the region. In order to understand the sweeping transformation of the region, we organized an annual conference on Social Change in the Gulf region in November 2020. Social change is generally understood through shifts in human interactions and relationships that reshape cultural and social institutions. Change occurs over time and often has profound and long-term consequences for society. This volume attempts to advance our knowledge of social change in the Gulf region by documenting the changes in the social, cultural, economic, and political spheres of the Gulf States. This book aims to take forward the discourse on the factors, directions, and magnitudes of social change in Gulf region from multidisciplinary perspectives.

This book contains thirty-eight chapters and is divided into four parts. We broadly cover social, linguistic and cultural, economic, and political spheres of the Gulf region. The volume endeavors to narrow the gaps in our understanding of social change in the Gulf region, providing opportunities for learning from best practices as well as offering practical solutions for policy interventions. This volume aims to be comprehensive, but it is by no means all encompassing. Areas of need for future scholarship and research will become clear through our readers’ comments, reviews, and assessments. We hope that this volume will be valuable to many inspired academics who will continue to carry this line of scholarly inquiry forward.

While several chapters in this work were presented at our annual conference, we also solicited papers through our personal connections and received huge responses from authors in the region and beyond. We are indebted to all authors for their timely response and cooperation in the publication of this book. We would like to acknowledge the support and guidance that we received from Dr. Mahjoob Zweiri,

Director of the Gulf Studies Program and Center, throughout the process of making this volume a reality. Thanks to Dr. Luciano Zaccara, Dr. Nikolay Kozhanov, and Dr. Farhan Mujahid Chak for their encouragement. We are thankful to Nourhan Abdel Bulble, Farah Anwar, and Noora Ali A. H. Abdulaziz for their cooperation and assistance in organizing the annual conference. We wish to express our thanks to Bilal Deep Mohmoud, Glnar Adnan Eskandar, Sahar El Sayed, Sharique Umar, and Codou Elisabeth Diouf for their assistance in proof-reading.

Doha, Qatar

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Chapter 1

Social Change and Transformation in the Gulf Region



Md Mizanur Rahman and Amr Al-Azm

Social change is an integral part of human social behavior and a phenomenon that is continuously happening around us. We constantly challenge existing social structures and institutions and transform them by contesting the cultural norms and values upon which they are founded. While such disruption may seem at the superficial level a negative form of disorder, in reality, it represents the way in which societies develop and evolve over time. Social change involves a cultural transformation often as part of an adaptive response to an ever-changing world around us.

While the Arab Gulf region may seem immune to this natural phenomenon, unchanged and deeply rooted in its ancient tribal customs and traditions, merging both past and present smoothly and with apparent ease. In fact, the region has been subject to countervailing forces resulting in a constant state of flux, social change, and transformation since the oil era of the 1970s. One question that may be asked here however, is whether the phenomenon of social change and transformation in the Arab Gulf region is evolutionary or revolutionary.

The first two decades of the twenty-first century have witnessed an accelerated pace in social change and transformation within the Arab states of the Gulf, impacting nearly every aspect of life in their societies. These social transformations are most obvious in areas of education, economic development and employment patterns, urbanization, and deep demographic shifts within these societies.

Since the early 2000s, there has been a transformative revolution in the education systems to promote greater diversity and growth. One major manifestation of this transformation has been the inclusion of women. Despite the deeply conservative attitudes toward female education, female enrollment in higher education has been increasing steadily and, in some sectors, outnumbering males. Recent trends indicate

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that female education and employment are improving the social status of women within the family and facilitating the redefining of gender relations across the Gulf states. These changes are heralding significant social transformations in the region where women are now considered active members in their communities, gradually breaking the stereotype that Gulf societies are gender-biased.

One way in which the effects of this educational revolution have made themselves felt is in the employment sector. In response to the increase in the number of higher education graduates for instance, employment patterns in the Gulf have evolved and shifted in the last two decades, resulting in both men and women joining public and private sector employment. The economic advantages of gender diversity in the workforce are encouraging women to enter the work force in greater numbers across the region. Formal employment in government and the private sectors replaced more traditional occupations and provides a much higher income for nationals, enabling people to make personal decisions more independently than ever before (Ghabra, 1997). Furthermore, education and experience are now prerequisites for access to these better paid government jobs. As a result, governments and employers focused on and invested in education, to improve the quality of their workforce (both men and women) (Peterson, 2014).

At the same time, social change causes transformations also in demographic trends too: Dentice (2018) notes that over the next decade, population dynamics will play an important role in determining labor and immigration policies, economic growth, market liberalization, the role of women and youth and their inclusion in the workforce.

The Gulf States have witnessed dramatic population growth mainly due to significant expatriate immigration as well as natural increase because of reduced mortality rate brought about by marked improvement and investment in health care and welfare. The growth of the expatriate population has led to wide-ranging social changes in Gulf societies. Migration plays a key role in population size and composition, as well as economic development and growth in these states. In turn, these shifts population dynamics are raising important questions related to labor market sustainability and migration control, permanent residency and citizenship, and culture and identity.

This rapid growth in population, and the stress it places on the current economic system in most Gulf States is clearly manifested when one examines the employment ratio between young people (nationals from these states) and the millions of people who migrated to the region. There is no doubt that these demographic pressures add to the challenges, as increasing numbers of young people (nationals) enter the job market looking for career opportunities that meet their financial aspirations. While this in the past may not have been a significant issue, but in an era of low oil prices, and energy revenues, the effects of this demographic shift have become more problematic. The revenues generated through oil and gas sales are no longer sufficient to sustain the current socioeconomic model at the basis of which is a social contract that expects citizens to support their ruling elites and forgo political participation in return for a generous welfare state that provides economic privileges (Dentice, 2018).

The process of urbanization which has accelerated exponentially since 2000 has also had a major and irreversible impact on Gulf society. The construction of

entire new cities and neighborhoods some of which on newly reclaimed land (from the sea), hosting ultra-modern skyscrapers made of steel and glass both alien and ill-suited to the arid and superhot desert climate, have disturbed traditional social patterns. As more and more families and clans disperse throughout these new cities, clear shifts in traditional family residential patterns are emerging, leading to new forms of relationships. Both men and women now form close relationships with their peers and fellow workers, and other affiliations that are independent of traditional family and tribal kinship networks, or community connections. The impersonal nature of the city is further emphasized by the large numbers of expatriates from a wide range of countries, so that nationals now find themselves in the minority in their own countries in (Peterson, 2014).

Another important aspect of social change in Gulf society has come through technology—as in satellite television and the Internet—both have transformed Gulf societies by dramatically opening them up to the wider world and exposing them to different cultural and political narratives. They provide the capability for communication beyond mere face to face contact and emphasizes the process of time–space compression. Social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, have since emerged as a powerful driver of social transformations in the Gulf too with the number of users rising exponentially since 2010 by several hundred percent. The use of social media is changing the way people discuss, post, and deliver their messages to their communities and communicate with ruling elites. There is a consensus that this new media presents a virtual yet vibrant space for social empowerment in the region.

In the face of this overwhelming evidence for social change in the region, Abdulla (2011) points out that the Gulf States “have experienced more changes in the past fifty years than in their 500 years of recorded history. These states are pregnant with all types of changes, some deep-rooted and structural and some superficial and cosmetic” (p. 114). This change has taken place on a massive scale and unprecedented speed, sweeping away the older traditional conservative way of life and replacing it with one that is modern, urban, and prosperous.

Yet, Peterson, Al Ghabra, Abdulla, and others argue that there are also strong counterforces of continuity with Gulf societies that resist social change and transformation. They have put forward the notion that Gulf States and their societies, while open to economic development have been much more resistant and have shown deep resilience to the inevitable forces of social change and modernization. This resilience or “social continuity” as Peterson calls it, has been maintained, through inherent social conservatism, backed by religious (Islam), tribal and other sociocultural identities, and reinforced by the state. It can be argued as well that tribalism and the enduring emphasis on family and clan is another compelling force for continuity too. This has been held together by the gradual and incremental pace of economic change and, especially, by the traditionalist and patriarchal political order (Peterson, 2014).

In part, this resistance to change or “social continuity” due to an intentional strategy by states and their ruling elites. According to Al-Tarrah (2007) “Gulf states use their wealth to buy political loyalties through public spending, including a generous subsidy system. This non-economic utilization of resources socialized

youth to believe that work has no inherent value and production is irrelevant because salaries are paid in the bureaucracy without regard to work” (p. 123). As a result, citizens view their income from the state as their right, by way of their share in the oil revenues. This sense of entitlement, is a powerful inhibitor for the majority of people to seek change in the current situation. In fact, were they to attempt to bring pressure on the state to alter the existing status quo, they might jeopardize these benefits altogether.

Furthermore, from this point of view, Gulf societies have been overwhelmed by the large numbers of expatriates and the inescapable and at times pervasive draw of Western, influence. This in turn has produced a backlash and a countermovement towards an authentically purer Gulf Arab social identity rooted in a tribal past. Social interaction between nationals and expatriates are now increasingly discouraged outside the workplace, while restrictions on national dress, economic benefits, and rights of residence have all been enforced on expatriates at various times. Expatriates are now increasingly seen as threats to both the purity (“cultural integrity”) and the security of Gulf society as a whole. This is becoming increasingly noticeable in efforts by various states to make the issue of expatriates and pervasive foreign/Western influence a matter national security (Peterson, 2014).

A different approach to interpreting the phenomenon of tribalism and modernizing social change is taken by Miriam Cooke. She views adherence or return to tribal identity not as backlash against Westernization or a “social continuity movement”, as part of a resistance to change; rather, as an agent of social change and transformation. Cooke states that the tribal (identity) as manifested in the Arab Gulf today is essential to the modern and a principal element in the Gulf’s perceived sense of modernity. Unlike in the middle of the twentieth when it (the tribal) was considered it an impediment to modernization, tribal identity is making a comeback today offering the opportunity for racial privilege, social status, and exclusive entitlement to a share in national profits (Cooke, 2014).

In the twenty-first century, there is the emergence of a national brand that merges both tribal and modern identities and for which Miriam Cooke coined the phrase “Tribal Modern”. This goes against the popular stereotype and media hype of a highly stigmatized, region that is usually thought of as either tribal or modern; in other words, it is either backward tribal with a thin, modern veneer or a failed modern because of its tribal residue (Cooke, 2014).

According to Cooke (2014), “to begin to understand the culture of the Gulf and to appreciate what is new and different in it, we must see how the modern and the tribal, the high-rises and the tribal regalia, converge, each reinforcing the other” (p. 11). A new space where the hypermodern, the tribal, and the national meet and coalesce, with ruling the elites comfortably occupying it.

Through the concept of the Tribal Modern brand, the potential for dynamic interaction is unleashed. It allows for the contradictory state of social change and stability, transformation and preservation, Western modernization and, tribal tradition to paradoxically occupy the same space. The brand offers entitlements and advantages to both individuals and nations but also differentiates them. Internally, it distinguishes nationals from the many foreigners sharing their cities. Externally, it allows these

new nation to place their distinctive mark on world politics. The brand effectively addresses/negates the issue of resistance to change forcing “social continuity” as framed by Peterson and others to shape a new way to think of the modern in cultural terms where the tribal becomes a modernizing force.

In conclusion, contrary to popular notions that social change in the Gulf and its acceleration over the course of the Twenty-First Century, is the product of something novel or groundbreaking, it is due to the impact of a natural course of modernization. This radical social transformation is simply a case of Gulf Arabs asserting their wills in a modern world that does neither reject nor forget their rooted, ancient, and tribal identities. This does not somehow make their emergence into a global scene which is transnational, modern, and cosmopolitan paradoxical or hypocritical. It is their own natural course for creating their national identity which blends several aspects of their histories and culture along with the contemporary future of their nation. There is no one correct or natural path to modernization, and to assume so, would be to fall into an essentialist trap that is both inaccurate and limiting. As history has shown, adaptation and progress are processes that constantly navigate the twisting road of the romance of the traditional and the excitement of the new.

1.1 The Study of Social Change in the Arabian Gulf Region

There are several earlier attempts to document the social change in the Middle East region as a whole since the early 1960s (Antoun & Harik, 1972; Belgrave, 1968; Duckworth, 1981; Halpern, 1963; Heard-Bey, 1972; Kergan, 1975; Monroe, 1975; Polk, 1967). For instance, Manfred Halpern’s book, “The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa”, is probably one of the most comprehensive works of outstanding merit that documented the political and social forces underlying developments in the Middle East before the surge of oil price in early 1970s (Halpern, 1963). Halpern’s administrative experience enabled him to emphasize the need for policy-oriented research. From an academic point of view, the book is still relevant and regarded as authoritative masterpiece on the studies of the Middle East and North Africa Studies. We find parallel policy orientated research work in the same decade. For instance, William R. Polk presents a conceptual scheme for the analysis of economic and social change in the Middle East in the late 1960s (Polk, 1967). Polk offers a political analysis of social change in order to improve reporting of the events and to bridge the gap between theory, reporting, and formulation of policy.

Sir Charles Belgrave, a British citizen and an advisor to the rulers of Bahrain from 1926 until 1957, delivered a powerful address at the Royal Central Asian Society on June 28, 1967. In this address, Belgrave discussed the Gulf region—past and present—and summarized the story of the Gulf in three words: pearls, pirates, and petroleum (Belgrave, 1968, p. 28). While the Gulf remained famous for pearls and piracy for many centuries, the exploration of petroleum and oil-price hike in early 1970s changed the region dramatically over time. The Gulf has been able to transform itself at a pace unprecedented in human history. We notice that oil as a driving force

for change is reported prominently in the early works of Frauke Heard-Bey (1972), J. L. Kergan (1975), H. F. Duckworth (1981), and Robert E. Looney (1990).

Since the 1990s, we can observe a more systematic study of the scope and depth of impact of rapid development on various aspects of the societies in Arab Gulf and beyond, for instance, gender and social change (Moghadam, 1993); politics of change (Satloff, 1992), economic change and population and political stability (Gause, 1997), development and change (Touraine, 1998), Social transformations of the twentieth century (Abdelkarim, 1999), War, Institutions and social change (Heydemann, 2000), Gulf in the 20th Century (Heard-Bey, 2002), gender, religion and change (Flaskerud & Okkenhaug, 2005), political change (Tetreault et al., 2011), government and politics (Ismael & Ismael, 2011), Islam and political reform (Alshamsi, 2012), politics, economics and global order (Held & Ulrichsen, 2013), political economy, war and revolution (Ehteshami, 2013), change and development (John & Howard, 2013), higher education (Tuma, 2014), Economic and political change in the Middle East (Badry & Willoughby, 2015), political and socio-economic change (Bahramitash & Esfahani, 2016), new regional order (Bazoobandi, 2019), the 2017 Gulf crisis (Zweiri & Qawasmi, 2021), linguistic identities (Hopkyns & Zoghbor, 2022). This volume has benefited from these earlier works, and, in many ways, our approach and interests are shaped by these volumes as well as many other research publications.

1.2 Structure of the Volume

Considering the scope of the existing literature and the existing void in addressing a topic like social change in a dynamic region like the Gulf society, we have divided this volume thematically into four parts: Part I Social Sphere, Part II Cultural Sphere, Part III Economic Sphere, and finally Part IV Political Sphere. The geographical scope of the book encompasses research on the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and other countries in the region. Thus, this volume attempts to advance the body of knowledge about the factors, directions, and magnitudes of social change in the Gulf society from a multidisciplinary perspective. We offer a brief overview of the four broad divisions by delineating individual chapters and their key arguments and findings in the remainder of this chapter.

Part I includes fourteen chapters that address change in the social sphere. This part covers a wide range of topics such as social media, social identity, social justice, online education, higher education and research, women empowerment, marriage, and family, and finally migration and diaspora. Chapter 2, “Social Media in the GCC Countries—Facilitator or Curse for Generation ‘Z’?” by Ciprian Priporae-Șerbănescu and Ecaterina Mațoi examines the directions of the social change in the GCC, by analyzing how traditional interactions between generations and pattern evolution are shaped by social media. The chapter states that particular generations may be seduced by the illusion and political elites might find it highly challenging in ensuring the stability and stimulating a solid societal identity in an increasingly complex world. In

line with the impact of social media, Chapter 3, “Identity and Globalization: Tribal Identity in the Age of Social Media” by Abdulla Al-Etaibi also deals with the use of social media for political purposes by both governments and individuals since the Arab Spring. The author in this chapter highlights the use and effects of social media on tribes for mobilizing tribal kinship networks.

After social media and identity, our next chapter addresses claim over “Chai Karak”, Emirati identity, Tujjar, and sociopolitical influence. Chapter 4, “Chai Karak: The Politics of Tea and the Coloniality of Appropriation in the UAE” by Abdulla Moaswes offers an impressive analysis of the effects of Emirati claims of ownership over chai karak in terms of its political and socioeconomic impact. Moaswes states that the discourse of ownership produced today around chai karak comes close to those produced as a result of colonial legacy. Chapter 5, “Tujjar in the Gulf: Changes in Socio-Political Influence”, by Lakshmi Venugopal Menon examines merchant-ruler relations and its transnational dynamism. This research describes the condition and the activities of the merchant classes in the states of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE during the pre-oil, interwar crisis, and post-oil periods. The chapter asserts that the Western-European city concept is devoid of an appreciation of the Arab Gulf’s transnational dimension and the region’s structural demand for foreigners.

The study of social justice is an evolving area of research in the global South and this volume offers two chapters on social justice in the Gulf. Chapter 6, “Social Justice in the Gulf States: A Case in Qatar”, by Muhammad Mustafizur Rahaman looks into social justice and its role in addressing the problems of inequality. Focusing on Qatar’s success in ensuring migrants’ rights and healthcare provisions, the chapter claims that robust judicial process, consolidation of social development institutions, and client-focused health policy and services have been instrumental in boosting social justice in Qatar. Chapter 7, “Social Justice Under COVID-19: A Comparative Study of Health and Socioeconomic Policy Responses in the Arab Mashreq and the Arab Gulf”, by Ahmed Aref deals with the patterns of health and socioeconomic policy responses in the two Arab regions from a social justice perspective. The chapter offers insight into the structural factors that shape different typologies of policy response in both regions.

The next two chapters discuss education, research, and online teaching during the pandemic. Chapter 8, “Graduate Research Experience in the Arab Gulf: The Case in Qatar”, by Mary Newsome addresses growth in the higher education sector in the Arab Gulf States with a particular emphasis on graduate education and the graduate research experience in Qatar. Mary identifies and discusses key barriers to a successful graduate research experience and stresses the need to focus more on graduate students thriving rather than just focusing on graduate research output. Chapter 9, “Transition to Online Teaching Under COVID-19: The Case Study of UAE University”, by Aizhan Shomotova and Tatiana Karabchuk examines the role of universities and government in supporting the transition to online teaching. The chapter describes the challenges and reflections of academic staff from the University of UAE on this transition to online teaching. The study also finds an improved research efficiency, irrespective of gender during the pandemic.

The status of women and family relations constitute an important area of research for the Gulf region. We offer two chapters on this topic. Chapter 10, “Women’s Status in the Process of Socio-Political Development in Iran”, by Maliheh Mousanejad addresses women’s participation in the sociopolitical development of Iranian society during the last four decades. The study concludes that the status of Iranian women in their society has increased over time. However, their participation at higher organizational levels continues to face social, political, and cultural impediments. Chapter 11, “Reasons for Divorce in Kuwait: An Application of the Likelihood of Divorce Inventory (LDI)”, Fahad Alnaser and Hussain M. Al-Fadhli use the likelihood of divorce inventory to examine married university students’ assessment of reasons for divorce in Kuwait. The study identifies infidelity, spousal abuse, and drug/alcohol abuse being among the most prominently reported reasons for divorce.

The Gulf States now account for the world’s largest flow of South–South migration, and indeed by a large margin. The growth of the non-national population has inevitably brought about wide-ranging social changes in Gulf societies. Migration holds the key to population size and composition, as well as economic growth and the future of the Gulf countries. We dedicate four chapters to the understanding of the dynamics of migration and diaspora. Chapter 12, “The Transformation-Migration Nexus in the United Arab Emirates: A Historical Analysis”, by Gennaro Errichiello provides a historical evolution of migration in the UAE. Errichiello argues that migration is neither a cause nor a consequence of social transformation but is part of the transformation processes. The chapter shows that migration in the UAE can be better understood by linking local-level experience of migration with other socio-spatial levels in the increasingly interconnected world. Chapter 13, “From ‘Brain Drain’ to ‘Capital Gain’: Indian Skilled Migration to the UAE”, by Omar Bortolazzi examines the magnitude of emigration of India’s high-skill population to the United Arab Emirates. The chapter assesses the role played by remittances, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and knowledge and technology transfers as key economic resources toward the development of the national economy and the potential reversal of the impact of “brain drain”. Chapter 14, “Migrant Network and Credit: Dynamics of Punjabi Migration to the Gulf Countries”, by Atinder Pal Kaur and Ruchi Singh examines the role of migrant networks in facilitating Punjabi migration to Gulf countries, and the role of credit and debt to cover the cost of migration. The chapter suggests that migrant networks offer employment opportunities and various types of debt are used to cover migration costs. Finally, Chapter 15, “The Choice for the ‘Zendegie’: The Ethnography of the Migration of Iranian Young Generation”, Gi Yeon Koo examines changes in Iranian diaspora. The chapter revisits the reasons for migration with a focus on Iranian young immigrants. The paper suggests that Iranian youth emigrate overseas for “air to breathe, basic living, and COVID-19 vaccination for survival”—it is their choice for a “normal life”.

Part II includes seven chapters that addresses the changes in the cultural domain with a focus on cultural heritage, language and communication, reverse orientalism, artistic movements, vocabulary change, and literary evolution. Chapter 16, “The Threat to Cultural Heritage in Times of Conflict and Its Dynamic Relationship with Gulf Society” Amr Al-Azm addresses the importance of preserving cultural heritage

by Gulf societies from the growing threat of looting and trafficking. The chapter seeks to address questions pertaining to the evolving relationship of Gulf States and societies to cultural heritage (museums, private collections, etc.), the extent of trafficking that occurs in the region and changing attitudes to this practice. Chapter 17, “Challenges of Communication and Identity in the Gulf: Insights from Qatar and the UAE”, by Rizwan Ahmad argues that while the presence of foreign languages does facilitate communication in Qatar and the UAE, it has also heightened a fear of loss of Arabic and Arab identity among the local population. Rizwan demonstrates how the two governments struggle to balance the needs of communication and identity. On the question of identity, geography, and culture, the next chapter investigates the changes with an example of French Muslims’ embrace of Salafism and the globalization of beliefs, symbols, and identifies. Chapter 18, “Reverse Orientalism? French Salafis’ Fascination with Saudi Arabia”, by Mohamed Ali Adraoui demonstrates the influence of some forms of Islam originating in the Gulf within French society that can be interpreted as the result of a desire to identify with a non-French way of being a Muslim. By analyzing the kind of relations between certain French Muslims and a country such as Saudi Arabia, the chapter elaborates on the fascination with Salafism and the rejection of their home country’s values. More importantly, the chapter shows that French Salafi Orientalist type represents an original way of looking and understanding “the Islamic East” today.

The next two chapters discuss the changes in relation to art and identity in the contact zone. Chapter 19, “Art in the Contact Zone in the UAE and Qatar: Trans-Regional Cultural Policy and Rise of New Artistic Movements”, by Mohammad Raza Moridi argues that Dubai and Doha strive to be known as transcultural places, as what Mary Louise Pratt calls “contact zone”. This chapter shows how trans-regional cultural policies have made Dubai and Doha welcome marginal arts, hybrid arts, and multicultural arts. More importantly, Mohammad discusses the role of Iranian and Arab artists in shaping this contact. Chapter 20, “The Gulf as a Global Contact Zone: Chronotopic Identities and Linguistic Landscapes”, by Letizia Lombezzì uses the concept of chronotope to analyze the Gulf context and the richness of its repertoires, intended as language, cultures, activities, identities. The chapter elaborates on the phenomenon of superdiversity and discusses the reasons that led to such a reality.

The last two chapters deal with changes in vocabulary in multilingual societies and literary evolution. Chapter 21, “Vocabulary Changes in the Arab, Turk, and Persian Bilingual Societies in Northeastern Iran”, by Pooneh Mostafavi, Faryar Akhlaghi, and Hiwa Asadpour, examines the borrowability of basic vocabularies. This includes kinship terms, body parts, natural and weather terms in nine bilingual villages in Northeastern Iran. The results show deep basic lexical changes and speech communities. Chapter 22, “Shellyseer: A Literary Evolution”, by Fathieh Hussam Saber uses comparative literature and literary theory and criticism in order to dig deep into how drama evolves in the globalized world. Fathieh traces drama back to its oldest documented sources to show how it evolved throughout history. This chapter offers deeper knowledge of the Middle Eastern drama, the importance and strength of political satire, and how strong the mutual influence of Eastern and Western literature have on each other.

Part III includes ten chapters that deal with change in the economic sphere and covers the topics such as economic diversification, the 2017 Gulf crisis and economic resilience, development models, innovation and endogenous growth, green supply chains, sustainability and environmental challenges, unemployment, and finally foreign power and development in the region. The first four chapters explain the nature and extent of economic diversification and economic development models in the Gulf. For example, Chapter 23, “Working for God (and Country): Religious Education and Economic Diversification in the United Arab Emirates”, by Sharif Ibrahim El Shishtawy Hassan and Zeynep Ozgen explores how the Emirati state cultivates certain values among its citizens to support its goal of economic diversification. The chapter states that the UAE has reformed its national education curriculum in an effort to equip Emirati youth with both the requisite skillset for transitioning to a knowledge economy and the mindset necessary to accommodate such a transition. Chapter 24, “Innovation, Technology Transfer and Endogenous Growth in the GCC Countries”, by Erhan Akkas and Suleyman Orhun Altiparmak examines the nature of economic diversification in the GCC states by analyzing innovation performance indices, economic freedom indices, and doing business indicators. The chapter stresses the need for developing technology and innovation-based private sectors.

There are several attempts to shift the reliance of Gulf States from an oil-based economy to new economic miracle. For instance, Chapter 25, “The New Arab Gulf: Evaluating the Success of Economic Diversification in the UAE”, by Saima Shadab refers to the region as a new Arab Gulf in terms of its economic achievement. Saima argues that some GCC countries have been able to reduce their reliance on oil and diversify their economy at an astonishing pace. Saima takes the UAE as a case study for this chapter. She reports that the UAE serves as a successful model of economic diversification for the rest of the GCC countries. Chapter 26, “Economic Development Models of Doha and Dubai: A Comparative Analysis”, by Al Dana Al Thani describes the development of two cities by highlighting the imperatives of the economic, political, and social aspects of development strategies. The chapter states that Doha and Dubai adopted different development strategies and their economic growth resulted from different economic, political, and social considerations.

The next four chapters address various economic challenges that the Arab Gulf countries have encountered and elaborates on the progress the region has made over time. Chapter 27, “The 2017 Gulf Crisis: Changes in Qatar’s Economic Landscape”, by Sharique Umar and Salem Ghurab investigates the changes that took place in Qatar’s economic landscape during and after the 2017 Gulf crisis. The chapter asserts that Qatar has shown remarkable resilience during the crisis and has crafted an economic policy that relies more on domestic production and international trade diversification. Chapter 28, “Green Supply Chains: A Comparative Efficiency Analysis in the Gulf and Beyond”, by Alexander Wollenberg, J. G. O. C. Lazarini, J. J. C. Lazarini, L. F. O. Parra, A. S. Kakade addresses the development of sustainable supply in three regions from a comparative perspective. The research shows the high logistics performance but significant divergence in green logistics performance among GCC countries. Chapter 29, “Greening the Dessert: Sustainability

Challenges and Environmental Initiatives in the GCC States”, by Meredian Alam and Izni Azrein Noor Azalie explores various sustainability initiatives for environmental conservation in the GCC states. The chapter discusses the national efforts of each of the GCC states to prevent and control hazards and to reduce the effects of environmental challenges. Chapter 30, “Unemployment Challenge and Labor Market Participation of Arab Gulf Youth: A Case Study of the UAE”, by Anita Poplavskaya, Tatiana Karabchuk, and Aizhan Shomotova examines the unemployment challenge for Emirati youth and other GCC states from a comparative perspective. The chapter elaborates on the job search experiences of Emirati youth from a gender perspective.

The remaining three chapters demonstrate how engagement of China and Japan in the region has facilitated economic transitions. Chapter 31, “Chinese Investments in the Special Economic Zones in the Gulf Region: New Structural Economics Perspective”, by Luyang Zhou explains how Chinese investments in the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) play a role in the development of the Gulf region. The chapter presents three cases of development in the SEZs in the Gulf region that received Chinese investments: China-Oman Industrial Park in Duqm, the petrochemical and chemical fiber integrated project in Saudi Arabia’s Jazan City for Primary and Downstream Industries, and the China-UAE Industrial Capacity Cooperation Demonstration Zone. Chapter 32, “China in the Middle East: Foreign Direct Investment, Economic Transformation, and Regional Development”, by Guanlie Lim and Mustafa Yağcı shows the manner in which Chinese investment has taken shape in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and the development implications in the region. Finally, Chapter 33, “Japan and the Gulf States: Friendship Prospects Under the FOIP Initiative”, by Habib AlBadawi introduces the idea of Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) Strategy, by exploring the future possibilities of cooperation, partnership, and the alliance between Japan and the Arab world. The paper states that the ties between the Arab Gulf States and Japan have been mainly economic including significant two-way investment and trade.

Finally, Part IV casts light on change in the political sphere. This part includes six chapters and covers several issues such as the majlis, mediation, women’s political emancipation, the Yemen war, and China’s vaccination diplomacy in the region. Chapter 34, “Khaleeji Modernities: Private Spaces, British Imperialism and the Centralization of the Qatari Peninsula”, by Javier Guirado Alonso discusses the role of majlis as a key political and social mechanism with reference to Qatar. Chapter 35, “Kuwait’s Mediation in the Gulf Crisis: Dynamics of Kuwait’s Foreign Policy Approaches”, by Huzeyfe Altıok explores Kuwaiti mediation in the 2017 Gulf crisis and provides an overview of the Kuwaiti mediation efforts in the Gulf crisis and deconstructs the role of small states in international relations. Chapter 36, “Political Power and Material Identity: Saudi Women in Real and Virtual Societies”, by Reem Ali Al Derham elaborates on the economic and social rights granted to Saudi women in the Saudi Vision 2030, as well as on the Saudi leadership’s decisions related to Saudi women. Chapter 37, “Saudi Women Activism Through Media”, by Priyanka Mittal explores the role of media platforms for the promotion of rights-based activism of women in Saudi Arabia. The chapter states that the use of social media platforms

by Saudi women has promoted activism for rights, greater social freedom, and more inclusion.

Chapter 38, “Yemen, the Wound That Still Bleeds in the Gulf and Beyond”, by Joel Foyth examines the causes of the conflict and reasons for the continuation of the Yemeni civil war. The chapter argues that the absence of real change and the complexity of Yemeni society undermined the process, leading to civil conflict. The study suggests that the war turned eventually into a brutal conflict, which has made it one of the century’s worst humanitarian crises. Chapter 39, “China’s COVID-19 Vaccine Diplomacy to the Gulf and Beyond: Efforts and Challenges”, by Wang Jin shows that the COVID-19 vaccine has become an important diplomatic tool to expand China’s influence in the Middle East. The chapter reports efforts and challenges in using vaccine as an international relations tool.

The long-term goal in putting this volume together has been to reflect on the sweeping social change in Gulf societies and to provide an assessment of its social, linguistic and cultural, economic, and political aspects. This volume aims to be comprehensive but is by no means all encompassing. Our goal is to offer the reader a holistic understanding of the phenomenon of social change in the region that cannot be grasped by adopting any one discipline or perspective alone. We hope that this volume will inspire academics in the region and beyond to carry this line of inquiry forward.

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Part I
Social Sphere

Chapter 2

Social Media in the GCC Countries—Facilitator or Curse for Generation “Z”?



Ciprian Pripoae-Șerbănescu and Ecaterina Mațoi

Abstract The aim of this paper is to explore the directions of the social change in some of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member countries, by analyzing how traditional interactions between generations and pattern evolution are modeled by influences exercised through the use of internet, and in particular of social media. We will delve on the impact of internet technology and social media on (Arab) self, but also on human connectivity. Social media has a tremendous impact on how people share ideas and visions, but also on how they define and represent themselves and the social environment. Detached from traditional institutions, more members of Arab societies may be seduced by the illusion of an ever evolving and confident identity, a deception/dream generously offered by the social media. As such, the role of ruling political elites might be highly challenging, not only in ensuring the stability of their societies, but also in stimulating a solid societal identity in an increasingly unpredictable and complex international environment.

Keywords GCC countries · Generation Z · Social media · Social change · Identities · Security

2.1 Introduction

If there is any cultural region on the face of the earth which possesses an articulate spirit, it is the Arab Peninsula and its natural extension from the Hadramawt to the Euphrates Valley. By an articulate spirit I mean the cultural entirety of the universal, comprehensive view of things which accumulates over the centuries, to control both visibly and invisibly the conduct and aspirations of the inhabitants.¹

¹ Naqīb (1990, p. xix).

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With the advance of technology-mediated communication, and especially with new media, the role of online communication in shaping the public sphere, culture, and political decisions has become more visible and impossible to ignore. From political engagement to emotional expression, the roles of online communication have been carefully scrutinized in order to better understand how this phenomenon influences social life and politics.

The rapid transformation of the Arab world is ongoing and for any decision-maker, a proper understanding of the impact of online communication and virtual communities on real-life issues is essential. As the internet is a unique facilitator for self-expression, it is of special interest to understand how this web technology influences the “deeper structures” of Arab society. We are therefore fascinated by the potential impact of internet-based communication on the beliefs system that composes the bedrock of any culture.

Less visible than other constituents of culture, social beliefs are associated, mainly in the psychodynamic literature, with the social unconscious, the realm of the unconscious motives that drive groups or communities. As we give credit mostly to the cognitive dimension of information space, with this paper we will delve into the impact of various expressions of modernity on the Arab social unconscious. More accurately, we will try to examine whether its social binding function has been irreversibly altered by online communications, whether the “Z” generation² is more vulnerable to this phenomenon.

Although, specialists support the hypothesis that the Middle Eastern societies were among the first in the world to undertake the shift from pre-urban to partially urban, citing evidence found in the earliest centers of urban civilization such as Nineveh, Uruk, Lagash, Ur, or Eridu in present-day Iraq,³ or Dilmun civilization in the Persian Gulf⁴ region, there are other researchers who mention that in the years when the West was experiencing the hippie movement/subculture, many citizens of the Gulf area, were still living in the desert and had little contact with the outside world.⁵ Furthermore, the idea that only with two oil booms from 1973 to 1975, and 1979 to 1980,⁶ lifestyle in the Gulf region began to change is stressed; starting with living in modern homes and receiving financial support from the state, widespread access to radio and television, as well as foreign films have subjected these populations to “new ideas and ways of life, especially in terms of gender roles, sexuality and family relationships”,⁷ a process which is still ongoing today, but one accelerated by what we now generally call *social media*. Moreover, literature mentions that the widespread of different forms of communication, fast urbanization, literacy, and other sources of change that have begun in the Gulf region during the second part of the twentieth

² Author’s note: The term will be explained in another chapter of this paper.

³ Hugh and Roberts (2016, p. 22).

⁴ Author’s note: throughout the paper, we will use the terms: the Persian Gulf, the Gulf, interchangeably.

⁵ Byman and Green (1999, p. 83).

⁶ Thee (2012, pp. 90–106).

⁷ Byman and Green (1999, p. 83).

century, has disrupted the rhythms of daily life and social hierarchies in a traditional society.

As we observe during the current COVID-19 pandemic, online communication, the social networks enable the instantiation of online communities, virtual “tribes” with different, often opposing views, beliefs, and values. For decision-makers, these digital rifts are potential massagers of future evolutions within their societies as they express societal inequalities along older dividing lines, as gender, race, ethnicity, or age. Today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, when social networks have become the main channel of information for the “Z” generation, we wonder, not rhetorically, what would have Hobsbawm added to the above statement, especially related to potential effects produced at society level in the Gulf, taking into account particularities of the riparian states’ societies, and strategical relevance of this gulf for the great and regional powers? Keeping in mind the above question, main objective of the paper is to identify potential effects on Gulf societies, resulting from the influence exerted by the development of technology/internet in general and social media in particular on *Generation Z*, and implicitly on the society taking into account a tendency of this space to copy certain behavioral models from the West.

2.2 The Persian Gulf—A Gulf of the World?

The Persian Gulf, often mentioned in Western and Arab literature as the Arab Gulf, or the Gulf, is an important transport route since ancient times and, therefore, a name and a region contested by Arabs, Persians, Turks, Portuguese, British, and in the contemporary era by Americans, who competed in the more or less conventional fight for control of the waters from this gulf. Before oil and gas resources were discovered at the beginning of twentieth century, people in the area earned their living from fishing, pearl trading, commerce, and even piracy,⁸ as the Nations Online Project further mentions.⁹ Industrial production of oil in the Persian Gulf region began around mid-twentieth century, while today, in the riparian states of the Gulf region a significant percentage of the world’s oil reserves can be found, along with relevant/consistent production capacity, as well as two states from top three worldwide in terms of global gas reserves.¹⁰

⁸ Author’s note: Arabic literature mentions that pirates in the Gulf did not pose such a strong threat as it was presented by the Western narrative. On the contrary, it says that the repetitive mention of pirates in the region was more a pretext than a reality, therefore, a reason for the foreign intervention and the protection of the interests of the powers of those times. For more details, see Naqīb (1990).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ “Strait of Hormuz—Oil in the Persian Gulf.” Robert Strauss Center for International Security and Law, 8 July 2020, www.strausscenter.org/strait-of-hormuz-oil-in-the-persian-gulf/. Accessed 13 October 2020.

2.2.1 *Gulf's Historical Societies*

The inhabitants of the Gulf area, are called Khalijis^{11,12} a name derived from the term Gulf (Khalij), historically the descendants of *Ichthyophagi*—“fish-eaters”,¹³ located geographically in the northwestern part of the Indian Ocean, including the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, southern Iran and India, as described by Greek and Latin writers.¹⁴ Due to the proximity of water, they had a similar lifestyle, but not a common identity, except for a few moments in different historical periods, when both sides of the Gulf had had the same leader.

For thousands of years, the Gulf area has been a region characterized by the constant exchange of people, trade and religious movements, and until the discovery of oil, the peoples of the region shared a maritime culture based mainly on pearls, fishing, and long-distance trade. Therefore, it can be asserted that the Persian Gulf has always been a distinct region compared to other forms of political or administrative organization in West Asian area, precisely due to connections to historical harbors that were relevant to the naval powers of the time and access to the Indian Ocean.¹⁵ In terms of local populations in the Gulf area, a social mix of several ethnic groups, such as Arabs, Persians, Indians, Baluchis, Africans, and other smaller ethnic groups can be found.¹⁶

In the Gulf countries, predominant Islamic culture, known as conservative has long had separate social practices for men and women.¹⁷ As the region modernized, women gained many rights and privileges, including the right to hold political office, which once belonged exclusively to men. In terms of societal structure, tribal relations have long played an important role in the region, today as well, since the tribe is important in political decisions.¹⁸ Political participation in the area, although relatively limited, has increased to some extent, but it cannot be compared to that in the West. From the Gulf States referenced above, present research will focus mainly on Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates societies—due to the fact that they have distinct histories, but at the same time share many fundamental geographical, political, and societal similarities¹⁹—and less on Saudi Arabia and Oman.

¹¹ Potter (2009, p. 4).

¹² According to W. O. Beeman, “Khaliji, from the word for Gulf, khalij, *which has the virtue of working* in Arabic, Persian, and South Asian languages, and is very expressive”. For more on the subject, see: Beeman (2009).

¹³ Potter (2009, p. 4).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁷ Etheredge (2011, pp. 33–34).

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 33–34.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 32.

2.2.1.1 Bahrain

Also known as the “Pearl of the Persian Gulf”, Bahrain is the smallest and most densely populated Arab state from GCC, with a land area of only 670 km², consisting of a group of islands halfway along the western edge of the Persian Gulf. However, Bahrain, with its 1,505,003²⁰ inhabitants, has a population density almost unique in the world, transforming it into one of the busiest countries on Earth.²¹ The term “Bahrain” in Arabic means “two seas” and refers to some of the smaller bodies of water that surround the country’s 33 islands, not all of them inhabited.²² There is historical evidence on human traces dating back approximately 50,000 years, and artifacts that are indicating that agriculture has been practiced in Bahrain since 8000 Before Common Era (BCE).²³ Closer to our era a few thousand years later, in the third millennium BCE, this archipelago became together with present-day Kuwait, and Eastern Saudi Arabia, the region of Dilmun²⁴ civilization during the Bronze Age, with its power based on a rich and strong trading empire, that lasted about 2000 years. It seems that Dilmun’s culture and the economy prospered due to the strategic geographical location situated along important trade routes that connected the Mesopotamian civilization with the Indus Valley.²⁵ For centuries, pearl mining has been the main occupation and source of income in Bahrain. In fact, pearl divers have been searching for and collecting these gemstones for at least 5000 years, an occupation mentioned even in the Epic of Gilgamesh, as Gillespie underlined in her book about Bahrain.²⁶ This smallest state from GCC had been ruled by the Al-Khalifa Sunni family since 1783 when it concluded a series of treaties with the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century that made Bahrain a British protectorate, from which it declared independence in 1971. Due to the fact that it has been forced to diversify its economy due to declining oil prices, Bahrain has focused on oil processing and refining, aluminum production, and the hospitality and retail sectors. Another direction was the development of banking sector, becoming a leading regional banking center, especially in terms of Islamic finance. Due to its geographical location and size, its economic dependence on Saudi Arabia and its proximity to Iran (with a predominantly Shiite population), this state has to pay a critical attention at stances in foreign affairs policies of its neighbors; therefore, its foreign policy activities cannot be much different than those of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Considering this aspect, it was not quite a surprise at diplomatic level, that on September 15, 2020, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates signed together a peace agreement with Israel—mediated by the US—in Washington, DC, an agreement that has a strong

²⁰ The World Factbook: Bahrain (2018).

²¹ Gillespie (2002, pp. 9–13).

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Howard-Carter (1981, pp. 210–223).

²⁵ Gillespie (2002, pp. 9–13).

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 9–13.

symbolistic meaning for the People of the Book, respectively the *Abraham*²⁷ *Accords*, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates representing the two (next) countries of the Middle East, that together with Egypt and Jordan, officially recognize Israel.

2.2.1.2 Qatar

The leaders of this tiny country from the Persian Gulf, a peninsula in itself as a geographical feature, are part of the Al Thani family, who led this state since the mid-nineteenth century.²⁸ Looking back at the history of Qatar, at its developments, it is difficult to talk about where it stands today as a state-actor at the international level, without associating its evolution with the ruling family Al Thani, beginning with the moment when the first Sheikh Mohammed Bin Thani “united the Qatari tribes and the country in a difficult stage”²⁹ and with September 12, 1868, when he signed an agreement with the representative of the British Empire, Col. Lewis Pelly, that was considered the first step for the international recognition of Qatar’s sovereignty under the leadership of the Al Thani family. That was the moment when the first pages of history of a state that will go through tough times, such as the years of hunger during the 1930s,³⁰ on its path to an unique type of state on the stage of international relations at the beginning of the twenty-first century, that today amazes with its resilience in the face of challenges that few other states would have resisted.

The events known in MENA region as the Arab Spring did not affect Qatar, which had managed to resolve its long-standing border disputes with both Bahrain³¹ and Saudi Arabia, and when the region was engulfed in protests, it experienced no unrest or domestic violence, or violence due in part to its immense wealth and patronage networks.³² Qatar’s leadership has demonstrated a cautious commitment to its own populations, creating a more politically open society and has given priority to developing educational infrastructure.³³ Thus, on the outskirts of the Qatari capital, the Education City educational complex resides, with branches of several prestigious American universities, i.e., Georgetown University. Also, worth mentioning is the establishment of the world famous Al Jazeera satellite television network, founded in 1996, in addition to Qatar’s involvement in grandiose sports projects and events. The current Amir Tamim bin Hamad enjoys a strong popularity among the Qataris

²⁷ According to Mary Saurer, Muhammad was a descendant of Ishmael who was the first born of Abraham that had another son, Isaac (authors’ note: the second of the Patriarchs of the Jewish people). “The whole conflict between the Arabs and Israelis stems from an ancient controversy about who supposed to inherit the land that was promised to Abraham” (Saurer, 2006, p. 123).

²⁸ The World Factbook: Qatar (2018).

²⁹ “Sheikh Mohammed Bin Thani: The Amiri Diwan.” Amiri Diwan. www.diwan.gov.qa/about-qatar/qatars-rulers/sheikh-mohammed-bin-thani?sc_lang=en. Accessed 15 October 2020.

³⁰ Ulrichsen (2020, p. 22).

³¹ Ibid., p. 32.

³² “Sheikh Mohammed Bin Thani: The Amiri Diwan.” Amiri Diwan. www.diwan.gov.qa/about-qatar/qatars-rulers/sheikh-mohammed-bin-thani?sc_lang=en. Accessed 15 October 2020.

³³ Etheredge (2011, p. 37).

due to his role in leading the country starting with 2013 and gaining an almost mystical aura³⁴ due to flexibility³⁵ he has shown starting with the very first day of the blockade, for his efforts to improve the country's health and education systems and for expanding the country's infrastructure in anticipation of hosting the 2022 Football World Cup. In 2020, despite the health crisis that hit this tiny country as well, and as a result of Qatar's economy shrinking 6.1% in Q2 (of 2020)—worst in eight years, according to Al Jazeera,³⁶ this state's population seems to be more united than ever, from the outside.

2.2.1.3 United Arab Emirates

It would be incomplete to write about the modern history of the United Arab Emirates and not to mention the *Trucial States*. Before the signing of the first annual maritime armistice in 1820, between British Representatives and the Arab sheikhs from the Persian Gulf, the land where the latter were living, was referred to by the British as the "Pirate Coast".³⁷ Later, they were gradually called "Trucial Oman", in fact, an entity other than the Sultanate of Oman, while their leaders were known as "trucial sheikhs". Of these, "Abu Dhabi and Dubai were the ones that received the most interest, due to the wealth of oil resources and, respectively, for the potential of 'regional storage'", according to T. Bradshaw.³⁸ Through the treaties concluded between the British official Representatives on the one hand, and these entities from the Gulf, on the other, their leaders were granted some degree of independence, but piracy was banned, while their sheikhs were forced to follow British advice when it came to foreign relations.³⁹ In 1928, the Trucial States were characterized as "independently administered tribal principalities, ruled by independent Arab sheikhs",⁴⁰ and 8 years later, the special representative of the Eastern Department of the British Foreign Ministry stated: "Gulf states are a reserve of His Majesty's government, whose policy toward them is based on a kind of Monroe Doctrine".⁴¹ The relationship in the treaty ended in 1971 when these states gained full independence from the British Empire.

Relevant for what is happening today, from a political and security perspective in the Persian Gulf, is that one of the most significant British contributions to the Trucial States has been the development of their armed forces, police forces and a local intelligence capability. These forces were important because of the growing potential threat of subversion in the Trucial States that were no longer immune to

³⁴ Al Jazeera English (2017).

³⁵ "'Joint Action' Indispensable in Addressing Global Challenges—Emir of Qatar | | UN News." United Nations. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/09/1073082>. Accessed 29 October 2020.

³⁶ Al Jazeera (2020)

³⁷ Bradshaw (2020, pp. 2–3).

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 2–3.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 2–3.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 2–3.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 2–3.

regional trends. The gradual deployment of these forces has played an important role in maintaining internal security in the protected states. However, the extent of the internal security threat in the Trucial States has been limited, a fact that eased the role of national security and intelligence forces.⁴²

Following the independence, fundamental changes took place in the emirates, each of them pursuing its own path to development and economic security, but by far two of them stood out through a rapid development, namely Abu Dhabi and Dubai. If in the case of the first who under the leadership of Sheikh Zayed followed a prudent path to modernity, by carefully using its vast oil reserves, thus ensuring a stable and comfortable income for the citizens at least on medium term, Dubai was in a rather delicate position, given the fact that its oil reserves were only a small part of what Abu Dhabi had; by far, the most serious economic problems were faced by Sharjah in 1989 when it was rescued with Saudi aid from the financial and political crisis it had entered.⁴³ Only since the 1990s have the United Arab Emirates really begun to capture world's attention, mainly due to "a spectacular series of new developments in Dubai initiated by Sheikh Mohammed, Sheikh Rashid's third son and the driving force behind the emirate's developments",⁴⁴ including the Burj al Arab Hotel, Burj Khalifa, Emirates Airlines, the Emirates Palace Hotel, Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, Saadiyat Island, just to name a few of the "miracles" performed in the UAE by its leaders.

As for the UAE's economy today, according to specialists,⁴⁵ the GDP of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is still growing, but the one per capita stagnates, and so far, the declining contribution of the oil sector has been offset by other sectors. The question arises as to whether or not this will work in the future due to the current stagnation in education, especially at the tertiary level and the high share of foreign workers which indicates that the UAE is currently a congested economy that risks becoming smaller if foreigners will move out. Therefore, the UAE has to improve its investments and speed up development of education to enhance even more skills of students.⁴⁶ At the moment, the United Arab Emirates is struggling to survive the effects of the post-*Dutch disease*⁴⁷ at the beginning of a century in which many developments will probably remodel the entire globe.

⁴² Ibid., p. 156.

⁴³ ***The UAE: From Rags to Riches (2017).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Nour (2016, p. 4).

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 4–15.

⁴⁷ According to specialists, "Dutch disease is a paradoxical situation where good news for one sector of the economy, such as the discovery of natural resources, results in a negative impact on the country's overall economy", see Dutch Disease—Definition, Disadvantages, and How to Avoid (2019).

2.2.2 *The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf*

This entity, also known as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), is a political and economic union established in 1981, consisting of six oil-exporting countries from the Persian Gulf (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates), had at the beginning of this century a series of stated goals such as: customs union, common market, and common currency among others, encouraging cooperation between the Member States in key domains, especially the economy.⁴⁸ It is noteworthy that most of these states are all monarchies, respectively constitutional, federal, and absolute monarchies. And if this relationship of institutionalized cooperation between GCC member states had an existence of decades, their populations shared the common faith of Islam, an Arab, and a mix of Arab-Persian cultures, as well as of a hybrid culture for many centuries by now, as already has been mentioned previously.

Equally significant as long-term impact, the issue of identity should draw the attention of local leaders. The topic of identity in the Persian Gulf to be debated upon in academia, it is not exactly something new; i.e., few years ago, professor Abdulkhaleq Abdulla pointing out at the UAE's society, underlined that "*In terms of identity, Dubai is no longer what it was just a short time ago—Emirati, Gulf, Arab, Islamic or Middle Eastern. It has hurriedly become a global city that is intricately connected to the economic, financial, and commercial global network*".⁴⁹ Given that this description was made eight years ago, the question that naturally arises, when considering the importance of the internet today in the age of 5G and the Internet of Things, as well as that of the extensive use of social networks by several distinct generations in the region, is: how these technological advances shape the social structure and the interactions between members of various communities from the region? Of special interest for this paper are the nature and amplitude of changes induced by digital technology and social platforms on the identity of younger generations and what other effects might be produced by the widespread use of technology in Gulf societies. The focus is on a particular demographic segment (Generation Z), because it has the traits necessary to mark a point of discontinuity in the evolution of any society.

⁴⁸ Amadeo (2020).

⁴⁹ Abdulla (2012, p. 118), cited in Potter (2009, p. 29).

2.3 Modernization, Technology, and Social Media in the Gulf Region

The world is changing; and communication, as every time when tectonic changes took place, is one of the many fields of confrontation, where the battle for the agenda, meaning, and sense in the symbolic space, is fiercer than ever.⁵⁰

As history has shown, the evolution of each society is driven mainly by the impact of technology and the diffusion of ideas within the boundaries of respective societies. With the advent of satellite television and the Internet, communication technology has become the main facilitator for connecting minds and stories throughout the globe.

The role of technology in society dynamics is obvious, and through its daily impact, communication technology might create the perception of an unstable and unpredictable environment. As identity is largely dependent on the parameters of external world, both physical and social, it is obvious that the dependence on the virtual environment, which reflects the world in a splintered, fragmented mode, will affect the coherence and internal consistency of one's self and identity. Multiplied at the level of whole society, this form of self, unbanded and unstable, should be of concern for every political regime. In the Western society, social media has become a common place for criticism against capitalism. Likewise, in Arab countries, social media could be not just an open forum for debate, but a platform where the status quo is questioned, and the compliance with identity axioms undermined.

On the path of technological progress, the appearance of internet came as a logical succession of semiconductors and computers. In less than 30 years, the internet impacted directly and indirectly many aspects of societies. Among the most prominent businesses that developed initially, besides the expansion of network infrastructure, were sales and marketing, media industry (news, audio and video productions), and the new business of search portals/engines. In terms of "socializing" online, the 1988 Internet Relay Chat (IRC) was followed by messenger programs like Yahoo Messenger or AOL Messenger that allowed exchange of text messages and files.

The mobile technology was combined with what is understood through internet, e.g., HTTP web pages, only later. In the last 10 years, businesses related to online have expanded in different directions: providing mobile internet, cloud-based computing services and data storage, social media, online gaming, geolocation and maps and associated services, streaming, advertising, retail, and others. Alphabet Inc, Amazon Inc, and Apple Inc are among the largest companies in the world, to name just a few.

Without any doubt, technology has always created the premises for the increasingly faster changes in society. But in last 20 years, the pace of these changes has become so high, that both decision-makers, responsible with the administration of different societies, and ordinary people has become more and more anxious about the

⁵⁰ Bărgăoanu (2018, p. 35).

outcome of these changes. As Paul Virilio⁵¹ has pointed out, the influence of technology and speed on society, but also in politics, is dramatic. By stripping out the time for reflection and balanced deliberation, speed was associated by aforementioned author with violence and with the danger of triggering unintended wars.

The phenomenon of modernization through technology is of special interest for Gulf countries. This is because if Western culture has a long tradition in technology innovation, in most Arab countries, at least in the last century, modernization is perceived as a Western, alien influence. In the introduction of *History of the Middle East*, Bernard Lewis draws attention to a very important aspect of the transformations that have taken place in depicting the behavior and attitude of the customer of a Middle Eastern cafe over several decades, which he compares with that of a European one. In this sense, Lewis said that there is not a significant difference between the transformation of the two customers over time, except for the origin of their transformations. If in the case of the European client, the transformations were considered almost exclusively of European origin—and to a certain extent from the North American society—therefore, from within the society, in the case of the Middle Eastern client, most changes had their roots outside this space, respectively from “societies and cultures deeply foreign to the indigenous traditions of the East”. Furthermore, the same author mentions that the transformation of the man from the oriental cafe illustrates the changes that have transformed the society of the Middle East and that this is best seen through the clothes he wears. Therefore, this observation and others have led Lewis to consider modernization almost a synonym to Westernization.

The online environment offered, besides the new digital market places that offer products and advertising, a space to practice what used to be called “socializing”. The early chat programs mentioned previously were superseded in the early 2000s by proper social platforms like Friendster, LinkedIn, and Hi5 (launched between 2002 and 2003). Facebook was launched in 2004 (was publicly accessible in 2006) and MySpace in 2006. In the same year, Twitter was also launched. The social networks mentioned above can be considered as part of the first wave in social media platforms that offered the possibility to exchange different categories of content in a relatively simple manner. Flickr, founded in 2004 and YouTube, founded in 2006, are also considered part of this wave, although the latter developed massively after Alphabet Inc purchased it. In China, the Sina Weibo and WeChat were launched in 2009 and 2011, respectively. A second wave of social media platforms were founded in the last decade. This includes Instagram (2010), Snapchat (2011), Tumblr (2007), among others. This was complemented by the development of instant messaging apps like WhatsApp (2009), Viber (2010), Telegram (2013), etc. The online communication industry was also developed toward professional sectors like web conferencing.

Social media was defined as interactive web 2.0 internet-based applications, which allow the creation and sharing of various contents (text, photos, videos) over the internet. Social media differs from traditional mass-media through its dialogic transmission system and multiple sources transmitting to multiple receivers. As in real life, virtual users tend to self-assimilate into social networks, the usual

⁵¹ Virilio (2006).

online behavior being either consumption or creation-contribution orientated, using personal computers, laptops, tablets, or smartphones. Facilitating interactivity, social media proved to have a tremendous impact both on individual human behavior, and on various aspects of human society. Moreover, besides their implicit role, e.g., to facilitate communication, the potential of social media platforms was relevant in major political events like the so-called 2011 Arab Spring and the 2016 US elections (although Cambridge Analytica filed for insolvency in 2018).

The term “social media” is generally associated with a nowadays, or more sophisticated/better, way to socialize, in the sense of becoming more active or recognized in a society. It is important to distinguish in this context between society, the system of interaction and social relationships, and community, a subsystem of society that unites people with a certain common characteristic like region, language, etc. The term “community” was especially used in the first phases of online activity, and created a sense of belonging to a set of values related to one or more goals: terms like “Linux Community” were commonsense decades ago. Whether social media is a replacement for socialization is not a certainty, but a rising question in recent years, despite undeniable indicators that confirm the expansion of virtual interaction. While telecommunication capabilities evolved significantly, the questions refer to more aspects of social media: does it extend social skills in the classical sense, in a complementary manner, or virtual interaction replaces at least partially the classical socialization? In an empirical formulation, how does a real gathering set up through social media look like? Is there more interaction, or the people tend to check from time to time social media feeds? If yes, this means that they will not be active on social media during the gathering, so what is the most social activity in this case: the classical socialization or social media? If both, what are the differences between the two? At the moment, sociologists, anthropologists, and other related disciplines are expanding research on such topics.

Modernity is often portrayed in the Arab world as a process that undermines “all the old certainties”,⁵² and keeping in mind that mobile social media penetration in various regions has increased by 44%,⁵³ and half of Arab youth get their news on Facebook on a daily basis, making them more informed but also much easier to be manipulated, hence the social media cannot be perceived in a more positive way the Gulf leaders. Moreover, while many teens and young adults see a positive effect on using social media, mainly because they stay connected with family and friends, increasingly more time spent on mobile devices was associated with more anxiety and depression. What youth believe, how they live and think, how they perceive themselves and others, or how they interact has become more visible due to social media, and therefore, more susceptible to exposure, to be judged or rejected, fear of being isolated, bullied, or subject of rumors spreading as the most negative outcomes.

Another issue raised around the globe is that of rights, regulation, and censorship in social media. Traditionally, the “virtual space” was conceived and promoted as a free space, in an abstract sense, of course, similar to the concept of non-application

⁵² Tamimi and Esposito (2002, p. 42).

⁵³ Radcliffe and Abuhmaid (2020, p. 3).

of national laws on the territory of international airports, or application of national laws in an aircraft flying over another country. Among the most liberal expressions of this “freedom” was John Perry Barlow’s “A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace”, presented at Davos, Switzerland, in 1996.⁵⁴ The distinction between regulation and censorship can vary and lexical definitions play a major role: while Cambridge Dictionary defines “censorship” as “*the policy of censoring*”,⁵⁵ and provides a further definition for “censor” as “*an official who examines films etc. and has the power to remove any of the contents which might offend people*”,⁵⁶ an explanation for “censorship” on Oxford Reference includes already the term “regulated”: “*Any regime or context in which the content of what is publicly expressed, exhibited, published, broadcast, or otherwise distributed is regulated or in which the circulation of information is controlled...*”.⁵⁷ In these particular English definitions, that carry an official sense, two important aspects are mentioned: censorship involves an “official” and content to which it applies is “publicly expressed”. In the USA, “official” or state censorship is limited by the first constitutional amendment, while private censorship is a distinctive, not regulated activity.⁵⁸ There are also implications related to the term “publicly”: it could refer to an action or statement made in the name of a community or with the purpose of reaching others. Depending on the view and interpretation, or even definition utilized, the control in social media can be treated as censorship or regulation. In this sense, regulation or regulation attempts in traditional democracies like the United Kingdom (but also France, Germany, and other countries) may be analyzed by some groups through the loop of censorship,⁵⁹ hence perspective is relevant. Anyway, the control of social media might generally be an interplay between the company offering services and the state where the user is residing, with different proportions of influence depending on the state. The debate on privacy versus transparency is likely to remain open.

The perspective on the Persian Gulf countries and social media is influenced by a series of elements that add up to the general debate on social media opportunities and issues. Firstly, all GCC countries are monarchies, with the UAE being a federation of monarchies. This adds a perceptual factor in analyzing events, besides the developments themselves. Secondly, the Arab and Muslim cultures were relatively separated from the Western powers until the twentieth century, hence differences in culture are a given fact. Finally, the Middle East as neighborhood is a tough environment in which strong decisions are made. With respect to social media experiences, symbols, and perception of these matters, the general atmosphere from the Middle East may have

⁵⁴ Electronic Frontier Foundation. <https://www.eff.org/de/cyberspace-independence>. Accessed 14 September 2020.

⁵⁵ Cambridge Dictionary. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch-deutsch/censorship>. Accessed 14 October 2020.

⁵⁶ Cambridge Dictionary. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch-deutsch/censor>. Accessed 14 October 2020.

⁵⁷ Oxford Reference. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095558166>. Accessed 14 October 2020.

⁵⁸ Magarian (2004).

⁵⁹ Woodhouse (2020).

an impact. Social media interaction in the Persian Gulf has been analyzed in literature.^{60,61,62} The conclusions relate both to factors that influence the interaction and effects that they produce. While some papers insist on cultural elements specific to the Persian Gulf, other focus on topics that may be relevant in other regions as well. In the context of global social media phenomenon however, the set of technical skills for utilizing social media platforms in the region is probably at a level similar to other regions. In terms of economic benefits, the US and Chinese companies that operate such large platforms are probably leading. The costs of companies that develop their marketing and/or services around such platforms depend on number of users to generate revenue, number of advertisers, etc. According to a STATISA report, a Facebook CPC (Cost per Click) in Q4 2017 was \$2.09 in the Czech Republic, \$0.97 in Bahrain, and \$0.76 in Singapore.⁶³ From an economic perspective, social media users come third in this chain, without a clear economic benefit, after platform owners and advertising community.

2.4 Social Media, the Arab Self, and the Psychological Effects on Generation Z

One of the most relevant aspect in utilizing social media interaction may probably be the age and all factors associated to it. Literature often divides segments of population in function of age vis-à-vis experience with internet, social media platforms, etc.⁶⁴ Generation Z (born from 1997 onward) are considered “digital natives”. On one hand, this generation found itself indeed in an environment friendly to digital life. Computers evolved sufficient enough to allow an intuitive and simple operation, while the prices for hardware decreased significantly and became accessible on a large scale. At the same time, urbanization and industrialization increased around the globe, allowing the allocation of more time for experimentation with social media. In parallel, digitalization was adopted in different sectors of economy, not only in education, allowing further perfection of interaction. But the use of social media for Generation Z is not comparable to previous experiences with online communication tools of the 1990s. The former virtual expression of freedom in an unregulated environment, accessible only to certain groups is likely to remain singular in history with respect to online communication. To complicate things even further, this new generation is about to occupy the central position, as the most active and relevant segment of society, both as decision-makers and consumers. Generation Z (or iGen), is considered as a demographic cohort that succeeded Millennials, and precedes

⁶⁰ Stanger et al. (2017).

⁶¹ Gjylbegaj and Abdi (2019).

⁶² Shockley et al. (2020).

⁶³ STATISA. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/279946/cost-per-click-on-facebook-in-selected-countries/>. Accessed 14 October 2020.

⁶⁴ Ibáñez-Cubillas et al. (2017, pp. 64–69).

Generation Alpha. Although every region on the Globe has a Z generation, specific economic and social conditions influenced the psycho-social characteristics of this demographical cohort. However, what is shared among the members of this young generation is their savvy on digital technology and the intensive use of social media platforms, as they are defined as internet natives. It was chosen to focus on this demographical cohort as Gen Zers are perceived as having a different mindset, and more impact on different areas of social life and society than previous generations. These elements are enough to raise concerns on the social outcomes of the combination between the advancement of technology, internet, the social media, and Generation Z in the Gulf area.

Social media and generally online platforms can be considered a common environment nowadays, with an increasing number of written and unwritten rules, with many users and organizations that generate content, regulated or not by service providers or countries. The discussions around such platforms are not related anymore to idealistic goals, but direct benefits, efficiency, and so on. As the social networks are expanding and the type of interaction becomes more and more public, countries will probably enforce more regulations. As the impact of this development on traditional communities will increase, more studies are expected in the near future on this topic. Regional trends are expected to be a part and a reflection of the overall digitalization process that can be considered still at the beginning.

As it became rapidly obvious, internet-based technology tends to increasingly mediate human interactions and become present in virtually every activity, creating new fields of studies,⁶⁵ mainly focused on the transformation of human identity. Maybe the most obvious effect that social media has on individuals is *identity revision*. Detached from real-life presence, online networks offer potential ambiguity in terms of self-disclosure and other psychological variables.⁶⁶ Offering the possibility to choose one particular story that fits audience's desired identity, social media creates the *illusion of identity control*, relying less on intersubjective peer interaction and more on digital environment. Facilitating self-expression, simultaneity, and image management, social media has facilitated mimicry, narcissism, anonymity, stimulating a culture of pretending. As such, social media enabled a transition from a bodily mediated self-authenticity, to a fake interpersonal engagement. On a more positive side, social media offers the possibility for self-expression, a virtual space where personal ambitions and dreams can be expressed and shared with others. If modernity can be defined, from a psychological point of view, as the pursuit of personal ideals, then social media may account as starting point where personal identity may gain recognition, consistency, and legitimacy as a quest for happiness and personal fulfillment. However, poverty, family, or tradition, often shape or even block such aspirations or individualistic visions of life, creating the premises for resent and fatalism.

On social level, from business sphere, to political governance or social networks' dynamics, social media has become a power broker and a virtual frontier between

⁶⁵ Technoself studies (TSS).

⁶⁶ Lipschultz (2017, p. 42).

freedom of access, intimacy, and authority control and regulation. Through its innate qualities, social media creates transparency and the premises for a rapid democratization on influencing capability and power. Giving a voice to virtually everyone, enhancing dialogue or raising the awareness on social issues, social media had embrittled the supremacy of government's narrative, and has the potential to put under question traditional social practices and values. Social media offers now access to other models of societies, with different pattern of relations between men and women, children and parents, between young and old individuals. This openness along with the higher possibility of the citizens to participate to various forums, where alternative perspectives on social issues are expressed, have the potential to undermine, to some extent, a clan mentality. At individual level, social media provides access to different styles of life, more or less attractive, more or less permissive, creating the premises for an evolving tension between Western identity and narrative, Arab identities, especially during adolescence and first years of adult life. As such, we intend to explore how the self-definition of youth in the Persian Gulf could be modeled through the use of communication technology, especially through the interaction with social media ecosystem, and whether this transformation could be associated with a threat for social stability. In order to achieve this goal, we rely on cultural definition of self, a self which is characterized by complexity and contradictions, located in a culture defined fundamentally by a dynamic conflict between old and new, modernity and tradition. Therefore, it is of crucial importance to analyze the magnitude and the nature of changes induced by new media, having in mind the central role of honor and shame system in the Arab culture. These features have a fundamental role in shaping the structure of self and further evolution during the life for most of the individuals.

2.4.1 *The Arab (Self) Identity*

What does it mean to be an Arab in the Gulf region? Although at first glance, the answer might be easy, in reality, a potential answer requires a much more complex analysis. In addition to the fact that in this part of the world, there is a mosaic of ethnicities and religions—a fact mentioned already in this paper, to understand the Arab self from the shores of the Gulf, there is necessary to look back in history. This is because the Arabs themselves have debated the issue of Arab identity since pre-Islamic times, not just Western researchers who have largely stopped at negative conclusions about Arab culture and the (in)ability of some local leaders to govern.⁶⁷ Among the Arab researchers who have focused on the issue of “Arab identity”, we selected the Iraqi scientist Nissim Rejwan, who has compiled a collection of writings by both Arab and Western intellectuals who have tried to define what it means to be an Arab. Thus, in his book “*Arabs in the Mirror: Images and Self-Images from Pre-Islamic to Modern Times*”, he presents different perception on the “evolution”

⁶⁷ Rejwan (2008, p. 3).

of the Arab identity beginning with pre-Islamic times, until the last decades of the twentieth century. To see how it evolved, or what factors influenced the Arab identity, N. Rejwan looks at the influence of Islam, the rise of nationalism, the Israel's role in the Middle East conflict, and the so-called "cultural invasion" of the West, among other topics. Eventually, he concludes that despite the prominent Western stereotype that Arabs are incapable of self-reflection or self-government, the Arabs mirror a rich tradition of self-criticism and self-knowledge among themselves. Because, in order to understand what it stands for being an Arab, one has to know that Arabian Peninsula was the cradle of the Semitic peoples' family who called themselves Babylonians, Assyrians, Phoenicians, Jews, and Arabs, that during the Jahiliyyah period words were a powerful weapon, poetry being considered the highest manifestation of the Arab culture.⁶⁸ It must also be taken into account that according to Abdul Rahman Ibn Khaldun, there are two fundamentally different environments in which the Arabs developed were the *desert* and the *city*,⁶⁹ thus reflecting a nomadic and a sedentary way of living in which core principles of life have been developed and perpetuated, such as *asabiyyah*, *muruwwah*, or *sharaf*. Moreover, the Arab is neither a racial nor a religious category; Arabs might be called a people who speak a language, because not all Arabs are Muslims and only a minority of Muslims are Arabs⁷⁰; therefore, a distinction must be made between the terms "Arab nation" and what is called "Arab culture".⁷¹ Thus, the Arab nation comprises elements "that have not yet fully developed", while the Arab culture consists of "concrete realities that have grown over the centuries and that time has only served to consolidate and strengthen", while the main issue of the Arab peoples of today according to al-Husaini is that they "have not assimilated Arab culture and the Arab spirit or the immortal elements of Arab civilization".⁷²

Besides, regarding the Arab (Muslim) self, according to Marwan Adeeb Dwairy, in collective societies the idea of independence has a different meaning in comparison with the one from the Western societies where the individual is raised to fulfill independent personality and self,⁷³ which is perceived as a form of selfishness and disobedience in the Arab East. There is also an example from the "other" side: in the Arab-Muslim world, the person is raised in the spirit of an emotional interconnectedness, with a strong sense of submission to cultural norms, loyal to the family, therefore in the society from which she/he is a part of, is considered a mature one, while in the West the same person would probably be diagnosed, with "dependent personality disorder",⁷⁴ according to DSM-IV.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. vii.

⁶⁹ Ibn Khaldun cited in Rejwan (2008, p. 3).

⁷⁰ Juan Cole cited in Rejwan (2008, p. 21).

⁷¹ Ishaq Musa al-Husaini cited in Rejwan (2008, p. 21).

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Dwairy (2006, p. 73).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

2.4.2 *Self-Concept and Generation “Z”*

Self-concept lays at the bottom of identity formation and evolution. Although this mental representation serves to monitor the permeability of the limits between individuals, it is recognized, especially in the studies of acculturation, that “self” is often not coherent, even more, that manifold identities serve adaptive aims. It is specifically this discontinuity in the individual development, that can be fueled by social media, creating the premises for more internal tension and insecurity. We consider that a pertinent analysis of any society and the social life within it should include the various complex mechanisms that serve individual identification.

According to the psychodynamic approach, the main psychological processes that support self-formation are introjection and identification during early childhood. Subsequently, in late adolescence/early adulthood, individuals develop a belief system which, by his mirrored, unreflected nature, can be considered “ideological”. We tend to consider that social media and internet could be a hazard in the early years of childhood, when the process of identification takes place, only if the caregivers spent too much time on virtual space and tend to ignore or give inappropriate response to children, endangering mainly children’s capacity to introject gender role behaviors and self-worth. In late childhood, social media might facilitate identifications within online individuals or models, mainly through real-life events and shared social concerns, and emotion expression. In a culture that valorizes direct connectivity and tends to preserve age and gender hierarchies, individuation and autonomy are often acquired through a series of self-identifications and life-long intimate relationships. With the advent of internet and social media platforms, the role of the (real) other, as a tangible and stable “place”⁷⁵ from where we are being observed, in the pursuit of our self-project, tends to become secondary and the capacity to adopt a realistic self-identity is endangered.

In line with the critical theory, Slavoj Žižek suggests in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*⁷⁶ that ideology, as a mechanism for identity formation, works not on the conscious level, but through subconscious mechanisms which crystalize and shape a specific perspective on the society and the world. Addressing the implicit level of thinking, ideology functions precisely because individuals are not able to detect how they are compelled to adopt specific values and behaviors. Although many envisage ideology as a political system of beliefs, Žižek’s perspective on ideology emphasizes its capacity to create “false consciousness”, when is embedded in public discourse. Therefore, it is of interest to acknowledge the role of social media as one of the main facilitators for the modeling of social representations.

Digital natives, i.e., Generation Z and Generation Alpha, will probably experience an increasingly simplified and regulated digital society worldwide, a trend which most likely will be pursued by countries from the Gulf area. At the moment, the regulation framework for social media around the globe is shared by the companies and states, with authorities like Australia’s eSafety Commissioner or Cyberspace

⁷⁵ A place serving for what is called symbolic identification.

⁷⁶ Žižek (2009).

Administration of China policing the internet. This applies to other aspects of life as well, like banking, relation with the state, shopping, etc. The regulation and enforcement development will probably continue, increasing the safety for users, but two aspects are under consideration from this perspective: the usual question whether developments are good or bad, which accompanies any change process, and how the real world and virtual space/automated machines relate to each other.

The latter question will not be approached in detail, since the rise in use of virtual space is obvious, fast, and ongoing, and companies will probably integrate it more pronounced in everyday life through technologies like driverless cars, augmented reality, and similar. From a user's perspective, some activities will be simplified or even eliminated, which in a positive assessment will free up time and resources to perform more complex tasks, or operate safer. With respect to the former question, opinions on progress have always been divided. The tendency of older generations is to perceive it with more skepticism and less interest, while the younger generations are generally more open. Nevertheless, progress occurs continuously, in a way or another, the only question that remains is whether it develops in the "right direction" and with sufficient speed. Challenges shared by the entire Z and Alpha generations across the globe are various.

From a societal and economic perspective, concerns are raised about disruption of territorial systems (TS) and loss of related competitiveness. Furthermore, finance and access to technology, as well as interoperability, may raise issues related to efficiency and standardization of approaches in digitalization and social media. Countries and regional partnerships are only in the initial stages of approaching regulation, and approaches are particular, thus at least years before an attempt to even start a global discussion on regulation of social media.

From a human and societal perspective, social media and digitalization are bringing different advantages to different communities. The communities with a long tradition in designing and operating such platforms tend to develop faster and come up with new features that strengthen their position in the market. For example, WeChat's success was noticed by Facebook's founder, who also referenced its payment system in discussions about the proposed digital currency Libra. A sustained speed in this field does not only require many financial and human resources, but can also disrupt other related branches of activity. A study that assesses how many countries would have sufficient resources to offer such systems, or even supervise them properly in citizen's interest, would be of further relevance to this topic, especially in the context of discussions on how access to market and revenues are taxed. At the beginnings of social media, concerns were also raised about productivity of employees at work place, across the board. But as the phenomenon developed, relations between employers and employees settled, in principle, such topics.

The legal framework, previously referenced in this paper, can also constitute a challenge. When considering the multiple behavioral changes brought by providing and utilizing social media, legal aspects are multiple. Current approaches address safety, security of the users and their state, copyright, false information, and probably in the near future taxation. Furthermore, the accountability for certain action on social media can be problematic: the perpetrator can be located in a country, service

supplier in another country, and the victim in a third country. Additionally, the issues related to privacy concerns are relevant not only from a legal perspective, but from a procedural point of view as well: how are the concerns addressed by legal entities, and service providers? Cybersecurity risks are also not to be underestimated. Besides the cyberattacks, that became a common practice nowadays at personal and state level, the capacity of states to prevent cybercrime require ever more resources: faster computers, secure clouds, professional personnel, and continuous training and improvement.

2.5 Conclusions

As GCC countries are pondering economical options for a post-hydrocarbon era, correspondent social concern arises. GCC, as a regional society, is marked by distinctive ideas, beliefs, and technological influences. As population inherits very old traditions, old traditions, and newer traditions, an increasingly incompatibility between ideas and practices becomes evident. Nevertheless, enjoying the benefits from technology, countries like Qatar and the UAE, are topping in the hierarchies designed to indicate progress and quality of life. In these cases, tensions between tradition and progress appear to have been appeased in a unique and smart manner.

From a broader perspective, there are two main developments to consider when analyzing social media impact in the GCC region: *the first one is about history of social media that is part of a larger history of digital revolution, developed initially in the West, in a cultural system in which technological progress might be seen as slower, but continuous.* Focusing on the problematic aspects of “adopting” Western innovations might have become an outdated perspective, if one considers that China is not anymore in a learning, or adoption, phase in all fields, but pioneering new social media technologies like Byte Dance’s TikTok: when really understanding how technologies can help in improving societies and allocating resources to pursue a genuine progress path, history has shown that results matter. Some societies courageously adopted innovation as part of their culture and are not afraid anymore about losing their identity, as transformation outcomes are now part of their identity. The focus is shifted in this case from preventing progress to adapting progress to society’s traditions and needs, which is probably a more complex and difficult task, but also more rewarding.

The second broader aspect that deserves attention is that of differences between GCC’s Generation Z and rest of the world’s Generation Z. Gulf’s history and traditions are indeed particular, but youth across the world face particular and common challenges. After analyzing a series of studies and opinions on this topic, it is difficult to establish which challenges are more pronounced for GCC’s Generation Z: the particular ones, due to Gulf’s unique culture and history, and due to fast adoption of foreign social media products, or the general ones, that are faced by globe’s entire Generation Z. Other societies have also particular challenges to face due to political, social, economic, technological, and other types of transformation and ultimately,

wise choices will always prevail. Furthermore, as literature points out, some issues related to digital transformation are more relevant when assessing the concept of “self”, not that of “social identity”.

Is social media a facilitator or a curse for Generation Z? Literature provides both negative and positive perspectives related to mass adoption of social media. There are, of course, challenges associated to this transformation, but probably in the right hands, social media will help the evolution toward an ultimately positive social impact. Is it possible to stop progress/is it desirable and achievable? Since progress is an ongoing process anyway, probably the desirable approach would be to assist and continuously assess it.

Does social media have the capacity to dislodge identities? Rather than weaken identities, social media might create new dimensions of identity and new skills for all Generation Z across the world, as any innovation from mankind’s history did, which in a good situation will complement core cultural traditions. The uninhibited expression, self-promotion, self-disclosure, and other online behaviors might represent real challenges for the country leadership, as some of these might contravene with traditional forms of interaction, creating both excitement and powerful form of rejection. It is therefore the responsibility of each society’s member to build, shape, or use such systems for social purposes, and probably their leader’s role to help turn threats into opportunities.

As a final note, it is important to start considering an assessment, or even a classification of the elements that contribute to Generation Z’s identity. In the broader context of international relations across the globe, in which the dichotomy between national/regional and global action is now questioned again, it is important to identify adequate parameters to measure whether social media has impacted the way in which individuals and groups exert power. Because if it did and successes were achieved, this certainly led to new “self” and “identity” elements, that will shape future alliances and goals.

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Chapter 3

Identity and Globalisation: Tribal Identity in the Age of Social Media



Abdulla Al-Etaibi

Abstract The age of globalisation and digital technology gives people the means to stay connected more than ever. As elsewhere, social media is rapidly spreading in the Gulf region where it constitutes a virtual public forum for people to express opinions on current issues. Social media has been used for political purposes by both governments and individuals since the Arab Spring. The use of social media to disseminate political information and mobilise groups extended to the 2017 Gulf Crisis. This paper will focus on the use and effects of social media on tribes during the crisis and how technology has provided a virtual space for mobilising tribal kinship networks.

Keywords Tribes · Social media · Qatar · KSA · Transnational identity

3.1 Introduction

The advent of globalisation and recent technological advancements have given rise to communication channels that enable individuals to stay connected more than ever. Like in many places, social media has gained significant traction in the Gulf region as a virtual forum wherein people can express their opinions on a range of local, regional, and global issues (see, e.g. Al-Jenaibi, 2016, p. 61; Gunter et al., 2016, p. 5; Reyaee & Ahmed, 2015, p. 23). The communicative reach of social media means that it has been used for political purposes by both governments and individuals. This was evident during the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011 (Allagui & Kuebler, 2011, p. 8; Bruns et al., 2013, p. 871; Markham, 2014, p. 89; Newsom & Lengel, 2012, p. 31; Stepanova, 2011, p. 1; Wolfsfeld et al., 2013, p. 115). The ongoing Gulf Crisis has also seen social media being used as an instrument for political mobilisation. This crisis began when three member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), namely, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and

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Bahrain, cut off relations with Qatar and imposed a blockade on that country. The measures against Qatar were taken because of its alleged involvement in terrorism (Naheem, 2017, p. 265). Significantly, political social media content during the crisis attempted to mobilise actors by appealing to their tribal identities.

The driving purpose of social media is to establish social connections between individuals through digital tools. Beyond these simple social functions, social media connections can be leveraged to mobilise around and achieve political goals. These characteristics of social media have led scholars such as DeVriese (2013, p. 220) to conceptualise it as an extension of the Habermasian public sphere, reconfiguring civic engagements in a new type of political space. Countless scholars have illustrated the importance of social media as ‘an instrument of local and national mobilization, communication and coordination; [it] helped propagate international revolutionary contagion; and contributed to the enhancement of a pan-Arab consciousness which facilitated the contagion process’ (Howard & Hussein, 2011, p. 36). Other researchers point to how the speed of communication enabled by this technology quickly stabilises individual and group goals: ‘messages to travel in an immediate, instantaneous and spontaneous manner’ (Alqudsi-ghabra, 2012, p. 9). The specific ways that this technological capability is utilised varies between contexts. Geoff Martin found that political activists in Kuwait between 2010 and 2012 largely used Twitter to disseminate general information and ground-level reports of actions (Martin, 2019, p. 9). Moreover, Nathan Brown has identified social media as a ‘new Saudi public sphere’ that citizens regard as a channel for free information flows across borders. The fact that this new public sphere is monitored closely by the Saudi state lends credence to the notion that social media is now a space of huge political significance (Brown, 2017).

Against this backdrop, this paper aims to critically discuss the use and effect of social media on the ways that Gulf tribes are leveraged politically during the Gulf crisis, an event that was marked by domestic social dissatisfaction and international tensions. This theme was covered in a 2019 issue of *Review of Middle East Studies*. Mitchell (2019) found that during the blockade, social media did not incubate new narratives about Qatar that are related to the specificities of the crisis. Rather, it became a platform for Gulf States to air pre-existing grievances against Qatar. Saudi citizen users and news outlets tended to draw on common, longstanding tropes, discrediting Qatar’s by comparing the government’s liberal attitudes unfavourably to that of the conservative Saudi Arabian regime. Historic border disputes between the KSA and Qatar were also raised. Leber and Abrahams (2019) looked at how, during the crisis, the Saudi state engaged in ‘networked authoritarianism’. This refers to how an apparently organic and potentially liberatory medium such as Twitter is in fact managed by state actors who mould its discursive agendas to their political advantage. Saud al-Qahtani, who was the General Supervisor of the Centre for Studies and Media Affairs, created false accounts to systematically undermine Qatar and muzzle potential sympathisers within the kingdom (Timberg & Dadouch, 2021).

This paper augments this growing literature on social media in the Gulf Crisis by focusing on the discursive construction of tribal identity on social media during the crisis. The paper begins by reflecting on Gulf transnational tribal bonds that

transcend national identities and state borders. During the Gulf Crisis, social media technology has facilitated greater tribal solidarity and communication. The three blockading countries used the rhetoric of tribal identity to encourage Qatari tribes to undermine the Qatari state's domestic political stability. This mobilisation process relied heavily on appealing to long-held tribal traditions and attitudes now able to be disseminated through social media. This paper also illustrates how social media offers a virtual space where tribes can organise politically as cohesive groups. In the final section, this paper discusses the reaction of the Qatari government and the tribes to these online mobilisation efforts. It also explores the gradual consolidation of the Qatari national identity in response to this transnational mobilisation of internal dissidence. The paper approaches these points qualitatively and draws from interviews and observations conducted during in-country fieldwork in Qatar from 2020 to 2021. The paper analyses social media output from Qatari and Saudi actors during the crisis, relating them to the actions taken by the Qatari and Saudi governments to mobilise tribal sentiments.

3.2 Identity in the Age of Globalisation

This paper understands tribes to be a form of transnational identity. Actor identities in general and transnational ones in particular feature heavily as contested concepts within globalisation studies. While there are competing definitions of globalisation, most agree that it is a set of technological, economic, sociocultural, and political processes that have weakened the salience of state borders while strengthening economic interdependence and cultural interchange between groups formerly bounded by the nation-state. For Arjun Appadurai, it has constituted global cultural flows carried through demographic movements, capital flows, and technological transfers (Appadurai, 1996, p. 36). Ruggie summarised globalisation as the declining centrality of geographical places and the disintegration of the border (Croucher, 2004, p. 13). According to these theorists, subjective identities and group loyalties followed suit. In the sphere of the cultural economy, media products are exported from rich to poor countries (Croucher, 2004, p. 16). Consuming similar commodities and integrated into a supply chain that extended around the globe, people become less attached to parochial identities tied to certain geographic locations, ethnicities, and religious beliefs. In their place, Western Enlightenment ideas and practices, in particular the rise of a global cosmopolitan public, become the dominant feature of international events (Beck, 2006, p. 2).

The view that international relations were characterised by cultural homogenisation and economic and political integration along Western lines first became popular with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The end of the bipolar Cold War international system supposedly heralded a global order dominated by Western political and economic models and ideals of liberal democracy, capitalist economics, and secularism (Appadurai, 1996, p. 36). In making these arguments, the early globalisation theorists were attempting to understand real processes occurring late eighties and

early nineties: the emergence of large transnational corporations, state deregulation, and technologies that increased the mobility of commodities (Savage et al., 2004, p. 1). Yet, scholars questioned this picture after the Balkan conflicts of the nineties suggested that international relations remained riven by sectarian, ethnic, and religious lines. Attention was further drawn to parochial categories of belonging after 9/11 and the war on terror. The rise of terrorism appeared as a reaction against global economic, cultural, and political integration into capitalist networks and liberal Western ideals (Croucher, 2004, p. 3). This phenomenon undermined Martin Albrow's claim that globalisation has seen 'peoples of the world [...] incorporated into a single world society, global society' (Albrow, 2004, p. 40).

Yet, the issue of global terror also brought a seeming contradiction within globalisation studies to the fore: transnationalism and sectarian identities can co-exist, even be strengthened, by the very lines of interconnection described by early globalisation theorists. The dissolution of borders had not resulted in global cultural homogenisation but rather in the proliferation of transnational identities that fell outside the purview of Western frameworks. While the membership of such groups transcends geographical boundaries and the historical narratives that underpin their identities are non-nationalist, they are far from universalist or cosmopolitan entities. These parochial categories of belonging defined by religious belief, ethnicity, and tribal networks may appear contrary to the globalisation process as described by the first wave of globalisation theorists. Yet, the very technologically mediated modes of expression and organisation that underpin cross-border cultural, economic, and political ties under globalisation are also what enable traditional particularist identities to gain cohesion. This suggests that the proliferation and consolidation of identities is part and parcel of globalisation itself. New forms and means of integration spark counter-movements that reestablish boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, ones that more easily cut across the borders of the nation-state.

Tribal identity was crucial in the development of the Gulf Crisis as a foreign policy crisis, showing how many in the Gulf still regard tribal identity as a powerful locus of belonging. Yet, the Gulf Crisis also complicates critical responses that reasserted the relevance of local identity in globalisation studies. While tribes are often associated with particular regions, they do not comfortably fit definitions of the local evoked in standard critiques of globalisation theory. In the Gulf Crisis, tribal identity not only gained visibility but acquired substantial regional and international influence by leveraging a quintessential feature of globalisation: digital communication technologies transmit information rapidly across state borders. This consolidated tribal identity as a clearly defined cultural and social unit whose agency, membership, and communicative reach nonetheless extend *beyond* particular geographical sites. Further, critiques of early globalisation theory often juxtaposed the local and the global by portraying the former as only an 'instantiation of' overwhelming and abstract global powers rather than 'as motors of change' in their own right (Savage et al., 2004, p. 5). This idea that local identity is a passive subject of universalising forces is forcefully challenged by the Gulf Crisis. The tribe has become an autonomous political organ, a traditional function thought to have been permanently diminished after the rise of the nation-state and the GCC. The character of tribal

activity during the Gulf Crisis thus upsets definitions of cultural globalisation as top-down homogenisation. It also adds nuance to the critical literature that characterises local responses to globalisation as reactive, locally bounded pockets of resistance.

3.3 Tribes in the Gulf Region

At the most fundamental level, it can be argued that tribes are an intrinsic part of human society. This claim is made on the basis that humans are naturally tribal and need the sense of belonging that tribal membership offers (Chua, 2018, p. 2). This psychological aspect of belonging to a tribe is also supported by more pragmatic motivations for membership. Tribal identity is not a feature unique to the Middle East; it also exists elsewhere, such as in Africa and Central Asia. Nevertheless, it is particularly worth investigating the importance of tribal identity in the Arabian Peninsula, where tribes are active on many levels, from the ruling families to the grassroots of society.

It is difficult to define the terms ‘tribes’ and ‘tribalism’ and to place both within a suitable context to clarify their importance. This difficulty is partly due to the multidimensional aspect of tribes: they are blood-based relations that can align with other tribes and take over territories (Bodley, 1994, p. 86; Salzman, 1974, p. 208). A straightforward definition of tribes can be a group of people who share blood ties, while tribalism is the act of mobilisation based on tribal identity. When examining tribes from a social or political perspective, scholars have focused on the idea of inclusion and exclusion (see Hassan, 2019, p. 78; Sonowal, 2008, p. 125). In this case, tribes can also be understood through Benedict Anderson’s (1983, p. 6) *Imagined Communities*, which looks at the idea of community in the minds of group members who share a feeling of belongingness. ‘Ideal’ group members are supposed to follow precise guidelines and behave as true followers of the group and community. Such connections managed to bring all tribespeople together until the emergence of sovereign boundaries, which placed all tribes within the context of the government ownership of land and also within new national identity projects.

Since the Neolithic period, states in Southern Arabia were built upon pre-existing tribal social relations. Indeed, the early history of the region can be written through the prism of fluctuating tensions and compromises between state-building and permanent settlements on the one hand and nomadic tribalism on the other (Magee, 2014, p. 251). Archaeological evidence for example suggests that South-eastern Arabians abandoned permanent settlements for a nomadic lifestyle based on tribal values around 2100 BC, possibly in rejection of an increasingly hierarchical sedentary society (Magee, 2014, p. 125). The Arabian Peninsula has been inhabited by many different tribes, who each controlled an area of land or territory known as *Hijra* or *Dirah*. Each *Hijra* was ruled by a tribal leader or sheikh, who was responsible for ensuring the protection and prosperity of his tribe (Kostiner, 1990, p. 231). This tribal structure persisted, even throughout the twentieth century, as modern states were constructed in the region. Tribes are a prominent feature in the social fabric of Middle

Eastern societies, many of which are founded upon tribal affiliations (Hweio, 2012, p. 111). Indeed, the existence of tribes in the Middle East precedes the establishment of the modern nation-state. According to Collins (2004, p. 224), tribes are ‘informal identity networks’ predicated on ‘kin or fictive kin bonds’. Kinship requires societal recognition regarding the existence of connection between group members (Weiner, 2016, p. 2). Nevertheless, the notion that tribes are not necessarily established on genetic kinship ties has been widely acknowledged in the literature (Wing, 2016, p. 30). As Wing (2016, p. 30) notes, they are ‘essentially imagined or constructed and represent a “state of mind” and model for organisation and action’. Despite this broad recognition, kinship is invariably conceptualised as being linked to tribal identity in the Gulf.

Abdul-Jabar (2003, p. 76) has noted that tribes are ‘the oldest, most enduring social entity in the Middle East’ even if this is, at the same time, ‘the most polemical entity’. Ultimately, tribes consist of individuals who share common cultural, social, and traditional ties. In the Middle Eastern context, tribes have historically had a social function. However, tribal networks have assumed new, varied, and often political forms (Hweio, 2012, p. 111; Yizraeli, 2016, p. 107). Hence, tribes are not static and are in a constant state of flux in response to changes in the state. In the Gulf, tribes did not go into aggressive confrontation with the state; rather, they tried to adapt to the changes in the system to benefit from the new structure (Al-Najjar, 1996, p. 7). Therefore, tribal affiliations have endured. Despite newly formed states being modernised, an environment has been created in which tribal identity can survive (Hweio, 2012, p. 114). Nevertheless, the old tribal structure had to change to adapt to the new situation where tribes are now divided at a national level.

At the core of tribalism is the concept of *assabiyah* (loyalty) which ‘instils in the members of the tribe a sense of primary or even exclusive solidarity with the tribe over and above any other collective identity and defines social boundaries within the tribe itself’ (Bar, 2020, p. 129). Honigman (1954, p. 307) conceptualises the tribe as a form of social organisation within which individuals have ‘a common territory, a common language, and a common culture’. Both blood ties and culturally constructed kinship bonds bind these informal identity networks (Collins, 2004, p. 224; Wing, 2016, p. 30). Until the beginning of modernisation in the twentieth century, tribalism was the dominant form of identity in Middle Eastern societies. The tribe was a source of both individual and family honour (Bar, 2020, p. 129). Many tribes straddled the borders of new states even while they became incorporated into state institutions. They maintained cross-border relationships with tribal kin which means that ‘the tribal identity tends to reject the demand by the state or the extra-tribal sectarian identity to prioritize the interests of the higher level over the tribe’s direct interests’ (Bar, 2020, p. 129).

Tribal cohesiveness, or what Ibn Khaldun called *Asabiyyah*, has been affected by sovereign boundaries. This relatively recent political construct obliges tribes to conform to new forms of land ownership. This has divided tribes into national groupings that adhere to territorial boundaries rather than kinship ties. Despite the newly formed Gulf nation, tribes have managed to stay connected across borders through visits and communal events that have mainly taken place in the Gulf. For example,

there is the *janadiriyyah* event in Saudi Arabia that celebrates Arab Bedouin heritage and particularly communal poetry readings (Al-Rasheed, 2005, p. 13). Another is the Dhow festival held in Qatar, which hosts a programme of traditional tribal activities such as pearl diving and camel racing (Cooke, 2014, p. 104). It has been promoted as an event designed to raise awareness of tribal heritage both among national citizens and regional visitors (Oxford Business Group, 2014, p. 251). Moreover, visiting *majlis* is still the norm in Gulf tribal society and will be discussed later. *Majlis*, loosely translated as ‘council’ are an all-male council or gathering of tribal leaders who hear community grievances and enforce sanctions to redress wrongdoing (Strobl, 2018, p. 214). This is not the only method that tribes use to maintain cohesion. They have also resorted to the virtual world to disseminate news, keep people updated, and establish virtual forums that approximate *majlis* where tribesmen express their opinions publicly. Therefore, tribes have found technologically innovative ways to sustain cultural cohesion. This will be discussed next, with reference to social media.

3.4 Social Media and Tribes in the Gulf Region

Social media serves as a public sphere for interactions based on solidarity and reciprocity. Yet long before social media, tribes in the Gulf region have organised tribal gatherings that serve the same function. These gatherings are known as *majlis* or communal sittings. *Majlis* have been a significant part of the cultural fabric of the region. They constitute the main social event where members of the public and rulers can socialise and discuss important issues. During the *majlis*, tribes discuss issues pertinent to the community, arbitrate disputes, exchange news, and engage in various other forms of socialisation. In parallel to social media, *majlis* serve as an inclusive space open not only to tribe members and family but also to inhabitants of other neighbourhoods. Arguably, the *majlis* facilitate an informal participatory process where people may interact with their rulers, just as social media does. During these gatherings, tribal leaders act as representatives of tribal history and genealogical lines. They thus serve as conduits through which tribal bonds are formed and perpetuated. This paper argues that social media has revolutionised the way tribes connect with each other and has brought them closer in a new virtual space similar to the *majlis*. Moreover, social media has enabled tribal formations to undermine sovereign boundaries in two ways: through tribal mobilisation of people across borders and the dissemination of tribal discourse beyond fixed localities.

This study argues that social media has heightened the transnational character and fluidity of Gulf tribal identity. The shared ancestry of tribes across the region meant that tribal identification was never totally extinguished by state boundaries that emerged in the aftermath of World War I (Bar, 2020, p. 128). This makes sense given that tribes have been an integral part of the cultural and social fabric of Gulf societies for centuries. Their existence pre-dates the formation of the modern nation-state (Abdul-Jabar, 2003, p. 76; Hweio, 2012, p. 111). Moreover, tribes have played an important role in state formation in the Gulf. Ruling families mobilised tribes to

establish political power within the new state institutions as well as to defend national sovereignty against incursions by other regional states. For example, Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud established the KSA in 1932 after the fall of two Saudi states by encouraging various tribes to extend their loyalties to him and, by default, the Kingdom that he embodied (Bowen, 2015, p. 105). To varying degrees, all ruling Gulf families established their authority as leaders within new state formations using the enduring social bonds that characterise tribal groups (see Marvin, 2016, p. 401; Rush, 1987, p. 2; Zahlan, 1979, p. 28).

However, during the 1970s and 1980s, the rise of the nation-state appeared to harken the retreat of tribal systems as a political formation (Al-Kuwari, 2018). Once the central state served the basic needs of its citizens, the tribe was no longer needed as a locus of political, social, and economic security for its members. By building a welfare state and granting key political posts to important tribes, the family's political legitimacy was secured. Ruling families expected subjects in return not to interfere in governance decisions (Valeri, 2018). Yet since the Arab Spring, tribal identity has enjoyed a resurgence. Tribal affiliations were mobilised to criticise the failures of the nation-state, particularly their inability to address 'extremism and corruption' in the societies they presided over (Bar, 2020, p. 129; Maisel, 2015). After 2011, tribal rhetoric made increasing historical references to a glorious tribal past to construct a common set of values that would bind the Gulf public during a period of political and economic instability.

Public mobilisation is increasingly constructed through tribal categories rather than national ones (Bar, 2020, p. 129). Individuals responded to regional instability after 2011 by mobilising around various sub-state identities such as the tribe, the clan, and the family. This post-Arab Spring revival of the tribe occurred even outside rural and peri-urban areas where we would expect state loyalty to be more fragile (see, e.g. Dukhan, 2014, p. 1; Fattah, 2011, p. 1; Zubaida, 2012, p. 568). Even in urban centres where tribal identification declined after modernisation, the political salience of the tribe was reasserted as an 'anchor for the individual' (Bar, 2020, p. 129). In the KSA, for example, tribal groups are exerting greater influence in the public sphere through tribal events and connections with the government. This renegotiation has been underpinned by traditional forms of identity based on genealogical and kinship solidarity (Maisel, 2015, p. 1) rather than claims based upon the notion of universal human rights or the rights and obligations attached to the state and its citizens. For example, since the crisis began, the Sheikh Shafi Al-Hajri of the Bani Hajer branch of the Qahtan tribe has addressed members to support Mohammed bin Salman in his opposition to Qatar (Alasiouti, 2017). Another example, a Qatari branch of the Al Ghafran tribe fled to the KSA in September 2017 to escape Qatari persecution for its Saudi sympathies, according to its leader Sheikh Taleb bin Shraim (Dorsey, 2017).

These cross-border tribal affinities have become politically consequential particularly due to the influence of social media. Aside from using the *majlis* as a platform for communication, tribes have communicated, mobilised, and publicised their agenda using other traditional public relations campaigns. For example, between the late 1990s and early 2000s, Saudi tribes competed with Islamist, Shia and liberal ideologies by publishing their agenda through television, literature, poetry, and popular

culture (Maisel, 2015, p. 1). According to Maisel (2015, pp. 5–6), examples of television programmes that forwarded the tribal agenda include the popular Ramadan series which covered the Bedouins and their traditional lifestyles, such as *musalsal badawi* (Bedouin television dramas). For poetry, Kurpershoek (1999, p. 77) argues that poetry both ‘conserves the past in the present, not as a distant memory but as a lived reality’ and provides ‘an important ideological underpinning’ for contemporary tribal society by sustaining their traditionally oral culture. These traditional channels enabled tribes to avoid government reprisals and scrutiny since their message was distributed through cultural channels that appeared to be apolitical. Through these platforms, tribes were able to disseminate their message about the imperatives of renewing tribal values and histories to a wide audience.

New media advancements, population growth, economic development, and advancements in communication have instigated social changes which tribes have actively responded to. The tribal use of social media in the aftermath of the Arab Spring comes under this. Social media is a powerful communication tool and medium of public discourse in which user participation and interaction are central. As much as tribal uptake of social media is challenging traditional forms of interaction through the *majlis*, popular culture, literature, and so on, social media has enhanced traditional tribal affinities and reasserted traditional values. Tribal groups are leveraging social media to mobilise themselves around political issues, project their messages, and interact socially. For example, many tribes, such as Al-Murrah and Otaiba, have launched their own messaging services to keep the tribespeople informed of all the events taking place that are related to the tribe or its interests. Such tribal services focus on the interests of a branch and do not provide information about other branches in the tribe. This was observed during fieldwork in the region in 2020–2021 and occurred specifically via Short Message Service (SMS) and WhatsApp.

In the KSA, the advent of social media has provided tribes with new platforms to express and implement their traditional values in the context of modern society (Maisel, 2014, p. 100). Social media has changed interactions between tribes and authorities and between interpersonal communication between tribe members. According to Maisel (2014, p. 100), tribes have capitalised on social media to lobby for a new social pact within Saudi society. This can be seen in northern tribes, such as the Shammar, Anazah, Ajman, and Mutayr, and southern tribes such as the Zahran and Ghamid. All have used social media to contribute to the national discourse around tribal marriage, the interpretation of tribal histories, the role of customary law in arbitrating legal disputes, and tribal solidarity (Maisel, 2014, p. 100). Social media is providing an online discussion board for tribes where, much like traditional *majlis*, individual and shared opinions are expressed on a range of political, social, and legal issues. Unlike the *majlis*, however, social media has enabled faster communication and wider dissemination of messages to a larger group of followers. With regard to cell phones, Maisel (2014, p. 100) suggests that tribal members in Saudi Arabia are now better connected, not only within the kingdom but also transnationally because they connect with relatives in neighbouring countries.

These dynamics have changed the nature of tribal communication. In the past, intra-tribal communication was structured by its social hierarchies. In the contemporary context, tribal members can actively engage with their elders and those who are not socially equal to them. Women tribal members are also able to communicate more freely with their male counterparts (Maisel, 2014, p. 102). The Saudi case illustrates how tribal members can engage in discourse and exchange information concerning their history and their future, even if this does not align with state attempts to encourage a culture of national unity. Issues concerning tribes have received significant support among tribal masses and have captured their attention on matters of importance such as *nasab* or ancestry and history. Northern and Southern tribes have contributed to national debates around marriage strategies, the role of customary law in legal disputes, and increased political participation for tribes through online tribal forums as well as through local and national elections (Maisel, 2014, pp. 116, 118).

The Saudi case illustrates how social media facilitates the development of social capital among tribal members and serves as a tool for group communication. However, the uptake of social media by tribes is not limited to mere social interaction. Tribes have also used social media as an instrument of political organisation and activism. This function was evident during the 2011 uprising in Kuwait, which was largely successful due to social media-led mobilisation by youth movements who adopted tribal opposition as one of their causes (Dazi-Heni, 2015, p. 1). In November 2010, youth movements launched a social media campaign under the banner of '*al-sha'b yurid isqat Nasser*' or 'the people want the fall of Nasser' (Dazi-Heni, 2015, p. 1). In contrast to previous movements in Kuwait, such as the one in 2006, the 2011 movement adopted a more politicised and tribal approach to political opposition due to endorsements from tribal leaders. In 2010, tribal MPs allied with Islamist and liberal counterparts to defend constitutional and civil liberties in the face of government media repression and restrictions on public association, showing that tribal identities were not a spent force when it came to political mobilisation (Al-Nakib, 2014, p. 733).

This politicised tribal movement was spearheaded by educated young people who, in effect, altered traditional approaches to tribal politics. In the past, tribal politics involved tribes campaigning for access to additional resources from the state (Dazi-Heni, 2015, p. 1). In Kuwait, these traditional approaches were beneficial for the ruling class from the 1960s onwards. They granted tribes access to resources in a way that undermined the restive urban middle class (Dazi-Heni, 2015, p. 3). Tribal mobilisation and activism in Kuwait changed after the power of Islamist movements grew in tribal regions and after an increase in the number of educated people. Social media use has accompanied these changes in tribal political activism among the younger tribal members. It has been noted that:

this evolution contributed to widening the dichotomy between the ancient political order (ruling family, old merchant elites and traditional tribal opposition) and a new generation of political activists coming mainly from peripheral tribal districts, but also from older urban ones (with a mixture of Islamic and secular leanings), all denouncing the lack of economic vision for the country and the rigid administration plagued by corruption. (Dazi-Heni, 2015, p. 1)

Younger Kuwaitis, unlike their predecessors, used Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp for political mobilisation during the 2011 movement. Since 2011, WhatsApp and Twitter have become the primary political communication platforms. Recently, Snapchat have also gained more attention due to its uniqueness and simplicity regarding sharing short videos in a matter of seconds. Tribes are able to broadcast their messages quickly using these platforms (Dazi-Heni, 2015, p. 1). In this sense, social media has allowed younger tribal members to transcend the limits of the tribal *majlis*, which were confined to a particular locality and had limited audience reach. Despite the social and cultural significance of the *majlis*, these sittings rely upon face-to-face dialogue which has become increasingly difficult due to changes in lifestyle, among other factors such as COVID-19 pandemic. Technological developments now mean that a larger number of people across a wider geographical range can receive information in a matter of seconds.

3.5 Social Media, Tribal Organisation, and the Gulf Crisis

On the 5th of June 2017, the KSA, the UAE, and Bahrain formally severed ties with Qatar. The official narrative from the three countries justified their decision by accusing Qatar's funding and harbouring of terrorist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, ISIS, and Al-Qaeda's affiliates such as Al-Nusra Front. By meddling in the domestic affairs of its GCC cohorts, their sovereignty was undermined, instigating domestic instability, and backing Iranian attempts to destabilise countries by encouraging revolutions through the use of media platforms (Alshabnan, 2018, p. 1; Solomon, 2017). Qatar was also accused of working collectively with Houthi militias to weaken the efforts of the Arab Coalition to support the Yemeni government (Alshabnan, 2018, p. 1).

Qatar was barred from using the sea routes and airspace controlled by the blockading countries. The KSA closed its land border with Qatar and ordered all its citizens in Qatar to return home. Qatari citizens resident in the KSA were also ordered to leave the country within 14 days. The UAE and Bahrain issued similar directives to their citizens, and Qatar was barred from the Arab Coalition represented in Yemen (Alshabnan, 2018, p. 1; Tawfeeq et al., 2017). Despite all the actions taken by the three countries, most international actors remain unconvinced and interpret the move as an attempt to undercut Qatar's foreign policy independence (MacDonald, 2021). During the early stages of the crisis, the KSA actively mobilised tribes in its Eastern province who had a common ancestry with Qatari tribes. This was in order to demonstrate loyalty to the KSA and to mobilise oppositional tribal factions against the government of Qatar (Bianco & Stansfield, 2018, p. 615).

The KSA has historically used competing tribal sovereignty claims to exert influence in Qatar, thus betraying their tribal conception of *Dirahs* or territorial sovereignty (Baskan & Wright, 2011, p. 106; Zahlan, 1979, p. 16). These competing claims of tribal sovereignty have highlighted the 'historical influences on contemporary attitudes, relationships and prejudices between neighbouring states' (Baskan &

Wright, 2011, p. 106). The KSA has previously mobilised the large Al-Murrah tribe, located partly within its borders and partly in Qatar, for political purposes. The Al-Murrah tribe constitutes one of the largest tribes in Qatar (Al-Shawi, 1994, p. 3; Al-Shawi & Gardner, 2013, p. 54) and different branches of the same tribe are present in various countries. With respect to the Gulf Crisis, tribal notables on the Qatari side publicly pledged allegiance to the Qatari Emir in the aftermath of the blockade. Both Qatari and Saudi-based Al-Murrah groups arranged a number of *majlis*, as did the Bani Hajer tribe. These gatherings were designed to mobilise dissent and allegiance through traditional forms of media such as the Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera television networks in Saudi Arabia and Qatar. In November 2017, for example, Al Arabiya showed a video of Sheikh Sultan bin Suhaim as he addressed thousands of members of the Bani Hajer tribe in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia, proselytising upon the imperative of regime change in Qatar (Dorsey, 2017; Elbalad, 2017). He pointed to the evidence of Qatari human rights violations linked to displacement, the stripping of citizenship from Al Ghafran members, and the funding of terrorist groups (Al-Khalifa, 2019, p. 1). Over the course of the crisis, there has been a shift in the way such videos are disseminated. Social media has allowed for videos to be shared in real time and broadcast to a wider audience of tribal members, thus mobilising support for the respective agendas of the opposing sides. For the KSA and the UAE particularly, support for regime change in Qatar has been mobilised via the dissemination of videos of tribal *majlis* online, particularly via Twitter. In 2017, for example, Mohammad Bin Salman was shown having discussions with the leader of the Al-Murrah. This video went viral on Twitter, stirring up tribal sentiments both inside and outside of Qatar (Aldosari, 2019, p. 10; Bianco & Stansfield, 2018, p. 615). The leader of the Al-Murrah tribe, Taleb bin Shraim, went on record saying that the Qatar government had unjustly treated the Al-Murrah tribe, and that tribal loyalty must be switched to Al-Saud. In a tribal gathering, he was also supported by Sheikh Sultan bin Suhaim who remarked:

I stand before you today in solidarity with Sheikh Taleb bin Shraim and with every Qatari who lost their nationality (Qatari citizenship) unjustly or didn't have their rights granted or was arrested for demanding their rights. We call on the world to recognise the ongoing violations against the Qatari people who are unable to enter their country and are afraid of entering, even though I am one of them. I'm forced to leave my country and I cannot enter it safely, however, our situation will be better because of God's power. (quoted in Aldosari, 2019, p. 11)

During this speech, he further declared the king of Saudi Arabia to be the leader of the entire Muslim *Ummah* (Aldosari, 2019, p. 11). The presence of Sheikh Sultan in the event of Banu Yaam aimed at showing that he enjoys wider support from tribes as a prospective leader of Qatar if the blockade were successful. This suggested that the blockading countries would support a coup attempt in order to disrupt Qatari stability. The viral video makes it apparent that technology has played a central role in allowing tribes to virtually congregate, thus reinvigorating the political function of the tribe once extinguished by modernisation and the rise of the nation-state. The instantaneous nature of social media also enabled Qatari tribal members to quickly deny allegations that they were loyal to their counterparts in the KSA (Aldosari, 2019,

p. 11). For example, on Twitter, members of Al-Murrah in Qatar launched and used the hashtag #Al_Murrah_soor_Qatar, which translates as *Al-Murrah is the wall of Qatar* (The New Khalij, 2017). Moreover, Qatari members of the Al-Murrah pledged loyalty to the Qatari state and supported the government initiative to consolidate the Qatari national identity (Almasri, 2017). This illustrates how social media's interactive format enabled rapid dialogue between tribal groups—dialogues that responded quickly to developments in inter-state relations. Through this dialogue, new understandings of tribes as political formations emerged. Now, it was undeniable that tribes were political formations with substantial influence over and impact upon the contemporary Gulf state and, in the light of the crucial strategic importance of the Middle East, upon the global stage. This case study demonstrates the positioning of social media platforms, such as Twitter, as online discussion boards for tribes where, much like traditional *majlis*, individual and communal opinions are expressed on a range of political, social, and legal issues.

On the 24th of December 2017, a senior sheikh within the Al-Murrah tribe named Sheikh Mansour bin Rashed once again used social media to mobilise support for anti-Qatar dissent on the basis of tribal solidarity in the aftermath of the blockade. Sheikh Mansour bin Rashed recorded a video that was distributed via Twitter which rejected the policies of the Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad and documenting hostile actions against the Al-Murrah tribe (Habib, 2017). The video featured Sheikh Mansour bin Rashed saying, 'I denounce the ruling regime's policy, which supports terrorism, deploys Turkish and Iranian troops in the emirate and persecutes members of [the] Al-Murrah tribe' (Habib, 2017). According to Habib (2017), 'Sheikh Mansour broke his long silence and explained that his existence inside the rich gas state makes him fear being arrested by the authorities, adding that he may have his citizenship revoked by the Qatari regime'. Through the video circulated on Twitter, Sheikh Mansour was attempting to spark debate about the dispute between the Qatari authorities and Al-Murrah tribe members in Qatar who had decided to side with Qatar against their fellow tribesmen. Those tribesmen who challenged Qatar had their citizenship revoked for supporting the blockading countries and for their agenda regarding Qatar. For the government of Qatar, these tribal members constituted a potential threat that could disrupt the domestic front. For Saudi members of the Al-Murrah tribe, the revocation of citizenship constituted an arbitrary act that violated human rights provisions. Twitter was used by the Saudi branch of the tribe to oppose what they considered to be destabilising policies propagated by the Qatari regime. The narrative that the Al-Murrah tribe was wronged by the Qatari government has been a popular tactic used by Saudi tribal members to mobilise dissent within Qatar's borders and other neighbouring countries. This has historical precedent: the Saudi government used General Ali Muhsin, who was one of Saleh's former allies, and other tribal leaders as proxies within the Yemen War while it has long played on tribal lineage as a marker of sectarian belonging (Kamrava, 2018, pp. 61, 198).

The Banu Yaam tribe in Saudi Arabia has also used social media to criticise the Qatari government in the aftermath of the blockade and to exert pressure on the regime. The Banu Yaam tribe has its origins in the Najran province of Saudi Arabia (Ismail, 2012, p. 412), but it also shares a common ancestry with the Qahtan branch

of Arabian tribes—the Banu Hamdan (Habib, 2017). Consequently, the Banu Yaam originate from southwestern Arabia although they have gradually migrated to small villages and no longer live a nomadic way of life (Habib, 2017). The Banu Yaam share a common ancestry with the 'Ujman and Al-Murrah tribes, and they all have their own triple tribal alliance. In 2017, hundreds of members of the Banu Yaam tribe mobilised on the Saudi borders with Qatar to exercise dissent against the Qatari regime because they had stripped tribal leaders such as Sheikh Taleb bin Shraim of Qatari nationality (Habib, 2017).

The gathering exerted pressure on the Qatari regime and as it had been organised by Saudi members of the Al-Murrah tribe, social media was used by Saudi Banu Yaam members to mobilise support for their cause. Here, we see how social media lead to the snowballing of inter-tribal support concentrated around their opposition to a common opponent, the Qatari regime. Members of the tribe used social media platforms including Twitter and Facebook to disseminate videos and photos of the gathering using the hashtag #*Ajtima_Qabayl_Yaam*, which translates as *meeting of Yaam tribes* (BBC, 2017). These gatherings represented the enactment of tribal pride as people in the Arabian Peninsula see tribal meetings as huge events that allow the tribe to defend the rights of its members. The Qahtan tribe in the KSA also used similar techniques to protest against the Qatari regime. They used videos and photos on social media to provide real-time documentation of their demands for the Qatari government to define a roadmap for dealing with violations against tribal opponents and its sour relations with GCC neighbours (Maguid, 2017). In November 2017, after the tribal meeting of Qahtan and Bani Hajer, videos and photos have been circulated showing hundreds of vehicles moving in the direction of the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia to show support for Sheikh Shafi bin Nasser Al-Hajri, the leader of the Shaml of the Bani Hajer tribe (Maguid, 2017).

Blockading countries and their tribal affiliations used the principle of citizenship to agitate tribes in Qatar and convince them that the Qatari regime had treated them unfairly. It is also evident that social media enabled the leaders of the blockade to mobilise the tribe as a tool against Qatar, although one might argue that they were not able to create an effective rebel movement by using this strategy. With tribal opposition against the Qatari regime increasingly being launched via social media platforms, pro-Qatari tribes located within its borders have also responded via social media. They rejected the attempt of the KSA and the UAE to exploit tribal connectivity for political purposes, voicing their support for the Qatari government's attempts to consolidate an overarching national identity. Qataris have launched and widely used the hashtag #*Qabylati_Qatar*, which translates as *My Tribe is Qatar*, on Twitter (Murad, 2018). The hashtag was also used widely by expats and migrant workers who were included in this renewed sense of national unity. It has been argued that there is immense value in the hashtag as it demonstrates that Qatari society is civilised and what connects its members is the state. The positioning of Qatar-based tribes provides empirical evidence that contemporary tribes do not act in the same way as their predecessors in terms of mobilising around tribal sentiments. The different responses of Qatari and Saudi-based tribes indicate that the strength of national identity intervene. While the KSA attempted to rally tribal sentiments among

the Al-Murrah tribe to support its political agenda in Qatar, Qatar-based factions of the tribe did not mobilise on the basis of tribal solidarity and sentiments.

Social media has provided a platform for tribe members to engage in critical political discourses in a more nuanced way that transcends and does not rely on traditional markers of solidarity and bonding. These trends have nevertheless not prevented leaders of the blockade from using social media to disseminate the outcomes of meetings and conferences for affiliate tribes to support their cause against Qatar. Aside from the social media-led response, other strategies to counteract Saudi attempts to exploit transnational tribal affiliations via social media have been exploited by the government of Qatar. For example, tribes participated in the National Day celebrations as one group and in one place known as *Ardat Ahl Qatar* (sword dancing of the people of Qatar) instead of having a tribal celebration for each tribe. Consequently, Qatari tribes have resorted to similar tactics to show their support for the Emir of Qatar and to reject the acts of their fellow tribesmen in neighbouring countries.

3.6 Conclusion

This paper aimed to critically discuss the use of social media and its effect on the tribes in the Gulf. The paper began by arguing that tribes in the Gulf region have long organised themselves in the public sphere in the form of tribal gatherings known as *majlis* or communal sittings. However, this is changing due to the advent of social media and other forms of technology. Social media has provided tribes with new platforms to express and implement traditional values, albeit in the context of modern society. In examining this phenomenon, the study contributes to the literature on globalisation, identity, and social change in four ways. First, it reveals how a sub-state, non-Western identity with transnational reach is interacting with the foreign policy and domestic policy decisions of nation-states. Nation-states exploited cultural ties and rhetorical references to traditional customs, challenging realist frameworks that explain state behaviour by referring solely to material pressures exerted by the anarchic international order. Second, it shows how the resurgence of parochial identities is often predicated open, and not necessarily in competition with, quintessential processes of globalisation such as rapid information flows, technological transfers, and digital communication. Third, it shows how these identities, in utilising cross-border channels of communications, are not dissolving the state construct in any straightforward way. Throughout the crisis, the tribal identity and unit were not necessarily poised in opposition to the state as an abstract notion, nor did they always display a self-understanding that positioned themselves as external to the state. When tribes were involved in the crisis for political mobilisation, tribes within Qatar asserted their right to belong to the Qatari body politic while their counterparts in Saudi Arabia equally insisted on their rights to the same.

Finally, the case study upsets simplistic notions of cultural identities as geographically bounded sub-units of the global international order that react in an ad hoc

manner to deterritorialising tendencies from above. The crisis was shaped by sub-state, transnational identities that were not limited to narrow geographical locales while nonetheless adhering to sharply particularistic notions of belonging. Not only did tribal identity reassert itself in the rhetoric of anti-Qatar opposition, but tribes also served as sites through which political practices were enacted. They leveraged their potential to set in motion domestic changes in order to affect inter-state relations, showing themselves as active agents. Of particular interest is how the blockading countries and their tribal affiliations used social media platforms to assert the principle of citizenship and agitate tribes in Qatar against the regime. This shows how tribes can represent a source of unrest when mobilised or central authority weakens, something that has also occurred in Iraq and Libya. Yet beyond their negative destabilising potential, tribes have also shown themselves to be motors of domestic social change in a more substantive sense. They have used social media to lobby for a new social pact within governing states by showing loyalty and support to respective governments, generating new ideas about the relationship between state and citizen. Moreover, digital technologies prompted new communal tribal practices that were not in evidence previously, showing the historical plasticity of the tribal form. Social media is serving as an online discussion board for tribes where, much like traditional *majlis*, individual and shared opinions are expressed on a range of political, social, and legal issues. Unlike the *majlis*, social media has enabled more rapid forms of expression and has facilitated the wider dissemination of messages to a larger group of followers. In short, the Gulf Crisis underlines how tribal identities are neither static nor anti-modern but are instigators and legitimators of social change at the domestic and state levels.

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Chapter 4

Chai Karak: The Politics of Tea and the Coloniality of Appropriation in the UAE



Abdulla Moaswes

Abstract Chai karak is a popular tea beverage in in the UAE and the other Arab Gulf states that is widely consumed across class and ethnic lines, particularly among wealthy UAE citizens and the poorer South Asian manual labourers who make up a large proportion of the country’s population—also often thought of as the group that brought the beverage to the UAE. This study primarily aims to understand the effects of Emirati claims of ownership over chai karak in terms of its political and socioeconomic impact. It does this through an analysis of analogous case studies and a series of interviews with chai karak vendors in the UAE. This methodology explored the item’s position with regard to three main research areas: the relationships produced by claims of its ownership, their impact on the political and socioeconomic status of South Asians in the cafeteria industry, and what the ensuing contestations show about the UAE’s wider social relations. The study concludes that the discourse of ownership produced around chai karak resembles those produced as a result of colonial relationships. In this UAE, this creates a form of consent-based hegemony that acts alongside other mechanisms of maintaining the privilege of citizens of the country.

Keywords Politics of food · Chai vendors and chaiwalas · Homo culinarius · Israeli appropriation of hummus · British curry

4.1 Introduction

The term chai karak¹ (literally ‘strong tea’) refers to a type of tea beverage that is popular in the Arab Gulf States. While there is no historical account of how the beverage came to become so popular in the region, it is believed by many that ‘South Asian workers in the region brought with them their love of milky tea when they left their homes’ and moved to the Gulf (Chadalavada, 2011). Dubai-based food blogger,

¹ Also known as karak/kadak chai.

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Arva Ahmed (2017), refers to chai karak as ‘that democratizing drink that fuels Dubai: the jewellers and tailors of Meena Bazaar, workers on construction sites, fishmongers in Al Ras, hot-blooded race-car youth in Jumeirah and Satwa and middle-class Indian families seated al fresco in Mankhool’. She also describes chai karak as ‘[seeping] its way into local food culture and [becoming] a staple drink in Emirati homes and restaurants’. Emirati journalist Elham Al Dhaheeri (2015), however, argues that chai karak is an already established staple within Emirati homes, reflecting a wider trend of the UAE claiming ownership over the beverage. Other examples are present in the VisitDubai website—run by the Dubai Corporation of Tourism and Commerce Marketing—which lists chai karak as an Arabic drink, and in gentrified local cafés and restaurants that serve the beverage. One such example is Karak House, which claims to be a ‘homegrown Emirati restaurant [that draws] on traditional Emirati tastes while adding a contemporary twist’ (in Johnson, 2017). Many other popular examples of this trend also exist, such as the restaurants Al Fanar, Logma, and Local Bites.

This study primarily aims to investigate how Emirati claims of ownership over chai karak have impacted the relational status of South Asians in the UAE. It will do this by critically analysing first-hand oral history accounts of South Asian tea vendors across the Dubai-Sharjah area, as well as by analysing a body of secondary literature in order to develop a theoretical and contextual base. The research questions that this study seeks to address are the following:

- What kind of racialised relationships have emerged from the Emirati claims of ownership over chai karak?
- How have these relationships affected the political and socioeconomic status of the South Asians who work with chai karak?
- What does the contestation around chai karak reflect in terms of trends within the UAE’s social relations?

In response to the first question, this study will argue that the main relationship that has emerged is one characterised by cultural appropriation and exploitation. Richard Rogers defines cultural appropriation as being ‘the use of a culture’s symbols, artefacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture’ (2006, p. 474). For Rogers, cultural exploitation is one of the four types of cultural appropriation, alongside cultural exchange, dominance, and transculturation (p. 475). He defines cultural exploitation as being ‘the appropriation of elements of a subordinated culture by a dominant culture without substantive reciprocity, permission, and/or compensation’ (p. 477). The importance of recognising such a phenomenon is drawn from bell hooks’ assertion that ‘minority peoples need to critically engage questions of their representation and its influence on questions of identity formation’ (Coombe, 1993, p. 267). It is also important to note that the relationship produced between Emiratis and South Asians regarding chai karak’s appropriation strongly resemble those produced by histories and practices of colonial (and settler colonial) exchange and integration.

With regard to the second question, this study will argue that the relationships produced have entrenched class divides that are largely based on ethnic origin.

Speaking on cultural appropriation in the USA, Jason Rodriguez's assertion that ideological discourses are 'essential for reproducing the racialised social system' (2006, p. 645) can also be applied to the UAE. In relation to the role of food in perpetuating discourse, Ronald Ranta explains that 'adding a nationality to food increases its perceived value and appeal' (2015, p. 34), while Claude Fischler explains that 'food is central to our sense of identity [because] the way any given human group eats helps it assert its diversity, hierarchy and organisation, but also, at the same time, both its oneness and the otherness of whoever eats differently' (1988, p. 275). Speaking on class specifically, Pierre Bourdieu writes that 'the art of eating and drinking remains one of the few areas in which the working classes explicitly challenge the legitimate art of living' (1979, p. 179) while Janine Chi describes food as serving 'as a symbolic means of expressing belief systems and social class distinctions' (2006, p. 160).

Finally, this study will argue that the contestation around chai karak in the UAE is reflective of the both the 'unique societies' that 'migration and the international mobility of labour are commonly believed to have created' in the Gulf states (Fargues, 2011, p. 273) as well as of a form of cultural extractivism resembling that seen in colonial relationships. The role of the South Asian diaspora in the Gulf is of particular importance because 'the South Asian labour community is a vibrant community without which Gulf economies perhaps would not survive' (Jain & Oommen, 2016, p. 3). The discourses are also reflective of 'certain characteristic features of South Asian manpower, namely docility, political neutrality, flexibility, willingness to work at marginal wage differentials, and capacity to work hard also helped in this process' (p. 4). Furthermore, this practice of appropriation itself shows another facet of the measures taken to 'maintain a highly privileged position of the nationals', alongside 'the sponsorship system, the rotational system of expatriate labour to limit the duration of foreigners' stay, curbs on the naturalisation and citizenship rights of those who have been naturalised', among others (Kapiszewski, 2016, p. 48).

4.2 Methodology

As a result of a lack of availability of existing literature regarding the politics of chai karak in general and in the UAE and the rest of the Arab Gulf states in particular, this study will rely on primary and secondary sources in order to address the above questions. The primary sources that this study uses are oral history interviews with South Asians who work in close proximity to chai karak across the Dubai-Sharjah area. The secondary literature will consist of theoretical, contextual and historical literature, as well as literature that relates to analogous case studies that will be used in order to situate the data analysed from the interviews into existing debates regarding the politics and appropriation of food.

Five in-depth interviews were conducted for the purpose of this study, with the participants coming from a variety of backgrounds in terms of their ethnic heritage and professional experience. All the interviews were anonymised, with pseudonyms being used within the text of this paper. The interviews covered each participant's

experience of consuming and working with chai karak, as well as their perspectives regarding its history and place within the social and cultural fabric of the UAE and South Asia. As well as these interviews being the only way in which it was possible to gather data that directly addressed all of the research questions, interviews are important because they are ‘an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest [that see] the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and [emphasise] the social situatedness of research data’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 14). Furthermore, oral history, as ‘a means for transforming both the content and purpose of history [...] can give back to the people who made and experienced history, through their own words, a central place’ (Thompson, 1978, p. 3). When it comes to addressing questions of social relations, oral history is a doubly important method because ‘the boundary between what takes place outside the narrator and what happens inside, between what concerns him or her and what concerns the group, becomes quite thin, and personal ‘truth’ may coincide with collective ‘imagination’ (Portelli, 1981, p. 99).

It is important to note that the data gathered through the interviews may be coloured by a specific experience of state intervention that was relayed by one of the participants. He stated that many chaiwalas—a term for those that serve chai karak—and their managers fear being questioned by undercover policemen and investigators from the local municipality who visit chai karak cafeterias regularly. As a result of this, some of the responses provided may not be entirely truthful nor reflective of the beliefs or opinions of the participant. This claim was given credence when another participant expressed trepidation when he thought he heard the word ‘municipality’ during the interview. Additionally, an anonymous local businessman corroborated the claim. However, the data that was gathered was still highly useful and sufficiently addressed the research aims of this study.

This study also utilises a number of secondary sources for the purpose of contextualising the primary data and forming a strong framework within which its analysis can take place. The secondary sources that this study used are divided into three categories, with the first two being composed of theoretical materials and the final one of historical materials.

The first category is literature that relates to case studies that are analogous to the subject of this study. The aim of using these sources is to relate the politics of chai karak to other examples of food politics within the broader region of study, primarily West and South Asia. This section begins with an analysis of Liora Gvion’s study, *Cuisines of Poverty as a Means of Empowerment: Arab Food in Israel*, which explains how the exoticisation of food leads to the objectification and subjugation of marginalised communities. Gvion’s study also includes first-hand accounts by Palestinian activists and restaurateurs, as well as an analysis of them. The second part of this section addresses the topic of political and economic conditions disrupting the connection between food and belonging, as expressed in the works of Ronald Ranta and Yonatan Mendel, mainly through the book that they co-authored, *From the Arab Other to the Israeli Self*. It is worth noting that both of the so-far-mentioned texts assess the politics of food in an Israeli settler colonial context. The third part

of this section assesses the book *Food Culture in Colonial Asia* by Cecilia Leong-Salobir, which looks at the politics of food produced as a result of colonial encounters, specifically with reference to the British appropriation of Indian so-called curry.

The second category of secondary literature relates to established theoretical works within the field of food anthropology. The aim of this category is to provide theoretical context to the arguments made as part of this study and to develop a theoretical framework that can be applied to the primary data. It opens with an assessment of the connection between food and culture, as explained by Pasi Falk in his works *The Consuming Body* and *Homo Culinarius: Towards an Historical Anthropology of Taste*. After this, it addresses the connection between food and identity from a theoretical standpoint, relying on Claude Fischler's study *Food, Self, and Identity*. The final theorist whose work will be looked at in this category is Pierre Bourdieu, who in his book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* addresses the connection between food and social class.

The final category of secondary literature relates to literature regarding the migration and presence of South Asians in the Gulf. This category seeks to provide a historical and socio-political context to the analysis of the primary data. Upon establishing the importance of the presence of South Asians in the UAE and Gulf more generally, this section will look at the commodification of South Asian labour and the political position of South Asians in the region. The main scholars whose works will be looked at in this part of the study are Girijesh Pant, Prakash C. Jain, and Andrzej Kapiszewski.

4.3 Analogous Case Studies

As explained, this section will begin with an analysis of Liora Gvion's work on cuisines of poverty in Palestine and Israel. The main phenomenon that can be observed within this study is the manner in which the politically and socioeconomically dominant group within society, in this case Israeli Jews, are able to both de-value and exoticise the status of the marginalised group's ordinary food items simultaneously. This is done by modifying the taste of these items to suit that of the dominant group (2006, pp. 307–308). This view is informed by the testimony of Warda, a Palestinian political activist from the Galilee, who told Gvion that Israelis have 'appropriated only dishes which have suited [their] eating habits' and that they 'have changed them accordingly regardless of the way we eat them', ending her statement by saying that she felt disrespected (p. 309). The main impact of such a process of appropriation is to transform the marginalised groups into objects whose express purpose is to supply such foods to the dominant group. Amin, a Palestinian restaurant owner from Haifa who Gvion interviewed, articulated this by stating that his Jewish clients view him as being only good for producing 'hummus and kebobs', with the rest of his food all being 'disgusting and not worth even trying', despite one of these clients claiming that he considers Amin to be 'a brother' (p. 308). Mendel and Ranta describe Gvion's process of appropriation as being 'not part of a new

process of inclusion and of creating new spaces for coexistence and cooperation, but rather a new and useful mechanism for subduing and domesticating a threatening space' (2016, p. 99).

With regard to food and belonging, Ranta argues that 'despite its seeming ordinary nature, food holds an important place in how we view our national identities' and that 'food represents the nation's attachment to its land, history, and culture' (2015, p. 40). He carries on to claim that it is for this reason that 'certain food items are fought over and contested', which is very significant in the context of this study since tea was historically at the centre of pretexts for colonial wars and power struggles during encounters between the British Empire and other powers present on the Asian continent in the past (Moxham, 2003). This connection, between food and belonging, can be disrupted by political and economic forces, however, according to Mendel and Ranta. By way of example, they bring up Diana, a famous eatery in Nazareth that describes itself as an Israeli Grill Restaurant. They argue that 'the [restaurant's] sign, bringing together the Palestinian-related name Diana, with the invented concept of 'Israeli Grill' and with a Kosher certificate' is a result of Jewish-Israeli 'dominance and hegemony' forcing the Palestinian owners of Diana to compromise in order 'to ensure the flow of Jewish-Israeli customers and money into the restaurant' (2016, p. 78). From this, Mendel and Ranta conclude that the censoring of Arab and Arab Palestinian contributions to the food landscape of Israel is due to 'political, commercial and ideological reasons' (p. 88).

Finally, it is important to assess the case study of the British appropriation of Indian curry. The point of comparison to which this relates to the Emirati appropriation of chai karak comes from the fact that 'while most scholars would agree that curry by itself is not a dish that had its genesis in India it is, for all intent and purposes, the most identifiable dish that has been associated with India' (Leong-Salobir, 2011, p. 40). Leong-Salobir argues that 'although curry was adopted and adapted by colonizers it was not invented by them', rather 'curry figured prominently in the colonial imagination [and] its culinary creation was a collective but haphazard effort of both the colonizer and the colonized'. In describing this effort, she states that 'curries were created, adapted and modified through the input of indigenous cooks, by the availability of ingredients in particular regions, by the social mores of the time, and also by health and nutritional thinking of the nineteenth century' (pp. 39–40). As will be explained later in this study, an interesting point of comparison can be drawn between the canned milk of chai karak and the powder of colonial Indian curry, which Leong-Salobir posits 'was developed by the British to pander to the fondness for curry that the colonials had acquired in India' (p. 45). This demonstrates that there exists a precedent for the appropriation of South Asian food items that is based on colonially-influenced alteration, thus linking the study of Leong-Salobir to those of Gvion, Mendel, and Ranta.

4.4 Theoretical Framework

The first theorist whose works will be assessed in this part of the study is Pasi Falk, who argues that ‘taste preference is a multi-relational concept which cannot be reduced to a relationship between the objective properties of food-stuffs and the sensory-physiological reaction of the human ingestive and digestive organism’ (1991, p. 757). This is significant because it provides a socio-cultural element to understanding the popularity of food items within communities. Falk also posits that ‘at the sensory level taste preferences are necessarily also related to and even determined by the symbolic principles which translate the material universe into representations of the edible vs. inedible, which are then further specified into different subcategories according to taboos and ritual rules’. This distinction that he draws between edible and inedible forms the basis of the *homo culinarius* theory, which suggests that it is ‘the most fundamental distinction made by man’ since it ‘divides the world [...] into that which may be incorporated and that which may not’ (Falk, 1994, p. 69). According to Falk, ‘edible vs. inedible is a basic distinction closely related to analytically constructed and more abstract binary oppositions such as *us vs. them*, *same vs. other*, *inside vs. outside*, *good vs. bad* and *culture vs. nature*’, ultimately defining ‘edible’ as ‘something which may be accepted or ‘taken in’ to our community and, in the last instance, into our bodies’.

The second theorist whose works will be assessed for this study is Claude Fischler, who draws the connection between food and identity. For him, the relationship between humans and food is two-dimensional: ‘the first [dimension] runs from the biological to the cultural, from the nutritional function to the symbolic function [while] the second [dimension] links the individual to the collective, the psychological to the social’ (1988, p. 275). Due to man’s omnivorous nature, Fischler believes that ‘incorporation is an act laden with meaning’ (p. 276). Incorporation, in this context, refers to the process, ‘in both real and imaginary terms’, of incorporating ‘all or some of’ the properties of food; in essence, ‘[becoming] what we eat’ (p. 278). Fischler describes this as ‘a foundation for identity’ and the reason for which ‘identification of foods is a key-element in the construction of our identity’ (pp. 276–278). He expands this claim to include incorporation as ‘also the basis of collective identity and, by the same token, of otherness’, since ‘food and cuisine are a quite central component of the sense of collective belonging’ (p. 278). This concept is notable because ‘human beings mark their membership of a culture or a group by asserting the specificity of what they eat, or [...] the difference of others’ (p. 279).

The final theorist whose works are relevant to this study is Pierre Bourdieu. For Bourdieu, ‘taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier’, since ‘social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed’ and that ‘oppositions similar in structure to those found in cultural practices also appear in eating habits’ (1979, p. 6). This most significantly relates the choices people make with regard to their food and what this indicates of their social position. Bourdieu explains this

difference through the example of the café, which he claims is ‘not a place a man goes to for a drink but a place he goes to in order to drink in company, where he can establish relationships of familiarity based on the suspension of the censorships, conventions and proprieties that prevail among strangers’, while in the bourgeois or petit bourgeois café ‘each table is a separate, appropriated territory’ (p. 183). As the interviews will show, this distinction is particularly relevant in the case of chai karak cafeterias and the social conventions that govern them. With regard to the composition of a working-class meal, Bourdieu points out that is ‘characterized by plenty (which does not exclude restrictions and limits) and above all by freedom’ (p. 194).

4.5 Migration and the Status of South Asians in the UAE

In order to provide a historical and contextual backdrop to this study, it is vital to assess a number of sources that speak about the migration and status of South Asians in the UAE. The South Asians² form an important ethnic group in the UAE because although the post-pandemic numbers are not yet clear, they together, prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, ‘[comprised] around 55% of UAE’s total population’ (Snoj, 2015) and likely still remain the largest sector of the population. This number gains increased significance when one looks at the historical development of the workforce in the UAE. In 1975, after the oil boom of the previous years, foreign workers, mostly South Asian, ‘in the UAE comprised 84% of the total labour force’, with this number rising to 89% in 1990 (Jain, 1999, p. 25) and 90% in 2004 (Kapiszewski, 2016, p. 48). Furthermore, at least when speaking specifically of Indians, although this can be extrapolated in a pre-Partition context to the rest of the subcontinent, Bansidhar Pradhan points out that ‘ties between India and the UAE run deep into history predating the emergence of the two as independent political entities, out of the shackles of their common colonial master – Britain’ (1999, p. 228).

Much of the literature that speaks of the presence of South Asians in the Gulf addresses the issue from an economic perspective. This is largely because both the Gulf States and the South Asian countries benefit from this movement in economic terms, mostly in the shape of ‘manpower export and remittances’, which ‘have acquired a critical role’ in the relations between said states (Pant, 1989, p. 51). Pant pinpoints ‘the oil price hike of 1973–74’ as the starting point for this relationship, despite the fact that South Asians had been migrating to the Gulf beforehand. This is because ‘the new emigration is not permanent in nature’. He argues that due to the contractual nature of the new emigration, ‘It can be regarded as an export of labour services instead of an export of people’, thus transforming the majority of South Asians of the Gulf, in economic terms, into a commodity rather than a community. He also highlights the fact that ‘this migration is not only temporary in nature but also of that section of the population, which belongs to economically the lowest stratum

² South Asian refers to the nationals of Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka in this instance.

of the exporting countries', although Masood Ali Khan points out that Kerala's 90% literacy rate makes it the most popular Indian state to recruit from (1999, p. 61). It is notable that the majority of South Asians historically 'have been employed in the construction sector, followed by the service sector' (Pant, 1989, p. 62), since this makes chai karak cafeterias the place where South Asians who work in these sectors come into contact, thus fitting in with Bourdieu's observation of the significance of proletarian cafés.

Politically, it seems that South Asian labourers benefit from the fact that they are viewed as being 'more efficient and less troublesome' than Arab labourers (Pant, 1989, p. 59). Kapiszewski adds to this that 'unlike governments in many Arab states, Asian governments became involved in the recruitment and placement of their workers, facilitating their smooth flow to the Gulf' (2004, p. 120). That being said, they do face 'political, economic, and socio-cultural' discrimination because the 'the patriarchal nature of the social structure and the rentier nature of the economy and state [...] have effectively curtailed freedoms of political expression, occupational choice and recreational and formal religious activities of the Indian immigrants, and particularly of the non-Muslim immigrants' (Jain, 1999, p. 35). Jain also claims that the 'segmented' nature of the social life of South Asians has created 'little scope for building a community among the working class' South Asians (p. 36), but Nasra M. Shah disputes this, stating that 'once social networks of friends and relatives are well established in the host country, migration takes on a self-perpetuating character as seems to have happened in the case of Asians in the Gulf' (2004, p. 100).

4.6 Interview Results and Analysis

Prior to conducting each interview, it was important to note that the design of a vast majority of working-class chai karak cafeterias, where all but one of the interviews were carried out, force a separation among consumers. Many of the cafeterias do not have tables, and the assumed wisdom is that one either orders the beverage from and to their car or drinks it standing outside. There is a divide in terms of who consumes chai karak in what way, with the majority of car-riding customers being more affluent Emiratis, an observation that was confirmed by interview participants, and standing customers being South Asian labourers. This fits in well with Bourdieu's characterisation of the café as being indicative of social classification, where the bourgeois Emirati customers are constantly kept separate from the working-class South Asians. This creates a social hierarchy within the cafeteria based on social class and ethnicity.

The question of the country of origin of chai karak resulted in answers that were reminiscent of Leong-Salobir's narration of the invention and history of Indian curry under the British Empire, as well as Falk's *homo culinarius* and the cultural construction of taste. It is striking that while non-Indian participants were quick to attribute the drink to India, Indian participants attributed it to the UAE. When asked about

what distinguished chai karak from Indian tea, Hamza, a Keralite shift manager at one of the city's oldest Pakistani restaurants, states:

In India and in Pakistan, we use fresh milk. We always get a hold of fresh raw milk with which we make karak chai. Here, you are deprived of that. Of fresh milk, you know? Here, it is more common to have your chai made with powdered milk or with canned milk. It is a problem that we are only able to work with these kinds of powdered and packaged milks, but we have to rely on this chai.

Hamza's differentiation between the fresh milk-based chai karak of India and the canned milk-based chai karak of the UAE is a result of the relative difficulty of obtaining fresh milk for commercial use, particularly when he had first arrived from India to work for his current employer in the late 1980s—a period that coincided with one of the largest waves of migration of South Asian labour to the UAE. This echoes Leong-Salobir's description of British curry powder, which differentiates British-Indian curries from more local Indian dishes. To add to this, while Hamza does recognise that canned milk-based chai karak was created by Indian labourers in the UAE, it is only later in the interview when he becomes more comfortable calling it 'our' drink. He articulates this by saying that:

When we originally came here we were all labourers and this was how we made our chai. The Arabs of the time welcomed it and enjoyed it, and in my opinion their culture has evolved a lot during this time. There was not that much of a difference between their habit of having chai then and now. They used to have a cup of Suleimani chai³ after lunch, dinner, or meals, but that is the main difference. [Back then,] Dubai was still being constructed and it was still evolving. For labourers, karak chai was a cheap drink to have, but the Arabs became interested in our chai back then just as they are now.

Omar, another Kerlite chaiwala at a newer karak chai cafeteria popular primarily among a diverse community of university students, on the other hand, states that the reason for using canned milk in the chai karak that he serves is because although 'we do have fresh milk in the cafeteria, the customers do not like it [...] They think that if we use fresh milk, the taste of the chai will not be as good'. This relates to Falk's theories on how culture impacts taste. While all of the South Asians interviewed in this study expressed that they would rather drink chai karak made with fresh milk, it is the Emirati customers who prefer it to be made with canned milk who dictate the market. To add to this, Farhan, a former senior sales manager for a large South Asian dairy distribution company, stated that the move towards a more Emirati taste for karak chai is also shifting market forces back in South Asia, where dairy distributors are introducing liquid tea whiteners, such as canned milk, to the market as a cheaper-to-produce alternative to fresh milk since. This played into the notion expressed by Mendel and Ranta that commercial forces can alter the cultural heritage of food products.

Ranta and Fischler's theories of associating identities with food as a means of adding value to it were visible in responses to the question about South Asian dominance in the chai karak industry. Hamza jokes that while other large migrant communities in the UAE, such as East Asians, 'do not really have the same past with chai and

³ Sweet black tea consumed without milk.

do not really understand it [...] chai karak might be in itself a blood group in Indian and Pakistan'. Shahid, a Bangladeshi chaiwala at another, older chai karak cafeteria, adds to this that 'people from other countries do not really want to work in this field'. However, he also says that while Afghans would like to sell chai karak, since 'it is a big deal', they simply 'do not know how to make chai' in his opinion and that the burden falls upon people from 'poor, chai-making countries like India and Bangladesh', in his own words. This response also recalls Gvion's *Cuisines of Poverty*, as well as Pant's suggestion of the commodification of South Asian manpower, in objectifying a certain sector of the South Asian diaspora in the UAE as being one that is only good for making chai karak (among other cafeteria specialities) when it comes to their gastronomic output.

Jasim, a more recently-arrived Pakistani part-time chaiwala at another chai karak cafeteria, provides a different account of why it is the case that the chai karak industry is dominated by South Asians and South Indians in particular. He stated that:

It's the beautiful concept of a community. One person comes here from a particular community. One person comes from that neighbourhood in South India and then asks everybody to come over and help him build a business over here. They create a whole market over here together from that neighbourhood. One after another they continue to migrate here, so it becomes a complete extended family of South Indians from the same place. They really help other Indians from their communities to get settled in these kind of places, giving them good benefits and return on investments, outside of India.

This account, explaining that communities from South India transfer themselves to the UAE, contradicts Jain's claim that it is difficult to form South Asian communities in the UAE; rather, it complements Shah's assertion that these very communities and networks perpetuate the migration of South Asians to the Gulf.

The responses of the participants to the questions about who consumes chai karak were all indicative of a form of Gvion's social objectification similar to that expressed by Shahid above. While not as confrontational, the responses of each of Jasim, Hamza, Omar, and Farhan shared the sentiment of Amin and Warda, Gvion's Palestinian interviewees, who stated that the interest of the dominant group, Emiratis, in chai karak does not translate into respect for its maker and that they who make and serve chai karak have become almost supplementary to the actual process of customers consuming chai karak. Although, as earlier stated, the UAE has a very large population of South Asians—in fact, five times the size of the Emirati population—each participant stated that the majority of their customers were Emiratis. Hamza's response that Emiratis started consuming chai karak en masse once they 'realised the kind of kick that we Indians and Pakistanis get' from the beverage also hints at cultural appropriation and exploitation along the lines of Rogers' definition.

The final area in which the interviews yielded results of interest came when the status of South Asians in the UAE was addressed directly. Jasim, speaking about his position as a Pakistani within an industry heavily populated by Indians, said that:

All of the blue-collar workers in Dubai are Malabar⁴. Because they are uneducated, and sometimes illiterate, they are actually everywhere and end up taking control of everything in Dubai.⁵ Being a Pakistani, I don't have any problem living here with them. We all live here hand in hand in one way or another. We don't have any cultural or racism problems.

I developed a connection with my colleagues over a period of time that helped me show them how to make chai in the way that I want it. Otherwise it is such a hard thing to translate to chaiwalas this [Pakistani] method and to get them making it in other places.

I had to explain to them to keep the milk quantity higher than any other ingredient, be it the water, tea, whatever, and to use fresh milk rather than Rainbow.⁶ It was hard work teaching them how to do it here, so I would be similar hard work explaining to somebody how to do it elsewhere. Over here, they honour my way of making chai, though.

Jasim's response shows the importance of chai to building the social relationship between him and his Indian cohabiters and colleagues, thus aligning with Ranta's statement on expressing identity through food as well as Fischler's theory of incorporation in defining communities and creating otherness.

Hamza, by virtue of his longevity within the UAE, initially agreed with Jasim that, 'Here in Dubai, there is absolutely no difference between Indians and Pakistanis. There is no India and there is no Pakistan. We are all one'. However, he also stated that, 'Initially, there were a lot of problems when I first arrived here, with treating India better or treating Pakistan better by Arabs. We were all treated in different ways, but lately their mind-set has developed and they are all fine with us'. He estimated that this process of change took around fifteen years and has arisen out of the fact that the UAE shares good economic relations with both India and Pakistan, which has affected the culture in the UAE. This fits in with Mendel and Ranta's characterisation of commercial and market norms forcing cultural shifts.

4.7 Conclusion

A lack of available literature necessitated the heavy reliance on theoretical materials and analogous case studies in carrying out this study. In conclusion, however, it is clear that the theories as understood by analysing the secondary sources and the experience as understood through the five oral history interviews align and complement one another very well.

It is evident that there is a discourse of cultural appropriation and exploitation that runs through the centre of any conversation on the history of chai karak in the UAE, but additionally there exist themes of integration, incorporation, exploitation, and objectification that need to be further explored. These themes have affected the

⁴ A term used to refer to people from the Malabar Coast in India, which includes the southwestern Indian states of Kerala and Karnataka.

⁵ This claim is heavily disputed by Keralite interview participants, who instead pointed to Kerala's high literacy rate as being the most attractive factor that explains their high level of employability and hiring in the UAE and the wider Gulf.

⁶ A well-known canned milk brand.

social status of South Asians who work with chai karak because it entrenches the notion that their presence in the country is a heavily commodified phenomenon, since they exist as service providers and cultural objects that feed into the national culture. The fact that neither Emiratis nor the Emirati state are fearful of the influence of South Asians on the local culture in the same way that they are fearful of the influence of expatriate Arabs (Kapiszewski, 2004) demonstrates that they are fully in control of the contestations that surround South Asian cultural integration into the social fabric of the country. Finally, the contestation around chai karak in particular in the UAE reflects trends within the UAE social relations by enforcing the supremacy of Emiratis above all other ethnic groups and by connecting the social power of different ethnic groups and communities to market forces. This creates a form of hegemony that acts alongside other mechanisms of maintaining the privileged position of Emiratis, many of which were described by Kapiszewski earlier in this study.

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Chapter 5

Tujjar in the Gulf: Changes in Political Influence



Lakshmi Venugopal Menon

Abstract Since the oil boom in the 1970s, the Gulf region has witnessed tremendous growth. Today, the GCC countries have an impressive collective 85% urbanization. This paper argues that merchant-ruler relations and the transnational dynamism of the Gulf played crucial roles in the traditional development and evolution of urban cities in the GCC. It argues that pivoting to a Western-European city concept devoid of an appreciation of the GCC's transnational dimension and the region's perennial structural need for migrant labor is imprudent. This chapter aims to fill the existing gap in the literature and urges the GCC countries to increase local participation to offset an observed Orientalist approach to Gulf urbanism. Thus, making the case for the creation of sustainable city concepts that appreciate the transnational nature of the Gulf region.

Keywords Gulf merchants · *Tujjar* · Merchant-ruler relations · Gulf pre-oil history

5.1 Introduction

Over the past few decades, the Gulf region has experienced unprecedented degrees of development. With a tech-savvy new generation, an array of massive infrastructure projects, and urbanization surpassing the global average, the region is one to watch. Since the 1970s oil boom, tremendous growth has unraveled in the region (The World Bank, 2021). The member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council today boast of a collective 85% urbanization. This is further projected to rise to an impressive 90% by 2050 (PwC, 2016). Since the onset of the twenty-first century, Gulf states have been increasingly moving in the direction of economic diversification and making large investments beyond the oil industry. Much emphasis has also been made concerning sustainability and modernity. There is, thus, a need to analyze the growing importance and trends of sustainable contemporary urbanism

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and identify how it could be achieved in compliance with multi-faceted international concerns.

The main argument of this research paper is that merchant-ruler relations and the transnational dynamism of the Gulf were crucial in the traditional development and evolution of urban cities in the GCC. Thus, these factors must not be overlooked in theoretical discussions of the Gulf's urban designs. It also argues that pivoting to a Western-European city concept without an appreciation of the GCC's transnational dimension and the region's perennial structural need for migrant labor is imprudent.

The research raises certain questions in this respect. Is it possible to create resilient, inclusive, and sustainable smart city concepts without understanding the GCC's transnational nature? Why do contemporary planning and design strategies lack socio-cultural sensitivity? Can a balance be found between the GCC's workforce nationalization policies, migrant rights, and an inclusive smart city concept in the GCC? The research paper aims to fill the existing observed gap in the literature and urge the GCC countries to engage more localized strategists and planners to offset an Orientalist approach to Gulf urbanism and create truly sustainable city concepts that appreciate the transnational nature of the Gulf region.

The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section looks into the evolution of the cities of the GCC countries. It also appraises the discrepancies and inconsistencies in the conceptualization of Gulf cities. The second section looks into the transnational nature of the Gulf region and the role of the merchants, or *Tujjar* as they were called in the region. The third section studies the political clout of *Tujjar* through the case studies of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and the UAE. The fourth section identifies the aims and challenges in the pursuit of sustainable smart city concepts in the GCC. It highlights the importance of appreciation of pre-oil history in this regard. The last section makes propositions for the way forward through the identification, acknowledgment, and filling of the identified gap in the existing literature. It attempts to give due credit to the often overlooked, and recently (since the 1970s and 1980s) underplayed, transnational nature of the Gulf region. It discusses the importance of appreciating the region's transnational dimensionality for realistic, holistic, sustainable, inclusive city concepts in the GCC states.

5.2 The Evolution of the GCC Cities

Studies have attempted to trace the evolution in architecture and human settlement in the context of the location's particularity, environmental factors, and globalization. Issues of urbanism, globalization, cultural identity, environmental design, ecological sustainability, climate change, and architectural designs in the Gulf have been considered (Golzari & Fraser, 2013). However, there is a significant gap in the literature when it comes to the role and importance of the merchants, (particularly the pre-oil merchant classes) in the evolution of the cities of the GCC.

The top-notch smart city multi-mega projects in Dubai and Doha have piqued the interest of the international community. The global events by both cities—the ongoing 2020 World Expo in the UAE (which endured a setback due to the coronavirus pandemic) and the upcoming 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar—feature premium smart technologies such as air-conditioned football stadiums and driverless cars. Additionally, Qatar’s Lusail city and Abu Dhabi’s Masdar city initiative are both being developed to become smart cities (Mcsparren, 2014). Existing researches and studies critically examine the temporalities, spatiality, and phases of neoliberalism by studying the Gulf’s port cities. They situate the region’s smart city concept within a theoretical discussion that contours the relationship between neo-liberalization and urban areas, meanwhile identifying fault lines. They analyze diversification initiatives that aim at reducing dependency on hydrocarbon reserves and delineate the criteria of a “smart” city using the Masdar City as an example. A smart city utilizes existing information in the planning for optimum utilization of limited resources to ensure optimum efficiency, cost reduction, and better quality of life. It will also appraise intractable challenges such as climate change, limited budgets, and growing populations (Gharib et al., 2016).

Yet, there seem to exist inconsistencies between the master plans for development and the socio-economic, socio-cultural, and political dynamics of the Gulf region. Furthermore, the growing global emphasis on “sustainable urbanism” is landing the GCC states in a quandary regarding the environment (Zaidan & Abulibdeh, 2020). Recently, the state of Qatar reshuffled its ministry of municipality and environment to create a new ministry dedicated to the environment. A move the country wishes would be considered symbolic of their national commitment toward sustainable construction and development (Youssef, 2021).

The fact that most of the master plans are made by Westerners could be a causal factor for the discrepancies (Abulibdeh & Zaidah, 2021). Such discrepancies stem from developmental plans that reflect an Orientalist approach—a lack of understanding and appreciation regarding the historical transnational nature of the Gulf region—in making any such sustainable plan feasible. This is a gap in the existing pool of knowledge. Development policies are expected to be designed for the creation of resilient, inclusive, safe, and sustainable cities. The lack of affordable schools in Qatar, despite having such a large second-generation migrant population, reveals shortfalls in planning. An orientalist approach, which lacks appreciation of the historical transnational nature of the Gulf region, toward development policies will fail to capture the true essence and dimensionality of the region. Thus, leaving shortfalls in the creation of modern cities in the Gulf.

5.3 The Gulf's Transnational Dimension: The Role of *Tujjar*

The Gulf is the heart of modern trade and has been at the crossroads of religions, global trade, and cultures, historically. Allen James has provided substantial contributions to the history of Gulf cosmopolitanism by analyzing trans-cultural encounters. He concentrates on the role of change in society, culture, trade, and religion. His thesis is an appraisal of the Gulf as a catalyst for global encounters.

Despite overwhelming evidence regarding the Gulf's cosmopolitan nature since before the advent of oil, many scholars from the West display an attitude that the history of the GCC region is merely seventy to a hundred years old. This is a folly. The Gulf's long-standing transnational nature and existence as a global space with a high degree of dimensionality is a cornerstone in understanding and formulating city concepts in the region. The Gulf was never completely Persian, Arab, African, or Indian. But, with the politicization of national identities in the 1970s and 80s, multiculturalism and transnationalism are being underplayed. Before this, transnational elite culture was celebrated. People did not have to Arabize to gain acceptance or influence in society.

The emphasis on the Arab identity cannot do away with the history of transnationalism. The Gulf to date remains a transnational space; only the nature of transnationalism has changed. Previously, it used to be a melting pot of cultures; today, it is simply a mixing pot. Different cultures are welcomed, appreciated, and even celebrated. Arabs still mingle with various cultures through food, music, movies, and other forms of entertainment. However, there is a careful restraint and distance that is maintained from other cultures. They are careful not to allow the dilution of the Arab "*najdi*" culture and identity through the interaction with other cultures.

An easy example to understand this shift would be the regional attires. Before the 1970s and 1980s, elites of the GCC wore outfits that were a hybrid of the Arab *kandura* with an Indian or Persian headdress and spoke Farsi, Gujarati, or Hindi fluently. However, post-1980s, an Arab merchant elite would restrict himself to wearing a *Najdi shmagh*, *ghutra*, and to speaking only Arabic in public (Onley, 2004).

Understanding the Gulf as a global/cultural space remains in its embryonic stage (Fromherz, 2018). There is a lack of depth, detail, and dimension in the study of Gulf history. It is often reduced to superficial mentions of "*Ichthyophagi*" (the fish-eaters), the utilitarian tone of the Imperial powers' secret officers, and the current backdrop of economic or policy analysis studies in the context of Gulf security, terrorism, the "war on terror" narrative, and petrodollars. The lack of scholarly contributions on the rich social, cultural, and historical roots of the region is striking.

Appreciating the region's transnational dimensionality is crucial in creating modern global cities. Transnationalism in the Gulf was largely caused by the pre-oil *Tujjar* (merchants). Merchant families connected eastern Arabia to the rest of the world. Evidence for such trade networks in the Uruk' period (Algaze, 1989) and 6th millennium B.C. has been found (Oates, 1993). Heterogeneity, duality, cosmopolitanism, geographic fluidity, and blending of cultures were synonymous with the

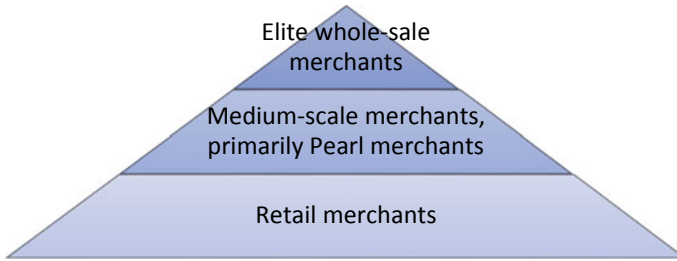


Fig. 5.1 A hierarchical depiction of the three different classes of merchants (retail merchants, middlemen/medium-scale merchants, and elite merchants) as explained by Peterson (2016). The triangle also shows the relative volume of the respective class of merchants

pre-oil merchant elites. They practiced fishing, pearling, dhow, passenger trade, and agency work (Liendhardt, 2001). The characteristic extensive business networks that functioned as conglomerates across various countries and possession of substantial property holdings made them the wealthiest and most influential after the ruling elite (Fromherz, 2018) (Fig. 5.1).

During that period, Peterson argues, three distinct classes of merchants controlled the trade in Eastern Arabia: the retail merchants, pearl merchants, and wholesale merchants (Peterson, 2016). One could explain that the first class was the largest volume of merchants who were into retail and extracted small margins with trade. They were the least wealthy merchants and were primarily locals. Second, the group of merchants who were intermediaries and middlemen in the fishing and pearling sectors. They were fewer and wealthier than the previous category. Last, the scarce but ultra-wealthy wholesale merchants who owned dhows, pearling facilities, and the nomadic workforce. They were transnational conglomerates. Some also collected taxes and commissions from the public for the ruling class. Finance, real estate, and wholesale trading were also activities of this elite class of merchants.

5.4 The Political Clout of *Tujjar*: The Cases of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and the UAE

Merchant-ruler ties have been crucial in the Gulf monarchies' development. Merchants participated in decision-making and gave insights regarding economic and political reforms through an informal quiet understanding. Their ties were bolstered through frequenting the regular councils (*majlis*) and through social institutions of marriage. This ensured informal but regular access to the rulers. Merchants' control over the mobile pearling and nomadic workforce through their ability to leave for friendlier ports worked as a check on the ruler's power. The movement of the workforce meant the lack of revenue, leading to the historic governing coalition of a quiet, informal understanding between the rulers and merchants in the region.

Eventually, the kinship, group identity, and the common tie of the production process led to the emergence of a strong, cohesive, self-conscious socio-economic class—the merchant class. Rulers’ financial dependence on the *tujjar* bolstered the merchant-ruler ties. The merchants and rulers had a unique mutual dependence, aimed at safeguarding mutual interests. The merchants made the money embedded in the sea accessible to the monarchs. Since the monarch was dependent on the merchants for money, the rulers ensured that the *tujjar*’s interests were preserved. Additionally, the importance of “kinship” among the regional tribes made the merchant elite the most “influential stratum of one’s blood kin,” making kinship “the language of power” (Fig. 5.2).

The merchants always enjoyed three choices—to remain loyal to the monarch, to voice out their concerns and interests, and to exit with their workers for friendlier ports (Hirschman, 1972, 1980). Merchants could arguably be the social class that was the most drastically affected by oil. The rulers became less accessible to the merchants. Post-oil, rentier incomes increased state autonomy, and the *tujjar* were made to take a step back from the realm of politics (Crystal, 1995).



Fig. 5.2 Determinants of Success of multi-generational business of the Gulf’s Merchant Families utilizing the factors compiled from Jaidah (2008)

The political clout of the merchant families also depended on the ability of the Gulf family businesses to survive across generations. Various factors such as succession, next-generation development, family harmony, governance, leadership, financial capital and liquidity, human capital, family norms vs. business values, loyalty to the business, loyalty to stewardship, outside advisors, ownership concentration, geometric growth, diversification, booming oil economy, protectionist policies, creation of venues, and transfer of ownership to companies in different combinations, causative manners, and sequences determined the fate of the merchant families of the Gulf (Jaidah, 2008).

Many authors and analysts tend to overemphasize and exaggerate a very personalized interpretation of Arabian Kingdoms' development spending. However, it is true that if the ruler does not want a merchant to benefit from the government, and the chances of the merchant prospering become slim. The non-cooperation from the government will lead to the others avoiding business deals with the merchant. On the other hand, the chances of a merchant winning contracts are heightened by lobbying the ruling family members. In Saudi Arabia, merchants have also acquired land, contracts, and favors by serving the monarchy (Field, 1984a, 1984b).

Despite the advent of oil, this relationship has not seen much change in Saudi Arabia. This is primarily since a formal administration was never actually built by King Abdel-Aziz. Trusted subjects, most often than not individuals from big merchant families, became advisors, secretaries, and administrators. This method of induction to the government has led to a group of bureaucrats who have no precedence of government careers in the European sense but have considerably served the monarchy well. Interestingly, in many cases, the King's servants accept salaries that are not particularly generous or a match to their status and lifestyles. However, they are enormously benefited by signing formal contracts and receiving business concessions and royal gifts.

Furthermore, as a result of princes entering into business, merchants began facing more competition and even corruption. In the case of Saudi Arabia, King Abdel-Aziz forbid the princes from trading. However, they did indirectly participate as mediators and in many cases received very high stipends or commissions. This caused distress among the merchant class. This policy changed during King Faisal's period. Since then, princes have more easily participated in trade. Today, some of the most successful Saudi businessmen and companies are members of the ruling family. Many still try to maintain a low-profile and have others representing them. Even today, government contracts are many at times viewed as royal favors (Field, Merchants and Rulers, 1984) (Field, 1984a, 1984b).

In Qatar, however, this wasn't the case. Qatar did not have a national market until the twentieth century. The small state lacked a cohesive merchant group. The merchants were weaker, depended on pearling, and had fewer economic options. This could also be attributed to the absence of an entrepot economy in Qatar. Interestingly, the pearl divers were uniquely free of debt-bondage; proof of the lesser control the merchants enjoyed over the workforce. The overall strength, political role, and bargaining capacity were much lesser for merchants in Qatar compared to other Gulf regions. This could be because, in Qatar, the merchants lacked a monopoly on

trade. The ruling family members were also merchants who actively participated in trade activities. In fact, during the interwar eco crises, World War II, depression, and plummeting of pearl industry due to the advent of the Japanese cultured pearls, pushed the Gulf region into unprecedented crises. The majority of Qatar's merchants left the country in search of more profitable options. Only two merchant families remained—Al Mani and Darwish (Crystal, 2011). Consequently, before the advent of oil, the country never had a thriving merchant class with a strong political clout.

Nevertheless, since the advent of oil, the business community is among the primary clients of the state of Qatar. Mehran Kamrava anchors the clientelist relationship in three main developments: first, the conceptual rather than actual nature of divisions between “state” and “business” owing to the commercial and familial links between Qatari merchants and top government officials; second, the strong role of the clan and tribal dynamics in shaping relations between merchants and the ruling Al-Thani family; and last, the multiple, overlapping, concentric clientelist networks that erode private sector's autonomy and bolster ties between businesses and the state (Kamrava, 2017).

Merchant-ruler ties are crucial in the Gulf's development. In Kuwait, merchants were a small, coherent, elite group with political power. They dominated public life. In the case of Kuwait, the interwar crises brought the merchants together. The merchants returned to long-distance trade and diversified their trade, which led to the development of the Shatt al-Arab in Iraq. Although the merchants were economically weakened by the crises, they remained in Kuwait, unlike the merchants in Qatar. The *tujjar*'s political and social cohesion grew as the merchants began to ally with ruling family dissidents.

When the gap between them and rulers increased, merchants formed an articulate politically organized merchant elite and created educational councils and political institutions (such as the Kuwait municipality). They also formed secret meeting groups and clubs to further their interests. Their activities led to a brief rebellion in 1921 and the Majlis Movement in 1938. The Kuwaiti merchant class became a well-organized and articulate political opposition to the ruling family. Thus, before the advent of oil, a politically organized conscious merchant elite class was formed in Kuwait. This group has been substantial in the socio-economic and political development of the country. Even in the post-oil era, the merchant elite enjoys substantial leverage over the Kuwaiti ruling family. Rentier state theory stipulates that the political relations between businessmen and the state are solely determined by the rental incomes. However, Kuwait's recent history paints a different picture. Many merchant families in Kuwait remain continuously active in parliamentary politics. Kuwait's merchant community still possesses the power to influence government decision-making and negotiate government distribution patterns (Nosova, 2016).

In a 2013 study, 83% of the interviewed individuals from merchant families asserted that some merchant families would oppose any issuance of “a Kuwaiti code of corporate governance.” They explain that such opposition comes from a minority who are beneficiaries of a fortune that has been built through manipulation. The interviewees also mentioned the existence of two types of merchants in Kuwait—first, those who had anticipated the 1977 Al-Manakh market crisis and called for radical

economic reforms in the public interest; and second, those who pursued self-interest, jeopardizing the interests of their stakeholders and investors, and amassed massive fortunes during the country's financial crises (Al-Buloushi, 2013).

This variation in Kuwait's case from the popular rentier understanding was explained by Anastasia Nosova by ascribing it to the semi-parliamentary political system. Rent-seeking, ties with the ruling family, ascriptive features, and the changing nature of Kuwait's political scenario were considered intervening variables (Nosova, 2016). In Kuwait, the merchant families remain integral to the state's unusual political and commercial fabric. The merchant class has played a positive role in the development of a flawed but somewhat democratic political system in Kuwait (Wigglesworth, 2011).

The culture of urbanization in Dubai was the brainchild of the former ruler Shaikh Maktum bin Hasher's pro-business policies (al-Sayegh, 1998). One can argue that he paved way for the recent economic diversification model of Dubai. Due to the geographical location, Dubai is a natural harbor with historical importance as a regional trading center. Dubai was always a cosmopolitan mercantile city-state. Although the concept of *Ayan* (local fishing and pearling merchants) being superior has existed, transnational and multinational merchants have traded freely, more or less on equal terms. Indian merchants controlled the financing sector, while Persians monopolized retail trading and foodstuffs. The strong trading traditions led to prosperity before oil.

Commerce was the primary source of income for the Dubai *Shaikhdom*. With the sole objective of promoting trade, Shaikh Maktum abolished customs and taxes. These initiatives were taken despite running the risk of being overly dependent on the merchants financially. Shaikh Maktum was willing to jeopardize his financial/economic security for the sake of his country's socio-economic development. His efforts created a sophisticated conscious mercantile community which became the driving force behind restructuring and implementing reforms (al-Sayegh, 1998), namely urban planning. The ruler's financial dependence on the merchants got the latter seats in the legislative councils and advisory boards. Unequivocally, merchants played a fundamental role in the development of Dubai in the pre-oil era.

From 1900 to 1929, two major developments intensified the role of native and foreign merchants in Dubai—the growth of pearl trade and the emergence of Dubai as the main port of the Trucial Coast in 1903. This increased the political clout of the merchants. Between 1929 and 1939, major economic changes such as economic depression and novel sources of income such as air travel and oil concessions bankrupt the merchant class. However, the decline in the influence and power of merchants was only temporary in Dubai. Merchants in UAE continue to play a crucial role in implementing and reformulating socio-political structures and economic affairs. One can thus argue that the Emirati decision to provide selective citizenship is only a natural progression, considering the region's transnational history. Citizenship is the relationship between a state and an individual wherein the individual owes allegiance to the state and in turn the state is entitled to the protection of the individual or citizen (Britannica, n.d.) (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Compiled by Author from data found in different sources

State	Pre-oil	Inter-war crises	Post-oil
Kuwait	Small coherent elite merchant group with political power	Merchants moved and developed Shatt al-Arab in Iraq Economically weakened but politically organized merchant elite Well-organized, articulate political opposition to the rulers	Substantial leverage over rulers Active in parliamentary politics Negotiate government distribution patterns
Saudi Arabia	Very close ties with rulers Rulers could make or break a merchant	Economic distress due to World War 1, Japanese cultured pearls, and economic depression	Princes entered the business Merchants were inducted into the government Government contracts are viewed as royal favors
Qatar	Lacked cohesive merchant class/group No entrepot economy	Merchants exited from Qatar. Only merchant families of Darwish and al-Mani remained in Qatar	The business community is the primary client of the state
UAE (in particular Dubai)	Strong cosmopolitan merchant class The role of native and foreign merchants increased due to the growth of pearl trade and Dubai becoming the main port of Trucial Coast in 1903	Bankrupt merchant class Economically affected but largely remained in UAE and received support from the government	The temporary decline of influence and power of merchants Continued crucial role in implementing and reformulating socio-political structure and economic affairs

5.5 Aims and Challenges: Why History Is Important

The aims of urbanization and city planning in the Gulf are said to be threefold. First, to provide for the growing populations. The Gulf’s population has swollen due to the expatriate workers. Qatar’s population jumped from 600,000 at the start of the millennium to over 2.9 million in 2020 (2021). In Kuwait and Bahrain, the respective populations have nearly doubled since 2000. Second, to diversify the generated incomes (2021). Saudi Arabia’s 2030 vision and Dubai Plan 2021 emphasize the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach. Third, to showcase the relatively newfound advancements, powers, and capabilities to the world. This is a matter of pride that is shared across the region.

Digital transformation and literacy become concerns due to the underutilization of the available e-commerce, m-government, and cloud services. In the 2020 Portulans Institute's Network Readiness Index, the GCC states did not boast high ranks: Saudi Arabia at #41, Qatar at #38, and UAE at #30. However, the GCC ranked much higher for skills and usage of information and communications technology (ICT): Saudi Arabia at #12, Qatar at #10, and UAE at #1; and for the level of access to ICT: Saudi Arabia ranks at #19, UAE at #10, and Qatar at #2. Today, Riyadh has emerged as the world leader of schools with internet access. A further top-down hurdle would be getting accustomed to the new-normal of decreasing oil incomes and reducing petro-chemical dependency, thus restraints on infrastructural projects' expenditure (Treeck, 2020).

Finding a balance between modernization and tradition is a challenge the Gulf region faces. GCC states are trying to resist the cultural influence of the West and other regions through the opening of heritage museums, replacement of Persian and Indian headdresses with the *Najdi shmagh* and *ghutrah*, and likewise (Potter, 2014). Nevertheless, this strife between globalization and tradition may unravel in the pursuit of ultra-modern cities. The connection between radicalization and rapid urbanization is an aspect familiar to historians who worked on Russia in the early twentieth century and Turkey in the 1970s (Frankopan, 2018). An accelerated unregulated change could prove unnerving.

5.6 Discussions and Conclusion: Identifying, Acknowledging, and Filling the Dearth

With 35 million expatriate workers living in the GCC states, it is no surprise that the GCC states are heavily dependent and reliant on the transitory migrant workforce (Karasapan, 2020). The number of foreign workers in the GCC is extraordinarily high. In Qatar, foreign workers comprise 88% of the population (Snoj, 2019). In UAE, this proportion is similar. In Saudi Arabia, it is 38.4% (Migrant Refugees, n.d.). In Kuwait, it is approximately 70% (2021) (World Population Review, 2021). In Oman, this dropped to 37% amid the pandemic (Expats, 2021). 52.6% of Bahrain's total population is comprised of non-Bahrainis (Worldometer, 2021).

Over the last decade, GCC states have become warier of this dependence and are implementing efforts and policies with the sole purpose of nationalizing their workforce. Through the latter, the GCC governments wish to rectify structural labor imbalances in their economies and societies. Concerns regarding social stability, high rates of citizen unemployment, workforce gender imbalance, and lack of education systems able to provide competencies required for employment are rife (Randeree, 2012).

Here, a fundamental issue in perception arises. The framework of GCC's labor nationalization policies aims to serve economic advantages and preserve the social

stability of the GCC states through the exclusion of migrants. Such an “exclusion” mentality is not sustainable. These policies reinforce the perception of immigrants being a non-integral and non-essential part of society—the unwanted “Others” (Alsahi, 2020). It undermines and ignores the historical transnational nature of the GCC.

Another question that requires addressing is how a balance can be obtained between the GCC countries’ urban city concepts, migrant rights, and workforce nationalization policies. This question, however, will set us on a different tangent and thus will not be addressed in this chapter. Nevertheless, pivoting to a Western city concept without appreciating the regional transnational dimension and the perennial structural need of the GCC for migrant labor is imprudent. Futuristic urban concepts must not ignore the Gulf’s historical urban and city fabric. The importance of local participatory planning systems must not be ignored.

Transnational merchants are yet to achieve their well-deserved place in the history of the Arabian Peninsula. The scarcity of written sources becomes the biggest concern regarding the availability of well-documented data (Segal, 2009). The review of the existing literature has revealed a substantial lack of appreciation for the Gulf’s traditional merchant-ruler relationships and the region’s historic transnational nature. This is also evident in the study, planning, structuring, and implementation of urbanization and GCC’s city concepts. The dearth causes deficiencies in innovative developmental plans which converge strategic planning, effective land use, and sensitivity toward the socio-cultural, transnational, economic layers of the Gulf states. Such insufficiencies will manifest hurdles.

GCC’s futuristic city concepts seem to aim for substantial minimization of migrant labor and maximization of workforce nationalization. The coronavirus crisis, the rising xenophobic anti-migrant sentiment (blaming migrants for the virus spread), and the acceleration of workforce nationalization have aggravated the precarious conditions of migrant workers. Migrant workers remain important contributors to the social and economic development of the GCC. They are central to the survival of certain economic and social sectors. GCC’s job localization policies do not completely address the GCC’s structural labor shortcomings. Replacing the entire migrant community is not sustainable. Once again, it undermines the transnational cosmopolitan nature of the Gulf region.

Thus, the way forward is to look behind.

Disregarding history is imprudence. History shows the occurrences and transition of changes and provides explanations and insights as to why the present changes and circumstances manifest. The Silk Roads, which connected regions like the Chinese empire to Central Asia, Europe, South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa through multinational and transnational trade historically, were of utmost importance in the past. Its importance continues today. Chinese Premier Xi Jinping’s ambitious Belt Road Initiative, which aims to revive the Silk Roads, is proof. Historical knowledge, stability, prosperity, tolerance, and development go hand in hand.

Urbanization and urban concept existed in the Gulf long before the oil boom. The conquering of vast territories by the Arab armies in the seventh and eighth centuries created a new world order in the Middle East—one that combined the

lushest, richest, most sophisticated, and cosmopolitan parts spanning three continents. It became a honey pot for world merchants who wished to progress (Frankopan, 2015), thus commencing the existence of the Gulf region as a transnational space. Any regional futuristic urbanism must not ignore the region's historical urban and city concepts, largely conceptualized and developed by the pre-oil *tujjar*. Adopting an orientalist approach to urban planning and city concept in the Gulf monarchies is not wise. Rich innovative inclusive developmental plans that incorporate strategic planning, effective land use, economic structure, socio-cultural sensitivity, and appreciate historic transnational dimensions are crucial. Transnational intelligence regarding the Gulf region is necessary to develop an inclusive, sustainable, progressive modern urban concept in the GCC. Overlooking GCC's transnational dimension may prove detrimental in the long run.

This research paper provides an essential perspective and renewed appreciation for the role of the *Tujjar* in the development of the GCC states. The chapter provides a tabular description of the condition and activities of the merchant classes of the states of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE during the pre-oil, interwar crisis, and post-oil periods. It is a comprehensive image of the state of affairs of the merchant communities during the above-mentioned periods.

This scholarly contribution will prove beneficial for academics, scholars, and students studying politics, culture, and society in the Gulf region. The paper can be utilized by those studying the Middle East, the Gulf region, anthropology, migration, and international relations. The two questions that were raised in the course of the paper "Why do contemporary planning and design strategies lack socio-cultural sensitivity?" and "Can a balance be found between the GCC's workforce nationalization policies, migrant rights, and an inclusive smart city concept in the GCC?" are individual research topics that have great potential. Such investigation could reveal multimodal facets that could provide reasons and direction for future research. The author hopes to study and investigate these themes in future publications.

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Chapter 6

Social Justice in the Gulf States: A Case in Qatar



Muhammad Mustafizur Rahaman

Abstract Social justice continues to construct important agenda for discussion due to its role in addressing the problems of inequality and ensuring the rights of equality of employment and health. This chapter addresses social justice cases in Qatar by highlighting the new measures taken by Qatari Government in ensuring migrants' rights and healthcare provisions during the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter reports that Qatar has ensured a high form of social justice by vaccinating more than 99% of its residents. Qatar has also achieved some successes in promoting social justice through pioneering reforms in labor sector. Apart from visionary political leadership, robust judicial process, consolidation of social development institutions, and client-focused health policy and services have been instrumental in boosting up social justice.

Keywords Social justice · Qatar · Vaccination · Covid-19 pandemic · Client—focused health policy · Labour sector reform · Visionary leadership

6.1 Introduction

The rise of inequality in the distribution of income and access to various services sectors is a globally recognized matter (Oxfam, 2020; UN, 2006). The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated the situation (Sanchez-Paramo et al., 2021; Chancel et al., 2021, p. 46) succinctly mentioned, “The COVID-19 Pandemic has exacerbated several forms of health, social, gender and racial inequality within countries.”

Social justice continues to construct important agenda for discussion due to its role in addressing the problems of inequality, ensuring the rights of equality of employment health, and ultimately achieving long-lasting peace (Bary, 2005; ILO, 1919; Midgley, 2020). Most importantly, the widespread disparity in vaccination for

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fighting against coronavirus warrants social justice in the distribution of vaccines (Hasan & Dearden, 2021; Oehler & Vega, 2021; UN, 2021). Tatar et al., (2021 p. 1) noted, “COVID-19 Vaccine distribution is substantially unequal, and global efforts are vitally needed to distribute to low- and middle-income countries.” By pointing out that more than 75% of all vaccines had been administered in just ten countries, the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) called the vaccination distribution a “scandalous inequality that is perpetuating the Pandemic” (*India Today*, 2021). He further noted, “If we are to end the pandemic in the coming year, we must end inequality” (*Gulf Times*, 2021a).

Coupled with inequality in vaccination, the current severe economic crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic desperately pushed for doing well for the migrants. Migrants constituted 3.54% of the world population (IOM, 2020). The interplay between migration and development has long been in existence. The recent ethical imperative of the United Nations (UN), no one left behind (UNSDG, 2019), focuses on the need for improving the socio-economic condition of migrants to achieve its targets set in the Development Agenda 2030, primarily zero poverty and no hunger (UN, 2018). The economic upliftment of those who live at the “Base of the Pyramid (BOP)” should be the core of all attempts taken by both state and non-state actors. We are fortunate enough to see the visibility of such thinking since long while US President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1937 called for building an economy from the bottom-up, indicating the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid.¹ C.K. Prahalad, a management scholar, popularized the concept in 2004 and stressed that 4 billion people lived at the BOP earning only \$2 per day (Prahalad, 2004). Leaving them behind, the UN targets succumbed to failure at least partially, if not entirely.

To reiterate, migration continues to construct important agenda for discussion concerning its role in development. This is particularly true in the case of the State of Qatar, a country that is home to more than two million expatriates (88% of the total population). Among them, migrants constituted approximately 95% of the total labor force (Human Rights Watch, 2020), and the ratio is highest in the world. Therefore, any reform effort underpinning the welfare of migrants is essential to enhance the developmental impacts of migration which was given particular emphasis by then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon (UN, 2013).

Qatar caught the attention of the various international organizations such as, in general, and the International Labor Organization (ILO), International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), International Organization of Employers (ITO), Federation of International Football Association (FIFA), and Amnesty International (AI), for its spearheaded pioneering labor sector reforms. ILO succinctly mentioned that reform like removing the No Objection Certificate (NOC) was the first of its kind in the Gulf region, while AI termed the latest reform a significant step toward protecting migrant workers (Rahman, 2020). Qatar has set a milestone in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and providing health services to the residents, including the migrants. Qatar emerged as a successful country in ensuring social justice in providing vaccines to their residents, including the migrants. In sum, Qatar showed its commitment to protect the rights of migrants and promote social justice.

Research in this area, however, is very **scanty**. Moreover, the social justice issue in Qatar remains at the center of the debate. Some studies found negative results, while others positively viewed Qatar's stance in advancing social justice. For example, Gardner et al. (2014, p. 5) mentioned, "Migrants who can bring their justice system, are often unable to endure in that system. Instead, they abandon their cases, they seek to return their homes, or they seek works that are illegal under the strictures of the kafala." On the other hand, Tok et al. (2016) **noted** Qatar's recent transformation and the development of social, political, and administrative institutions. Ali et al. (2016) specifically pointed out that Qatar significantly transformed its health system and improved health governance.

Rahaman (2020a) conducted a pioneering study on the subject. He cited numerous examples of Qatar's stance in enhancing social justice by giving justice to workers and providing healthcare service to everyone irrespective of nationality and immigration status. Rahman (2020, p. 2) mentions "Qatar, for example, has practiced a more inclusive COVID-19 pandemic management policy, taking care of everyone in the country, nationals and residents alike."

In another study, Rahaman (2020b) elaborated how Qatar played a vital role in ensuring social justice by reforming its labor sector following international migration conventions. Rahaman et al. (2020) highlighted the institutional preparedness of Qatar in tandem with other factors to uphold social justice through providing healthcare service. Rahaman and Khan (2021) focused on Qatar's Social Protection Policy to provide healthcare services and promote social justice.

This study is a new addition to the debate. It seeks to fill the current void of research on social justice in Qatar. The chapter is organized in the following way: First, it will conceptualize social justice and identify its core elements. Then it attempts to elaborate upon the unfolding stories of social justice in Qatar in the subsequent sections.

6.2 Social Justice: Definition and the Context

Social justice has a long history; however, the concept's origins are unclear (Kraynak, 2018). Supposedly, the term was first coined by Luigi Taparelli S.J. in the early 1840s (Wikipedia, 2021). Some people mentioned that Antonio Rosmini (2006) was one of the first to use the term in 1848 (Kraynak, 2018) in his book, *The Constitution under Social Justice* (Antonio, 2006). ILO (1919) is supposed to be the first international organization to use the term in its preamble: "peace can be established if it is based on social justice." The UN (2006) states that "Social Justice may be broadly understood as the fair and compassionate distribution of the fruits of economic growth."

Social justice, however, encompasses many issues and perspectives. Austin (2014), for example, explained social justice for legal, literary, religious, and humanitarian perspectives. Rawls (1971) argues that social justice provides a way of assigning rights and duties in the basic institutions of society, which define the appropriate distribution of benefits and burdens of social cooperation. Simply put,

social justice is the equal access to health, economy, opportunities, and privileges of the people within a society. This simple definition indicates the link between social justice, social protection, and the rule of law. The rule of law has two clear meanings: equality of people in the eye of law and equal protection before the law.

Concerning migration, this paper **further** analyzes social justice in the context of the rights of migrants enshrined in the international instruments, namely ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, 1998; Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951; Domestic Workers convention, 2011; International Convention on the protection on the Rights of All Migrants and members of their Families, 1990; Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970; Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibility, 1981; Decent Work Agenda, 2008; and Global Compact for Migration, 2016.

While it is easy to explain the issues and perspectives of social justice, achieving its targets is difficult. Midgley (2020) argues that a carefully designed, adequately funded, and effectively implemented social protection policy can enhance social justice. In a 2000 publication, the WB (2000, p. xi) stated, “Poorly functioning public sector institutions and weak governments are major constraints to growth and equitable development in many developing countries.” It further states, “Institutions are central to sustainable and beneficial economic growth. They create the policies, mobilize and manage the resources, and deliver the services which stimulate and sustain development. Growth and prosperity are unlikely to be maintained if the institutions which guide them are dysfunctional” (Salman, 1992, p. 11). Therefore, institutions appear to be important for ensuring social justice. Lately, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development and its 17 goals called Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been the cornerstone of development and sustainability. Goal 3 of the SDGs primarily focused on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all ages. Goal 16 called for building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. Within the wider perspective of sustainable development, a focus on developing and nurturing appropriate institutions has become conspicuous lately, which was echoed by Rawls (1971, p. 4) “.....they provide a way of assigning rights and duties in the basic institutions of society and they define the appropriate distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation.”

The COVID-19 pandemic and the havoc it has wrecked may also be seen and reflected upon from the perspective of an institutional failure. Some research identified the institutional failure to protect people from coronavirus (Patrick, 2020; Rhodes, 2021). Others explained that high healthcare costs, shortage of protective equipment, low medical capacity, ICU beds, and ventilators have ultimately exposed weaknesses in the delivery of patient care (Cohen & Rogers, 2020; Ranney et al., 2020). In another way, institutional capacity, including health infrastructure, human resources (doctors, nurse, lab technician), and availability of medicine and financial resource, emerged as the dominant factor. Suffice it to mention here that the importance and usefulness of investing in and building robust service institutions are unequivocally established.

Social justice also requires the prevention of some forms of human trafficking. Human trafficking has various effects at both individual and societal levels. Ending

Fig. 6.1 Model of social justice (*Source* Prepared by the author)



human trafficking has appeared to be an important agenda for discussion concerning its relevance and proximity to some of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably decent work and economic growth (goal 8), and promote peaceful and inclusive societies (goal 16). According to a new estimate, human traffickers enslave approximately 24.9 million victims worldwide in forced labor and sexual exploitation and state-imposed forced labor (ILO & Walk Free Foundation, 2017). Simply put, human trafficking is the trade of human beings for exploitation in the form of forced labor, sex slavery, involuntary servitude, etc. (UNODC, 2000). Such exploitation is against the rights of workers and principles of social justice. A further discussion on human trafficking as a global menace would be quite topical and appropriate in our time.

To sum up, social protection policy, prevention of human trafficking, the rule of law, and strong institutions have been vital for ensuring social justice. I develop a model of social justice in the (Fig. 6.1).

The next section shows how Qatar promoted social justice following the above model.

6.3 Social Justice in Providing Health Service

Healthcare standards in Qatar are generally high. Its health care is dominated primarily by the public sector. Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and Primary Health Care Service (PHCC) are the main health service providers. While the HMC charges a minimum fee for visiting the doctors, the PHCC provides this health service

free of charge. In the usual situation, health service recipients must pay only 20% of the total cost of services (medicine, medical examinations, and doctor's visiting charges in HMC). By providing an 80% waiver in medical services, Qatar has set an example of giving world-class care at an affordable price. Apart from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Qatar Government provided free treatment to many patients. For example, one Bangladeshi patient with blood cancer was treated in Qatar for about 16 months without any charge. Another Bangladeshi patient who had no residency permits was hospitalized for severe illness. Before being sent back to Bangladesh, the hospital authority provided necessary treatments with medicine for one week before discharging them from the hospital without charging him a fee. In the Long-Term Care Unit of Rumaillah hospital, many patients are being cared for a long time by providing sophisticated medical instruments with minimum cost. Since 2019, HMC has been taking care of one critical Bangladeshi patient. Although the patient's family paid a small amount, the actual cost was much higher than the paid amount (Rahaman & Khan, 2021).

Qatar has been hailed by world leaders and International Development Partners (IDPs) for its comprehensive efforts to control the COVID-19 Pandemic. The death toll in Qatar has only been 662, accounting just for 0.19% of the total positive cases (as of February 20, 2022). This ratio is one of the lowest in the world. Because Qatar has been one of the leading countries in providing excellent medical care to COVID-19 patients, its recovery rate (98.08% as of February 20, 2022) has been the envy of the world (global recovery rate is 82.33%) as it has a low death rate.

Qatar has stood out during the pandemic by providing free health care for those infected by the virus according to the best international standards. It is noteworthy that Qatar provided treatment to every resident, including those who had no valid work permits and health cards in congruence with international instruments, namely International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 1990; Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provision) Convention, 1975; and ILO's Decent Work Agenda, 2008. As a result, Qatar has been able to address the health issues of the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid—the low-income migrants. Moreover, the country has treated both Qataris and non-Qataris equally. For example, a middle-aged laborer walked into an emergency room with flu and cough symptoms. He was admitted to the hospital after he tested COVID-19 positive. As his condition worsened and he started requiring oxygen, he was admitted to an intensive care unit and kept on ventilator support. Finally, he was given ECMO support—a very expensive machine requiring high maintenance and operating cost that works of the heart and lungs externally and allows the patient's body to rest. The patient eventually improved clinically, recovered from COVID-19, and walked out of the hospital after a total length of stay of one and a half months without paying a penny (Rahman, 2020). Even a Qatari citizen would not get more support because that was the highest level of treatment for COVID-19 patients.

Niranjan Chandra (54) is one who recovered from a coronavirus-related illness. Here is his story: He visited the local pharmacy with the symptoms of COVID-19 and took medicine for two days. As the symptoms worsened, he called the emergency

ambulance service and was taken to the HMC, where he urgently attended and was diagnosed as corona positive. After 14 days of incentive treatment, he was sent to quarantine for another 11 days. He was eventually released after two consecutive test results confirming COVID-19 negative. He expressed overall satisfaction with food, accommodation, nursing, and treatment at the HMC and the quarantine. This case illustrates how Qatar has saved the lives of corona patients by ensuring timely and intensive institutional care (Rahaman et al., 2020).

Apart from an engaged political leadership, who has been on the top of things by maintaining daily vigilance of the anti-COVID-19 campaign in the country, institutional capacity appeared to be the important factor in curbing the death toll in Qatar.² With the increase of COVID-19 positive cases, Qatar has been able to deploy required resources in workforce institutions expeditiously. With the increase of the COVID-19 pandemic, Qatar has set up several new facilities, such as field hospitals, isolation, and quarantine areas, expanded testing facilities, and distribution points for sanitizers and masks for the public and PPE for medical and paramedical professionals. Even amidst for crisis, the country remained sensitive to the special needs of the patients. Qatar, for example, appointed Bangladeshi doctors on an emergency basis based upon the proportion of Bangladeshi patients admitted to the hospital. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the Ministry of Public Health undertook various preventive and curative measures; one innovative measure was the establishment of telemedicine facilities and home delivery of medicines for patients to limit face-to-face exposure to reduce the risk of infection spread which is supposed to be an effective way to provide healthcare service. It also undertook special measures for older people (55 and above), including a daily consultancy and awareness campaign over the telephone.

One important aspect of Qatar's health care and social protection is the service provided by case management. Case Management provides a variety of resources and works closely with patients, their families, and employer (legal guardian) to achieve optimum quality of care of patients. More specifically, case managers perform the following tasks: (1) ensure high-quality care is delivered in accordance with discharge policies and procedures; (2) refer patients after discharge to home care service; (3) refer cases to the concerned social worker for social assistance and external communication with patient's representatives; (4) initiate process of repatriation after agreement by team consultant through repatriation committee and follow the process with repatriation committee, social worker, employer, Qatar Airways, and Embassies; (5) solve problems that may occur during patient and his relatives/representatives hospitalization; and (6) support and protect the patient by identifying and taking actions in case of situations, events, and behaviors that may result in danger, harm, and abuse.

Qatar's health sector is very developed which is vested under the Qatar National Vision-2030. Qatar's health system aims to ensure that population is healthy both physically and mentally (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008). Qatar adopted two strategies: Qatar National Health Strategy (QNHS) 2018–2022; and Primary Health Care Strategy (PHCS) 2019–2023. The QNHS focuses on building a comprehensive world-class health system to ensure better health (MOPH, 2018).

On the other hand, goals of PHCS are: All patients have named physical, and access to trained health team; accessible timely high-quality, comprehensive services available for all communities; expansion of health services delivered in primary care led community settings; and reduce vulnerability in quality of care (Primary Health Care Corporation, 2019). Qatar eventually declared 5-year roadmap of Primary health care.

Significant to note that Qatar has long invested in developing and consolidating social development institutions, including the health ministry and affiliated facilities. Since the 1990s, Qatar has made impressive strides in its healthcare system. Spending in the healthcare system continued to rise in Qatar. In 2014, Qatar invested \$4.7 billion in healthcare (*Arabian Business*, 2015), increasing to \$6.2 billion in 2018 (*Albawada Business*, 2019). Increased investment in health infrastructure improved life expectancy and better health outcomes, resulting in Qatar's health system being ranked fifth-best in the world. Qatar ranked first for a doctor per capita and fourth for satisfaction with health care (*Gulf Times*, 2019). Spending on health care in Qatar accounted for 2.2% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2014, which was increased to 3.7% in 2018 (*Gulf Times*, 2019).

6.3.1 Social Justice in COVID-19 Vaccination

In tandem with other factors, vaccination has been seen as a necessary way of vanquishing the COVID-19 pandemic because of its efficacy in reducing the risk of getting and spreading the coronavirus. While it is heartening to witness the extraordinary achievement in developing vaccines against the COVID-19 pandemic, successfully vaccinating the global population appeared to be challenging. Such challenge mainly emanates from an unequal distribution of vaccines; as Brilliant et al. (2021) mentioned, "although the creation of vaccines was a triumph of international cooperation, their distribution has been anything but."

Malloch-Brown, Rajshah, and Walker further echoed (2021):

The wealthiest countries have more than enough vaccine doses to protect their people from the virus, while the poorest countries do not. Those in the Global North also have the means to stave off economic calamity and social disruption through massive stimulus packages; hundreds of millions in the Global South have been driven into extreme poverty. This inequitable divide leaves humanity far more vulnerable to the next stage of the pandemic, as well as to any other systemic crisis that may emerge.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesur, Director-General of World Health Organization, mentioned that of the 832 million vaccine doses administered, 82% have gone to high-or upper-middle-income countries, while only 0.2% have been sent to their low-income counterparts.³ Hasan and Dearden (2021) further noted that by the end of November 2021, just 7% of people across Africa had been fully vaccinated.

Qatar highlighted the need for vaccine equity due to widespread discrepancies in administering vaccination around the world (*The Peninsula*, 2021). It also emerged as a country demonstrating its commitment to ensuring equity by vaccinating more

Table 6.1 Vaccination in the Gulf Countries

Country	Doses administered	Fully vaccinated
UAE	24,922,054*	>99%*
Qatar	7,601,367*	>99%*
Kuwait	8,255,386*	79%*
Bahrain	3,476,633*	75%*
Saudi Arabia	68,148,406*	74%*
Oman	7,086,050*	61%*

* were last reported more than two weeks ago. Source Holder (2023)

than 99% of its total population (*Gulf Times*, 2022). As a part of its rapid vaccination campaign, Qatar established one of the largest vaccination centers in the world (Al Sharif, 2021). Residents, including the migrants, who have valid health cards, have come under the rubric of its rapid vaccination campaign. Other Gulf countries also achieved remarkable progress in vaccinating their residents, which have been mentioned below (as of February 20, 2022) (Table 6.1).

6.4 Social Justice in Migrant Worker Sector

6.4.1 Labour Sector Reforms

To reiterate, migrant workers make up 95% of the total labor force in Qatar (Amnesty International, 2019). For ensuring social justice, the migrant workers should be brought under equal treatment in terms of salary, service benefits, and other service conditions. Qatar is committed to creating a modern and dynamic labor market aligned with Qatar National Vision-2030. As a result, Qatar pursued some notable reforms in the labor sector to ensure justice to workers. It is important to note here that Qatar signed an agreement with the ILO in 2018 through which it became the first country among the Gulf countries to allow setting up an ILO office. The ILO office played a role in putting forward such reforms.

Furthermore, Qatar is going to host the FIFA World Cup in 2022. FIFA wanted to maintain the highest standard in its operations. From a global governance perspective, fulfilling FIFA's criteria also acted as a motivating factor that pushed for such reforms. Notable reforms have been discussed in Fig. 6.2.

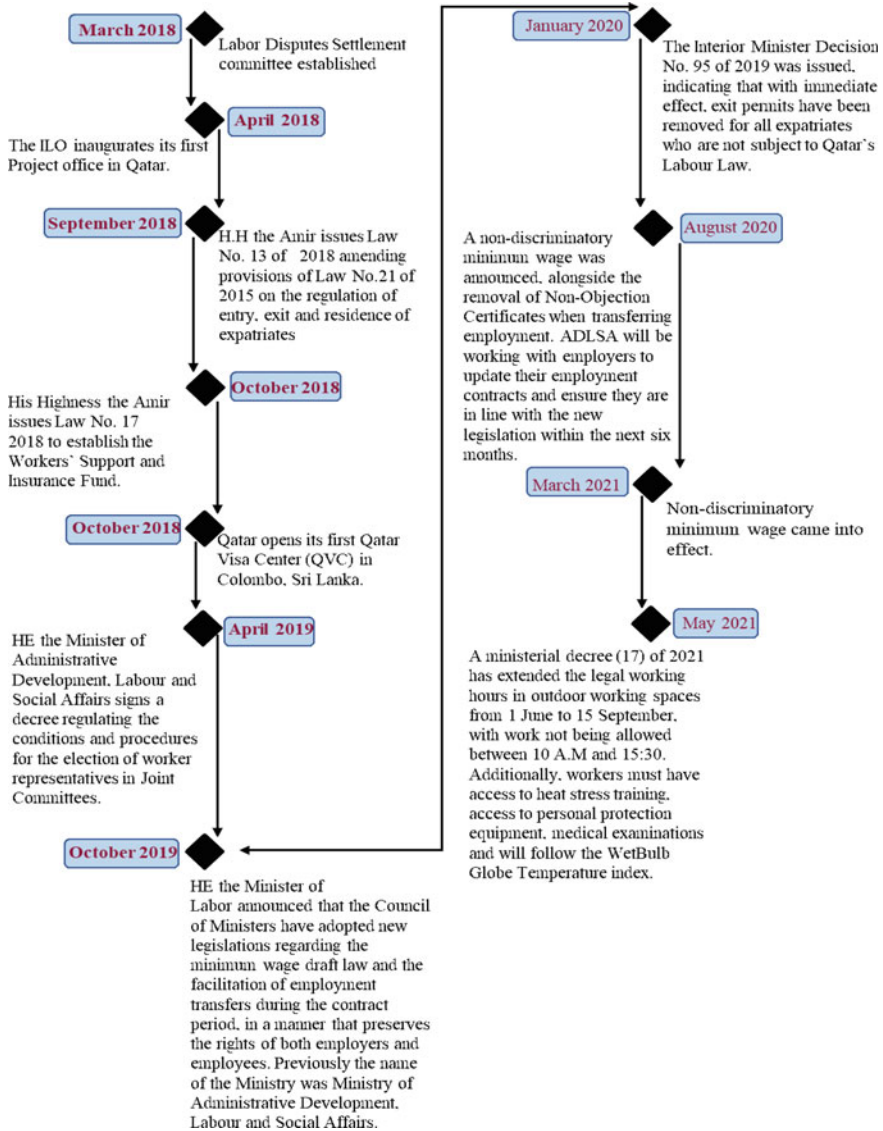


Fig. 6.2 Qatar labor sector reforms (Source Government Communications Office [2021]. Slightly modified by the author)

6.4.2 Wage Protection System (WPS)

In order to ensure timely payment of salary of workers, Qatar reformed the Labor Law and introduced Wage Protection System (WPS) under Law No.1 of 2015, which necessitated the mandatory payment of salary to the workers' account at least once a

month or once every two weeks.⁴ In case of violation, companies are given electronic messages under the new reform; violation results in a sentence of not more than a month in prison and a fine of not less than 2000 Qatari Riyals (QR) and not more than 6, 000 QR or either of these penalties. The Ministry of Labor mentioned that the introduction of WPS contributed to protecting more than 96% of workers from wage-related violations (*Gulf Times*, 2021b).

6.4.3 Adoption of Minimum Wage

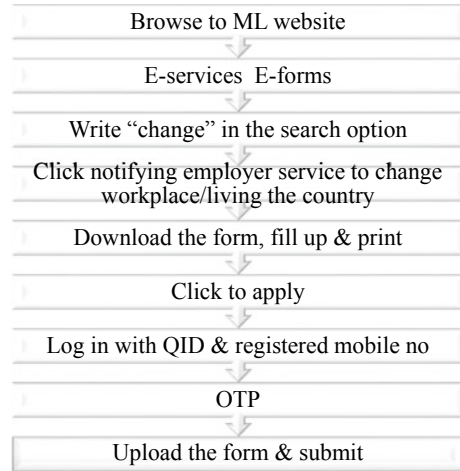
Qatar adopted a non-discriminatory minimum wage for workers, including domestic aids under Law No.17, 2020.⁵ It fixed 1000 QR per month as a basic wage, 500 QR for accommodation expenses, and 300 QR for food, unless the employer provides accommodation and food. Qatar declared such reforms when we saw the retrenchment policy worldwide due to the economic crisis created by the COVID-19 Pandemic. It will surely increase the income of poorly paid migrants and thus help them break the vicious circle of poverty, ultimately contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and social justice. Violation of this law may end the company with shutdown or suspension of operations. Ministry of Labor, Qatar, stated that the minimum wage policy benefited more than 4 00,000 workers due to an increase in salary and other financial incentives (*Gulf Times*, 2021b).

6.4.4 Abolition of Kafala System and Ease of the Change of Sponsorship

“Kafala” is an Arabic word that stands for sponsorship. Under this system, migrant workers must obtain a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from their current employer prior to applying for the change of sponsorship. The recent reform declared on August 30, 2020, dismantled the system by removing the requirement of NOC. Workers are no longer required to submit NOC for getting approval of change of sponsorship, but they need to give prior notice to the existing company. If the workers work under a company for two years or less, they need to give notice one month before and if they work in a company, more than two years require giving notice prior to two months.⁶

Moreover, under the kafala system, workers were required to obtain exit permits to leave Qatar, which was declared null and void under Law No.13, 2018 by reforming Exit and Residency related Law No.21, 2015. Under the law, workers can permanently leave Qatar and temporal vacation. In order to maintain the job environment, companies can apply to the Ministry of Labor to retain 5% of their total employees under the Kafala System who requires permission to leave Qatar.⁷ However, the Chief Executive Officer, Finance Officer, Supervisor, and Information Technology Officer are not subject to this provision.

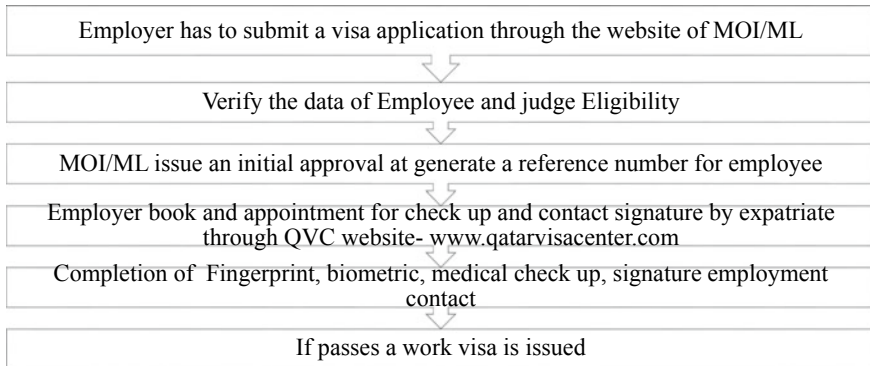
Fig. 6.3 Flowchart of change of sponsorship
(Source Prepared by the author)



Coupled with the termination of the exit permit, the abolition of NOC fully has put an end to the kafala system. Due to allowing mobility of workers, they will be able to find better positions, which would be vital to creating a dynamic and talented labor market. Companies would also be compelled to create a decent working environment to retain the talented existing workforce. Ministry of Labor, Qatar, released a statement showing that about 242,870 migrant workers could change their jobs since the announcement of facilitating workers transfer procedures between different employers in September 2020 (*Gulf Times*, 2021b) (Fig. 6.3).

6.4.5 Introducing Qatar Visa Center (QVC)

Qatar introduced Qatar Visa Center (QVC) in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal, India, and the Philippines to ensure justice to migrant workers in the process of recruitment. It enables the expatriates to easily and effectively complete the recruitment-medical test, biometric, and signature in e-contact. It ensures the eligibility and fitness of expatriates for workers before their arrival to Qatar. Most importantly, the QVC allows prospective workers to go through the agreement or job contract before signing. Through this system, expatriates' welfare and protection of their rights are established. The process is as follows:



6.4.6 Protection of Domestic Workers

Under Law No.15, 2017, a decent work environment has been ensured for domestic workers for both sexes. An employer is responsible for providing suitable housing, food, medical care, medicine, a monthly wage, etc. The law prohibited the recruitment of domestic workers of both sexes under 18 years. The law fixed the time for daily work, which is limited to 10 h. Other terms and conditions have been mentioned: weekly leave, yearly leave allowance, ticket, service benefit, etc.⁸

6.4.7 Grievance Redress Mechanism

Qatar introduced the smart system in receiving and disposing of work-related complaints. Workers can complain to the Ministry of Labor either online or physically on work-related disputes. Following Citizen Charter, Labor Department tries to settle the dispute in seven days. In case of failure, it is forwarded to a dispute settlement committee, who are obliged to settle it in 7 days. In case of failure, it is sent to the high court. The court upholds workers' rights as one worker explained his case: He worked in a company for almost two decades, was terminated, and was not paid a penny as a service benefit. He went through the grievance-redress mechanism by submitting a complaint to the Labor Department, handled through the Dispute Settlement Committee and Supreme Judicial Council. The court ordered the company to pay his service benefits and dismissed the firm's complaints against him. Three months after the court order, the company paid what was due (Rahman, 2020).

Thus, how Qatar upholds governance and accountability in the system. The flow of dispute settlement is mentioned in Fig. 6.4.

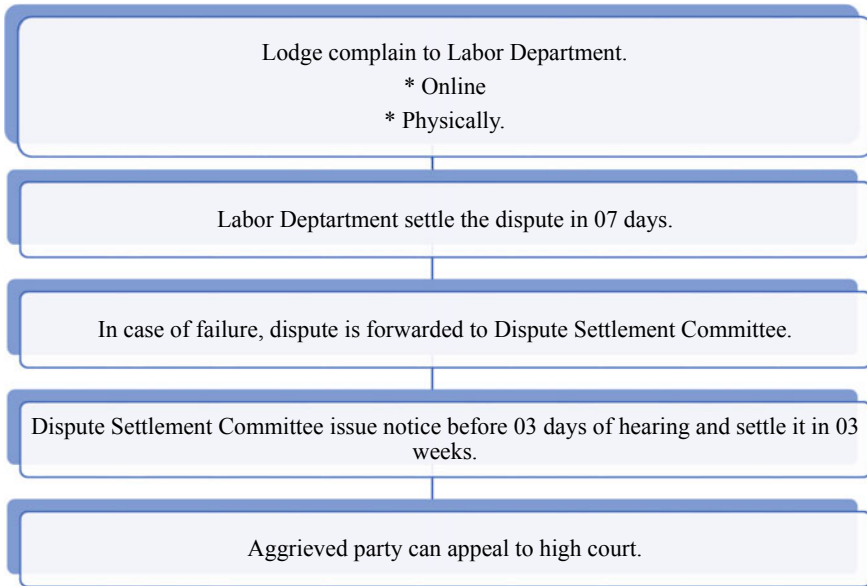


Fig. 6.4 Flow chart of dispute settlement (*Source* Prepared by the author)

6.4.8 Establishment of Workers' Support and Insurance Fund

Under Law No.17, 2018, Qatar established a Workers' Support and Insurance Fund.⁹ Fees collected from the Workers' permits and the renewal is the 60% source of its Budget. The fund aims to support and care for workers, guarantee their rights and provide a healthy and safe working environment. The fund is used to pay the workers' benefits, which the labor dispute settlement committee settles, and establish safe accommodation, proper work environment, and playground and amusement center for the workers.

6.5 Rule of Law

It will not be an exaggeration to say that rule of law is the cornerstone of social justice. The Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar is a prime exemplar of social justice and the rule of law. Article 18, 19, 30 primarily called for equality, equal opportunities, and social justice (State of Qatar, 2004). Qatar has come up with novel ideas and steps to ensure justice for migrant workers. In harmony with the constitutional guarantee, Qatar stepped in some measures that are thought to be useful to uphold social justice.

First, it introduced a time-bound grievance-redress mechanism. Second, workers have easy access to the justice process. The state court has appointed translators of different languages. Public prosecutors have been appointed responsible for helping both parties in dispute. The Chief Prosecutor of Residency Affairs has been vested with the power to dispose of complaints before forwarding them to the court and thus provide swift justice to victims. For example, runaway case against workers is common in Qatar. Companies and sponsors have the right to file runaway cases against their employees. At the same time, workers have been facilitated to get justice. Once a runaway case is filed, the accused receives a notification in his or her mobile number. He can apply to the Chief Prosecutor, residency affairs to get justice.

Numerous examples are worth mentioning here: First, the sponsor of a Bangladeshi filed a runaway case against him. He applied to the embassy for his runaway case vacation and got a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the company to change his sponsorship. Accordingly, the embassy forwarded his application to the chief prosecutor of the residency affairs. After careful investigation, the chief prosecutor dismissed the runaway case and directed the sponsor to provide him with the NOC. The worker later changed his company and got a residency card (Rahman, 2020).

In an extreme case, a sponsor demanded a Bangladeshi worker's money to prepare a QID. As he did not comply with the request, the sponsor lodged a runaway case against him. The embassy wrote a letter to the chief prosecutor for residency affairs to ensure justice. The chief prosecutor investigated, held a hearing, and dismissed the case (Rahman, 2020).

Qatar also compensates a deceased or injured person if he is proved to be in the right position during the death or accident. In the case of an accident, either in the workplace or on the road, a person is entitled to receive compensation based upon the order of the competent court. Provision for death compensation is also available in Qatar, provided that the person was not guilty of his or her death.

6.6 Addressing the Human Trafficking Issues

Human trafficking entails some elements that correspond to sparking social injustice (UNODC, 2000). Nevertheless, every year human trafficking takes away many souls of human being around the globe. The world must be mournful by observing such unfortunate deaths of many migrants. These people succumbed to death while trying to migrate to developed countries by adopting illegal ways instead of 'safe, orderly, and regular migration.' The punishment for such heinous activities is supposed to be rigorous. In practice, many countries promulgated laws regulating human trafficking and proclaimed years to life imprisonment. In retrospect, we suppose not to be that much aggrieved when we see the news on non-payment of workers, confiscation of passports by employers, or involuntary servitude, because these anti-humane activities might not be life-threatening. Such unlawful activities are punished with lower terms of imprisonment than human trafficking. Said another way, human trafficking

and violation of some of the rights of migrant workers should not be in the same boat; even if placed in the same boat, the levels should be different.

Human trafficking might occur throughout the whole process of migration or partially in the countries of origins and destinations. Considering the above discussions, this paper proposes to categorize human trafficking as follows: (A) extreme or less extreme; (B) hard or soft. (A) extreme (hard): migration as opposed to safe, orderly, and regular, which we usually see while some Asian, African, and Latin American nationals try to migrate to Europe, USA adopting illegal ways; (B) less extreme (soft): the migration adopts a broadly “legal” means but not in conformity with the basic principles of migration in which some fraudulent activities are visible either in the country of origin or in the destination country.

Literature review reveals that some forms of soft human trafficking are visible in Qatar (Gardner et al., 2014; US Department of State, 2021). Qatar also adopted some appreciated measures, and US Report on Trafficking in Persons (RIP), 2021, Ranked Qatar in TIER 2 (US Department of State, 2021). The State Department also honored H.E. Mohammed Hassan Al-Obaidly, Assistant Undersecretary for Labour Affairs of the Ministry of Labour as the 2021 TIP Report Hero for his leadership in addressing labor abuse in Qatar (US Embassy in Qatar, 2021). A recent report reveals that the Ministry of Labor inspected 35,280 workplaces and workers’ accommodation and issued 13,724 violations against companies, including closing workplaces, financial fines, prison sentences (*Gulf Times*, 2021b).

Under Law No.10, 2009, Qatar Government ratified the Prevention of Crime Related Convention of the United Nations and protocol related to Human trafficking, especially children and women. ILO recognized the attempts taken by Qatar to protect the rights of migrants. Under the law, No 15, 2011, persons involved in human trafficking shall be punished with seven years’ imprisonment and, 250,000 QR to 15 years’ imprisonment and 300,000 QR fines. Similarly, Under Law No.21, 2015, if the passport of workers is seized, he or she should be fined up to 25000QR. Someone can lodge complaints to the Ministry of Labor if his or her passport is seized. Qatar established a committee called National Human Trafficking Prevention Committee and Human Care Home to give law support, provide accommodation and protect health.

6.7 Conclusion

The role of social justice in protecting the rights of migrants enshrined in some international instruments is univocally established. Qatar, a country of Global South, spearheaded much appreciated pioneering reforms to ensure social justice to migrant workers. The UN labor organization, for example, termed the abolition of the Kafala system as a “milestone” (*The Peninsula*, 2020). The declaration of minimum wage is subsequently the first of its kind in the Middle East. Beat Andres, Chief of the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work branch of the ILO Governance and Tripartism Department, remarked Qatar’s reforms as a model for development (*Gulf Times*,

2018). Ensuring social justice is a time-consuming and difficult process. Considering this fact, Qatar is arguably a progressive country that successfully promoted social justice through labor sector reform.

Qatar has set a milestone in providing healthcare services to migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic. It provided healthcare services to all irrespective of nationality and immigration status. Nevertheless, the country treated both Qataris and non-Qataris equally. Its comprehensive efforts to provide healthcare service to migrants culminated in social justice. It reflects upon a well-planned and distributive social policy of Qatar. While social justice in COVID-19 vaccination is at bay across the Global North and Global South, Qatar has been embedded with a high form of social justice by vaccinating 87.6% of its residents. As mentioned before, expatriates constituted 88% of its total population and 95% of the total labor force. Due to Qatar's non-discriminatory national vaccination policy, expatriates are supposedly received a higher percentage of vaccination. In another term, out of approximately 2 million expatriates, more than 1.7 million are supposed to be vaccinated which is highly praiseworthy in the aftermath of global discrepancy thereon.

An analysis of pre-COVID and during COVID-19 situation of Qatar proffer two insights and lessons. First, systematic investment in developing and consolidating social development institutions (notably health) and the maintenance of a sound and client-focused health policy have been instrumental in taming the COVID-19 and boosting up social justice. Second, long-range strategically focused preparation, mainly in the form of careful formulation and delivery of social & development plans, especially those linked to SDGs, has come in handy while addressing this disaster & eliminating the underlying incentives that act as a deterrent to social justice. In the wake of COVID-19, there are suggestions for the nations to prepare for the next pandemic. The Qatar example may provide useful clues in this regard.

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Notes

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Chapter 7

Social Justice Under COVID-19: A Comparative Study of Health and Socioeconomic Policy Responses in the Arab Mashreq and the Arab Gulf



Ahmed Aref

Abstract This chapter provides a critical overview on the patterns of health and socioeconomic policy responses in the Arab Mashreq and the GCC countries, from a social justice perspective. The social stratification and inheriting inequality in the Arab Mashreq affected the policy response, by favoring the economic support to big businesses, and depriving the poor from accessing quality health care, which shaped a class-based recovery. However, this disparity in the GCC policy responses in the health sector did not exist, since high-quality health care was provided to all. Moreover, the economic support was comprehensive and did not exclude small and medium-sized enterprises. However, the labor policy response undermined the social justice in the GCC pandemic response. Austerity measures were significantly directed toward the expatriate workers by reducing their numbers or cutting salaries and benefits. The chapter provides contextual analysis to draw a full picture of the structural factors that represent pressing determinants shaping different typologies of policy response in both regions.

Keywords Social justice · Policy response · COVID-19 · Health policies · Socioeconomic policies · Social Inclusion/Exclusion · Inequality · The Arab Mashreq · The Arab Gulf

7.1 Introduction: Social Justice in Policy Response to COVID-19

By the middle of the last decade, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emerged as a development agenda that countries would follow until 2030 and frame their national plans on accordingly. In the midst of the obsession with SDGs' data monitoring, reporting, and following up mechanisms, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world in 2020 with great force, turning quickly into a global pandemic. The pandemic stole the show, leading policymakers, NGOs, and other stakeholders away

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from the “trendy” SDGs “policy design” and localization notions to the timely and significant “policy response” concepts. In fact, although the development agenda’s moto was “no one left behind,” yet crisis management and policy response concepts were actually left behind in the development agenda itself. The policy response to the pandemic in most countries prioritized the value of life and health over economic interests, while the measures taken disrupted and reshaped the functionality of many systems, such as labor and education.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted normal life across the world. It did not only ravage human health and caused untold suffering but has also threatened the integrity of social systems. The COVID-19 pandemic’s impact and the subsequent response from authorities shed the light on disparities based on economic status, class, citizenship and immigration status, etc. The policy response to the pandemic in Arab countries reflected the long-standing inequalities in society. In fact, the pandemic brought to the fore imbalances in resource distribution modulated by the general socioeconomic inequalities at large. These disparities form the basis for this chapter’s critical overview on the patterns of health and socioeconomic policy responses in the Arab Mashreq and the GCC countries, from a social justice perspective.

Response to the pandemic in different countries, not just the Arab countries, has reflected how the most vulnerable are left behind and becoming more marginalized (Fisher & Bubola, 2020). The socioeconomic disparities that preceded the pandemic became more pronounced as governments undertook policy positions like restricting movement and shutting down economic activities to contain the spread. These policy positions forced small businesses to shut down and caused many sectors to be paralyzed. These measures not only enforced the said disparities but also reinforced them, leaving the economically disadvantaged even more vulnerable, and exacerbated the hardship on the poor.

The COVID-19 pandemic raised important social justice issues related to preexisting social inequalities. Moreover, some policy responses to the pandemic were counterproductive and exacerbated the existing socioeconomic polarization. Such policy responses resulted in a skewed distribution of resources required for people to overcome the impact of the pandemic. Haase’s (2020) description of COVID-19 as a stressor for justice issues was likely in response to the disparities exposed by the pandemic. This means that the brunt of the pandemic was not just born by the poor and the marginalized by the socioeconomic status. Their suffering was enhanced by policy responses that were insensitive to their low income, poor housing, and lack of access to quality health care.

Research suggests that social polarization spurred by ineffective policy responses will have long-term ramifications that will increase the socioeconomic disadvantages faced by the most vulnerable in society (Fisher & Bubola, 2020). The following discussions will explore the role of Arab Mashreq policy responses in reinforcing existing social crises rather than alleviating them. Moreover, the contrast will be made with policy responses in the GCC countries that have integrated intersectionality perspectives in handling the complexities of the pandemic in the health policy response, while nationality-based discrimination was clear in the labor policy response.

7.2 Health Context and Infrastructure Shaping Different Policy Responses

Quality health care for all is an essential element in achieving fundamental social justice goals. According to Van der Weide and Milanovic (2018), income disparities contribute to inequities in health systems between the poor and the rich. Like in most Mashreq countries, the health system has been stretched to its limit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the pandemic has highlighted the health inequities in the system. Research suggests that marginalization and poverty are global risk factors that influence the spread, severity, or mortality of COVID-19. Countries in the Arab Mashreq with disproportionality higher poor populations have had higher COVID-19 cases and mortalities than GCC countries, whose populations are relatively less poor.

In the Arab Mashreq countries, the fragile health sectors and the coverage gap of medical insurance generated an association between appropriate recovery and the upper class. Accordingly, access to quality care was exclusively for the rich. On the other hand, the poor had to rely on public health, which is often underfunded, understaffed, and lacks sufficient resources (Aref, 2021a).

The COVID-19 pandemic shined a light on and exacerbated preexisting socio-economic and political health inequalities in the Mashreq. In some cases, policy responses to the pandemic widened the inequities and disproportionately exposed vulnerable communities to adverse health outcomes (Ku & Brantley, 2020; Marmot & Allen, 2020). Moreover, healthcare and local inequalities in poor communities promoted the spread of the virus as insufficient public health facilities derailed contact tracing efforts. Therefore, governments and authorities must understand the differential effects of COVID-19 to formulate effective policy responses within societies. Research suggests that health inequalities can be addressed through policy formulations that consider social determinants (Sokka et al., 2009; Tipirneni, 2021). This facilitates the formulation of COVID-19 policy responses based on an understanding of disease incidence and outcomes.

The lockdown measures in the Mashreq countries did not consider the disruptive effects on families' food security. In addition, refugees in countries like Jordan and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in war-torn countries like Syria and Iraq were left behind in the policy response. Instead of prioritizing their needs as vulnerable people, they faced restrictions on moving out from overcrowded camps due to the lockdown measures, which exacerbated their plight (Aref, 2021a, b).

Authorities in such areas should focus on channeling aid toward the creation of mobile healthcare facilities to assist vulnerable refugees and IDPs. The unsanitary condition in refugee and IDP camps coupled with crowded living conditions heighten the risk of exposure to the virus. COVID-19 policy responses that focus on hand-washing have to integrate the provision of clean water in such areas. Health and sanitation of facilities are essential in such regions to curb disease outbreaks.

Unlike the Mashreq, the readiness and the well-invested health sector in the Gulf represented a strong foundation for recovery and inclusion. In an assessment of

coronavirus preparedness published by the World Health Organization (WHO) at the start of the pandemic, countries were rated on a scale from 1 (incapacity) to 5 (sustainable capacity), with all GCC countries scoring 4–5. During the pandemic, GCC countries boosted the health sector by further investment estimated at USD 90 billion (Al-Ani, 2022). With this massive investment, the Gulf governments have succeeded in controlling the outbreak of the disease with recovery rates above the global average. For instance, Qatar has become the only Arab country in the region to be among the top 15 countries in dealing with COVID-19, according to a classification published by Der Spiegel magazine in Germany (Al-Thani, 2021). Moreover, the UAE and Bahrain are among the world's leading countries in terms of examination, as they ranked first and third, respectively, in terms of the number of new tests per thousand people (OECD, 2020).

In general, all over the GCC countries, the rights for detection, quarantine, and recovery were fully supported for all citizens and residents, regardless of the different health insurance frameworks. The pandemic has shed the light on the suffering caused by the virus to migrant workers, especially unskilled workers, given the overcrowded living conditions that allowed the virus to spread in housing complexes. Hence, the authorities paid special attention to the health of the workers, provided periodic examinations, and built temporary hospitals for quarantine and recovery. Even in some countries with regions whose residents lack official documents, such as some western regions of Saudi Arabia, schools have been used to provide temporary accommodation and quarantine.

The case in Mashreq is different in terms of the resources allocation and distribution of wealth, which both affected the unjust shaping of the health policy response. For instance, the highly privatized healthcare system in Lebanon is already a major obstacle for the most in-need people in the country, who struggle to access affordable care. The annual inflation rate, which jumped above 133% in November 2020, hit the Lebanese and refugees alike, directly undermining their ability to access health care. (Elwatan, 2021). According to the estimates of the Egyptian Medical Syndicate, out of 220,000 registered doctors, 120,000 of them are outside Egypt, and hospitals lack about 55,000 nurses, in addition to low wages and a lack of medical supplies (Elshobky, 2020).

Moreover, public health in Iraq is witnessing an old crisis, the results of which are unfolding today. Decades of conflict, along with international sanctions and a lack of interest in the health sector, have seriously damaged the healthcare system, creating an environment that has prompted many qualified doctors and others to emigrate. 5.4% of the total public budget is spent on health and the environment as a whole. According to the Public Health Organization, Iraq spends only \$154 per person per year on health. Iraq's population has seen a significant increase, but the health system has not kept pace (Physicians for Human Rights, 2021).

In Lebanon, before the pandemic, the crisis stems from the government's failure to reimburse private and public hospitals, including funds owed by the National Social Security Fund and military health funds, making it difficult to pay staff and purchase medical supplies. In addition, a dollar shortage has restricted the import of vital goods and led banks to curtail credit lines (Human Rights Watch, 2019). The

situation was expressed by a formal political narrative from in Lebanon that “We have reached a stage, that only the rich can enter the hospital” (Lebanese Ministry of Media, 2021).

7.3 Case Studies of Social Inclusion/Exclusion in Health Policy Response

A closer look at the UAE experience for instance provides a case for inclusivity of the health policy response of the GCC states. The UAE’s COVID-19 policy response was more sensitive to social justice concerns. Its response strategies focused on collaborative efforts through public–private partnerships to bolster supply chains for COVID vaccine and other essential items. This prevented serious disruption of the economy as people could access humanitarian, medical, and testing supplies. The government’s policy response prioritized testing and treatment by setting up testing stations in all major heal facilities. This allowed for developing and planning for appropriate interventions as the pandemic progressed.

The UAE policies on vaccination integrated a collaborative approach, with government leaders at the forefront of pro-vaccination campaigns. The government’s efforts to provide vaccines for all its citizens and migrant workers culminated in the UAE being ranked the 2nd in vaccine administration across the globe (Suliman et al., 2021). The UAE government availed COVID-19 vaccines to all its citizens at no charge, a policy that bridged socioeconomic disparities. Its locally manufactured Sinopharm and Pfizer-BioNTech were distributed in all the emirates for all people at no cost. The UAE government leveraged technology to bridge socioeconomic disparities through the digitization of healthcare data. Access to vaccines was made more convenient through mobile applications and telecommunication (Suliman et al., 2021). For instance, the government launched a contact tracing and vaccine registry mobile application, *Al Hosn*, to keep track of vaccination efforts. Digital technology was also deployed in data integration and COVID-19 community awareness initiatives.

The policy response is different when compared with another case study of Egypt for instance from the Mashreq. Historically, Egyptian health policies have been aimed at providing universal health care for all. The country had made commendable strides in these efforts with an impressive network of health facilities (World Health Organization, 2018). However, investment in the Egyptian health system did not match its high population growth rate, with government expenditure declining to 1.16% of the country’s GDP in 2020, at the height of the pandemic (Diab & Hindy, 2021). Moreover, out-of-pocket payments remain the main form of health financing, with low-income earners spending more on health than high-income earners. The Egyptian policy response to COVID-19 has largely ignored these disparities. The quality of health in private hospitals remains significantly better vis-à-vis public health facilities. Differences in the quality of health also occur on a geographical basis, with urban facilities being significantly better than rural facilities.

The COVID-19 pandemic not only exposed but exacerbated the underlying health inequalities in Egypt. The policy responses to the pandemic did little in the way of attending to the needs of low-income populations. The inaccessibility of healthcare services in underserved locations placed poor communities at a higher risk of infection and death due to limited vaccination or testing (Shawky, 2018). The Egyptian government's policy response to the pandemic featured interventions to reduce the spread through lockdowns, social distancing, and masking policies. The government also aimed to equip health facilities with requisite medication, conduct effective diagnoses, and enhance the capacity of health personnel.

Though well-meaning, the Egyptian government's policy response did little to address the existing inequalities. The informal and unskilled nature of the work done by people in low-income communities did not provide opportunities to work from home either. According to Egypt's of Manpower (2020), it attempted to remedy the situation through an EGP500 monthly stipend to informal workers. However, only a fraction of the workers in the informal sector (about 1.6 million) were beneficiaries of the policy. Affluent Egyptians were better placed to cope with the lockdowns while working from home. Access to COVID-19 tests and quality medical treatment was to a large extent the preserve of the rich. The poor did not have the same access to quality care due to the dichotomy between Egyptian private and public hospitals. Unlike private facilities, Public Facilities in Egypt were overstretched and ill-equipped to provide quality care.

Despite the pandemic and the catastrophic situation that the health sector is going through in Egypt, which necessitates an increase in spending on the health sector, the government reduced health expenditure and drug subsidies by 40% (about 1.5 to 2.1 billion pounds, from a target of 3.6 billion pounds) (Aljazeera, 2020).

7.4 Case Studies of Socioeconomic Disparities in Policy Response

The COVID-19 pandemic found Iraq already in a dire state of socioeconomic and political instability. The nation was already reeling from a lack of economic opportunities and basic services, prompting nationwide demonstrations in the last quarter of 2019 (Hassan & Rubin, 2019). The spread of the COVID-19 only worsened the situation beyond the tensions with the USA and the collapse of oil prices. It exacerbated social, economic, and political challenges that Iranians had to grapple with. The Iranian authorities' COVID-19 policy response had little substance in terms of strengthening social cohesion, inclusion, and protections for all Iranians (United Nations, 2019). Their response strategies stressed scientific recommendations like handwashing and mask-wearing. However, challenges arose since vast sections of the Iraqi population were already socioeconomically underprivileged, with most of them internally displaced.

The Iraqi authorities' response to the COVID-19 pandemic did not (or could not) take into account the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The living conditions of IDPs were characterized by a lack of clean water, poor sanitation, and insecure housing in densely populated communities. The pandemic found them already suffering from infectious and non-communicable diseases, malnutrition, and poor sanitation. Policies that limited movement, though well-intentioned, increased gender-based violence among vulnerable women and children in refugee and IDP camps (IASC, 2015). This trend was consistent with research in other jurisdictions that correlated spikes in domestic violence cases to prolonged lockdowns (Usher et al., 2020). Therefore, lockdown policies may have reduced the spread but with the unintended consequence of precipitating the humanitarian crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic response policies in Iraq did little in the way of protecting vulnerable populations, already in dire need of humanitarian assistance. Research places the percentage of Iraqi workers who are dependent on casual labor at 45% while 28% have no income (CLCI, 2020). The authorities' response strategies to the pandemic were not tailored to prevent further discrimination or marginalization. For instance, restrictions on movement did not take into account implications on humanitarian aid supply chains (OCHA, 2020). Lockdown requirements disrupted livelihoods and further reduced access to food, shelter, and other basic needs. Marginalized populations like refugees and IDPs were disproportionately more disadvantaged by lockdown policies. Socially, economically, and physically disadvantaged groups like the elderly and persons with disabilities were exposed to greater health and psychosocial risks.

Iraqi authorities did not ensure their response to COVID-19 was rights-based or prioritized gender parity and the needs of the socioeconomically disadvantaged. Consequently, the strategies deepened health inequalities. Moreover, the disparities in access to information channels and internet coverage along socioeconomic lines predisposed vulnerable and marginalized Iraqi communities to COVID-19 misinformation.

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a precipitous drop in global oil prices and devastated its oil-dependent economy. Incomes in the country also suffered as a result since half of its GDP comes from oil exports. The KSA deployed COVID-19 prevention strategies from the onset of the pandemic before it hit its borders (Hassounah et al., 2020). Its intervention policies integrated strict measures including shutting down international travel, closing down mosques in Mecca, and restricting public transport. The KSA also imposed partial lockdowns modulated by the severity of outbreaks and enforced WHO guidelines on mass gatherings.

Beyond instituting movement restrictions, the KSA COVID-19 response strategies were such as mass testing and provision of dedicated ICU facilities ensured socioeconomic disparities did not overshadow its fight against the pandemic. Its early interventions were effective in slowing down the spread and paved the way for the creation of public awareness on prevention measures for all Saudi residents. It also prevented the KSA health facilities, laboratories, and medical equipment from being overwhelmed by the outbreak (Hassounah et al., 2020). The government channeled a

substantial portion of its GDP (about 7%) to shield all Saudi citizens and its economy from the lockdown impacts. This went a long way in preventing socioeconomic disruptions in the country and protecting the most vulnerable in society.

The KSA COVID-19 policy response also focused on supporting its health system to sustain continuous delivery of essential health services throughout the pandemic. This ensured that its vulnerable populations had access to timely and comprehensive COVID-19 treatment irrespective of their socioeconomic status (United Nations, 2020). The KSA government constructed additional health facilities to plug potential shortfalls and supported them with significant financial investment. It ensured all medical personnel and the general public had adequate personal protection equipment to contain the spread. Moreover, the government ran media campaigns providing useful information to all residents on the virus.

7.5 Economic Response Between Including All Businesses or Excluding Small Ones

The economic response in the Arab Mashreq was directed to support large-scale companies and gig business owners with no resources being pumped into small and medium industries, while they were the biggest losers from the pandemic. Also, the social protection policy development remained almost absent, although the poor and vulnerable groups' needs should have been prioritized in such a crisis. The case was different in the GCC, as the same support was extended to the small business owners.

The KSA COVID-19 policy response for instance prioritized jobs protection focusing on small and medium-sized businesses. It integrated economic recovery strategies for workers in the informal sector, thus securing a significant portion of the labor market. This strategy was critical in lessening the social implications of the pandemic by stimulating economic recovery post the pandemic. Key initiatives such as financial support not just for large private corporations but for SMEs as well ensured were critical ensuring vulnerable communities were protected from the economic disruptions of the pandemic. The government also introduced labor market regulations that supported immigrant workers and offered unemployment insurance to private-sector workers.

The Kingdom's policy strategies also leveraged macroeconomic policies that reinforced multilateral regional responses and secured the interests of the most vulnerable. The government achieved this through diverse fiscal measures aimed at propping up the economy. These involved lowering the repo rate and fiscal support of about \$61 billion to cushion all Saudi citizens from the impact of the pandemic. The governments' policy response also involved bolstering resilience in vulnerable communities through the promotion of cohesion and deployment of rapid response systems. Key government ministries leverage social media to create public awareness and explain the reasons behind the closure of commercial activities in the kingdom. They also provided sanitary facilities to vulnerable populations in various locations.

Despite its best efforts, poor vulnerable communities in the KSA were still disproportionately more adversely affected by some of the interventions. For instance, non-Saudi residents working in the private and informal sectors were affected by salary cuts and the increase in VAT. To remedy the situation, the KSA COVID-19 policy response supported workers in the public and private sectors and businesses. The government rolled out public funds aimed at alleviating the suffering of the most vulnerable in society (United Nations, 2020). Moreover, the government engaged in a strategic partnership with the UN-network to distribute food aid to vulnerable communities through the Saudi Food Bank.

It is worth noticing that the support to small-scale businesses and the vulnerable population was not only initiated by the Gulf governments. The outbreak has redefined the responsibilities of citizens and the business community and highlighted economic and religious solidarity. The business community has become a buffer between the government and the population. Blurring the lines between the government and the business community is an attempt to make the economic challenge a shared responsibility. For instance, Kuwaiti businessman Fawaz Khalid al-Marzouq launched an initiative to mobilize support for the Kuwaiti government by donating \$10 million for a fund to be located under the government's umbrella. Other businesses rallied to contribute by providing financial and medical aid, logistical support, and by placing hotels, hospitals, and other venues under government control. Kuwaitis hailed these initiatives as a reaffirmation of the business community's support and commitment to the government in times of need (Alhussein, 2020).

7.6 Unjust Policy Response in the Labor Sector

The labor market context in the Arab Mashreq related to the high rates of informality and the preexisting inequalities was distressing the pandemic response. Most of Arab Mashreq already had to struggle with preexisting labor market challenges, whether in relation to the influx of refugees, high youth unemployment, low female participation rates, or high informality (Kebede et al., 2020).

Even before the pandemic, workers in the informal sector in the Arab Mashreq countries were unable to benefit from social protection programs (Jull et al., 2018). The pandemic exacerbated these informality challenges. Lockdown policies in most Arab Mashreq countries exposed the informal workers to income loss. Pre-existing social inequalities among refugees affected by forced displacement have been compounded during the COVID-19 pandemic, with related disruptions to services and social networks (Jones et al., 2022).

The labor market context in the GCC countries is different. The challenges are related to the demographic imbalance between a national minority and a majority of expatriates shaping the labor force. This challenge is placed within a complex political system of rentier monarchies that provide cradle-to-grave socioeconomic benefits to the nationals exclusively. This context affects the labor policy response in

the crisis as national entitlements cannot be touched (Aref, 2021b). Hence, despite the comprehensiveness of economic policy response in the GCC countries, the austerity measures directed to the expats' labor undermined the philosophy of social justice in the policy response. These measures were largely directed to expatriate workers in terms of reducing numbers or cutting salaries and benefits.

For instance, Kuwait has approved austerity measures that began with “zeroing” paid vacations for all expatriate workers, passing through reducing the salaries ranging from 30 to 65%, and ending their contracts. Oman has called to protect Omani nationals in the private sector. Bahrain launched a circular to reduce expenditure budgets by 30%, resulting in firing expatriate workers and cutting their salaries. In the UAE, although the Ministry of Human Resources has called on companies not to terminate the employees or reduce their salaries without their consent, and to resort to consensual measures such as unpaid leave, this did not prevent hundreds of companies from laying off expatriate workers and reducing their salaries by rates that sometimes exceeded the 75% threshold (Afzaz, 2020).

Saudi Arabia, whose economy is resource-driven, also had to reduce the workforce primarily from the oil and gas sector in response to the coronavirus crisis. The Saudi state oil company Aramco started laying off its employees in early June. Though the actual number of employees who lost their jobs is not clear, according to some business analytics, around ten percent of the total workforce has been laid off. The same case in Qatar, the world's largest gas producer had to reduce its workforce in various sectors in response to the financial impact of the ongoing pandemic. Qatar Petroleum, the world's largest producer of liquefied gas, has had to terminate around 800 jobs. The market downturn due to the ongoing pandemic has caused the company to restructure its model, which has led to the elimination of certain jobs and to cut spending by around thirty percent. (Center for International and Regional Studies, 2020).

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a critical overview on the patterns of social justice in the health and socioeconomic policy responses to COVID-19 in the Arab Mashreq and the GCC countries. The context of both regions was examined to underline the structural factors contributing to shaping the policy responses. The low-funded and fragile public health sector, along with the inherited inequality in the Arab Mashreq made it hard to have an inclusive policy response. The quality recovery was associated with the rich, while the poor and the most vulnerable were left behind. The same exclusion model was adopted by Mashreq governments in the economic policy response. The formal subsidies were directed to support big businesses, with no support dedicated to the small to medium-sized enterprises.

The Arab Gulf context is different in terms of the hydrocarbon economy, sufficient resources, and a well-invested-in health sector. This context helped the Gulf governments to pump the health sector with extra funds, achieve recovery rates

above the world average, and to provide inclusive health care for all. In addition, unlike the Mashreq countries, the economic response to the pandemic in the Gulf did not prioritize the big businesses. The small businesses were provided the same support to survive the crisis. However, the austerity measures that were taken by the Gulf governments toward labor policies undermined the inclusivity adopted in the health and economic sectors. These measures were shaped to reduce the number of expatriate workers by terminating their contracts and/or keeping them with cuts in salaries and benefits. The labor policy response was not constructed in a vacuum. The pressing political and socioeconomic context in the Gulf was explored to understand the exclusion typology in the policy response.

The review of COVID-19 policy responses in both Arab Mashreq and GCC countries reveals an imperative social justice dilemma that should be considered in all crisis responses. Rethinking the inherited context that shapes the policy responses is an area for future research and policy debate.

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Chapter 8

Graduate Research Experience in the Arab Gulf: The Case in Qatar



Mary Newsome

Abstract In the Information Age, the knowledge economy is at the crux of economic growth. Academic institutions, and the human expertise and research potential they possess, are important sources of knowledge that have a direct impact on every area of our lives. From ensuring a continuous and sustainable supply of safe food to the advancement of targeted therapies through precision medicine or the development of effective virtual learning environments, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have an important role to play.

Keyword Higher education · Qatar · Gulf · Graduate experience · Graduate research

8.1 Introduction

In the Information Age, the knowledge economy is at the crux of economic growth. Academic institutions, and the human expertise and research potential they possess, are important sources of knowledge that have a direct impact on every area of our lives. From ensuring a continuous and sustainable supply of safe food to the advancement of targeted therapies through precision medicine or the development of effective virtual learning environments, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have an important role to play. In a seemingly shared effort to transition from a center of knowledge reception to a hub of knowledge production, the Arab Gulf States (particularly Qatar, UAE, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia) have garnered attention in recent years as a dominant force in higher education (HE) by attracting internationally reputed institutions and renowned faculty to the region (Madichie, 2015). In fact, the number of HEIs in the Gulf has more than doubled in the last two decades led largely by an influx of international branch campuses (IBCs) and foreign universities such as the 27 colleges and universities comprising Dubai International Academic City (DIAC) in

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the UAE and the eight, largely American, universities contributing to Qatar's Education City (Wilkins, 2011). While critics like (Buckner, 2011) reduce these efforts to the mere "jazzing-up" of the region (p. 25), Coffman (2003) leans toward more genuine motivations suggesting the rapid expansion of HEIs is the result of growth in demand for the preparation of students in the Gulf for the knowledge economy. Coffman points out, for example, that the majority of the population in Gulf countries (roughly 60%) is under 18 years of age, which gives rise to the need for more HEIs in the region; furthermore, while the education of women has quickly become a hallmark of modernity in the region, conservative cultural norms typically dictate that Gulf women receive a local education unlike their male counterparts who often study abroad (Coffman, 2003, p. 17). Coffman (2003) also emphasizes the increasingly unsafe or unwelcoming living environments in the US that have encouraged many Gulf students to pursue a Western education at home since the early 2000s. Finally, the demand to provide HE for "enormous expatriate communities living long-term in the Gulf" is another factor driving the establishment of HEIs in the region (Coffman, 2003, p. 17). While there is undoubtedly a plethora of highly individualistic motivations and expectations around the development of the HE sector in the Gulf, one common aim is providing quality education that prepares students for the future. Nowhere can this be seen more than in the region's lofty investments in graduate education. To illustrate, the newly opened and government funded Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI) in Abu Dhabi, UAE, is a graduate-level, research-based academic institution that affords all its graduate students with full scholarships inclusive of accommodations, health insurance, and a monthly stipend in exchange for full-time commitment to studying and researching in the field of AI. Similarly, Qatar's Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) was established in 2010 as a dedicated graduate institution committed to the discovery of innovative (and locally relevant) solutions to global challenges. Likewise, Qatar's Emir (ruler), Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, gifted Qatar University the fully equipped research vessel, *Janan*, giving access to graduate researchers investigating the territorial waters of the Gulf and their natural resources. Such investments clearly signal the region's perspective on the invaluable contribution of graduate students to the knowledge economy. Yet, despite the establishment of world-class graduate-level institutions and a wealth of research funding and facilities, graduates still face significant challenges to a successful research experience. In fact, global estimates suggest that more than half of graduate students do not complete their degree citing anxiety around the research process as a primary cause (Cho & Hayter, 2020; Litalien & Guay, 2015). Unfortunately, relatively little has been written to address this issue and even less has explored the graduate research experience within the Gulf context. This chapter aims to highlight some of the unique challenges graduate students in the Gulf face throughout the research process by discussing the graduate research experience in Qatar. This chapter is intended as a catalyst for sparking discussion in HE around innovative approaches to enhancing the graduate research experience, combating graduate attrition, and preserving a rich source of contribution to the knowledge economy.

8.2 Graduate Education in the GCC States

Any conversation around enhancing graduate education at a national or regional level should be informed by accurate and reliable data. However, there is a dearth of systematic information and data preservation on graduate education in the Gulf, which poses significant challenges to evidence-based decision making regarding educational policy and planning, the graduate student experience, graduate curriculum enhancement, and the monitoring and dissemination of graduate research and intellectual property. While there is a preponderance of open data on GCC schools, there is significantly less information readily available regarding higher education, and the information that is available generally combines undergraduate and graduate education, has important missing data, and/or is not updated on a consistent basis. To illustrate, the most updated higher education statistics provided on the Higher Education Council's website in Bahrain at the time of this writing is from the academic year 2013/2014 (http://moedu.gov.bh/hec/Page.aspx?page_key=higher_education_statistics). Similarly, the Center for Higher Education Data and Statistics (CHEDS) under the United Arab Emirates' Ministry of Education has an impressive central data collection platform utilized by the Ministry and all universities accredited in the country; however, data and reports from the platform are not openly available. Likewise, Qatar's Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) lists six military colleges and universities as well as nine semi-government institutions on its website but does not provide data concerning student demographics, graduate research output, or expenditure per student at these institutions.

Table 8.1 provides a snapshot of graduate education in the Gulf to date based on limited available information and highlights the need for better data and data sharing in the region. For example, Qatar has 2.8 million inhabitants and is home to 34 colleges and universities, while Bahrain has 1.6 million inhabitants and 17 HEIs. The fact that Qatar is nearly double the size of Bahrain in terms of inhabitants and number of HEIs yet reports similar university populations (33,500 and 33,000 students respectively) indicates a need for clearer and more comprehensive data. Another glaring question that arises from the Table 8.1 concerns the significantly lower percentage of university students pursuing graduate study in Saudi Arabia (only 3%) compared to other GCC countries. Similarly, data from Table 8.1 suggests there is a gender gap in graduate education in many GCC countries, namely Kuwait (76% female), UAE (66% female), and Qatar (63% female) where females represent the overwhelming majority. Al-Misnad's (2010) extensive research exploring the gender gap in higher education in Qatar seems to have some bearing at the graduate level as well nearly a decade later. In her work, Al-Misnad reported data from the 2004 Census revealing that by the age of 25, only 46 Qatari men had university education for every 100 Qatari women with equal qualifications and that Qatar University's student body in 2008 was 76% female (Al-Misnad, 2010). Although the gender ratio in higher education in Qatar and elsewhere in the Gulf has improved somewhat over the last ten years, intervention and understanding are still needed to secure the future development of the region. Further cooperation is needed in the collecting

Table 8.1 Graduate education in the Gulf

GCC country	# Colleges/universities	# University students	# Graduate students	Graduate students by gender
Kuwait ¹	1 public 11 private	40,000	2,200 (5.5%)	76% (F) 24% (M)
Qatar ²	10 public 9 private 9 semi-government 6 military HEIs	33,500	2,500 (7.4%)	63% (F) 37% (M)
Saudi Arabia ³	29 public 14 private	820,000	24,600 (3%)	42% (F) 58% (M)
United Arab Emirates ⁴	15 public 79 private	280,000	34,500 (12.3%)	66% (F) 34% (M)
Bahrain ⁵	3 public 14 private	33,000	3,900 (10.2%)	56% (F) 44% (M)
Oman ⁶	3 public 16 private	21,000	2,000 (9.5%)	56% (F) 44% (M)

Source Compiled by author

and sharing of data to guide both policy and practice, particularly considering that existing data poses more questions than answers.

Perhaps because graduate research does not directly factor into university rankings, the collection and maintenance of relevant data have received less attention among HEIs and governing bodies in the region. Or, in the increasingly competitive world of higher education, colleges and universities have become less transparent with institutional data in fear of losing their competitive edge. Regardless, HEIs in the

¹ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/f6cee71e-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/f6cee71e-en#section-d1e9486>.

<http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/kw>.

² https://www.psa.gov.qa/en/statistics/Statistical%20Releases/Social/Education/2019/Education_Statistical_Pro%EF%AC%81e_2019_EN.pdf.

<https://www.edu.gov.qa/en/Pages/higheredudefaul.aspx?ItemID=58>.

³ <https://argaamplus.s3.amazonaws.com/63ef7efd-d6e9-451c-956d-a4c5408ad119.pdf>.

⁴ <https://gulfnnews.com/uae/education/uae-has-over-295000-higher-education-students-says-new-report-1.78194835>.

<http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/ae>.

⁵ http://moedu.gov.bh/hec/Page.aspx?page_key=higher_education_statistics.

<http://moedu.gov.bh/hec/UploadFiles/Final%20HEIs%20Statistics%204%20Website-%20C2.pdf>.

⁶ <https://www.moheri.gov.om/default.aspx?culture=en>.

<https://gulfnnews.com/world/gulf/oman/oman-over-21000-students-accepted-to-higher-education-institutes-for-new-academic-year-1.73309397>.

https://www.squ.edu.om/Portals/0/PlanningAndStatistics/Statistical%20Overview/statistical%20overview%202020.pdf?ver=mj9ZMig-i6_5KdKBLCh-SQ%3d%3d.

region need to cooperate in a shared effort to accurately portray the landscape of graduate education including types of graduate programs, scholarships, attrition rates, cost per student, grant funds, graduate research output, completion rates, employability, industry satisfaction, etc. Such cooperation has important implications for enhancing graduate education, cultivating a positive graduate experience, and producing well-rounded competent graduates. Despite a lack of sufficient data on graduate education and research in the region, this chapter aims to shed light on the graduate experience in the Gulf by examining the case in Qatar.

8.3 Graduate Education in Qatar

Qatar is a small desert peninsula in the Arabian Gulf, which shares its only land border with neighboring Saudi Arabia. Despite its size (approximately 160 km), Qatar is quickly becoming an educational hub in the region boasting some of the West's top universities including Texas A&M, Weill Cornell Medicine, University of Calgary, Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts, Northwestern University, and HEC-Paris. Beyond Qatar's impressive suite of IBCs, its national university, Qatar University (QU), is ranked 224 globally according to the QS World University Ranking 2022 and ranks second in the MENA region, just behind King Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia. Over the last decade, Qatar has witnessed tremendous growth in HE expanding from 16 institutions in 2014 to 32 institutions by 2020, with 15 universities offering graduate education to date. Despite this growth, QU is still the leading graduate institution in Qatar, which is home to nearly 80% of the country's graduate students and more than 50 graduate degree programs. Although QU offers several humanities and social sciences programs in Arabic, most graduate programs (76%) use English as the medium of instruction. In fact, graduate education in Qatar is largely taught in English except for programs offered through the privately owned Doha Institute for Graduate Studies where Arabic is the medium of instruction. While English is essentially the language of graduate education in Qatar, most graduate students (more than 90%) are L2 students, meaning their primary or first language is not English. Understanding the unique challenges L2 graduate students in Qatar (and likely elsewhere in the Gulf) face is at the core of cultivating a positive graduate research experience.

8.4 Inadequate English Academic Writing Skills Among L2 Graduates

In a world where knowledge is the fuel of economic growth, graduate students, particularly doctoral students, are essential (Brinkley, 2006). The in-depth knowledge and original research of graduate students provide a rich source of discovery and

innovation that drives the knowledge economy; however, all of this is largely contingent on students' ability to effectively communicate in writing (i.e., through thesis research, scientific publications, conference papers, etc.). Unfortunately, a vast body of research suggests that L2 graduate students lack the requisite English academic writing skills (Jeyaraj, 2020; Keong & Mussa, 2015; McCarthy & Dempsey, 2017; Mehar Singh, 2019; Rigler et al., 2017; Walter & Stouck, 2020). Perhaps worse is the all-too-common assumption by HE administrators, faculty, and thesis supervisors that graduate students arrive at university as expert scholarly writers in need of little or no guidance. This mismatch between ability and expectation gives rise to a plethora of problems. For starters, poor academic writing has been documented as a primary source of conflict between graduate students and their thesis supervisors (Adrian-Taylor et al., 2007), and thesis supervisors often lack the time and know-how to develop their students' writing skills (Whitman et al., 2014). Furthermore, when graduate students perceive they aren't meeting the expectations of their instructors and supervisors, it can lead to feelings of shame, anxiety, procrastination, and imposter syndrome (Aldrich & Gallogly, 2020). In fact, evidence has suggested that L2 graduates are at an increased risk of developing mental health disorders including anxiety and depression largely due to the acceleration of academic life and the "publish or perish" nature of graduate study (Levecque et al., 2017). To add fuel to the fire, most graduates struggle to find the time to develop their academic writing skills when juggling work and family obligations along with the demands of a rigorous graduate program. In addition to these challenges, which are characteristic of L2 graduates in general, there are unique cultural obstacles to successful English academic writing among L2 graduates in the Gulf in particular. Good English academic writing, for example, is both direct and concise, yet Arabs generally value indirectness and lengthiness in academic writing (Al-Khatib, 2003). Likewise, good English academic writing discourages the use of elaborate language, while Arabs value such a trait in academic writing (Rass, 2011). Furthermore, good English academic writing demands proper citation of source material, while Arab students are often encouraged to memorize source material and use it verbatim posing serious threats to academic integrity when writing in English (Fawley, 2007). Because the relationship between writing and culture is so intertwined (i.e., we write to express our ideas, and our ideas are shaped by our culture), it is only logical to expect L2 graduate students' English academic writing to reflect certain traits of the indigenous culture.

Despite this extensive evidence, graduate students, at least in Qatar, lack the infrastructure of support needed to help them develop strong English academic writing within the relatively short duration of their graduate study. In fact, of the 15 HEIs providing graduate education in Qatar, only Qatar University (QU) and Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) have dedicated centers for supporting the development of academic writing at the graduate level. Graduate writing support at QU has been offered through the Office of Graduate Studies since 2012 and includes one-to-one consultations (in-person, online, and via telephone), synchronous and asynchronous webinars, workshops, a graduate student Blackboard community, and lecture requests where writing support staff can be invited by faculty to deliver writing lectures to

classes. Similarly, HBKU established the Academic Writing and Research Excellence Center (AWARE) under the College of Humanities and Social Sciences to support academic writing in 2018 with the aim of helping students become better writers in the long term. AWARE provides support to graduate students through one-to-one appointments, workshops, and a variety of digital resources. Although both institutions are to be commended for being among the first in Qatar to acknowledge that graduate students do, in fact, need academic writing support and actually invest in the resources needed to tackle the issue, there is still much to be done. For starters, the kind of support offered through writing centers is essentially supplemental support available outside of program requirements, which means that students must find extra time to take advantage of the centers' services. However, a more effective approach may be for centers and colleges to work together to imbed academic writing instruction into the graduate program curriculum in addition to the one-to-one writing sessions and one-off workshops offered through writing centers. Some possibilities may be to include basic academic writing instruction as part of graduate students' orientation, require that a prescribed amount of academic writing instruction be taught in research methodology courses, imbed academic writing instruction in graduate seminars, and include one-to-one consultations with writing center staff as part of the thesis research hours. These are just a few ways writing centers and faculty/supervisors can collaborate to improve students' writing skills and facilitate a more positive graduate research experience.

8.5 Beyond the Language Barriers

While inadequate English academic writing skills are a major threat to a successful graduate research experience, there are other underlying challenges as well. In Qatar, unlike in the West, students' high school percentage at graduation largely determines their area of study at university where lower scores are associated with the humanities and social sciences and higher scores associated with sciences and medicine. A high school percentage of 70 permits a student to study business or education, for example, while an 80% opens the doors to study pharmacy, and an 85% or higher provides opportunities to study dentistry or medicine.

Although these "tracks" ensure top students enter the health and medical professions, it also has the unintended consequence of deterring them from pursuing majors in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. In such a system, there is a built-in assumption that the best students seek majors with high entry requirements, and "bad" students concede to majors with lower entry requirements. High schoolers who graduate with a 95%, for instance, may be passionate about language but instead pursue engineering because the higher entrance requirements imply a certain superiority and/or prestige. In other words, many students are concerned that choosing majors with lower entry requirements will reflect their performance rather than their preference. This has important implications for graduate study since students' undergraduate majors determine their area of graduate study to a large extent, and to be

successful in graduate study, students need to pursue an area of research from a place of passion rather than prestige. The very nature of graduate research is isolating in that one of the primary requirements is to make an original contribution to the field. In doing so, graduate students often find themselves exploring aspects of the field unfamiliar to even their supervisors. The resulting challenges require considerable discipline and perseverance; void of passion, graduate research can be a daunting, if not debilitating, experience.

Another important aspect of the graduate research experience that has largely been overlooked by universities in Qatar is the supervisor-supervisee relationship. Thesis supervisors act as mentors by broadening their students' intellectual abilities, scaffolding the development of their technical skills, providing administrative support concerning university policy and funding, managing research project timelines, and, perhaps most importantly, providing personal and emotional support throughout the research process (Rugg & Petre, 2007). Quality thesis supervision is paramount to success in graduate study. In fact, evidence has shown that the supervisor-supervisee relationship is the most important factor contributing to the completion of doctoral research (Mainhard et al., 2009; Wellington, 2010). Nonetheless, a thorough review of university websites in Qatar reveals a glaring absence of resources and support for this all-important relationship. For example, of the 15 HEIs offering graduate programs, none provide a mentoring toolkit, mentoring handbook or guide, professional development resources, or community of practice (CoP) to share mentoring experiences, strategies, or best practices in graduate supervision. Qatar University has recently taken steps in the right direction, however, by publishing guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of faculty and students in the supervisory relationship and developing an automated system, TADESS (thesis and dissertation electronic service system) designed to support supervisors' administrative responsibilities during thesis supervision. Still, more support is needed to ensure graduate students (and their supervisors) are thriving. Establishing opportunities for both students and faculty to voice their complaints in confidence and in a constructive manner is an excellent starting point for mapping the path to excellence in supervision. Given the ample opportunities for graduate study in Qatar, a wealth of research funding, world-class research facilities, renowned faculty, and a high value on contribution to the knowledge economy, investing in the supervisor-supervisee relationship will make an invaluable contribution to the graduate research experience.

Another barrier to cultivating a positive graduate research experience is a lack of mental health literacy (MHL) and the resulting stigma around mental health disorders in Qatar, particularly among graduate students (Bell, 2019; Elyamani et al., 2021). MHL is defined as knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders that aid in their recognition, management, and prevention (Jorm, 2015). Studies have shown that MHL in Qatar is considerably low among the public (Ghuloum & Bener, 2010) as well as among university students (Zolezzi et al., 2017). Uncoincidentally, the Arab World has been reported to have higher rates of depression, anxiety disorders, PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), and suicide compared to any other region (Naveed, 2018; Zeinoun et al., 2020). Because graduate students are already at an increased risk of developing mental health problems (Levecque et al., 2017), HEIs in

Qatar, and elsewhere in the Gulf, need to do more to promote MHL and destigmatize mental health diagnoses so students feel comfortable to seek out needed support. The demands of work, graduate study, familial obligations, and, in many cases, financial constraints can be extremely taxing for students. GCC youth, for example, have identified personal relationships and academic factors as primary sources of stress (Bell, 2019). While most universities have student counseling services with highly trained and compassionate staff, it is still considered relatively taboo for Arabs to discuss mental illness making it difficult to reach the heart of the problem. Consequently, many students internalize their struggles with mental health in fear of bringing shame to themselves and their families. Furthermore, when counseling services do attempt to raise awareness among students regarding specific mental health conditions (i.e., through workshops or trainings), they often need to package the material as to avoid cultural sensitivities. For example, a workshop on coping with addiction would likely be presented under the more generic (and palatable) topic of maintaining mental health and well-being. Likewise, a workshop on eating disorders might be presented as a workshop on maintaining a healthy and balanced diet. Such generic titles, however, fail to attract the very students they aim to help. This is particularly true at Qatar University where preserving the national identity is highly valued and associating it with any stigma should be avoided. As a result, the university faces the complex challenge of tackling an issue of great importance to the society—mental health—without offending the very community it serves. Universities under Qatar Foundation, on the other hand, have considerably more freedom as most are IBCs of Western universities where discussions of such issues are less stigmatized. Nonetheless, universities can, and should, take the lead in reshaping how mental illness and mental health disorders are viewed through advocacy and awareness. In fact, the mental health issues plaguing graduate education have been described as a mental health crisis (Charles et al., 2021); therefore, adopting a proactive attitude and normalizing discussions around mental health is fundamental to creating a great graduate research environment.

8.6 To Thrive or Not to Thrive

The quality of the graduate research experience is ultimately impacted by a university's ability to cultivate a supportive and engaging environment that allows graduate students to achieve a variety of personal, professional, and academic goals. Despite the perceptions of some, the graduate research experience does not have to be a labor-intensive struggle to balance work, life, and program demands. Instead, the graduate experience should be a transformative journey fueled by many opportunities for personal and professional growth. In this view, universities have the potential to cultivate either an empowering graduate research experience or a debilitating one. If the former is desired, and we believe it is, HEIs in Qatar need to look beyond just the establishment of new institutions and fancy, well-funded research facilities. Although these things are critical to advancing the knowledge economy and reflect the country's

commitment to higher education, they neglect a key driver behind universities' contribution to society, the graduate student. The current model of graduate education in Qatar is, to some extent and likely unintentionally, programming students to accept being overworked, overlooked, and unfulfilled. To pave the road forward, the mission of graduate education in Qatar should precisely and clearly reflect a focus on students' thriving. Human thriving has been described quite simply as a desirable life condition (Bundick et al., 2010). Spreitzer et al. (2005) described thriving individuals as those who feel a strong sense of progress and momentum, understanding and knowledge, and aliveness. However, efforts to conceptualize the thriving graduate student and his/her environment are lacking (Coe-Nesbitt et al., 2021), but we do know that thriving students are "fully engaged intellectually, socially, and emotionally" (Schreiner, 2013). They are not bogged down and burned-out individuals whose value is calculated solely by their research profile as some graduate researchers have reported feeling (Cactus Foundation, 2020). If universities really want to invest in the graduate research experience and reap the rewards of thriving graduate students, they must adopt a holistic view to improving graduates' overall well-being. Within the scarce literature, Coe-Nesbitt et al. (2021) point us in the right direction suggesting that interventions should focus on "enhancing the potential for students to maximize their achieving, engaging, connecting, balancing, enjoying, and being" (p. 11). This holistic approach, then, must involve both academic and non-academic experiences.

8.7 Conclusion

This chapter provides a brief overview of the tremendous expansion and investment in higher education that has transformed the Gulf into an educational hub with a particular focus on graduate education in Qatar and the graduate research experience. Although Qatar has made impressive strides to become a regional leader in graduate education by securing top-notch research faculty and facilities, offering unbeatable funding, importing world-class universities, and enhancing its existing ones, the graduate research experience has received far less enthusiasm. Despite graduate students' invaluable contribution to the knowledge economy and alarming evidence concerning graduate attrition rates, remarkably little has been done to explore what graduate students need to thrive. This chapter presents some of the most pressing barriers to a successful graduate research experience in Qatar including lack of data regarding graduate education and research, inadequate English academic writing skills among graduates, lack of infrastructure to develop requisite skills, overdemanding schedules, the acceleration of academic life, ineffective supervisor-supervisee relationships, and a multitude of issues around mental health. As we barrel into the fourth industrial revolution and Education 4.0 takes shape, one must ask if the fundamental concerns highlighted here will be reconciled or exacerbated in coming years. The technological revolution of the current age is fundamentally changing how we live, work, and learn at an unprecedented pace. Will the digital tools and capabilities of this new era cultivate a thriving graduate student environment and support the overall

well-being of one of our richest sources of contribution to the knowledge economy? The aim of this chapter is to spark dialogue among HE administrators, faculty, and graduate students regarding the future of the graduate research experience in Qatar and elsewhere in the Gulf.

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Chapter 9

Transition to Online Teaching Under COVID-19: The Case Study of UAE University



Aizhan Shomotova and Tatiana Karabchuk

Abstract This chapter discusses the role of universities and government in supporting the transition to online teaching, describes the challenges and reflections of academic staff on this transition to online teaching, their research efficiency during the lockdown, and their satisfaction and comfortability with the online teaching experience in general and in the future. This empirical study uses a cross-sectional online survey of faculty members' experience transitioning to online teaching at UAE University ($N = 175$ of faculty members). The chapter suggests that the UAEU case study could be treated as a successful example of the urgent transition to online learning and teaching since the vast majority of the faculty members were satisfied with their online teaching experience. Furthermore, results even speak for improved research efficiency, irrespective of gender.

Keywords Transition to online teaching · E-learning · Distance learning · Faculty members · COVID-19 · Higher Education UAE

9.1 Introduction

Many countries implemented severe restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19: lockdowns, travel bans, social distancing, closure of public places, transition to remote work from home, transition to online learning, vaccination campaigns, etc. The measures affected all social spheres of life, including education. All educational institutions in most affected countries had to shift the operation mode from face-to-face to online teaching and learning (Crawford et al., 2020; Cutri et al., 2020; John Lemay et al., 2021; Kessler et al., 2020; Rad et al., 2021; Rajab et al., 2020; Telles-Langdon, 2020).

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Recent advancements in the information technologies and global digitalization facilitated this transition (Bensaid & Brahim, 2021). However, countries with the highest digital divide faced multiple challenges throughout the process (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] Chairs, 2020). Countries without experience in online education before the COVID-19 outbreak had to make special efforts to close the digital divide (Agormedah et al., 2020; Mishra et al., 2020; Shomotova & Karabchuk, 2022a). Most faculty had to adjust and adapt to teaching online for the first time in their lives due to the urgent transitions (Johnson et al., 2020). Although some academic staff were familiar with digital platforms/tools such as Zoom, Blackboard, Skype (Mouchantaf, 2020) and had some technological knowledge, there was a gap between knowing technology and applying it to the daily online teaching (Alea et al., 2020).

The exploratory analysis of the transition to online teaching and learning under the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions allows to describe the possible effects on the quality of teaching and research as well as to disclose the challenges faced by academic staff. What roles can university administration and government in general play in coordinating and supporting such transitions? How difficult do the faculty members find this fast shift to online mode? Are there differences in combining family duties and remote work from home for male and female faculty members or for those who have or do not have children under 10 years old?

Most previous studies focused on student challenges in online learning under COVID-19 lockdown (Aboagye et al., 2021; Fatonia et al., 2020). This study analyzes the faculty experience in online teaching. The advantage of the study is that it uses empirical survey data collected in the fall of 2020. This allowed us to discuss challenges in distance teaching from the perspective of instructors, including their evaluations of their own teaching and research efficiency, and job satisfaction. It is vital to study those challenges and consequences of the shift to digital education from the faculty perspective to provide better solutions in the future.

This chapter sheds light on a successful example of the urgent transition to online teaching and learning in higher education institutions in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which adapted to the new digital reality quite quickly and smoothly (Karabchuk & Shomotova, 2022). The UAE could be considered a regional leader in higher education and research, as it became a fast-growing higher education hub that attracts a large share of international students (Karabchuk & Shomotova, 2022). The country has one of the highest percentages of high school graduates enrolling in tertiary education: 95% of women and 80% of men (UAE Gender Balance Council, 2021). Gross enrollment rates in higher education increased from 15.55% in 2008 to 53.72% in 2020. The numbers are even higher for women, with an increase from 27.7% in 2008 to 66.35 % in 2020 (UNESCO UIS, 2021).

First, the chapter provides a comparative literature review analysis on transition to online teaching at higher education institutions under the COVID-19. Second, the study describes the context of the UAE when the shift to online teaching occurred. Finally, the chapter focuses on the analysis of a case study of the UAE University as the largest public university in the country.

9.2 Transition to Online Teaching Across the Globe

9.2.1 *Online Learning in Higher Education Before the COVID-19 Pandemic*

The online learning environment is a relatively new and fast-growing niche in education that has been built, implemented, and practiced at different levels of effectiveness worldwide. Previous studies highlighted that teachers' perceptions of the learning environment influence their approach to teaching (Prosser & Trigwell, 1997; Trigwell & Prosser, 2004). Indeed, teaching in a traditional face-to-face classroom is different from teaching online (González, 2012). Moreover, one of the reasons why online learning was not massively used was that teachers considered online learning only as an information transmission method (Journell, 2010). Similarly, students could not use electronic courses without the active support of tutors (Balabas, 2017) and were less certain of the prospects for successful online learning interactions (Lemay et al., 2021). For example, in post-soviet countries, e-learning was most often associated with mass open online courses (MOOCs), and often blended with the traditional type of in-class education (Kireev et al., 2019), but usually with low number of enrolled students. Moreover, students do not use technologies the same way as well as they learn in a different way (Whitefield, 2012).

The global digitalization and development of ICT helped universities adapt online and hybrid learning approaches. Introduction and use of the Learning Management System (LMS), an online web-based program, supported the delivery of educational courses. Although online teaching practices were incorporated into traditional content delivery models, technology was used primarily for administrative efficiency or convenient access to lecture slides rather than to develop innovative teaching strategies to facilitate deeper learning (Clemmons et al., 2014; Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2015). Indeed, many higher education instructors and professors rarely developed teaching strategies to engage students in an interactive online environment using technology (Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2015).

Lately, literature emphasized that there was a significant growth of online learning in higher education, and it is important to provide faculty training and student orientation programs on the tools, course materials, and consider the instructors expectations from online education (Davis et al., 2019). Furthermore, the proliferation of new technologies, the worldwide adoption of the Internet, and the increasing demand for a workforce to be well prepared for the digital economy have led to the rapid growth of online education in various ways (Palvia et al., 2018). Therefore, the positive outcome of the pandemic outbreak is that it speeded up the fast transition of HEIs to an online learning environment, the use and adaptation of new educational technologies, the creation of new teaching strategies and approaches to deliver course content and engage students online. As a result, academic staff and students had to inevitably adapt, teach, learn, interact, and engage online in a new normal context.

9.2.2 *Online Higher Education Under the COVID-19 Pandemic*

The digital transformation of higher education has been taking decades, but the COVID-19 pandemic forced this transition to occur just within a few days or weeks across the world. Distance and online learning require facilities such as laptops, tablets, PCs, the Internet connection, and software tools. Most countries could provide access to all mentioned facilities, but the main issue was the digital literacy and the competence to use the technology (Khan et al., 2021). Most faculty had zero experience in teaching online before COVID-19 restrictions were implemented (Johnson et al., 2020). The pandemic caught faculty and students poorly prepared, which accounted for challenges associated with technological competence (Khan et al., 2021).

Most of the faculty reported that they faced new various challenges in adjusting to online teaching in March 2020 (Lemay et al., 2021; Mishra et al., 2020; Moralista & Oducado, 2020). Among those challenges they often named communication, student assessment, use of technology tools, online experience, pandemic-related anxiety or stress, time management, and technophobia (Rajab et al., 2020). Furthermore, academic staff declared that logistic support and technical assistance to students consume a lot of their time and effort (Al-Karaki et al., 2021; Cui et al., 2021; Kaba et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2021; Taha et al., 2020). Faculty members now had to spend more hours on preparation for online course delivery working from home (Lemay et al., 2021), and it considerably increased the time spent in front of the screen, causing physical complications (Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020; Kaden, 2020). They emphasized that teaching online could have a huge impact on the course and program learning outcomes (Al-Karaki et al., 2021) in addition to low student participation in online sessions (OECD, 2020; Khan et al., 2021). Thus, online classes were found by instructors to be more tiring than face-to-face teaching mode (Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020).

The next section of this chapter focuses on details of a case study of the largest public university in the country, UAE University, and transition to online teaching and learning under the COVID-19 pandemic in the UAE.

9.3 Digitization of Higher Education in the UAE Before COVID-19

On the one hand, the UAE was always keen on new information and computing technology (ICT) and has been putting a lot of efforts to close digital divide in the country. In 2015, the UAE (92%) was ranked second in the world in internet use, after Canada (95%) (DataReportal, 2015). By the time the COVID-19 pandemic occurred in 2020, the share of active Internet users in the country reached 99% of the entire population. Furthermore, the speed of the mobile Internet connection (83.52 Mbps)

was the highest in the world, overcoming South Korea (81.39 Mbps), Qatar (78.38 Mbps), and China (73.35 Mbps) (DataReportal, 2021).

On the other hand, the UAE significantly reformed its education system and considerably invested in higher education to increase the number of HEIs and percentage of students enrolling in tertiary education (Karabchuk & Shomotova, 2022). Furthermore, a few years prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, the Ministry of Education (MOE) acknowledged the critical role of information and communication technology (ICT) in the long-term growth and advancement of education (Fook et al., 2015).

In contrast to other Arab countries, the UAE was the first to introduce digital Internet-based learning tools at all levels of education. Since 2013, the UAE has been purchasing the latest e-learning materials, technology platforms, and other equipment (Fraij, 2013) as well as integrating computer-aided learning methods into vocational and higher education (Raji, 2019). For example, students used laptops in class on university courses (Awwad et al., 2013). And by the end of the 2010s, most HEIs were equipped with learning management systems (LMS) with strong 24-h support by IT service providers (Alterri et al., 2020).

In addition, online learning was used through online learning applications. This type of learning allows students to access university courses/educational programs online from anywhere in the world (Raji, 2019). It enables faculty members to supervise their students from distance, to teach a larger number of students, to reuse content, to track student progress using digital technology (Salmon, 2012; Verbert et al., 2014) and allows universities to grow and compete throughout the world (Gokah et al., 2015). For example, in the UAE higher education faculty members used LMS Blackboard, Moodle, and Web CT for e-Learning (Raji, 2019).

9.4 Transition to Full-Time Online Teaching and Learning Under the COVID-19 Pandemic in the UAE

As an essential containment measure to stop the spread of the virus, the first decision of MOE was to close all public and private schools and higher education institutions (HEIs) in the UAE from March 8, 2020. All educational institutions were set for the early spring break for two weeks. All classes were resumed online after Spring Break, the university was closed for sterilizations, and all faculty members were urged to work from home.

The UAE has put many resources to support and facilitate the transition to online teaching and learning. From the first day of this transition, the UAE government cooperated with the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), Du, and Etisalat to provide free access to online learning platforms and applications such as Blackboard, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Skype. Furthermore, in late April 2020, MoE collaborated with Al Yah Satellite Communications Company (Yahsat), to deliver high-speed satellite broadband services to students and teachers at various locations where such

services were unavailable before (UAE, 2020). Additionally, the government initiated the offer of free mobile Internet services for families without Internet connection at home (UAE, 2020). Furthermore, students and educators without devices were provided laptops (Alterri et al., 2020; Masoud & Bohra, 2020).

9.5 Experience of the Transition to Online Teaching at the UAE University

The United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) is the first largest public university established in 1976, with the highest number of faculty members in the country (Karabchuk et al., 2021). Among all other HEIs in the country, the UAE University strictly complied with the national regulations during the COVID-19 outbreak. As an institution, the UAEU strongly supported its students and faculty during the transition to online teaching and learning.

9.5.1 The UAEU Management of the Transition to Online Teaching and Learning Under COVID-19

The first email correspondence from the University Outreach Department, announcing the two days test of the online learning platforms (Blackboard Collaborate Ultra) at the UAE University, was issued on March 2, 2020. During physical classroom activities, students and teachers were asked to use laptops to log into online platforms to familiarize themselves with the system. After these two days of tests, all universities were sent for the earlier spring break to ensure the safety of the student and university community, in line with the efforts and measures taken at the national level to reduce the spread of COVID-19. More importantly, university management informed that after spring break classes would be delivered completely online using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra Virtual Classroom to ensure the continuity of education.

In addition to government support during the crisis, university leadership provided all the necessary resources to ensure a smooth transition to online teaching and learning (Rad et al., 2021). The transition to online learning can be successful if students and educators are prepared and provided with the necessary equipment and clear guidelines (Lemay et al., 2021; Telles-Langdon, 2020). Thus, the UAEU Center of Excellence in Teaching and Learning provided online training and recorded videos on how to operate online classrooms, prepare recorded materials, conduct online tests, and involve students in online class discussions. Furthermore, the easy-accessible 24/7 support from information technology specialists (IT helpdesk) facilitated the online teaching and learning experience for both students and faculty members.

9.5.2 The UAEU Study Description: Data and Analytical Strategy

To disclose all the challenges and bring more details on this experience in the transition to online teaching and learning, this study uses a self-administered survey of faculty members. Quantitative data was collected in Fall 2020 through the online survey platform (Qualtrics). It was a complete sample reaching out to all UAEU faculty members (the response rate comprises a bit less than 15%). The survey questions covered aspects such as the transition to online teaching, challenges of distance learning, well-being and happiness under lockdown, self-evaluations of teaching efficiency, and research productivity.

The final sample of the analysis consisted of 175 UAEU faculty members, out of which about 40% were females. About 75% of the sample were married and 12% were single; the rest were divorced. 38% of the academic staff reported that they did not have children. While 20% have only one child, 17% had two children, and 25% had three or more children in the family. 76% of the respondents had Ph.D. degrees, and around 50% of the sample declared that they worked at the UAEU for more than 7 years. The sample distribution by professor ranks was as follows: full professor—14%; associate professor—29%; assistant professor—27%; and instructor—24%.

9.5.3 The UAEU Study Outcomes

The first challenge in teaching online for faculty members was to learn the programs and tools to run the classes online. Since 68% of the respondents had never taught online before March 2020 it took them time and effort to become professional users of the online teaching tools (see Table 9.1). For those who gave a few webinars online before (17%) or were teaching blended courses with regular online lectures (13%), or even recorded online courses (2%) on different online platforms, such as Coursera, EdX. It was less time consuming to adjust to online teaching mode. Furthermore, UAEU faculty members, who had previously experience teaching online, were already familiar with Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, Skype, and Zoom as the most frequently used tools for online teaching. In general, each faculty member spent on average 3.2 h learning how to use the Blackboard Collaborate Ultra.

The experience of online teaching before reduced the number of hours for the class preparations. Thus, those who never taught online before spent on average 3.6 h to prepare for online classes, while those faculty members who had experience in online teaching before spent only 2.63 h for the class preparations. In general, faculty members needed two–three hours more to prepare for their online classes in March–May 2020 compared to the average time (1.69 h) required for face-to-face classes' preparations.

Table 9.1 Experience in teaching online before March 2020

I have never taught online	68.%
I only taught a few webinars online	17%
I teach blended courses with regular online lectures	13%
I recorded my teaching for Coursera, EdX, Udemy, etc	2%

Source Authors' calculations based on the Online UAEU Faculty Well-being Survey data, Fall 2020

Spending more hours on class preparations might reduce time to work on research, and that is exactly what we see in Fig. 9.1. The average number of hours spent on research per week decreased slightly from 9.5 h to 8 h under lockdown. It is important to note that this reduction in research time was true for all academic positions. Academic staff spent more time adjusting to online teaching. Furthermore, work from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic forced researchers to face excessive multi-tasking. They were distracted by childcare and housework, resulting in an experience of fatigue that could reduce research time and efficiency (Cui et al., 2021).

However, the publications outcome speaks for the increased research productivity. Interestingly, despite the rank of the professorship positions and type of the publications, we see the overall increase in the number of published articles and books (see Table 9.2). It could be explained either by the increased free time at home due to the overall country's lockdown or by the general university's re-orientation toward research and publications.

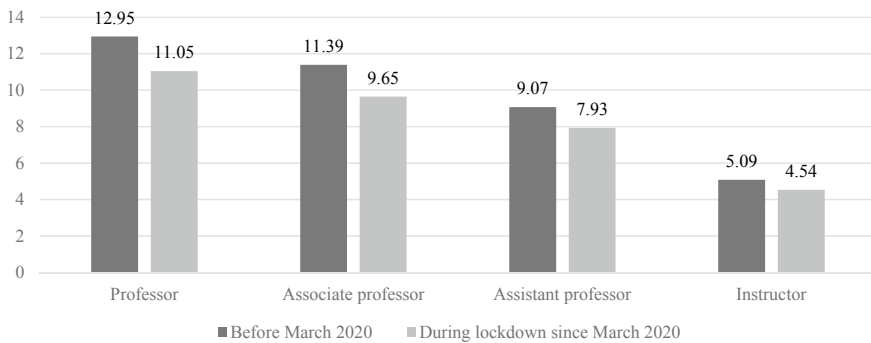


Fig. 9.1 The average number of hours that faculty members spent per week doing research before March 2020 and during lockdown since March 2020, by academic position (*Source* Authors' calculations based on the Online UAEU Faculty Well-being Survey data, Fall 2020)

Table 9.2 The average number of publications completed during March–September in 2019 and March–September 2020 by academic rank

Academic rank	March–September 2019			March–September 2020		
	Articles Indexed by Scopus	Chapters and Books	Non-indexed by Scopus	Articles Indexed by Scopus	Chapters and Books	Non-indexed by Scopus
Professor	3.7	1.2	1.1	3.5	3.5	1.4
Associate professor	2.1	1.1	1.1	2.4	2.4	1.3
Assistant professor	1.6	0.5	0.8	2.0	2.0	0.7
Instructor	0.5	0.1	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.3
Total	7.8	2.9	3.4	8.3	8.3	3.7

Source Authors’ calculations based on the Online UAEU Faculty Well-being Survey data, Fall 2020

9.5.4 *The Role of Gender and/or Family Status in Adjustment to Online Teaching*

Previous studies found that female professors spend more time doing multiple tasks, including home-related duties and childcare (Bianchi et al., 2012; Misra et al., 2012). Moreover, differences in gender diversity among faculty research productivity were found to be statistically significant, males researchers publish and collaborate more than females (Kaba et al., 2021). The pandemic further enlarged the gap between women’s and men’s domestic workload (Cui et al., 2021), as well as the gender gap in research productivity (Kaba et al., 2021). Figure 9.2 shows the existed gender gap in research hours before and after COVID-19: the about three hours difference on average that faculty spent on research remains. Important to underline that the expected further increase of this gender gap in hours was not observed in the UAEU. The gender difference in research hours even shrank from 3.04 h to 2.53 h. Both male and female faculty members reduced their time on research by one hour during the lockdown period.

Having children is likely to increase childcare-related tasks for parents-researchers. Previous studies reported that mothers found the transition to online teaching challenging because they running classed online and simultaneously were supervising their own children’s online learning (Al Lily et al., 2020; Shomotova & Karabchuk, 2022b). The results of this study are also in line with the previous findings (see, e.g., Al Lily et al., 2020). Faculty members with younger children under 10 years old at home spent slightly less time on research on average in comparison with those without younger children both before and after transition to online teaching (Fig. 9.3). At the same time, we do not see a considerable drop in research hours of the faculty members with children under 10 years old during the COVID-19 lockdowns in comparison with those faculty members without children.

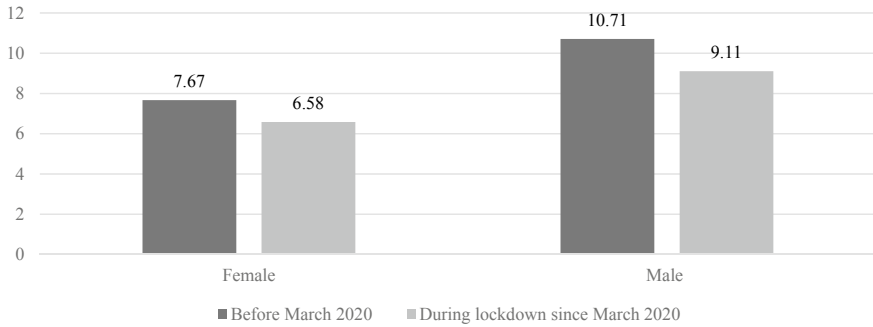


Fig. 9.2 The average number of hours spent on research per week before March 2020 and during lockdown since March 2020 by gender (*Source* Authors' calculations based on the Online UAEU Faculty Well-being Survey data, Fall 2020)

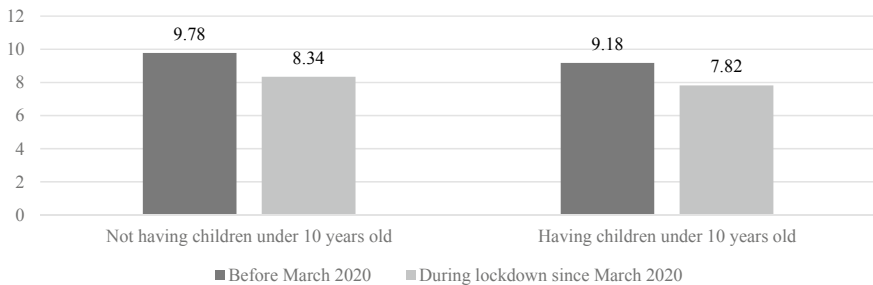


Fig. 9.3 The average number of hours spent on research per week before March 2020 and during lockdown since March 2020, having and not having children under 10 years old (*Source* Authors' calculations based on the Online UAEU Faculty Well-being Survey data, Fall 2020)

Figure 9.4 shows that more than half of the women agreed (54%) that they faced difficulties combining family and academic work during lockdown under the COVID-19 pandemic, while 52% of the men did not find it difficult to balance family and remote work from home during the same period from March to July 2020. Though there is a little difference found between genders, this question should be addressed in further research to provide better workplace strategies during emergency or crisis changes.

9.5.5 Challenges, Satisfaction, and Comfortability with the Online Teaching

Although the government in the UAE supported students and instructors with Internet access and technological resources (Sebugwaawo, 2020; Saif Almuraqab, 2020), educators needed some time to learn the online teaching tools and adapt to the

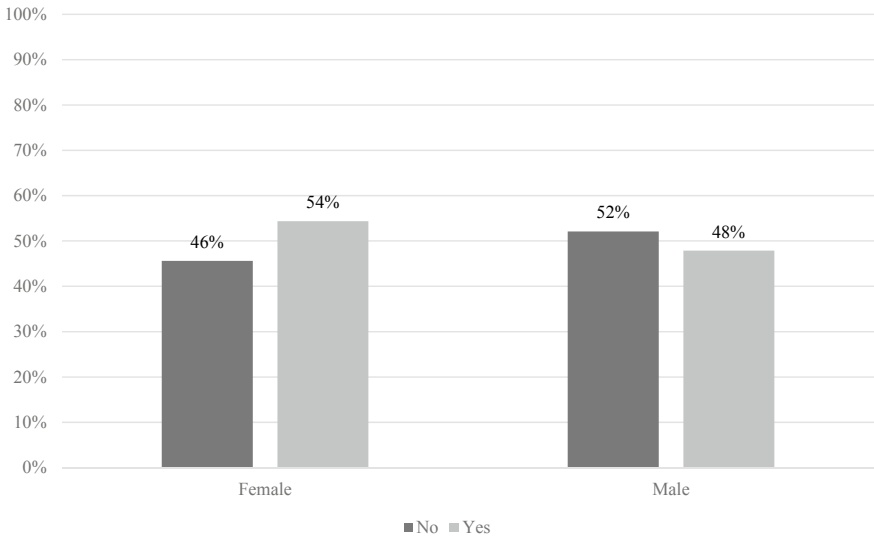


Fig. 9.4 The answer to the question ‘Do you face any difficulties in combining family responsibilities and academic work during the lockdown period from March to July 2020?’ by gender (Source Authors’ calculations based on data from the Online UAEU Faculty Well-being Survey, Fall 2020)

online classrooms (OECD, 2020). UAEU faculty members (89%) reported that the adjustment to online teaching has created new challenges and tasks in teaching. Most of the UAEU faculty members (83%) found that teaching online required more time and effort, especially for class preparations and providing feedback on assignments. In general, 73% of academic staff found that the workload was heavier during online learning than during face-to-face learning. These findings are much in line with the previous literature (Al-Karaki et al., 2021; Cui et al., 2021; Lemay et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2021).

In particular, 80% agreed that exams are better handled through traditional means than online. Exams online are more difficult to undertake if you have many people at home who distract you, the constantly open cameras during exams could give another type on anxiety (Al-Yateem et al., 2021; Khan & Khan, 2019). For the faculty members, the online exams require special strategies to reduce the dishonest behavior (Al-Yateem et al., 2021; Lassoued et al., 2020). In the UAE many universities required the use of exam integrity tools (e.g., LockDown Browser) and exam proctoring tools (e.g., Respondus Monitor) (Al-Karaki et al., 2021).

Online exams were not the only problem for the faculty members under this period of distant learning. Figure 9.5 shows the list of the most reported challenges that faculty members faced in the transition to online teaching and learning. 69% of the respondents mentioned low student engagement and discussion during online sessions. It was challenging to interact with students because they did not switch microphones and video-cameras; instead, they preferred to use chats. In addition to delivering the content of the course, teaching online required significant effort

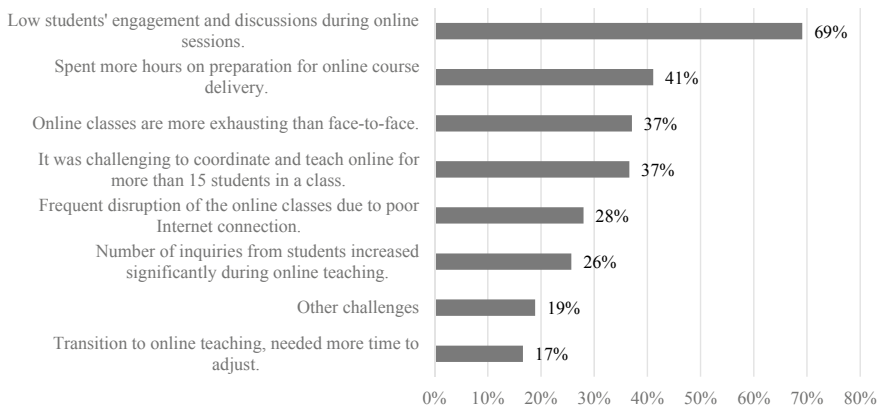


Fig. 9.5 The challenges academic staff faced during online teaching under the COVID-19 pandemic (*Source* Authors' calculations based on the Online UAEU Faculty Well-being Survey data, Fall 2020)

to judge whether students were paying attention and/or understanding the material. Due to low student engagement or no student responses, instructors needed to present the content of the class in various approaches to ensure that students understood the lesson. This required more time and effort than regular face-to-face classes.

As a result, 41% of the survey participants reported that they spent more hours preparing for the delivery of online courses. Furthermore, 37% of the faculty reported that it was challenging to coordinate and teach online classes with more than 15 students and that online classes were more exhausting/tiring than face-to-face. Furthermore, 28% of the faculty mentioned that poor internet connection and frequent interruptions were critical issues during online teaching.

Due to the emerging transition and the lack of time to change to online teaching, academic staff (26%) reported that they had to deal with the significantly increased number of student inquiries in an uncertain context of the pandemic. Other problems (19%) faced during online teaching were preparations for online examinations, managing online writing assignments, lack of practical sessions, more plagiarism and cheating during exams/tests, and lack of technology and digital literacy of students. Finally, academic staff (17%) needed more time to adjust to the rapid transition to online teaching.

The university support was highly appreciated by faculty members and was the key factor in rather high self-evaluations in the satisfaction of the transition to online teaching and learning at the UAEU. Almost all faculty reported receiving full support from the university while shifting to online teaching. They agreed that the UAE University: provided equipment and platforms for smooth transition to online teaching (93%); provided technical and training support to help me transition to online teaching (92%); replied quickly to my requests and questions about issues of online teaching (93%); regularly provided information on the process and regulations during online teaching (94%).

Table 9.3 The average scale of satisfaction by academic position and having or not having previous online teaching experience

		How satisfied are you with your transition to online teaching?	How satisfied are you with working remotely during a lockdown?
Academic rank	Professor	6.1	6.3
	Associate professor	6.9	6.6
	Assistant professor	6.9	7.1
	Instructor	7.3	7.1
Online teaching experience	Not having online experience	6.65	6.56
	Having online experience	7.19	7.25

Source Authors' calculations based on the Online UAEU Faculty Well-being Survey data, Fall 2020

Direct self-assessment questions allowed us to measure how much faculty members were satisfied with the transition to online teaching, remote work from home, their comfortability with online tools, and their perceptions about online teaching in the future. Table 9.3 shows that the younger generations of instructors and assistant professors had slightly higher average scores of satisfaction level than the older generations of professors. It looks like full professors faced more technostress and challenges in adjusting to the online teaching environment (6.1) and working remotely (6.3), in comparison with other academic staff.

Similarly, the previous research highlighted that most of the faculty respondents expressed feelings of stress and anxiety during their shift to online teaching (Johnson et al., 2020). At the same time, instructors were satisfied with the rapid transition to distance online teaching due to COVID-19 because of several advantages, such as online teaching saved time and energy to commuting back and forth between one's home and campus (Rad et al., 2021). In contrast, we also need to consider that the instructor position assumes heavier teaching loads than the full professor position, which accommodates time for research. If so, instructors should be the ones who suffered the most from the higher number of teaching hours online, but this trend was not obvious from the data.

Furthermore, it is critical to link the results on satisfaction with the previous online experience. Faculty members who had never taught online before were less satisfied with the transition to online teaching (6.65) and remote work (6.56) (Table 9.3). On the contrary, faculty members with previous online teaching experience were slightly more satisfied (7.19) with the transition to online teaching and (7.25) working remotely (Table 9.3).

Table 9.4 shows that females felt more comfortable with teaching online (7.81) and using online teaching tools (8.37) than male faculty (7.56) and (8.09) accordingly. Moreover, young faculty members (below 30 years old) were more comfortable (8.5) than older faculty members (7.53) to teach online, but interestingly, less

comfortable (8) of using the current tools to teach online. Academic staff without children under 10 years old had slightly higher comfortability score (7.75) against those who are with children (7.48) teaching online in general and using tools for online teaching (8.2). Notably, faculty members with previous online teaching experience were significantly comfortable with teaching online (8.21) and using online tools for course delivery (8.58) in comparison with those who did not have previous experience in online teaching (7.75).

On average, full professors were less comfortable (6.68) with teaching online compared to other faculty members (Table 9.4). Compared to instructors, who were the most comfortable (8.31) with online teaching, assistant professors and associate professors (7.71) reported to be less comfortable with online teaching. While all faculty members on average (8.19) on the scale from 1 (min) to 11 (max) were comfortable with using the current online teaching tools (BB Collaborate Ultra, MS Teams, Zoom, etc.), the instructors had slightly the highest score (8.69). The least comfortable with online teaching tools were full professors (7.64), who were as well less satisfied (6.1) with the transition to online teaching (Table 9.3).

Table 9.4 The average scale of comfortability with teaching online in general, with using the current online teaching tool, and positive feeling to continue teaching online in the future by gender, age, children under 10 years old, online experience, academic rank

		How comfortable are you with teaching online in general?	How comfortable are you with using the current tools to teach online?	To what extent do you feel positive to continue teaching online in the future?
Gender	Male	7.56	8.09	6.28
	Female	7.81	8.37	7.17
Age	<30	8.5	8	7
	>30	7.53	8.34	6.33
Children under 10 years old	Having children	7.48	8.17	6.33
	Not having children	7.75	8.2	6.76
Online experience	Having online experience	8.21	8.58	7.19
	Not having online experience	7.38	8	6.32
Academic rank	Professor	6.68	7.64	5.23
	Associate professor	7.56	8.16	6.56
	Assistant professor	7.71	8.1	6.71
	Instructor	8.31	8.69	7.46

Source Authors' calculations based on the Online UAEU Faculty Well-being Survey data, Fall 2020

Despite the challenges mentioned above, 43% of the faculty felt very positive about continuing teaching online in the future. Surprisingly, the share of positive forecasts for online teaching among female faculty members (7.17) was even higher than among male faculty members (6.28) (see Table 9.4). Younger faculty members (under 30 years old) appeared to be more positive (7) than those above 30 years old (6.33). Likewise, faculty with no children felt slightly more positive (6.76) about teaching online in the future. In addition, those who had previous online teaching experience reported that they felt more positive (7.19) about continuing teaching online in the future than faculty without the same experience (6.32). Considering academic positions, professors (5.23) are significantly less positive about teaching online in the future than instructors (7.46). Thus, we can conclude that instructors adopted online teaching a bit faster and have more positive perceptions of future online education. Similarly, a previous study found a significant difference in the favorability of online education in gender ($p = 0.036$), age ($p = 0.019$), years of teaching ($p = 0.048$), academic rank ($p = 0.013$) (Moralista & Oducado, 2020).

9.6 Conclusions

This chapter provided findings on how faculty members transitioned to online teaching and discussed the challenges that the faculty members faced with the focus on research efficiency and time for class preparations. In particular, the differences in combining family duties and remote work from home were highlighted for male and female faculty members and for those having/not having children under 10-year-old.

Most faculty worldwide had zero experience of teaching online before COVID-19 (Johnson et al., 2020) and the main issues were lack of digital literacy and technological competence (Khan et al., 2021). In this study, 68% of the respondents had never taught online before March 2020, and it took them time and effort to become professional users of the online teaching tools. They spent on average 3.6 h to prepare for online classes, while those faculty members who had experience in teaching online before spent only 2.63 h for class preparations.

Moreover, all faculty spent fewer hours on research per week under lockdown. Both male and female faculty reduced their research time by one hour during the lockdown period. Interestingly, despite that the survey revealed an overall increase in the number of published articles, chapters, and books.

Most university faculty found that the adjustment to online teaching created new challenges and tasks in teaching, especially for class preparations and providing feedback on assignments. Likewise, the workload was heavier during online learning than during face-to-face learning. More female faculty agreed that they faced difficulties combining family and academic work during the lockdown under the COVID-19 pandemic than male faculty members. Low student engagement and lack of discussion during online sessions were reported as one of the most significant issues in online teaching. It was challenging to coordinate and teach online classes with more

than 15 students and that online classes were more exhausting/tiring than face-to-face, in addition to poor internet connection and frequent interruptions.

As a result, full professors faced more technostress and challenges in adjusting to the online teaching environment (6.1) and working remotely (6.3), compared to other academic staff. Furthermore, they were less comfortable (6.68) teaching online in general compared to other faculty members. Similarly, faculty (6.65) who had never taught online before were less satisfied with the transition to online teaching and remote work in comparison with those who had this experience before. Only 43% of the faculty felt very positive about continuing teaching online in the future. Surprisingly, female faculty members were a bit more enthusiastic about teaching online in the future than male faculty members. In general, all faculty members on average (8.19) were comfortable with using the current online teaching tools (BB Collaborate Ultra, MS Teams, Zoom, etc.).

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Chapter 10

Women's Status in the Process of Socio-Political Development in Iran



Maliheh Mousanejad

Abstract This chapter examines the status of women's participation in the socio-political development of Iranian society during the rule of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The data were obtained and collected from statistical sources, including the Ministries, Governmental Organizations, and the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran. The chapter reports that the presence and participation of women at the micro- and middle level of decision-making and management have increased. However, the participation of women in high organizational levels has faced social, political, and cultural barriers. So the policy in the field of the woman requires more and more efficient employment of women's participation in macro-level management.

Keyword Women · Participation · Democracy · Iran

10.1 Introduction

One of the most important questions in development discussions is about the individual's position in the development process. Today, development is the human effort to change the environment for their needs in various economic, social, cultural, and political aspects; but what is being discussed here is socio-political development. One of the main ways to achieve this development is the participation of women at the macro-levels of society. This depends on the establishment of fair social relations. In fact, participation is the product of the structures and functions of social relations, the distribution of facilities and resources, the division of labor and responsibilities in society. It is also important that the status of women is not static, and in addition, the status of women should always be changed according to changing temporal and spatial conditions. With the spread of globalization and the subsequent rapid movement of people in different societies toward democracy, political movements were formed by women to participate in politics and the decision-making process in different countries. Although women's presence in politics is expanding as a general

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phenomenon in human societies, its quality and quantity are different in different societies. Women play a minor role in politics in most parts of the world, but some governments use specific criteria to improve the political situation of women (Pishgahi fard & Zohdi, 2010). Various mechanisms have been devised to increase the number of women in office. For example, a specific number of candidates for office must be women.

Socio-political participation of women in developing countries such as Iran, especially their effective and organized participation in sustainable development, has a special place. According to official statistics, more than half of Iran's population of 80 million are women. Women's participation in society is valuable because it provides the basis for sustainable development (Scaff, 1975). Therefore, one of the important development goals is denying class, ethnicity, gender, and human inequalities to achieve development. Today, eliminating inequalities between men and women and recognizing women's status in the development process has become a key issue among countries. Despite having various family roles, marriage, child-rearing, and housekeeping, women need to be active and effective in society. In this way, they can play an important role in society's political, social, economic, and cultural development. According to statics, even though Iranian women in terms of literacy and education have been able to reach the global indicators of human development, due to various structural and cultural barriers, they have not yet been able to achieve a good situation in the political and social arenas. So, they are absent in many important and influential areas of society, and their place in the political and managerial decision-making arena is limited to low-impact areas.

10.2 The Situation of Women in the World and Iran

In recent years, Iranian women have improved their abilities by increasing literacy and awareness and expanding higher education, often on the margins of social and political relations, and their role in the economic field has not been very significant. Forty years after the revolution, the number of women seats in Iran's Islamic Consultative Assembly has risen to 3%. In contrast, according to the United Nations, women make up about 30.4% of the seats in the United States, 27.7% in OECD countries, 23.6% in sub-Saharan Africa, 19.5% in Asian countries, 17.8% in Arab countries, and 17.9% in Pacific countries. The presence of women in the national parliaments of these countries has increased by a total of 11.3% since 1995. A look at the situation of countries separately also shows that in a significant part of the world, at least 30% of parliamentary seats belong to women MPs. According to the United Nations, there are currently 29 women in heads of state or autonomous regions worldwide as heads of state and 13 women as presidents. Worldwide, 18.3% of cabinet members are women, holding positions ranging from the Department of Defense, the Interior, and the Department of Justice to the Environment, Energy, Family, and Education. UN data also show that there was a direct relationship between women's participation in local councils and the well-being of local people at the local level. In India, for

example, the number of water supply and drinking water development projects in areas led by local councils with women is 62% higher than in district councils run by men. Also, in Norway, there has been a direct link between the number of women on city councils and increased support for and care for children (Jamshidi, 2006).

Now, forty years after the Iranian revolution, the goals of this revolution regarding the status of women have not been achieved. In Iran, the ideological justification of gender inequality and the dominance of patriarchal culture have overshadowed all areas. The exaggeration in the natural roles of women has increasingly removed women from the field of politics and society, and they are absent in influential areas such as judgment, jurisprudence, the leadership of the three forces, the Guardian Council, the Expediency Council, and the Assembly of Leadership Experts. Currently, only about 4% of MPs, 3% of managers, 1% of members of urban and rural councils, and 12% of members of metropolitan councils are elected from among women. The situation in the cabinets is much worse. In other words, after the revolution, the presence of women in the cabinet was limited to one or two deputy ministers, and the presence of women in political and diplomatic missions was less. Although the level of women's participation, in general, has increased, despite this change, there are still major weaknesses in this area. There is also a low presence of women in other positions, including the presidency of universities and scientific centers (even though more than 60% of university admissions are women, the presence of women working in senior management compared to the total number of women working in the public sector is only 9%) (Hosseini Zadeh, 2007). This research has been done through qualitative and secondary analysis. The data have been collected and analyzed by statistical sources available in the Ministry of Interior, Statistics Center of Iran, Islamic Consultative Assembly, Islamic Council of the city, and other related texts.

10.3 The Status of Iranian Women before Islamic Revolution of Iran

The history of women's social and political participation in Iran dates back to the early twentieth century, especially the constitutional movement. Prior to the constitutional movement, the patriarchal culture of traditional Iranian society did not allow women to engage in political activity, but eventually, as a result of relations with Europe in the late nineteenth century, the field of women's political activity and participation expanded (Shahsavani, 2001, p. 158). With the formation of the constitutional movement, Iranian women moved like men, so the real awakening of Iranian women began from this date. The participation of women in the whole process of the constitutional movement, from the beginning of its preparations until its victory, opened a completely new chapter in the history of socio-political activities of Iranian women (Hafeziyan, 2006, p. 56). Although before the constitutional movement, events such as famine or dissatisfaction occurred, which resulted in demonstrations by women.

What was new at that time seemed to be the presence of women in the political arena. In the late Qajar era, several protest movements were taken by Iranian women; one of them formed in the shrine Abdul Azim and asked for the formation of house justice for the first time (Mossafa, 1996, p. 108).

Women actively participated in the Constitutional Revolution, and later, in particular, after 1906, they were able to form their organizations and act independently. However, they were parts of a major overall movement in the country. The women's national movement was a petition that cooperated with the general movement and aimed at Iran's independence and the implementation of the constitution (Bashiriyeh, 1991, p. 289). The constitutional revolution created an opportunity for women to experience political participation; one of the interesting issues in the constitutional revolution was established and expended by women's secret associations. In the early stages of the Constitutional Revolution, active women were often influenced by religious leaders—"bread rebellion" was an example.

A large number of women, through clergy support, felt freed to participate in a demonstration or national slogans and, through secret associations and organizations, conducted activities against foreign powers and in support of the Constitutional Revolution (Sanasarian, 1982, p. 39). Women considered constitutional achievements very valuable, so some wore men's clothing in the war. They fought and killed. During the Constitutional Revolution, associations' organizations such as the Patriotic Women's Association and the Women's Prosperity Association were established to address the issues and problems of women and their lost political and social rights. Women's activity during this period was in areas that men allowed, such as creating associations, publishing newspapers and magazines, and establishing schools. Despite the numerous women's activities during this period, the constitutional amendment did not only have the right to vote for women but also sought to remove them from the field of activity. With the onset of the Mosaddegh government, which governs the constitutional law, women were mainly in political partnership as members of the national or left parties (Keddie, 2006, p. 405).

After the fall of Mosaddegh's government, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi attempted to establish women's organizations with governmental support. Not allowing the establishment of independent political parties was a way to prevent the activities of opposition groups. The period between the coup d'état of 1953 and the Islamic Revolution was new in changing the social structure of Iran. Some fundamental reforms were made in the 1940s under the name of the White Revolution, one of the principles of which was the reform of the election law, according to which women were formally given the right to vote. In 1963, the twenty-first term of the National Assembly was held, and women entered the National Assembly for the first time in the history of Iran. During this period, six Iranian women entered the parliament. In the 23rd term of the National Assembly, 17 women were elected as members of the Assembly, and in the 24th term of the parliament, 20 women were present in the parliament (Masoudnia et al., 2013, p. 583).

In general, wider changes in the participation of women began during the Pahlavi period. However, the record of women in the legislatures of the Pahlavi government shows that women representatives in the parliament had a more symbolic and

formal presence and were not the source of independent activity in the society of that period. The fall-off of Mosaddegh's government was the end of the work of independent women's organizations. Accordingly, the women's association was established in 1959, and its branches were expanded by government support in the country. Independent women's groups that had previously been formed also joined the organization, but since it was a governmental association, it could not penetrate the masses and become a tribune for all women (Kaveh Tavakoli, 2014, p. 116).

10.4 The Status of Women in Iran's Development plans after Islamic Revolution of Iran

The economic, social, and cultural development plans of the country determine the basic lines and general directions of the goals and policies of each sector and the executive affairs proceed in the same direction, and finally, the development plans influence the thoughts and ideas of policy makers. A development plan depends as much on the quality of human resources as it does on material resources. In fact, the Iranian society needs to adopt an approach in which the continuous process of human resource development is considered. Currently, one of the major weaknesses in formulating development strategies in Iran is the lack of attention to the role and potential capabilities of women in the economic, social, and cultural development of society. Therefore, the position of women in development plans must be determined first of all, because women are the subject and goal of any kind of development. For this reason, it is necessary to develop strategies and programs, as well as projects for the full integration and participation of women at all levels of planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

Development in the macro-sense means improving all areas of life. These areas can be broadly divided into four categories: economic, social, cultural, and political which reflect the ideological perspective of those who lead development programs. Whenever the development process is integrated and coordinated, we will see all-round growth and development for people, both men and women, but the evidence shows that women have been neglected in development programs in various ways, and as a result of these programs. One of the most important pillars that can examine the position of women in development is the planning systems and macro-perspectives of planners and policymakers.

In the first post-revolutionary development (1989–1992), the law called for women's participation in social, cultural, educational, and economic affairs while preserving family and transcendent values. But in practice, family planning policy and population growth control were considered as the main issues. Activities such as educating women, promoting their health, and reducing maternal and child mortality were also considered (Program and budget organization, 1994, p. 15).

In the second development plan (1995–1999), in comparison with the first plan, materials such as the following material were allocated to women, which were:

special attention was paid to the allocation of facilities for women and the filling of women's leisure time, as well as to the greater participation of women in social, cultural, educational and economic affairs while preserving the dignity of the family. The important point during this program was the opening of the Office of Women's Affairs of the Presidential Institution and the Women's Commission of the Ministry of Interior, which was a very important and fundamental step in the formation and implementation of development programs in the field of women; it also led to the establishment of governmental and non-governmental departments and institutions in the field of women (Program and budget organization, 1996, p. 18).

The third development plan (2000–2004) was based on greater participation of women in social, economic, and cultural arenas, so the attention to the situation of women in the third development plan was clearer than the previous two plans (Zafaranchi, 2006, p. 102). In this program, policymakers addressed all the goals and special programs for women in the form of Article 158 under the title of Presidential Women's Participation Duties (Office of Women Affairs of the Presidential Institution) and goals such as organizing study projects on women's issues and needs. These goals were to increase and promote women's opportunities through the High Employment Council, women's educational needs, women's legal and spatial issues and problems, the formation and development of women's NGOs, and assigning more roles to them and training capable managers (Program and budget organization, 2000, p. 19). In fact, the third development plan was the beginning of the government's serious attention to women's issues in the country. The relative success of women in the Third Development Plan led to an increase in the number of women in the Fourth Development Plan.

The Fourth Development Plan (2005–2009) was compiled simultaneously with the 20-year economic, social, and cultural vision document of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In this program, the main emphasis was on equal educational opportunities, increasing the level of efficiency and improving women's job skills, supporting women heads of households, strengthening the foundation of the family, and increasing the pensions of women heads of households. Empowerment of women in creating social interactions was done with the aim of developing opportunities and expanding their participation in the country. This program also supported the establishment and expansion of non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, and women's organizations (Program and budget organization, 2006, p. 21). In fact, the general policies of the Fourth Development Plan were based on gender justice and the architecture of the knowledge-based society, based on human rights and the principles of civil society on the one hand and scientific and economic principles on the other, and to this end, a comprehensive document on the development of women's participation was presented (including fourteen program titles in the executive action section).

In the Fifth Development Plan (2011–2015), many sections related to women were developed with an emphasis on strengthening the family again. The goals of the Fifth Plan for women are clearly stated in Article 230 of the Plan: strengthening the institution of the family and the position of women in all fields by formulating and approving the "Comprehensive Plan for the Development of Women and

Family Affairs". Among the axes of strengthening the foundation of the family were: reviewing laws and regulations, prevention of social harms, development and organization of economic and livelihood affairs, organization of home-based jobs for women, leisure, spreading the culture of chastity and hijab, promotion health, developing the capabilities of non-governmental organizations, enhancing the capabilities of women managers and elites, developing international interactions, deepening religious beliefs, and reforming the organizational administrative structure of women and the family (Program and budget organization, 2010, p. 23).

A look at six development programs in Iran shows that women either did not participate in these programs or were given a small share, which for some reason was not realized. In fact, in formulating development programs, in addition to ignoring the balance in policy-making, women's capabilities have also been neglected. In the first and second development plans, the contribution of women was mainly considered in the form of family and issues such as family planning policies and birth control. In the second development plan, women's participation in sports and social, cultural, and economic affairs was considered, and in the third development plan, some attention was paid to promoting the appropriate role of women. In this program, while emphasizing job opportunities, facilitation in legal and judicial affairs, women's participation in cultural and social affairs was also considered. The fourth program was slightly different from previous programs and in addition to what was highlighted in previous programs, the issue of gender was addressed for first time in development programs and special privileges were granted to women. Strengthening the role of women in society, providing opportunities and developing women's participation in society, and planning became policy goals, and the government was required to prioritize these issues in policies. In general, from the content of development programs, it can be inferred that women, along with other social groups, have been mentioned as the target community in planning, but in practice, their participation has been small and forgotten. This has prevented women from achieving the desired position in society, despite their great potential.

10.5 Women's Social Rights in Iran

Over the past decades, the Iranian women's community has undergone changes. With the rise of awareness and the development of higher education, they have improved their abilities and women can no longer be kept on the socio-political margins, because they want better conditions. Now, the main question that arises here is what has been the situation of women's social rights during the last forty years? The scope of women's social rights is very wide, the most extensive form of which can be seen in the Charter of Rights and Responsibilities in the Islamic Republic of Iran, approved by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution in 2004, which covers a wide range of issues including health, cultural rights, economic law, political rights, and women's judicial rights. Since it is not possible to examine all these cases in the present article, the examples of social rights of citizens that are

specifically mentioned in Article 26 of the Chapter of the Islamic Penal Code are examined, and examples of these social rights are:

- The right to run in the presidential and Assembly elections of leadership experts, membership in the Guardian Council and the Expediency Council, membership in the Cabinet, and holding the position of Vice President.
- Holding positions in the Judiciary, the Supreme Court, the Court of Administrative Justice, and the Attorney General.
- The right to be elected or a member of associations, councils, parties, and associations by law or by popular vote.
- The right to be a member of juries and trustees and dispute resolution councils and the right to work as a lawyer.
- The right to be elected as an arbitrator or expert in official authorities, as a guardian, trustee, trustee, supervisor, or trustee of public endowments.
- The right to employment and work in all government agencies, institutions under the leadership, municipalities, and institutions in charge of public services.
- The right to work as a managing director or editor of mass media and the right to establish, manage, or be a member of the board of directors of public, cooperative, and private companies (Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, 2004).

These rights are defined for all citizens of Iran, and women, as half of the country's population of 80 million, also have the right to profit them. But to what extent have women had these rights in the last forty years? In the following, the status of Iranian women will be examined.

10.6 The Participation in the Presidential and Assembly of Experts Elections

Since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, seven presidential elections have been held, and although women were allowed to register in this election, no woman's candidacy has been approved by the Guardian Council and has not had the opportunity to compete with other candidates. The same is true about the Assembly of Experts. The number of members of this parliament is 88, who are elected by direct popular vote every eight years and so far, six rounds of elections have been held to elect the members of this parliament which the last election of which dates back to 2019. However, despite the registration of women in this election, none of them were allowed to cross the barrier to determine the authority of the Guardian Council while there is no jurisprudential and religious prohibition for women to participate in the Assembly of Experts. Among the women who volunteer for this election, the names of many female professors of jurisprudence and law can also be seen. According to many scholars, many women who are currently working in seminaries can become members of this assembly, but in practice this is not possible for women (Koulaei, 2019).

10.7 The Presence of Women in the Guardian Council and the Expediency Council

According to the Iranian constitution, six jurists of the Guardian Council are elected by the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic and six jurists are elected by the head of the Judiciary after being introduced to the Islamic Consultative Assembly and finally obtaining the approval of the Assembly. Seven terms of the Guardian Council have been formed since 1980, and in each term, 12 jurists have been active for six years, but so far, no woman has been named among the members of this council. Furthermore, no women have been elected among the 44 permanent members of the Expediency Council, whose members are elected every five years by the decree of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

10.8 The Presence of Women in the Cabinet

The presence of women in the government cabinet has always been one of the election promises of the presidential candidates in Iran, but no president has succeeded in fulfilled this promise. Also, since the beginning of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, women have never had the opportunity to hold positions in the judiciary, the Attorney General, the President of the Supreme Court, and the President of the court of Administrative Justice (Koulaei, 2019).

10.9 Women's Membership in City and Village Councils

The presence of women in the city's Islamic Councils is the only area that women have been able to reach at macro-level representation (Jamshidi, 2006).

Despite strong opposition to electing women in key positions and management, women face fewer difficulties registering on city and village councils. According to the head of the country's Organization of Municipalities and Rural Affairs, there are currently more than 6,400 women on the city and village Islamic councils. Most of them are mayors and rural councilors. Even in the last city and village council elections, all registered candidates in one of Sistan and Baluchistan province villages were women. Therefore, it seems that the prominent presence of women in post-revolutionary Iran is in the middle levels of management. The same situation prevails in the field of education and employment. In the field of education, the percentage of men and women at the undergraduate level is equal. However, the number of women in the master's degree is more than men, and suddenly, the presence of women in the doctoral program decreases significantly. Women are at the forefront of education, health, arts, humanities, and even the basic sciences, but few women are in IT, engineering, and manufacturing (Ebtekar, 2018). In the field of employment

in 2015, the economic participation rate of men in the country was about 63%, and women were about 13%. In other words, 62% of the population aged ten and over were economically inactive, most of whom were women. According to the statistics, about 87% of the country's female population is economically inactive (Negin, 2019). There is currently an imbalance in the distribution of women's employment in different sectors. The highest employment density is in the service sector, and there is a gap of about 26% between women's employment in the service sector and industry. Women in all major occupations have a much lower proportion than men, so the unemployment rate for women has always been twice that of men in recent years (Koulaei, 2019).

10.10 The Presence of Women in the Islamic Consultative Assembly

In the ten rounds of the Islamic Consultative Assembly elections, women held 95 seats. In the last round of elections, with extensive efforts and even the formation of a campaign aimed at "changing the masculine face of the Assembly," they were able to win only 17 seats in the Assembly. In fact, despite the great efforts of women, there has been no change in the status of women's participation. In contrast, the number of educated Iranian women has increased significantly in recent years. A look at the statistical table of Iranian women elected as members of parliament shows the unfavorable situation of women's participation in macro-level decision-making (Table 10.1).

Table 10.1 Number of Iranian women in parliament

Comparative table of women in different periods of the Islamic Consultative Assembly		
years	Total number of representatives	Female number of representatives
1980	327	4
1984	274	4
1988	278	4
1992	275	9
1996	277	14
2000	297	13
2004	294	13
2008	288	8
2012	288	9
2016	290	17
2020	276	17

10.11 Barriers to Women's Participation in Iran

In recent years, most Iranian women have shown a greater desire to participate in large-scale decision-making processes such as the legislative and policy-making processes. They have expressed this interest by announcing their candidacy in the Islamic Consultative Assembly and town and village councils. Although this trend has been increasing over the years, there is still a long way to go between what is and should be. In general, Iranian society is not in a favorable position in terms of women's participation in decision-making areas, and women's access to large areas of decision-making, which includes the following is limited: percentage of women's presence in diplomatic cabinets and missions,

- Percentage of parliamentary seats held by women,
- Percentage of female managers among the country's managers,
- Percentage of employed women among employees across the country,
- Percentage of women's share of real income.

Examination of the above percentages in the findings section showed that the level of participation of Iranian women in high levels of decision-making is low, which indicates the many obstacles that women face. Some of these obstacles go back to the laws and parts that need to be amended, although the Iranian constitution explicitly emphasizes the need for women to participate alongside men. The main obstacle to women's participation is the prevalence of patriarchal culture and the behavior of Iranian government officials, who refuse to elect women in managerial positions. Participation is the foundation of democracy and requires adequate access to resources for all members of society. However, Iranian women are deprived of equal rights to participate in various political, social, and cultural spheres. One thing that is always mentioned about not making women responsible is their inexperience and skills, but this is often because women have not had the opportunity to play different roles, especially at senior levels. As long as the authorities ignore this important principle, women are not allowed to gain experience and skills. They will lag behind men, resulting in the country losing half of its human capital. However, looking at the developments of recent decades, we find that barriers to women's participation are more a matter of personal taste than legal, so what needs to be reformed more than anything else is changing in some misconceptions, especially a change in a patriarchal culture. In general, barriers to women's socio-political participation can be categorized as follows:

- The humiliation of women's personalities has caused them to become insecure about their abilities and suffer irreparable mental and physical blows.
- Gender inequality is based on prejudiced beliefs against women in education, health, credit, employment, social, and civil rights, as well as the institutionalization of discrimination against women.
- Sometimes women's social participation is equated with the issue of women's employment. In this regard, it should be acknowledged that although women

work as employees in governmental and non-governmental organizations, they are not given a position in group work and senior management positions.

- Women need to learn ways to deal with stereotypes that have hindered their growth. The patriarchal attitude has historical roots, an attitude that considers women as delicate, emotionally irrational, aimless, cowardly, and incapable of making a decision. These stereotypes prevent women from holding and succeeding in managerial levels.

10.12 Conclusion

Today, the participation of Iranian women in macro-level decision-making is unfavorable because women are not in a good situation in scales such as the number of parliamentary seats held by women and the number of women managers. They are in a very vulnerable situation in terms of access to power. The low presence of women in the decision-making sphere of the legislature is around 6.5% and has only two percent of the seats in the management of government agencies (out of a total of 17,563 managerial positions) which indicates low presence of women in Iran. The number of male managers in Iran is 35 times that of female managers (Davani, 2005, p. 55). There are many obstacles in this, including beliefs and prejudices against women in managerial positions. Women are considered who do not have the necessary conditions for effective management and are traditionally expected to take care of the family.

The success of organizations depends on the optimal use of existing specialties, whether these specialties are in the hands of men or women, so the obstacles to the women's progress must be removed. Globalization, human rights discourse, and women's rights discourse have led to the growth of women's organizations at the national and international levels. Increasing women's participation at the macro and managerial levels is one of the demands of women, especially Iranian women (Shiani, 2003). In Iran, these issues have occupied the minds of many thinkers, writers, experts, youth and women. In some of the works that have been written about the problems of the Islamic world, Islam has been analyzed as a deterrent to the goals of women's development and participation, and the absence of women in the public arena has been attributed to religious precepts. However, the successful experience of countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia suggests that the causes and factors of the low presence of women in some Islamic countries should be sought in these countries' general level of development and the type of policies.

Today, women's participation of power and development is not an option but a necessity. Studies in Iran show that patriarchal culture, negative attitudes, and prejudices prevent women from going beyond a certain level in the organizational hierarchy (Shiani, 2005). The main obstacle facing women seeking managerial positions is the cultural constraints imposed by society, the family, and women themselves. Half of the population comprises women, and society will not achieve comprehensive and sustainable development if planners and policymakers fail to determine the

special place of women in strategy development. One of the Millennium Development Goals, which was signed by the heads of states in 2000 and approved by the Iranian government in 2005, was gender equality and women's empowerment. These goals, which were mentioned as the third goal of Millennium Development Goals, were supposed to be achieved by 2015 but were not achieved. According to this document, gender equality and women's empowerment were the keys to achieving change in this area. In line with the goals and strategies designed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, it was decided that up to 30% of the seats in the National Assembly would be reserved for women by 2015. However, Iranian women faced many obstacles to achieving this goal. Civil law and family law in Iran were written seventy years ago, while today's Iranian society has changed a lot, and many of these changes are not reflected in the text of the law. Therefore, compliance with these laws with the realities of society is necessary.

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Chapter 11

Reasons for Divorce in Kuwait: An Application of the Likelihood of Divorce Inventory (LDI)



Fahad Alnaser and Hussain M. Al-Fadhli

Abstract This chapter employs the Likelihood of Divorce Inventory (LDI) to investigate married university students' assessment of reasons for divorce in Kuwait. The sample comprises 443 participants; about 37.5% are men and 62.5% are women. Exploratory factor analysis reveals that three LDI items—negative relationship and lack of respect, differences in behavior and personality, and psychological and physical illness—explain 63.5% of the variance. Participants generally hold positive attitudes toward the reasons for divorce, with infidelity, spousal abuse, and drug/alcohol abuse being among the most prominently reported. However, there are statistically significant gender differences regarding attitudes toward specific reasons for divorce, with women being more sensitive to inventory situations and supporting divorce at greater rates than men.

Keywords Gender · Reasons for divorce · Likelihood of Divorce Inventory · Kuwait

11.1 Introduction

Divorce refers to the dissolution of marriage, and is a universal social phenomenon. Murdock's (1950) study on family stability in non-European countries found that systems of divorce were present in 39 of 40 investigated societies. In Kuwait, tremendous social changes over the last few decades have made divorce a key social problem. To provide some context, Kuwait is a small country that was once defined by its traditional society; however, following the discovery of rich oil deposits and subsequent exports from 1946 onward, it transformed into a modern social and economic nation. In the 1960s, the total population of Kuwait was as low as 269,000; by 2019, this had grown to an estimated 4.4 million, comprising roughly 1.3 million Kuwaiti citizens and 3.1 million expatriates. The population is mostly urban, with approximately 83% living in the capital. High immigration rates and heavy dependence on foreign labor

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have formed a large working-age population (aged 15 to 64 years), which accounts for about 75% of the total (Central Statistical Bureau, 2020; Population Division of the Department of Economic & Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, 2018). The major social changes brought on by these circumstances have also resulted in a significant increase in the number of divorces.

Kuwait has been moving toward both modernization and urbanization since the discovery of oil, with high revenues affecting nearly every aspect of sociocultural life; of particular note, education is now widely available to both men and women. Meanwhile, dramatic social changes have also resulted in a variety of contradictions and challenges, including weakened family support systems, the need for legal reforms, and a new awareness of gender rights and duties (Al-Kazi, 2008). Further, the many job opportunities that have opened up have altered traditional gender roles, providing women with more economic autonomy and shifting the course of society toward individuation. Many factors have contributed to the high divorce rate, including a move from the extended to nuclear family structure, an increase in the number of heterogamous marriages, and many psychological, cultural, social, and financial factors.

In 2017, estimates showed about 76,000 divorce cases in Gulf Cooperation Council countries, with a general divorce rate of 2.2%. Saudi Arabia was the highest at 2.3%, followed by Kuwait at 2.2% (Statistical Center of the Gulf Cooperation Council, 2017). In this context, divorce has become a broad public concern, for reasons including spousal abuse and neglect, interference by parents and relatives, and limited contact during the engagement period (Al-Najjer, 2003). However, relatively few studies have investigated the attitudes Kuwaiti youths hold toward marriage and divorce. Alqashan and Alkandari (2010) found that adults whose fathers had chosen to separate from their spouses were less likely to hold positive attitudes toward marriage when compared to those whose parents maintained healthy marriages; these same individuals were also more likely to hold positive attitudes toward divorce. However, there is generally a lack of scholarly information on the subject, which highlights the importance of continued research.

While several self-reported divorce-related instruments have been developed in Kuwait, there is neither a comprehensive scale for assessing youths' attitudes nor sufficient information about what these individuals believe are the main causes. We addressed this gap by validating the comprehensive Likelihood of Divorce Inventory (LDI) for use in Kuwait. This is the first study in Kuwait to quantify divorce-related factors in married university students through factor analysis.

11.2 Divorce in the Existing Literature

Divorce is a significant social issue that contributes to numerous psychological problems, such as anxiety and depression. In the preventive context, therefore, adequate evaluations are crucial. Divorce is defined as the termination of marriage (Plummer & Koch-Hattem, 1986, p. 524) and often results in substantial economic, physical, and

mental burdens for all affected parties (Sbarra et al., 2014), particularly owing to feelings of lost social support and diminished family integration. Looking at Durkheim's perspective on social integration, this may increase the risk of suicide (Kposowa, 2000). Divorce negatively affects children in all psychological, physical, social, and emotional aspects, while causing poor performance and inefficiency for the entire family (Portes et al., 2000), often with devastating social consequences for young children and adolescents (Hill & Kopp, 2015). In sum, divorce has lasting effects on children and adolescents, who may face greater relationship difficulties and are at an increased risk of divorce when compared to their counterparts with non-divorced parents (Kahl et al., 2007; Kunz, 2001).

Spouses typically go through several stages before they obtain a legal divorce. The first contributing stage, emotional divorce (Kaslow, 1980), is a psychological mechanism that some spouses employ when they feel the marriage has become a threat to their well-being. Once an individual is emotionally divorced from their spouse, they have separated their emotions from the marriage (Al-Ubaidi, 2017). Two periods are highly important for the survival of marriage: (a) the first seven years, during which approximately half of all divorces occur and (b) the period when the first child reaches age 14, which is often considered a low point in marital satisfaction (Gottman & Levenson, 2000). In this context, divorce occurs in 50% of first marriages and 60% of second marriages (Cohen & American Academy of Pediatrics. Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2002).

Many variables are related to divorce and family stability in Kuwaiti society, including the level of acquaintance/interaction between spouses, age at marriage, religious sect, tribal background, income, presence of children/education, desire to marry, employment outside home, working hours, and social position of the family owing to marriage. As such, there are many predictors of divorce, including demographic/economic factors and personal factors (Amato, 2010).

Certain marriages are at greater risk of ending in divorce, for instance, those in which the spouses are under the age of 30 and if the wife has a higher educational level than the husband (Linlin, 1993). Other variables that increase the risk of divorce include low education/income, previous marriages, cohabitation before marriage, low religious affiliation, and witnessing divorce as a child (Amato & Silver, 1997). Meanwhile, the longer a marriage continues without problems, the lower the likelihood of consenting to divorce (Thornton, 1985).

In a study among interracial couples, Wong (2009) found that it was beneficial to identify and teach individuals about basic risk factors and the need for flexibility prior to marriage. Amato and DeBoer (2001) reported that low marital commitment contributed to a lack of optimism that potential marital problems could be fixed, with such couples being less likely to remain in the marriage after experiencing difficulty. Hawkins et al. (2012) found that two common reasons for asking for divorce included growing apart and lack of interpersonal communication, while Amato and Previti (2003) reported infidelity as the most common cause, followed by incompatibility, alcohol/drug abuse, and growing apart. The reasons for divorce also differ based on

gender, social class, and life course variables. De Graaf and Kalmijn (2006) showed that the most common causes of divorce were violence and infidelity, with less severe factors including relationship problems such as growing apart and insufficient attention.

We investigated the attitudes of married young people toward divorce. Research has shown that negative attitudes toward divorce are associated with stronger decreases in social contact following divorce (Kalmijn & Uunk, 2007). There are also two notable factors that influence attitudes toward divorce at the national level, including the societal prevalence of divorce and level of secularization (Norris & Inglehart, 2004). Kapinus (2005) examined the attitudes young people held toward divorce based on the quality of their parents' marriages, finding that low levels of marital quality were less likely to result in approving attitudes toward divorce. De Coninck et al. (2021) reported that students in 2018 tended to hold more positive attitudes toward divorce when compared to students in 2002. Whitton et al. (2013) pointed out that remarried adults were more likely to have negative attitudes toward divorce than those in their first marriages when experiencing marital distress, which may reflect a weaker commitment to marriage. The intergenerational transmission of divorce theory confirms that attitudes and patterns related to marriage are often passed on to children, in which case those from divorced families are at a higher risk of divorce in their own eventual marriages (Amato, 1996). However, Landis-Kleine et al. (1995) found that young adults generally held positive attitudes toward marriage and commitment, and that parental marital status did not significantly affect their attitudes about marriage or divorce.

While several existing scales are available to assess how young people perceive divorce, we developed a unique scale to reflect the social reality of Kuwaiti society. The LDI measures attitudes toward divorce based on 19 reasons, then asks participants to indicate their likelihood of seeking divorce. Mulder and Gunnoe (1999) developed a similar scale to assess the likelihood of divorce, albeit only according to seven hypothetical situations. In this regard, an expanded scale is important (Fam et al., 2017), showing the existence of more attitudes toward divorce.

11.3 Objectives and Research Questions

We aimed to clarify what types of attitudes Kuwaiti youth hold toward various reasons for divorce. As divorce becomes increasingly common in Kuwait, it is important to understand what youths, who now comprise more than 70% of the population (Central Statistical Bureau, 2020), think about the nature of divorce, thus providing an outlook for future conditions. The LDI results should also reflect the degree of sensitivity to key causes for divorce in this population, thereby providing information on specific mechanisms. We also sought to assess and verify the psychometric properties of the LDI within the context of Kuwaiti society. Finally, we set out to determine whether male and female participants held different attitudes toward divorce based on their general and subscale responses. Prior to conducting this study, we established the

following research questions: Question 1: What are the basic dimensions of the LDI responses using exploratory factor analysis (EFA)? Question 2: What attitudes do Kuwait University students hold toward various reasons for divorce? Question 3: Do male and female students at Kuwait University hold different attitudes toward the various reasons for divorce?

11.4 Research Methods

This study employed a cross-sectional design. In 2019, via random sampling, we recruited 443 married students at Kuwait University, obtained through an electronic questionnaire via Google Apps. They were selected from the students of Kuwait University in the six governorates of the State of Kuwait. Participants completed a questionnaire that sought sociodemographic information and also contained the LDI. It took three weeks to complete the questionnaire. The participants were not given any specific instructions. The sociodemographic questionnaire included gender, age, marital status, and economic level. This study developed the LDI for use in Kuwait. Although based on the literature (Fink & Shapiro, 2018; Kapinus & Flowers, 2008), our instrument included a total of 19 reasons for divorce. While Alqashan and Alkandari (2010) previously used 29 reasons, our pilot study among 20 married students at Kuwait University showed that the instrument could be refined to 19 probable causes of divorce. Subsequently, three professors of sociology and social work at Kuwait University established its content validity.

The LDI utilizes a scenario-based style in which respondents are required to assume that they are considering divorce. They are then presented with 19 situations and asked to indicate the likelihood of proceeding with divorce using a seven-point scale for each, in which 1 = very unlikely, 2 = greatly unlikely, 3 = somewhat unlikely, 4 = not sure, 5 = somewhat likely, 6 = greatly likely, and 7 = very likely, and the total score range of the instrument is 133 scores. In this study, EFA was used to identify the underlying dimensions of the participants' responses. Finally, we used Cronbach's alpha to measure internal consistency between items in each of these groups. The eight items under negative relationship and lack of respect yielded an alpha of 0.924, the seven items under differences in behavior and personality yielded an alpha of 0.829, and the four items under psychological and physical illness yielded an alpha of 0.751. In sum, all areas were deemed highly reliable. The data were individually analyzed for each research question. SPSS version 19 was used for all analyses (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA.).

Prior to the factor analysis, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were calculated as 0.894 ($p < 0001$), respectively. We conducted an EFA among the 19 probable divorce situations to identify correlations that could be used to establish factor groups. We thus found that three factors explained 63.5% of the variance. Next, we conducted a varimax rotation, redistributing the factor loadings to reflect the three major components, which we labeled as follows: (1) negative relationship and lack of respect (items: 1 (Your spouse

had an affair), 2 (Your spouse physically abuses you), 3 (Substance abuse (drugs or alcohol), 4, 8, 9, 10, and 17)); (2) differences in behavior and personality (items: 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, and 14); and (3) psychological and physical illness (items: 15, 16, 18, and 19). We conducted a descriptive analysis of responses to all 19 LDI items. A subsequent analysis was conducted to assess possible differences between male and female participants, with an independent samples t-test used to investigate gender differences in views concerning the three factors extracted during the EFA. Students provided a written consent to participate, and an institutional review board approved the study.

Selecting a sample of married students on campus was a challenge. Furthermore, the study did not include unmarried students for comparison. To assess the depth of divorce as a social problem, future studies should include young and adult Kuwaitis. Finally, the questionnaire did not include variables on family history, parents' relationship, and marriage quality.

11.5 Results

About 463 male and female students were recruited and only 443 data were analyzed, as 20 male and female students did not answer the questionnaire correctly. Of the 443 participants, 275 (62.1%) were women and 168 (37.5%) were men and all were between the ages of 18 and 28 ($M = 23$ years, $SD = 4.7$). Importantly, this gender distribution reflected the university-wide population structure. The majority of participants came from middle-class (83.5%) backgrounds (monthly income between 3,000 and 5,000 Kuwaiti Dinar), with smaller proportions coming from lower classes (2.3%) (monthly income under 3,000 Kuwaiti Dinar) and higher classes (14.2%) (monthly income more than 3000 Kuwaiti Dinar). Furthermore, the majority of participants' parents were still married (88.3%), with others reported divorce or death (11.7%).

Table 11.1 shows how participants perceived each of the 19 situations both in general and based on gender, while Table 11.2 presents their response distributions for the three main LDI components. Here, mean scores of four and above indicated the likelihood of divorce. Regardless of gender, Table 11.1 shows that participants generally held positive attitudes toward the 13 items, with infidelity, spousal physical abuse, and substance abuse being the most serious (likelihood scores of 5.10, 5.10, and 5.03, respectively). Situations with lower severity included the lack of respect on behalf of one spouse ($M = 4.72$), feeling put down or belittled and insulted by one's spouse ($M = 4.60$), not meeting family obligations ($M = 4.50$), immaturity (improper and childish behavior) ($M = 4.32$), spouse being too dependent upon or closely tied to own family ($M = 4.28$), unhappiness in marriage ($M = 4.27$), mental health disorder ($M = 4.24$), constant arguments and quarrels with spouse ($M = 4.11$), sexual intimacy problems ($M = 4.11$), and incompatible personalities ($M = 4.06$). The remaining six items were not as significant.

Table 11.1 Descriptive statistics of most probable situations for divorce: Men and women (N = 443)

Items	n	M	SD
Your spouse had an affair	430	5.10	2.204
Your spouse physically abuses you	435	5.10	2.331
Substance abuse (drugs or alcohol)	432	5.03	2.354
The lack of respect on behalf of one spouse	434	4.72	1.876
Feeling put down or belittled and insulted by spouse	433	4.60	2.032
Not meeting family obligations	431	4.50	1.859
Immaturity (improper and childish behavior)	430	4.32	1.823
Spouse too dependent upon or closely tied to own family	431	4.28	1.817
Unhappy in marriage	435	4.27	1.741
Mental health disorder	434	4.24	1.891
Constant arguments and quarrels with spouse	437	4.11	1.755
Sexual intimacy problems	425	4.11	1.528
Incompatible personalities	430	4.06	1.708
You do not love your spouse anymore	435	3.99	1.719
Spouse infertile	435	3.83	1.810
Spouse spends too much time with friends outside the house	431	3.77	1.516
Indifference to financial spending	433	3.67	1.462
Chronic illness	435	3.61	1.773
Financial problems	427	3.54	1.634

Note M: mean; SD: standard deviation

Tables 11.2 and 11.3 show gender differences regarding views of divorce situations to varying degrees. Women supported divorce in 14 situations, while men were only in favor of seven. Women were also more sensitive to situations in which husbands physically abused their wives, overindulged in drugs/alcohol, and engaged in infidelity ($M = 5.34, 5.26, \text{ and } 5.21$, respectively). On the contrary, for men, infidelity was the primary factor that increased the likelihood of divorce ($M = 4.91$), followed by physical abuse ($M = 4.69$) and substance abuse ($M = 4.63$). It is, thus, clear that women were more likely to seek divorce for the three most prominent situations. However, all participants agreed about the importance of the remaining situations (substance abuse, spousal abuse, insulting spouse, disrespecting spouse, not meeting family obligations, and spouse being too dependent upon or closely tied to own family). The fact that women supported divorce under seven more conditions than men seems to indicate that they were generally more sensitive to stressful dynamics. It also revealed that the likelihood of divorce increased with the severity of the situation.

Table 11.2 Descriptive statistics of most probable situations for divorce: Women (n = 275)

Items	n	M	SD
Your spouse physically abuses you	273	5.34	2.312
Substance abuse (drugs or alcohol)	272	5.26	2.266
Your spouse had an affair	271	5.21	2.162
Feeling put down or belittled and insulted by spouse	272	4.83	1.952
The lack of respect on behalf of one spouse	272	4.81	1.862
Not meeting family obligations	271	4.67	1.799
Mental health disorder	271	4.55	1.924
Immaturity (improper and childish behavior)	271	4.52	1.823
Unhappy in marriage	272	4.49	1.758
Spouse too dependent upon or closely tied to own family	270	4.35	1.762
Constant arguments and quarrels with spouse	273	4.32	1.735
Sexual intimacy problems	265	4.31	1.436
Incompatible personalities	269	4.19	1.705
You do not love your spouse anymore	270	4.17	1.680
Spouse infertile	273	3.97	1.758
Indifference to financial spending	270	3.84	1.379
Chronic illness	273	3.82	1.645
Spouse spends too much time with friends outside the house	268	3.80	1.434
Financial problems	269	3.65	1.505

Table 11.4 shows the independent t-test results for gender differences regarding the three main attitudinal components established via the EFA: negative relationship and lack of respect; differences in behavior and personality; and psychological and physical illness. We found statistically significant differences between men and women regarding their attitudes toward the listed reasons for divorce and the three dimensions. Women tended to hold stronger attitudes; for instance, their mean score for negative relationship and lack of respect ($M = 34.0$, $SD = 11.4$) was higher than that for men ($M = 30.7$, $SD = 11.4$), with a mean difference of 3.26. This difference was statistically significant ($t = -2.79$, $p = 0.01$). More specifically, this scale component included items related to insulting behavior, lack of spousal love, physical abuse, infidelity, unhappy marriage, not meeting family obligations, and substance abuse.

Focusing on the behavior and personality scale, which included items related to incompatible personalities; situations in which spouses spent significant amounts of time outside the home or were too dependent on their families; financial problems; immaturity; and sexual intimacy issues, Table 11.4 shows that women had a higher mean score than men ($M = 28.6$, $SD = 8.0$ vs $M = 26.3$, $SD = 8.0$; mean difference of 2.29; statistically significant at $t = -2.74$, $p = 0.01$). Women, thus, exhibited stronger

Table 11.3 Descriptive statistics of most probable situations for divorce: Men (n = 168)

Items	n	M	SD
Your spouse had an affair	159	4.91	2.268
Your spouse physically abuses you	162	4.69	2.315
Substance abuse (drugs or alcohol)	160	4.63	2.454
The lack of respect on behalf of one spouse	162	4.56	1.895
Feeling put down or belittled and insulted by spouse	161	4.21	2.111
Not meeting family obligations	160	4.20	1.926
Spouse too dependent upon or closely tied to own family	161	4.17	1.906
Immaturity (improper and childish behavior)	159	3.99	1.781
Unhappy in marriage	163	3.90	1.650
Incompatible personalities	161	3.84	1.698
Constant arguments and quarrels with spouse	164	3.78	1.741
Sexual intimacy problems	160	3.78	1.621
Mental health disorder	163	3.73	1.725
Spouse spends too much time with friends outside the house	163	3.72	1.645
You do not love your spouse anymore	165	3.71	1.750
Spouse infertile	162	3.58	1.874
Indifference to financial spending	163	3.39	1.553
Financial problems	158	3.35	1.823
Chronic illness	162	3.25	1.922

Note M: mean; SD: standard deviation

Table 11.4 T-Test: Likelihood of divorce regarding three factors for men and women

Likelihood of divorce Factors	Gender	n	M (SD)	T
Negative relationship and lack of respect	Men	148	30.7 (11.4)	-2.79 **
	Women	264	34.0 (11.4)	
Differences in behavior and personality	Men	147	26.3 (8.0)	-2.74 **
	Women	245	28.6 (8.0)	
Psychological and physical illness	Men	159	14.4 (5.3)	-4.2 **
	Women	271	16.7 (5.4)	

Note M: mean; SD: standard deviation; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01

resentment toward situations in which spouses behaved improperly or lacked social responsibility.

Next, outcomes were similar on the psychological and physical illness scale, which included chronic illness, infertility, mental health disorders, and constant arguments/quarrels with spouses. Women had a higher mean score than men (M = 16.7, SD = 5.4 vs M = 14.4, SD = 5.3; mean difference of 2.27; statistically significant at

$t = -4.2, p = 0.01$). Again, women were more likely to favor divorce in situations described in this category.

11.6 Discussions

This study investigated the attitudes of Kuwaiti married college students toward reasons for divorce as measured by the LDI. Generally, our findings were in line with those of previous studies, demonstrating that both men and women held positive attitudes toward several reasons for divorce. However, women were generally more sensitive toward the reasons for divorce and tended to support divorce at greater rates than men.

Many studies have examined the causes leading to divorce. Goode (1956) showed that the most mentioned marital complaints are lack of support, excessive drinking, and neglect. Kitson and Marvin (1982) found that women emphasized a former spouse's lack of communication skills, internal family violence, extramarital relationships, mistrust, immaturity, and drinking problems. Kelly (1982) found that women frequently complain about feeling unloved and that their husbands constantly underestimate their competence and intelligence. Fletcher (1983) cited husbands' public and private personality problems, negative attitudes, specific behaviors, and extramarital sexual problems as reasons for divorce. Chang (2003) examined the self-reported causes of divorce in Korean and non-Korean female immigrants. The majority of Korean immigrants cited their husbands' perceived negative/abusive behaviors and financial problems as reasons for divorce, while non-Korean American women tended to report abstract and emotional reasons. The patterns of divorce causes reported by the women in the study appear to be related to their difficult experiences after divorce. Amato and Previti (2003) used National Board data collected between 1980 and 1997 to rank 208 people's answers to a question about why their marriages ended in divorce. Infidelity was the most common cause, followed by incompatibility, drug or alcohol abuse, and divergence from one another. The reasons for divorce differed by gender, social class, and life course variables. While previous studies have generally suggested that women are more tolerant toward divorce, Kapinus and Flowers (2008) found that women were more likely to advocate for making divorce more difficult to obtain. This was also reported by De Coninck et al. (2021), who investigated the attitudes that college students in Belgium held toward marriage and divorce during two periods; students in 2018 held more positive attitudes toward divorce and more negative attitudes toward marriage when compared to those in 2002. Similarly, female students held more positive attitudes toward divorce than male students. Attitudes toward and the propensity for divorce are also affected by personal household experiences, regardless of gender. Several studies (Kapinus, 2005; Mulder & Gunnoe, 1999; Rootalu & Kasearu, 2016) have analyzed gender differences in relation to backgrounds involving parental divorce, parental relationships, and family type, finding that women who come from troubled families have more positive attitudes toward and a greater propensity for divorce when compared to those who come

from intact families. This study provided support for these conclusions through its investigation of the differences between married male and female students based on their responses to both the individual LDI items and three main factor components.

11.7 Implications for Practice

Kuwaiti society is undergoing a drastic social transformation from tradition to modernization: the clash between traditional and modern values over gender roles, especially the changing roles of women, is apparent. Owing to their increasing educational attainment and labor force involvement, women have begun to question the traditional male-dominated culture, which has, in turn, impacted the entire family structure. As a result, divorce rates have increased drastically; collective efforts on the academic as well as societal levels are needed to address this social reality. Therefore, institutions of higher learning should offer academic courses on family issues related to marital social problems, divorce, parenting, and family therapy. Additionally, the legislative body should revise the traditional family laws to reflect the current social changes. The media too have a responsibility to highlight these changes and should provide more coverage of such family laws to create awareness.

This study makes an important contribution to understanding the perceptions of divorce among married male and female students at Kuwait University. However, further research using representative samples from both divorced men and divorced women is recommended.

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Chapter 12

The Transformation-Migration Nexus in the United Arab Emirates: A Historical Analysis



Gennaro Errichiello

Abstract My chapter, based on archival materials consulted at the British Library, is a discussion of the historical evolution of migration in the UAE, and in particular in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. A social transformation perspective entails treating migration as embedded in the broad understanding of society and its changes. Migration is neither a cause nor a consequence of social transformation but is part of transformation processes. This paper demonstrates that the historical evolution of migration in the emirates can only be understood by linking local-level experience of migration with other socio-spatial levels thus contributing to a better understanding of contemporary dynamics where migration, globalisation, economic and political aspects are intertwined.

Keywords Social-transformation · Migration · Dubai · Abu Dhabi · Trucial States

12.1 Introduction

... there is the idea that without these people [South Asians] we won't have what Dubai is today, we need other people to be health provider, as educators, as construction workers and so on. (Emirati woman, age 28)

... we [Emiratis] are a minority in our country now, we see these people coming from all over around the world, not just let's say as labourers, just to work here. I mean, my opinion is that these people have built and are building our country, what could we do? What would Dubai be without them? Really, that is the truth. (Emirati woman, age 19)

The above quotations, recorded in Dubai in 2014 and 2015, exemplify how the social transformation processes occurred in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were linked to international migration, and this has greatly contributed to the development of the country. Indeed, this acknowledgement is relevant insofar as it emphasises the need to conceive of migration as a socially embedded phenomenon. It is rather unlikely

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to get a better understanding of migration if we do not consider it as part of the transformation processes.

The contemporary dynamics of migration and how the ethnic and cultural heterogeneity is managed in the UAE require a historical analysis. Currently, in the UAE, foreign residents are always temporary and, regardless of the length of their stay, they cannot acquire permanent rights and are rather unlikely to get Emirati citizenship (Lori, 2019). Migration is regulated by the sponsorship system (*kafāla*), which requires a local sponsor, and characterised by temporariness (Errichiello & Nyhagen, 2021).¹ Temporariness is a permanent status affecting all migrants, and the “demographic imbalance” meaning that migrants (88.5%) outnumber nationals (11.5%) (De Bel-Air, 2018) has pushed the UAE authorities to not implement any state policy aimed at integrating them in the social fabric.² Regardless of exclusion and segregation affecting some migrants who are incorporated in the UAE labour market (Fargues, 2011), Emiratis and migrants, in their everyday life, cross the boundaries and interact “in the domestic sphere, in the workplace, in the service industry, in restaurants, in malls, in mosques, on the streets” (Lori, 2019, p. 155).

It is undeniable, however, that migrants represent the main component of the transformation processes affected the UAE in the last forty years. It is thus necessary to understand the historical evolution of migration in the country, and in order to do so, it is important to conceptualise migration as socially embedded meaning that migration has to be understood as part of transformation processes that a society undergoes. Migration cannot be detached from the economic, political, social and cultural factors. At the core of the transformation-migration nexus, there is the need to reconceptualise the dynamics of international migration by looking at this phenomenon in the light of global changes and its local effects. In other words, it means moving beyond methodological nationalism to emphasise the adoption of a multi-scalar approach which should question “fixed analytical frames that prioritize national territory and belonging over other scale of belonging” (Williamson, 2015, p. 29).

This chapter, which relies on the archival materials consulted in the British Library between September 2021 and January 2022, and some of them contained in the *Records of the Emirates* (BRE), aims at addressing the transformation-migration nexus in the UAE, and the case of Abu Dhabi and Dubai is relevant because it shows how migration transformed in relation to the socio-economic transformation processes affecting both emirates. In the following section, I theorise the transformation-migration nexus before discussing the economic environment characterising the Trucial States at the beginning of the twentieth century. Having framed the socio-economic aspects, I then focus on the case of Abu Dhabi and Dubai whereby the economic trajectories that both emirates have followed, as discussed in the following

¹ The sponsorship system has recently undergone some changes. In 2019, the UAE authorities implemented new rules allowing some categories of migrants to obtain a long-term visa. See Golden visa—The Official Portal of the UAE Government (accessed 31 January 2023).

² Integration is not part of the political agenda nor in the UAE neither in the other GCC countries. However, some migrants have developed a sense of belonging and everyday integration. See, for example, Errichiello (2023) and forthcoming.

section, help us to understand that migration, socio-economic, historical and cultural factors are linked to each other.

12.2 Theorising the Transformation-Migration Nexus

Migration as a social phenomenon affects countries and contexts all over the world. However, migration has always been conceived as disembedded from the social reality and processes occurring in society; migration research was thus “compartmentalised” (Castles, 2010, p. 1569) and fragmented where interdisciplinarity, even though advocated, was more a discussion of each disciplines’ methods and analysis rather than an inclusive and “overarching synthesis” (Castles, 2010, p. 1569). Additionally, migration has become an issue of the political agenda, and this has further contributed to its fragmentation and compartmentalisation and fostered a *migration bias* due to the politicisation of the migration debate and policy-driven research that have often provided “simplistic, short-term remedies to complex, long-term social issues” (Castles, 2010, p 1571). The close relationships with the political realm have created a bias towards migration research and scholars. This bias has been, of course, detrimental for advancement in understating migration beyond its descriptive nature and thus excluding migration studies from the mainstream social science (Castles, 2015).

The classical approach to international migration requires adopting different frameworks in line with changes occurring globally. For Castles (2010, p. 1566), “we do not have a common conceptual framework that could serve as the starting point for intellectual debates and the formulation of hypotheses and research questions”. In the last few decades, migration has accelerated due to globalisation, and inequalities have emerged which seem to drive the understanding of the migration phenomenon from the South to the North.

Connected to the discussion of migration is the social change, which has recently received much attention. Portes (2010) argues that migration induces an evident superficial change in receiving societies, but it does not affect and even reinforces the central structures and institutions of those societies. In other words, the pillars of society remain intact, and migration induces only a superficial change mostly evident “in the new sights, sounds and smells that a growing foreign population brings along” (Portes, 2010, p. 1556). Instead, Castles’ (2010, p. 1568) approach revolves around the idea that migration should not be viewed as separated from social processes and changes, it has to be conceived of as “a normal part of social relations ... as a part of complex and varied processes of societal change”. It, thus, requires treating migration as embedded in broad understanding of society and its changes. Hence, the need to introduce the notion of social transformation as a framework to embed rather than disembed migration from the social context. Social transformation is:

[a] shift in social relationships so profound that it affects virtually all forms of social interaction, and all individuals and communities simultaneously, it is a ‘step change’ that goes beyond the normal processes of change that are always at work. (Castles, 2015, p. 4)

In the above definition, it is evident the inclusive and dynamic nature of social transformation, which is driven by economic, political, military and technological advances. Social transformation is so pervasive that it affects simultaneously “culture, social relationships, social institutions (such as the family), personal and community identities, ideologies and politics” (Castles, 2015, p. 4). Therefore, migration “is not a result of social transformation, nor a cause of it, but an integral part of transformation processes” (Castles, 2015, p. 10). For Castles (2015, pp. 9–10), the main point of social transformation approach relies on the concept of embeddedness meaning that migration “should be understood as an essential component of change, shaped not just by economic factors but importantly also by complex historical, cultural and social factors”. Therefore, the concept of embeddedness is of primary importance to advance and understand migration as a social phenomenon closely linked to social theory. But, the *migration bias* has impeded the full inclusion and understanding of migration from mainstream social science. Several studies have, however, emphasised the links between migration and social theory by focusing on structure and agency and their mutual relationships (Bakewell, 2010; Morawska, 2007; O’Reilly, 2012). This is evident in the notion of “migration project” that links together migration studies and social theory (Errichiello, 2021). It focuses on migrants’ agency, but at the same time, it also considers how structures affect and shape human agency. This entails acknowledging that “society shapes individuals and, simultaneously, the individuals shape society in the ongoing process of mutual (re)constitution” (Morawska, 2007, p. 12). The migration project represents the set of choices, decisions, mechanisms, procedures and institutions through which migrants plan, shape and modify their migration experience; therefore, it is created and recreated every day. It values the agency of individuals, groups and households to mobilise resources in order to migrate and their knowledge of structures that can enable and constrain their agential capacity. The idea of migration as a project seems to endorse the perception of a deterministic approach; however, the migration project is not immutable because migrants evaluate the situation and project their actions accordingly, and they act in relation to the structural context, new circumstances and events taking place before undertaking the migration, during the journey and upon their arrival (Errichiello, 2021).

In conclusion, due to its focus on structure and agency, the migration project is linked to social transformation because it enhances the global, the national and local levels. Migrants bend their habitual responses and future-oriented projects to their evaluation of the practical circumstances of the moment. As Morawska (2007) points out, this evaluation relies on their capacity to appropriate, reproduce and potentially project in relation to their interests, circumstances, events and their knowledge of the structural context. This capacity, which is a common feature of socially embedded actors, is based upon cultural orientations and resources available in a specific time and place. In other words, social transformation approach is greatly relevant because it helps us to map the economic, social, cultural and political factors that influence the individual’s migration project and understand “the connections between these factors” (Castles, 2010, p. 1582).

12.3 From Pearling to the Oil Economy

At the core of social transformation, there is the multi-scalar approach meaning that migration results from global processes with local effects (Williamson, 2015). Such an approach entails rethinking migration as intimately connected with and part of economic, social and political factors thus contributing to overcome the limitations and constraints of methodological nationalism and, therefore, more in tune with global and mobile society (Castles, 2010). This approach is relevant when considering the socio-economic transformation occurred in the Trucial States from the pearling industry to the oil economy.

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, in the Trucial States, the pearl fishing was

the principal or only source of wealth among the residents of the Arabian side [of the Gulf]. Were the supply of pearls to fail ... the ports of the Trucial ‘Omān, which have no other resources, would practically cease to exist; in other words, the purchasing power of the inhabitants of the eastern coast of Arabia depends very largely upon the pearl fisheries (Lorimer, 1915, p. 2220).

In the pearl fishery are evident “the signs of indigenous capitalist development” (Davidson, 2005, p. 8) being organised around two main classes: financiers and operatives. This capitalist system relied on the ownership of the pearling boats and the profits were distributed between the capitalist/entrepreneur and the labourers. A wealth entrepreneur owned and fitted the boats “who received a large part of the take at the end of the season, leaving the rest to be divided among the crew” (Heard-Bey, 2004, p. 208). The increasing profits deriving from this economic activity led to establish the class of the private financiers who invested their own money to sustain the operations and the crew of the boats. Persian and Indian merchants invested their money in the pearling industry and established in Abu Dhabi and Dubai (Davidson, 2005).

The class of operatives was the crew of the boat. It included the captain, the divers, the haulers who were sometimes assisted by other people and an apprentice who had to attend duties such as fishing and cooking (Lorimer, 1915, pp. 2227–2228). The divers (*ghāṣah*) were “mostly poor Arabs and free negroes or negro slaves; but Persians and Balūchis are also to be found among them, and in recent years, owing to the large profit made by divers, many respectable Arabs have joined their ranks” (Lorimer, 1915, p. 2228). Many Africans and even Baluchis arrived in the Trucial States to work as divers as well as for domestic duties. The British ban on slavery established in 1847 was, however, tolerated by the local rulers “because business of many pearl-boat owner in the coastal towns had grown to depend almost exclusively on slave divers” (Heard-Bey, 2004, p. 231).

In both classes, the presence of foreigners is evident. The trade and export of pearls was an important aspect of the pearl industry, and the knowledge of this provides a good and clear insight of the social stratification of the ports on the Trucial States (Heard-Bey, 2004). In this process, the role of merchants was prominent because they bought and sold the pearls in the trade markets (Lorimer, 1915, p. 2236). The

most important trade markets in the Persian Gulf until 1902 were Manama and Lingah (Southeast Persia), “the former drew to itself all the trade of the middle, the latter that of the lower Gulf” (Lorimer, 1915, p. 2236). The market of Lingah was, however, bound to be supplanted by Dubai, when in 1902 the stringent customs tariff severely affected the commerce of the port, and many Sunni Persian merchants “found no alternative but to close down their stores in protest and to emigrate to Dubai” (Abdullah, 2016, pp. 232–232). The Indian market was equally important, the local Arab merchants (*tujjār*) sold to the Indian pearl merchants who took the pearls to Bombay to sell them on the world markets (Onley, 2014), and thus, the Indian ports, especially Bombay, became the trading ports of the Gulf’s pearls. The interconnectedness between the Arab and Indian merchants led some of the latter to establish themselves in the Gulf port cities where they took up the residence (Heard-Bey, 2004). The Persian and Indian merchants were both part of the social context of the Trucial States, and they were socially and legally outsiders but fully economically integrated; however, such an influx of migrants created a segmented society where local Arabs, Persians and Indians were involved in a profitable economic activity and coexisted by sharing spaces and interests (Heard-Bey, 2004).

In the 1930s, however, the pearling industry was severely affected by the international economic depression and the prevalence of the less expensive Japanese cultured pearls. Many pearl merchants were affected by both events. It was reported that “60 diving ships of Dubai failed to put out to sea owing to financial difficulties”.³ In December 1929, in Bahrain, “the slump on Wall Street has had a serious reaction upon the world’s pearl trade, the Bahrain merchants who took pearls to Bombay have sold very little”.⁴ The other important event that affected the pearling industry of the Gulf was the growing presence of Japanese cultured pearls that were less expensive than the natural ones of the Gulf. In 1930, it was, for example, reported that the “outlook of the pearling season continues gloomy”, and this was due to the “Japanese cultured pearls, and it is said that they have found some artificial stimulus which cannot be detected by reflection like the present mother-of-pearl centre. If this is true, the results will be very serious for the Arab Coast”.⁵

Against this economic crisis affecting the Gulf port cities, the oil concessions in the 1920s and 1930s represented a turning point in the region. In 1922, the British authorities signed an agreement with the Trucial rulers who committed themselves to not grant any oil concession agreement other than the British companies (Heard-Bey, 2004). This agreement made the presence of British oil companies in the southern shores of the Gulf constant and pervasive, and oil concession agreements were signed by the Trucial rulers and the Petroleum Concessions Ltd. (PCL) between 1937 (BRE, 1937, pp. 561–638; Errichiello, 2012), when the first agreement was ratified between the then ruler of Dubai Said bin Maktum and PCL, and 1952, when the last agreement

³ Muhammad bin Biyat, a local prominent pearl merchant went bankrupted, and Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Dalmuk had financial difficulties. The stories are reported in the Arab States monthly summary 1929–1931, July, 1929, IOR/R/15/1/236.

⁴ Arab States monthly summary 1929–1931, December, 1929, IOR/R/15/1/236.

⁵ Reported in the Arab States monthly summary 1929–1931, March 1930, IOR/R/15/1/236.

was signed between the then ruler of Fujairah, Shaikh Muhammad bin Hamad, and the PCL (Heard-Bey, 2004).

As recognised by Lori (2019), the control of migration flows started before the UAE federation was created in 1971, and the British authorities used their power to favour their commercial and economic interests. The recruitment of foreign workers represented the only feasible way to develop the oil industry, and it was regulated by the nationality clause, which requested that all the oil companies had to employ local nationals as far as possible, while reserving the right to introduce and employ foreign workers, if the local labour market could not supply the skills requested by the company. Not only did the nationality clause foster recruitment of workers from foreign countries but also encouraged the intra-Gulf labour mobility because locals were suffering unemployment as a consequence of the decline of the pearling industry and, with this clause, the local rulers tried to transfer the benefits of oil concessions to the local populations (Errichiello, 2012).

However, this clause created a problem for the British oil companies insofar as Persians were easier to employ than the Indians, as the former “came at their own expense, did not have any certified contract with the company, and could be hired and fired almost at will” (Errichiello, 2012, p. 398). Indeed, the British encouraged and supported the migration of Indians. The Political Resident in Bahrain, in 1938, Hugh Weightman, urged the British to see the Gulf countries as a good market for “Indian products and a small but potentially increasing field of employment for Indians”.⁶ There were good job opportunities for skilled Indians, and he encouraged the British to adopt a system to support a regulated rather than an unregulated migration from India. The presence of skilled Indians in the Gulf countries was due to the lack of skills among the local population, as mentioned by Weightman in relation to the visit of the Vice-President of the Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO) in India with the aim to systematically recruit skilled workers. Therefore, skilled Indian workers were employed in all oil companies (Seccombe & Lawless, 1986).

The intra-Gulf labour mobility was not completely new, as seasonal labour in the pearling industry was traditionally characterised by a circulation of workers throughout the Gulf region. Whereas the new migration was driven by the discovery of oil which provided a new kind of job (industrial), it allowed individuals to be hired no longer for seasonal period, but for a long time, so that they could acquire new skills and abilities. During the 1940s and 1950s, many Omanis emigrated from the interior zones of Oman to the other Gulf countries and to Saudi Arabia. The Omani migration was directed to Kuwait, where Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) resumed its operations in 1945. As KOC was of joint Anglo-US ownership, it received priority as part of the Allied war programme. Thus, KOC recruited its workers from Oman, even though not directly. Many Omanis were laid off from BAPCO when its refinery expansion programme came to an end, and KOC decided to hire them. Omanis also moved to Qatar when in Dukhan and Umm Said fields, drilling activity was resumed (Seccombe & Lawless, 1986), and in 1949, many migrant workers also moved from

⁶ See the Trade: Reports on Persian Gulf Market and trading possibilities, IOR/L/PS/12/3797, folio 73.

Trucial Coast to Qatar, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia; in particular, a high percentage of travel certificates (3,000 certificates) were issued to subjects coming from Sharjah (Seccombe & Lawless, 1986). During the 1940s and 1950s, many people of the desert areas in Abu Dhabi moved to work either in Saudi Arabia or in Qatar, and in the 1960s, the ruler of Abu Dhabi implemented measure to prevent that those who had worked in the oil companies elsewhere in the Gulf could return to Abu Dhabi, “because those who had stayed behind were afraid that they might lose their job to those who came back armed with experience in the oil-field work” (Heard-Bey, 2004, pp. 206–207).

In conclusion, the pearling industry exemplifies how the understanding of migration is linked to the socio-economic environment where the presence of foreign workers became functional to the development of this economic sector. The oil economy, which required the recruitment of skilled and unskilled workers, was undoubtedly one of those factors of social transformation and, because of its characteristics, migration transformed, and new skills and abilities were required to work in the oil industry. Migration was thus a necessary part of the change, and not only was it due to the socio-economic factors, but it also related to historical events and affected the socio-cultural context (Castles, 2015).

12.4 The Sheikdoms/Emirates of Abu Dhabi and Dubai

Migration is part of the social transformation processes occurring in a society, and in order to understand such processes, we need to focus on the historical, socio-economic and cultural factors of the global cities like Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

Abu Dhabi was formed as a small village in 1761 and its origins are related to the Liwa and Buraimi oases (Davidson, 2009). In 1939, it had a population of 10,000 inhabitants which had grown at the beginning of the twentieth century having benefited from the boom in the pearl industry in the previous years.⁷ Abu Dhabi grew in size and its population changed, and it became the permanent residence of the Bedouin families that decided to spend their winter in town, and the development of the pearling industry encouraged many other individuals coming from other parts of the Gulf and Trucial States to work in the pearling industry or collateral activities to move and settle in Abu Dhabi. There were 500 Persians living in town, and some of them were originally from Arab tribes living in Persia and owned 40 of the 70 shops within the *sug* of the town (Heard-Bey, 2004). Because of the economic and political pressures they suffered in Persia, many merchants relocated their businesses and families in the Gulf port cities like Abu Dhabi (Nadjmabadi, 2010).

Hindu merchants, as Persians, arrived in town during the boom of the pearl industry that represented the biggest change in the socio-economic structure of the local

⁷ In 1939, in the Trucial States, the population was estimated at over 80,000. The data are reported in the Military Report of 1939. See IOR/L/PS/20/C252.

population (Heard-Bey, 2004). They were seasonal residents, and in winter, they tended to return to India; however, some of them settled down in Abu Dhabi.

In the 1920s and 1930s, pearl diving and fishing were in sharp decline (Errichiello, 2012); the growing presence of international competitors (Japanese cultured pearl) and the adoption of modern technologies and techniques not existing in Abu Dhabi made the economic condition of local merchants awful and it worsened to the extent that the pearl expeditions stopped entirely (Davidson, 2009). Therefore, the then ruler of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Shakhbut bin Sultan (1928–1966), in order to cope with the growing financial difficulties that the local population was experiencing, and after long and exhausting negotiations, signed an oil concession agreement with the PCL in 1939. Oil was found in 1958 and it sold in 1962 (Davidson, 2009). However, the ruler maintained his authority by paying subsidies or gifts to tribal chiefs. Thus, “Shakhbut tried neither to alter the tribal infrastructure of society, nor to abandon traditional means of securing loyalty, such as marriage and subsidies” (Rabi, 2006, p. 42). Indeed, Shakhbut “conceived that the rapid social change would corrupt the people and lavish finite national resources on unnecessary” (Rabi, 2006, p. 44). His detractors, such as members of his family, contested his politics of austerity, and British complained that he left his people in miserable conditions (Davidson, 2009). For this reason, his youngest brother, Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, with the support of family members and tribal sheikhs who refused to accept subsidies and gifts from Shakhbut, in 1966 became the new ruler of Abu Dhabi.

Zayed reigned (1966–2004) during the period of transition from the British withdrawal to the birth of the federation in 1971. He realised that it was necessary to pacify the tribes disappointed by the politics of austerity pursued by his predecessor and made locals enjoy the benefits deriving from oil wealth by cancelling, for example, all taxes imposed by his brother (Davidson, 2009). Zayed’s politics was mainly based upon the need to reinforce the tribal bonds and re-establish a sense of belonging among tribal sheikhs and local population. His decision to send personal invitations to those tribes that during Shakhbut’s reign left the sheikhdom, as they disagreed with his politics, is a proof of Zayed’s will “to boost Abu Dhabi’s population and repair more of the damage done by his predecessor” (Davidson, 2009, p. 53). Zayed has led the country in its transition, and this was made possible because he was able to earn support from the tribes and local population by adopting a politics of distribution of wealth and jobs in important positions within the federal state. Davidson (2009, p. 111) argues that

the rulers of Abu Dhabi continue to draw great legitimacy from their roles as tribal leaders rooted in the history and culture of the lower Gulf, and thus many powerful government and military portfolios remain in the hands of the non-ruling tribal elites.

Even his successors, like Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, continued to draw great legitimacy from distributing wealth and prestigious positions to tribal groups. This has created the allocative state meaning that the ruler is considered as a father who looks after the local population, in a sort of paternalistic spirit (Davidson, 2009).

In the nineteenth century, Dubai was one of the port cities of the Arab side of the Gulf where merchants, fishermen and traders settled down and where goods

coming from South and Southeast Asia were shipped throughout the Gulf region and the Indian Ocean. In 1833, Dubai became independent from Abu Dhabi. Members of the Al-Bu Falasah tribe, which is a section of the Bani Yas tribal confederation (Heard-Bey, 2004), left Abu Dhabi when Sheikh Khalifa bin Shakhbut Al Nahyan (who ruled from 1833 to 1845) suppressed a coup, and Khalifa's revenge "was so extensive that many of the perpetrators and their families had no option but to leave Abu Dhabi" (Davidson, 2009, p. 13). Thus, members of the Al-Bu Falasah tribe led by Maktum bin Buti Al-Falasi and his uncle Ubaid bin Said Al-Falasi (and with other tribes) settled in Dubai, which was proclaimed independent from Abu Dhabi, and they started the new dynasty, the Al Maktum (Davidson, 2008).

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many foreigners settled down in the sheikhdom and became part of Dubai's social fabric. In 1939, Dubai had a population of 20,000 inhabitants, and the local population was formed of members of local tribes but also some Kuwaitis, Bahrainis and migrants from Al-Hasa (Saudi Arabia). In the sheikhdom, there were also 3,000 Persians, about 1,000 Baluchis, Hindus and Khojas. The pearl diving and fishing were the main economic activities.⁸

In 1902 in Persia, a new law introduced high dues on imports and exports on goods going through Persian ports to the Trucial States (Heard-Bey, 2004). This led the port of Lingah to decline in its strategic and economic importance. Thus, goods from India were shipped straight to Dubai, and because of the decline of shipping, many Persian merchants were forced to leave their country and move to Dubai (Davidson, 2008). They came especially from the Bastak district in Persia, and even though they lived in Persia, they "belonged to various Arab tribes and were Sunni" (Heard-Bey, 2004, p. 245). This convinced the ruler of Dubai, Said bin Maktum (who ruled from 1912 to 1958), to invite them to establish permanently in the sheikhdom (Davidson, 2008).

The recent presence of Indians in Dubai dates to 1865 when they "first arrived as the representatives of British companies in India" (Davidson, 2008, p. 89). In Dubai, the presence of Indian merchants was a consequence of the Indian government's decision to "levy duties on precious metals, which led to India's losing its position as Asia's primary gold market" (Davidson, 2008, p. 70). The formation of the Indian community in Dubai was the result of favourable elements, such as "trade routes, economic opportunities, local demands, religious tolerance and the policies of the local ruler" (Onley, 2014, p. 247).

Dubai was also a recipient of merchants from other sheikhdoms. In the 1920s, because of increasing taxes imposed by the ruler of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan (who ruled from 1912 to 1922), many merchant families decided to move their activities and migrate to Dubai where the economic environment was more convenient than in Abu Dhabi (Davidson, 2009). Indeed, many other merchant families left Abu Dhabi during the Sheikh Shakhbut bin Sultan Al Nahyan's reign because of his reluctance to investing money, derived from oil concessions to develop the sheikhdom thus sharing the benefits with the local population (Davidson, 2009).

⁸ The data on population living in both sheikhdoms are reported in the Military Report of 1939. See IOR/L/PS/20/C252.

In the twentieth century, the major economic activities in Dubai were pearl diving, fishing and trading. These niches of the labour market were occupied by locals because they were seen as prestigious jobs (Al-Sayegh, 1998). Indians were mainly employed in the banking sector and in retail trading activities, and Persians controlled the retail trade and food commerce (Al-Sayegh, 1998). The merchant class has been important in Dubai's economy, and it has also played a key role in shaping Dubai's multi-cultural environment (Vora, 2013). The importance of the Indian and Iranian merchant class was directly proportional to the political influence that they wielded on rulers. "By an open-door policy Indian, Persian and Pakistani merchants were as free to trade in Dubai as the local inhabitants ... It was the initiative of the Persians which got trade off the ground at a time when the Arabs here were content to put their trust in pearls, and it was the contacts with Pakistanis and the Indians which produced the smuggling business to their home countries which is now the basis of Dubai's economy" (BRE, 1964, p. 254). The current ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Muhammad bin Rashid Al Maktum, "has continued to develop Dubai as a haven for people from any background while diversifying the state's portfolio of income-generating activities away from oil" (Lori, 2019, p. 86).

In both cities, the social transformation processes took place because of the historical, socio-economic and cultural factors and, as we have seen, migration transformed along with the transformation processes that both sheikhdoms were experiencing. This endorses the perspective that migration is socially embedded and cannot be detached from the social context.

12.5 The Transformation-Migration Nexus

In the twentieth century, Abu Dhabi and Dubai have been greatly interested by migration. Until the decline of the pearling industry, the role of foreigners in Abu Dhabi and Dubai was seen as functional to the development of both sheikhdoms, and their migration and "integration", at least in Dubai, were encouraged by the local rulers (Jamal, 2015).

The British, however, aimed at controlling migration in order to avoid economic penetration of other Western powers. Hence, it was necessary to establish a set of rules to clearly identify who were foreigners; therefore, in 1946, the Trucial States Order in Council was issued, and with this official document, the British and the rulers could define the category of foreigners.⁹ This document, along with the nationality clause, which was included in the oil concession agreements, established the nationality of foreigners who could work in the oil industry and reside in the Trucial States. However, the Order in Council originated an ambiguity, and disputes arose between the rulers and the British, and among the rulers.

⁹ For the Order in Council and the definition of the different categories of foreigners see File 18/6 II Trucial Coast Order in Council, IOR/R/15/2/576.

The first dispute related to the need to understand whether some residents had to be considered as Trucial States subjects or they fell under the British jurisdiction (Lori, 2019, p. 69). This is illustrated by the case of Persians, who, according to the Residency Agent in a letter to the Political Resident A. C. Galloway, in 1946, represented 30% of the total population of Dubai, 20% in Sharjah and Kalba, 10% in Abu Dhabi and 5% in the rest of the sheikhdoms, and the majority of them were born in the Trucial States.¹⁰ However, 82 Persians had obtained the Trucial States passport to easily travel to India for their business. Thus, the Persians were categorised in those who were “born and bred on the Trucial Coast”,¹¹ others were issued documents to travel and others were considered foreigners under the British jurisdiction irrespective of how long they have lived in the country. This contrasted with the British’s view that, instead, considered Persians under their jurisdiction. However, for some of the rulers, especially in Dubai, Persians, who were formed of wealthy merchant families, had been so important for the development of the trade that they intended to consider them as Trucial States subjects. In the 1960s, the situation of Persians worsened due to the oil discovery. In Dubai and Abu Dhabi, indeed, a different approach in relation to the illegal Persians emerged. The former was not interested in requiring a visa for them, they were considered as “subjects of countries of the Gulf” (BRE, 1968, p. 422), so in Dubai there was “a defacto visa abolition” (BRE, 1968, p. 421). The latter was much more concerned because those arriving in Dubai without a visa tended to move to Abu Dhabi illegally, and the ruler proposed to drop “and separate visas introduced for Dubai and Abu Dhabi” (BRE, 1968, p. 421).

The ethnic and cultural heterogeneity in both sheikhdoms was managed differently, according to their historical, socio-economic and cultural factors. The oil concessions encouraged the rulers of the Trucial States to better define the tribal allegiance and the territorial boundaries. This became evident in Abu Dhabi, when Sheikh Zayed Al Nahyan started to redistribute the rents deriving from oil and to invest in some development projects. Indeed, families from the other Trucial States decided to move to the city due to the increasing job opportunities and financial benefits associated with their allegiance to Abu Dhabi. During the reign of Shakhbut, some families left the sheikhdom because of his austerity policy to move to Dubai to work in the trade sector. However, when the situation changed, and Sheikh Zayed invested the oil rents in improving and providing benefits to the local population those who had migrated in the past and transferred their allegiance to Dubai decided to return to Abu Dhabi (Lori, 2019). This internal migration originated tensions among the rulers of the Trucial States because of the risk of depopulation that some of them were experiencing. In order to cope with it, Sheikh Zayed encouraged the would-be migrants to leave their family behind, and he diverted “Abu Dhabi’s resources to finance the establishment of security forces and state institutions in the remaining emirates to support economic growth outside of the capital” (Lori, 2019, p. 74). The discovery of oil in Abu Dhabi and the ensuing economic growth and financial benefits

¹⁰ See File 18/6 II Trucial Coast Order in Council, IOR/R/15/2/576.

¹¹ ‘File 18/6 II Trucial Coast Order in Council’, IOR/R/15/2/576, folio 188.

shifted the balance of power from Dubai as a centre of trading routes to Abu Dhabi where new job opportunities attracted internal and international migrants.

In the divergent economic trajectories followed by Abu Dhabi and Dubai, it is possible to frame the migration phenomenon (Lori, 2019).¹² However, from a social transformation perspective, the economic factor is not enough to understand the different way both sheikhdoms incorporated foreigners within their social context; we, thus, need to consider the historical, socio-economic and cultural factors. Jamal (2015) argues that the politics of *divide et impera* pursued by the British in the Trucial States originated the construction of nationality and of the tiered citizenship which is today evident in the UAE. This related to each Trucial State's capacity to issue visa and "its own passport. And ultimately, to better control the issuance of passport, they encouraged the development of a citizenship law limiting who could become a "national" and attain a passport" (Jamal, 2015, p. 27). The discovery of oil in Abu Dhabi and the following development projects created security issues in the sheikhdom where, according to Sir William Luce, British Residency in Bahrain, foreign population was increasing rapidly. He clearly noted that the problem of illegal migrants could become acute

since more and more people will be attracted to Abu Dhabi by tales of easy wealth. ... We do not want to find ourselves in the position where native Abu Dhábians find themselves in the position of being outnumbered by indigent and jobless foreigners. ... An obvious way to tighten control is to provide more efficient checks at the points of entry. I do not think this would meet the case. Part of the trouble is caused by people being surreptitiously landed at night by dhows. ... Again, a major difficulty is that many people enter legally with a visa, which then expires (BRE, 1966, p. 621).

This document emphasises one element of security that it is today evident in the UAE, that is, the demographic imbalance (Lori, 2019). This is strictly connected with the presence of illegal migrants, especially Persians that arrived in Dubai without visa and then moved to Abu Dhabi.¹³ In 1967, Abdul Ghaffar, who was appointed as Chief Immigration Officer in Abu Dhabi, proposed to issue two different residence permits. "The first is a pure and simple permit, to be endorsed in the passports of all alien residents The second is designed to cope with the fairly large numbers of long term residents who are without passports or other documentation" (BRE, 1967, p. 147). Therefore, the second permit allowed long-term residents who were illegal and had spent between five and ten years in Abu Dhabi, to obtain a document before getting a proper passport.

The socio-cultural context along with the economic environment is important to better understand the different way foreigners were incorporated in Abu Dhabi and

¹² The article 23 of the UAE Constitution establishes that each single emirate manages independently their natural resources thus following their specific economic path (Davidson, 2008; Lori, 2019).

¹³ In a letter of the British Residency in Bahrain, on 11 July 1955, the presence of foreigners arriving in the Trucial Coast without valid papers and in search for a job in the oil companies was so relevant that the Finance Dept in London had to be informed because the office staff of the Agent in Dubai had to collect money to repatriate those who did not fall under the Regulations dealing with distressed British subjects. "Control of Aliens Entering the Trucial States without Valid Travel Papers". TNA: PRO, FO 371/114725/1585.

Dubai. This is evident in the British records, when, in 1967, the Political Agent, D. Roberts, associated the stability of Dubai to its trading and commercial perspective, which required the contribution of all foreign communities thus leading the local population to accept their presence, whereas a xenophobic attitude and intolerance against the foreigners were evident in Abu Dhabi (BRE, 1967, p. 126–130). The ethnic heterogeneity in both sheikhdoms was accommodated differently, and this can be attributed to their different economic environment (Lori, 2019). The independent economic development path followed by each emirate determines the attitude towards foreigners and their incorporation or the lack of thereof. This perspective is proposed by Lori (2019, p. 86), who argues that the Dubai's economic development based on assets, trade requiring mobility of capital and labour has led to "policies of abolishing visas for key trading partners or issuing passports to facilitate the travel of merchants". However, the Abu Dhabi's development plans based on a fixed asset like oil has led the ruling elites "to adopt more restrictive incorporation practices, including greater barriers to citizenship and migration controls" (Lori, 2019, p. 86).

The *laissez-faire* approach or open-door policy adopted by the rulers of Dubai resulted from its economic environment and trajectory based on trade and commerce developed with Iran, India and East Africa. The different migrant groups (Iranians and Indians) were active members of the society and were "integrated" within the local social structure. According to the British Residency, Mr Pelly, the merchants and the ruler "give one the impression that they are not dissatisfied with present blessings and that they view the future hopefully" (BRE, 1950, p. 637). Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the rulers of Dubai have recognised migrants' contribution to the development of the emirate by attributing benefits, advantages and also gifting pieces of land (Davidson, 2008). For example, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Iranian merchants in Dubai were naturalised and the then ruler, Sheikh Said bin Maktum (who ruled from 1912 to 1958), invited them to establish permanently in Dubai, and they were offered an area on the Dubai Creek that was known as Bastakiyyah (from the province of Bastak in Iran from where they came). However, this area has now been renamed "Al-Fahidiyya" due to the process of "Arabisation" of the historical area (Lori, 2019). The India Club was established in the 1960s on a piece of land gifted to the Indian community by the ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Rashid Bin Said Al Maktum (who ruled from 1958 to 1990), and in 1973, he gifted a piece of land to the Pakistani community where they established the Pakistan Association Dubai (Errichiello & Nyhagen, 2021). Thus, it was a way to recognise their social status within the sheikhdom and the prominent role and contribution of the Iranian and Indian merchants, and the Pakistani seamen to Dubai's development (Errichiello, 2021).

In a different perspective, Abu Dhabi, because of its economic trajectory and the need to protect oil wealth, focused more on protecting and closing the boundaries. This strategy originated from the lack of trade and commercial routes like in Dubai, but this attitude also related to the income deriving from the families who were subjects linked to Abu Dhabi, and this was important "for the redistribution of oil wealth, since by 1967, in an effort to quell migration to Abu Dhabi, the British suggested creating a system of family allowances to redistribute the wealth from

oil without increasing income levels” (Lori, 2019, p. 88). As noted by the British Political Agency in Abu Dhabi, Sir Stewart Crawford, since 1966, the ruler, Sheikh Zaid bin Sultan Al Nahyan, distributed the wealth to citizens in two ways: “directly by cash grants ... and indirectly by providing them with work in the oilfields and on development projects” (BRE, 1966, p. 311). Therefore, the rulers of the sheikhdom were much more reluctant and stringent in issuing passports and in their interpretation of who was qualified as a Trucial State subject (Lori, 2019).

In conclusion, Lori (2019) explains that the different way migration is managed in both emirates resulted from their different economic trajectories. However, from the social transformation perspective, it is evident that the way migration is managed resulted from the combination of historical, socio-economic and cultural factors. In the case of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the ethnic and cultural diversity is managed differently in the light of the divergent socio-economic trajectories, historical events, cultural factors and the rulers’ attitude.

12.6 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the transformation-migration nexus in the UAE in order to emphasise the links between social transformation processes and migration. The starting point is the acknowledgement that migration as a socially embedded phenomenon can be understood and cannot be detached from the historical, socio-economic and cultural context.

The transformation-migration nexus in the UAE is historically relevant, because migration resulted from a combination of global, national and local levels. The pearling industry and its decline, the development of the oil economy and its socio-economic relevance led to a transformation in the migration processes. In the evolution of the socio-economic environment in the UAE, it is possible to see how migration transformed. This endorses the perspective that to overcome the *migration bias* we need to conceive of migration as a socially embedded phenomenon. The historical evolution of Abu Dhabi and Dubai shows that migration has to be understood in relation to the socio-economic, historical and cultural factors. It is thus of primary importance to move beyond methodological nationalism; as advocated by Castles (2015), migration has to be embedded within a broader context that considers the global, the national and local levels.

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Chapter 13

Migrant Networks and Credit: Dynamics of Punjabi Migration to the Gulf Countries



Atinder Pal Kaur and Ruchi Singh

Abstract This chapter attempts to understand the role of networks in facilitating migration to Gulf countries from Punjab and the role of credit/debt to cover cost of migration. Theoretically, the study is based on an ethnographic and narrative approach. The ethnographic approach includes the nature of migration, place of migration, network relations, years of migration, and occupation of the migrants. The narrative approach is used to understand and analyze channels of migration and return migration. The paper will highlight the role of social networks in discovering Gulf nations with employment opportunities and various types of debt used to cover migration's costs.

Keywords Punjabi migration · Social networks · Credits

Migration has a long history in India, and cross-border migration is not a new phenomenon. International remittances have played a significant role in India's growth and development. Large-scale international migration has sparked a surge in migration-related research and is widely researched by scholars across the globe. In terms of international migration, India is the leading country of origin and has always been a labor-sending country to other parts of the world. Thus, India has a long history of exporting migration. However, migration records were found before Britain captured India, but the well-documented migration started under British rule. Due to the need for workers in colonial rubber, and sugarcane plantations generally, Indians migrated as indentured laborers to the various parts of the world.

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13.1 The History of Punjabi Migration from Colonial Period to Present Time

The history of continuous migration from Punjab dates more than 125 years back; it primarily began under India's colonial authority when Britain captured Punjab in 1849 (Nanda & Veron, 2015). After that, Punjabis began to migrate to other parts of the world as indentured laborers, mainly to British colonies as army personnel (Singh, 2008). The first exodus is thought to have occurred when Punjab's last ruler, Maharaja Duleep Singh, was banished to England (Dusenbery & Tatla, 2009). The decade of 1870 is often regarded as the beginning of Punjabi Sikh settlement in the Far East when army personnel from Amritsar and Ferozpur were recruited for police and paramilitary duties (Judge, 2011). By the 1880s, the Sikh settlements appeared in the Malaya States and Hong Kong, where Sikhs worked as policemen (Sandhu, 1969). In China, Sikh troops settled and occasionally raised their families. From the 1890s onward, Sikhs started moving toward East Africa (Barrier, 2007). Ramgarhia Sikhs became the dominant caste, and about 10,000 were employed as indentured labor, and Jats served in the local military establishment or commercial activities (Mangat, 1969). Sikh Punjabi community has resided in Hong Kong since 1880 and served in police troops (Sidhu, 1991). Between 1903 and 1908, about 6,000 Punjabis entered North America (Canada), and nearly 3,000 crossed into the USA. Early immigrants in America came predominantly from Jullundur and Hoshiarpur, the Doaba region districts in the State of Punjab in India. Most of the early Punjabi Sikhs were Jats (La Brack, 2015; Tinker, 1974).

The initial wave of immigrants can be divided into two broad categories. The first includes a majority of uneducated and semiliterate laborers from agricultural and military backgrounds. The second category consisted primarily of a relatively tiny educated elite group of professionals and students. The laborers mainly were peasant Sikhs and Muslims from the Doaba and Malwa areas of Punjab province in Northwest India (Dusenbery & Tatla, 2009). During the colonial period, backward castes migrated to England in the 1920s and were seen as the pioneers among Punjabis in England (Ballard & Ballard, 1977; Singh & Tatla, 2006). However, following World War II, due to the need for rebuilding and the labor shortage in western nations, Punjabis migrated from the villages of Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, and Nawanshahr districts. Changes in migratory patterns have also been recorded in Moga and Ludhiana districts from Malwa and Tarn Taran districts from the Majha regions (Dusenbery & Tatla, 2009).

The post-1947 period is marked by a significant exodus of Sikhs from the Doaba region of Punjab. Their flow of movement was majorly to three Western countries (the UK, Canada, and the USA). Emigration from the Malwa area began to dominate in the late 1960s. Sikhs immigrated to different European nations, mainly from the 1960s to 1990s, during political upheaval. From Punjab, they traveled to Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Poland. Punjabis worked as laborers in restaurants and eventually started their businesses over time. In certain areas, Punjabis migrated for the second time from South African nations, primarily Uganda, to European countries, where marital

alliances or better job prospects made them permanently reside in these European countries (Bhachu, 1985; Jacobsen & Myrvold, 2011). The presence of Punjabis in France is a relatively new phenomenon, with the first wave of migration in the late 1970s and early 1980s when a few Sikhs came as illegal immigrants first in Germany and Belgium, and then in France (Moliner, 2011). After the Cold War ended in 1989, untouched land and sea routes opened for Punjabi migrants, with many landing in Greece, Italy, and Spain (Zachariah & Rajan, 2007). In the contemporary period of globalization, the migration of skilled workers has been taking place to Australia and Canada, from almost the entire Punjab (Rajan & Percot, 2011).

13.2 Methodology

The phenomenon of migration to Gulf countries started after the oil boom in 1973, and the sudden demand spike for labor in construction sites and factories. During this time, migration from Punjab to Gulf countries becomes noticeable to take advantage of economic prospects. With this given background, the study attempts to understand the role of networks in facilitating migration to Gulf countries from Punjab and the role of credit/debt to meet the cost of migration to this corridor. Theoretically, the study is based on an ethnography and narrative approach. The ethnographic approach includes the nature of migration, place of migration, network relations, years of migration, and occupation of the migrants. The narrative approach is used to understand and analyze channels of migration and return migration. To meet the objectives, a primary survey was conducted on 200 migrant households with male out-migrants in Gulf countries from 10 villages of Punjab with the help of semi-structured interview schedules. The present study was conducted in two talukas (tehsil): Sultanpur Lodhi and Kapurthala of Kapurthala district of Doaba region of Punjab, and five villages were chosen via snowball sampling from each taluka (tehsil) for the present study. It geographically extends from 31°06'36"–31°03'07" North to 74°56'24"–75°03'18" East (Fig. 13.1).

In total, 221 migrant data was collected from 200 migrant households, of which 182 were married, and 39 were unmarried migrants. From this, 128 farming families and 93 non-farming families were also considered for the present study. In addition, data is gathered on joint families (127) and nuclear families (94) about the remittance recipient.

A comprehensive set of questionnaires was employed to gather relevant information about years of migration, nature of migration, place of migration, occupation of the migrants, and network used for migration. In addition, the case study of return migrants and testimonies of selected respondents were used throughout the paper. To maintain the anonymity of respondents, pseudonyms are used in the paper. Lastly, data was also collected on the recipient of remittances and utilization of remittances. Thus, the study used a mixed-method approach to define the results.

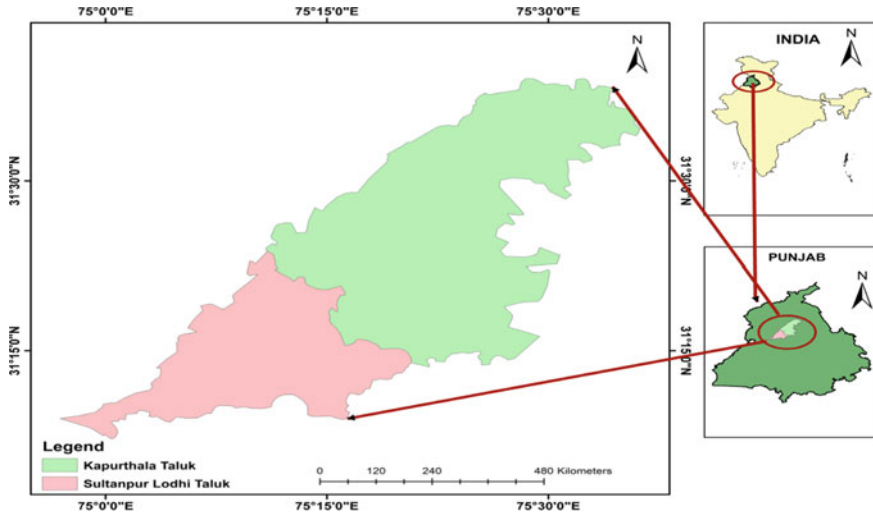


Fig. 13.1 Location map of study area, Doaba, District Kapurthala, Punjab, India

13.3 Nature of Migration Process and Social Networks

The migration to Gulf countries started later, after the Gulf oil boom in 1973. The massive demand for workers happened after the sudden growth of the construction industry. The Gulf countries became immensely wealthy overnight, embarked on a frenzy of building, new infrastructure of roads, ports, and airports, as well as schools, colleges, and administrative buildings as symbols of the new wealth. Hence, migrant labor was needed in construction projects and industries, trade, and services, including domestic services. As a response, many Indian laborers began to move, mainly to the GCC countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. As a result, there was a change in the trend of migration from Punjab to Gulf countries as unskilled laborers migrated, and it became an attractive destination for Punjabis (Zachariah, 1997).

Furthermore, data from the primary survey revealed that migration from Punjab to the Gulf occurred in two stages. Generational migration is included in the second phase, and the first phase began in the late 1970s.

Phase I: During the first phase of migration, people were generally from farming families and with a basic level of education. These migrants were unskilled and gained skills after migration. After reaching the Gulf, these unskilled migrants worked as drivers, guards, carpenters, and masons. Survey results showed migration from Punjab to Gulf nations is dominated by other backward castes (OBC) and visibility of scheduled caste was also recorded during field work that is shown in Table 13.1. The lack of job possibilities at the place of origin and large families with little land to produce remained the primary reasons for migration. Secondly, migration to gulf countries was less costly than migration to developed countries. Therefore, they

grabbed the available opportunity in front of their eyes. Following successful journeys to the Gulf, these folks ensured a better lifestyle for their children, siblings, and neighbors after 30 years of migration.

Table 13.1 shows data of the characteristics of migrants from 200 homes. This includes information about 221 migrants' age, education, occupation before and after migration, migration years, and migration location. Seventy-six percent of the surveyed migrants belong to the young age, and only 29% of migrants belong to the old age. We found out that 46% of the surveyed households are return migrants. These migrants returned after 40 years of migration, and now, their sons were the migrants to the Gulf countries. After having successful years of migration, they helped their sons to migrate.

In the late 1990s, we discovered that the village of Rampur Jagir had the biggest migration to Gulf countries. During our tour, we met the village Sarpanch, who was a return migrant. He was the third person from the village of Rampur Jagir to migrate. In 1977, he moved to Dubai. Only two men had been moved before him in the early 1970s.

In most cases, migration was accomplished through agents. He paid Rs.5000 for his relocation and traveled with a group of 20 Punjabis. According to Sarpanch, migration was referred to as "Labor migration" during his time. The visa was referred to as a "Benami visa" (no name on visa) or a "group visa" because no single name appeared on the visa card.

In our study, we found that 89% of migration were through labor visa (Fig. 13.2). While in 7% of cases, open visas were a channel to reach Gulfs, and lastly, in only 4% of cases, tourist visas were a way to reach Gulf countries. After arriving in Dubai, the Sarpanch of Rampur Jagir worked as a laborer and learned carpentry, which was highly demanded. He became a carpenter because he had exemplary drawing skills and had matric pass. Later, he learned to drive a truck and started his small truck business in Dubai. He had 40 years' migration experience and used this experience to send his two sons to the same place. Recently, his sons became in charge of his truck business in Dubai. The study also found that in 26% of cases, family members remained a channel for migration, as shown in Table 13.2.

When Sarpanch of Rampur Jagir returned, he retired from the job as a foreman. From our surveyed households (table 13.1), 34% of migrants' occupation was a truck driver. Other than that, the second most-opted occupation was masons in 19% of migrant cases. Gulf companies had direct contact with agencies and conveyed their labor needs. The occupation of mason is the second most popular among migrants because of the construction of hotels, restaurants, malls, and buildings. For the stay in gulf countries, the Sarpanch of Rampur Jagir mentioned that companies had arranged a place to live. The corporation determined residential locations; the experience may be pleasant or awful, but workers were required to stay because they did not own property in the area. As a result individuals had to adapt because they needed money. The truck driver or truck business was the most lucrative career in Gulf.

Phase II: In the late twentieth century, the second wave of migrants primarily headed to Gulf countries. The majority of these migrants were literate and had one or two talents (driving, electrician, mason, etc.).

Table 13.1 Characteristics of migrants

Characteristics of Migrants	N = 221	Percentage
Age		
18–24	35	16
25–35	55	25
36–46	67	30
47–57	39	18
60 +	25	11
Religion		
Sikh	153	70
Hindu	68	30
Caste		
General	25	11
OBC	147	67
S.C	49	22
Marital Status		
Married	182	83
Unmarried	39	17
Education		
Illiterates	75	34
5th pass	28	13
8th pass	20	9
Matriculation	50	23
12th pass	46	20
Graduate	2	1
Types of Family		
Joint	127	58
Nuclear	94	42
Types of Households		
Pucca	177	80
Semi Pucca	44	20
Years of Migration		
1–5	31	14
6–10	45	20
11–15	54	24
16–20	18	8
21–25	20	9
26–30	15	7
31–35	20	8

(continued)

Table 13.1 (continued)

Characteristics of Migrants	N = 221	Percentage
36–40	12	6
40 +	6	4
Place of Migration		
Dubai	63	29
Qatar	32	14
Abu Dhabi	42	19
Kuwait	27	12
Bahrain	15	7
Oman	22	10
Saudi Arabia	20	9
Occupation Before Migration		
Farmers	84	38
Truck Drivers	14	6
Electrician	23	10
Carpenter	15	7
Masons	34	15
Mechanics	10	5
Agricultural Labor	20	9
Non-Agricultural Labor	21	10
Occupation After Migration		
Forman	10	5
Labor	24	11
Truck Drivers*	75	34
Carpenter	31	14
Electrician	21	10
Mechanics	10	4
Masons	43	19
Machine operator	5	2
Peon	2	1

Source Author's Calculation

Punjabis with lower levels of education were, nonetheless, able to find work. Table 13.1 shows that farmers accounted for the majority of migration (38%) and that truck drivers accounted for 6% of migrants once they arrived in the Gulf. For migrants, the Gulf countries were the most enticing destination (special consideration was given to Dubai, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, and Saudi Arabia). The UAE hosted 48% of all migrants, with Dubai accounting for 29% and Abu Dhabi for 19%.

With the help of family, acquaintances, and relatives who had previously lived in Gulf countries, young migrants were able to relocate. The second generation of

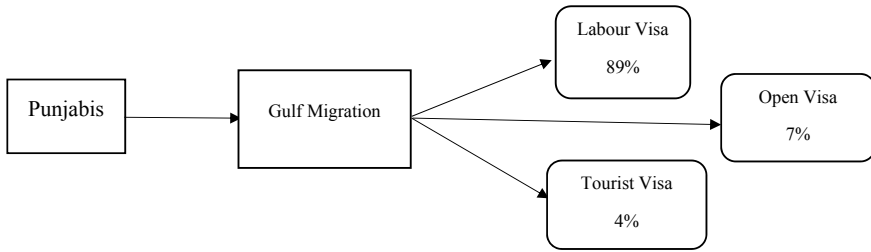


Fig. 13.2 Nature of Gulf migration process from Punjab

Table 13.2 Channel of migration

Channel of Migration	Numbers	Percentage
Agents	50	23
Friends	45	20
Neighbors	35	16
Relatives	34	15
Family Members	57	26

Source Author’s Calculation

migrant households was largely affected by the second phase of migration. These were people in their late twenties who followed their father, siblings, relatives, and neighbors. It is akin to generational migration in Punjabi communities. The young gang decides to travel to the Gulf after their elders return.

The migration route was crucial to the migration process in this case. Agents (23%) and social networking (77%) were the two most common migration pathways identified by questioned households. In the case of Punjabis migrating to the Gulf, social networking is crucial.

Because they remain a significant source of information about destination nations and job opportunities, the return migrant remained an important source of information about skill requirements, job opportunities, and where to stay. The cost of migration is another factor for relying on social networking. Return migrants assist in the migration process and are more reliable than agents. The migration process through agents is still expensive, requiring payment of around US\$ 2000 (Oommen, 2016); however, the social network can assist to mitigate these costs. A successful migration is the one in which the father assists his son in his migration.

In the case of Karan, his father built connections with his factory contractor after 40 years of migration, allowing him to launch a truck business. Similarly, in the Kashmir case, his elder brother supported him in his migration after ten years of Gulf travel. The existing link supported the new one in offering a nice stay after arriving at the location, assisting in the job search, and providing a friendly environment. Harminder from Kapurthala’s Nawanpind village mentioned:

When you have a connection, you are less concerned about where you will stay, what you will eat, and where you will begin your employment. It is easier to acclimatize to a

foreign environment and also to grasp norms and regulations of the country, which are the fundamental needs at the moment if you have a dependable person at your location of migration. Even having a companion can provide personal knowledge about where the visa procedure is reliable and straightforward.

Punjabis have a close-knit society in which neighbors also have relative relations like chacha, Taya (similar to Uncle), Bhai, or Veera (similar to brother). So, the sense of brotherhood (Bhai-chara) always becomes another channel of migration. Even after migration, being from the same province and having the same Punjabi background also played an essential role in getting a job. One family member migrates, that person helps in the migration of the whole family.

13.4 Typology of Debts

In general, migration is a way for families who rely on migrants to gain a higher return on their investment. As a result, the cost of migration is thought to be a one-time expense that returns afterward. In most circumstances, migration is motivated by pure altruism and the well-being of one's family.

As a result, debts from various sources were used to cover the costs of migration. A *pind* (village) in Punjabi society functions as a family unit, and everyone is there to aid each other through *bura waqat* (difficult times). Wada tabber were also employed by village residents (big family). The kinship structure played an important influence in migration as well. During the early stages of migration, Khoon da Rishta (blood relatives) aided the migrants. During the survey, we discovered that 41% of cases grant loans to relatives during migration (Table 13.3).

Ranbir noted in the survey that her husband found that migrating to Gulf countries after their marriage was profitable since they have modest agricultural property. In addition, they had a wadda tabber (large family) or joint family as well. As a result, migration was primarily motivated by this factor. Nonetheless, the question of how much to cover the expenses of migration arose. Her husband's fufad (Uncle) helped with migration's expenses at the time (Fig. 13.3). In Punjabi taxonomy, fufad refers to the respondents' spouse, father's sisters' husbands.

Table 13.3 Debts were taken for migration

Typology of Debts	Migrants (N = 221)	Percentage
Money Lender	64	29
Relatives	90	41
Banks	25	11
Savings	18	8
In-laws (Wife parents)	21	10
No Loans	3	1

Source Author's Calculation

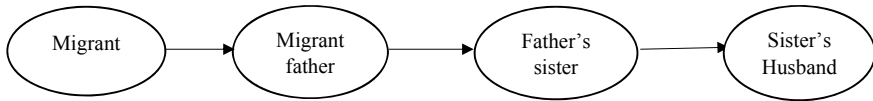


Fig. 13.3 Kinship relationship and migration

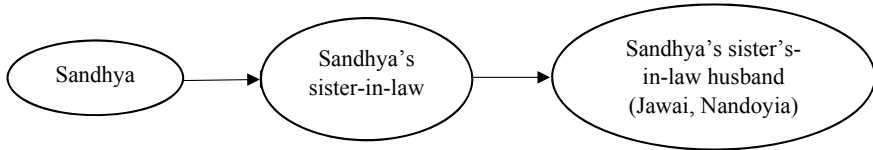


Fig. 13.4 Sandhya's relationship with Nandoyia and migration

In Sandhya's situation, her nandoyia (sister's-in-law husband) was a huge help during her husband's migration. He was undoubtedly the family's jawai, but he was also respected as a brother. Nanad's (sister-in-law's) spouse is always referred to as Bhaya by the bahu in Punjabi families (bride of the house). As a result, Sandhya's husband went to Abu Dhabi with the help of his brother-in-law (Fig. 13.4), a wealthy landowner.

When Sandhya's husband settled in Abu Dhabi after three months, he began sending money back to the family. Sandhya then gave a large portion of her remittances to her nandoyia as debt repayment.

In addition to families, the survey indicated that money lenders are the second most common source of credit in 29% of cases. The reason for relying on money lenders is that it was a quick source of funds. Second, because they were farmer families, and they already had a relationship with them.

Jagat from the hamlet of Boolpur stated that he paid Rs 2 lakh for his son's migration in 2001. He had some savings, but they were insufficient. So, to match the demand, roughly one lakh rupees were borrowed from a money lender.

While Sarpanch of Rampur Jagir went to Dubai for the first time, he took a loan from a moneylender for Rs 5000. Though he had farming land, during 1977 the return from agricultural land was not that profitable, which was also one of the triggering causes of migration.

Whereas in 10% of situations, the migrant's in-laws were also assisting with credits for migration. The bride's family constantly honors and respects jawai (son-in-law). As a result, they believe that aiding their son-in-law would benefit their daughter. Gurmeet Kaur of Nasirpur said that when her husband expressed an interest in migrating, they were modest farmers, living from hand to mouth. Her spouse claimed that he could obtain a visa to Kuwait but the agency would require payment for the migration. Gurmeet spoke with her family, and her brother paid them Rs 50,000 right away. Her husband was unable to find work for about three months after arriving in Kuwait, and her brother stepped in to assist them. For migration, banks loan also were taken in 11% cases, and sometimes savings in 8% cases were used.

13.5 Recipient and Control Over Remittances

In migrant families, it remains a debatable issue who will receive remittances and will control the amount and utilization of remittances. In a patriarchal joint family setup, remittances are generally controlled by males and other family members (Kaur, 2017).

While women in nuclear families get remittances from their husbands, they do not always control the utilization of these funds (Kaur, 2019a, 2019b). Because of nuclear families, the spouses received remittances in 47% of the surveyed households. In the remaining 36% of cases, the father is the principal recipient, particularly in combined/joint households. Gender-based, females got 59.7% more remittances than males (45%) (Table 13.4).

While the recipient of the remittances usually remains family members, especially male members in the households. However, we found that in 47% of cases, remittances were received by wives of migrants (Table 13.4). It showed that women had some role to play in economic matters. Further question was asked in relation to control over remittances, in which we found that male recipients had in 72% of the cases control over remittances (Table 13.5), while women had only in 31% of the cases control over remittances. Further, it showed that wives control over remittances decreased in 19% of cases. It showed that males as the financially supporting members of the families also control remittances. Study conducted to understand and analyze the impact of migration on women left behind also shows that male member of the family often has control and dominance over remittances and its utilization (Singh, 2018).

Table 13.4 Recipient of remittances in left-behind families

Recipient of Remittances	N = (221)	Percentage (%)
Father	80	36
Mother	28	12
Brother	19	8
Wife	104	47
Gender of Recipient		
Male	99	45
Female	132	59.7

Source Author's Calculation. Multiple responses because sometimes remittances were sent to two recipients. One is the wife and the other could be the parental family as mother or father

Table 13.5 Control over remittances

Control over Remittances	N = 221	Percentage
Father	80	36
Mother	28	12
Brother	19	8
Wife	42	19
Husband	62	28

Source Author's Calculation

13.6 Utilization of Remittances

Gulf remittances have been critical in reducing poverty, ensuring economic stability, and improving families' socioeconomic position and livelihoods in developing economies. Farmers moved out of the village for various reasons, including a lack of arable land, big families, and a desire to preserve for the future. Furthermore, migration is triggered in the scheduled castes by a lack of non-farm employment opportunities, reduced remuneration for labor, and, lastly, profitable remittances returning after migration.

Left-behind families receive remittances that vary depending on the migrants' jobs in their destination countries. The most noticeable difference in received remittances was between Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 100,000/-. There is a remittances gap as a result of migrant workers' employment. In most cases, the truck driver is responsible for more than simply the labor. Similarly, the marble cutter jobs had higher wages than an electrician.

The significant share of remittances is generally spent on family needs, followed by children's education, health, debts, shaguns (money gifts), and finally, some savings. If migration continues to be successful, money is generally spent on constructing houses and purchasing land or gold after 3 to 5 years of successful journeys. Table 13.6 shows that the major share of remittances in 49% of the cases spend on shaguns (that include weddings, gifts on birth and death ceremonies), second significant utilization of remittances in 39% of the cases on land purchase. The third major utilization of the remittances was on the construction of houses; this could be traced in 45% of the cases. While in non-farming families, there was major spending of remittances on basic consumption and repayment of debts in all cases. The second major area of utilization was children's education in 58% of the cases. The third major area where remittances were utilized is savings and health. Because non-farming households were reliant primarily on remittances, the study found disparities in how remittances were used in both agricultural and non-farming families. Remittances were, on the other hand, a supplement to the income of farming families.

Table 13.6 Utilization of remittances in left behind families

Items	Farming Families (n = 128)	Percentage	Non-Farming Families (n = 93)	Percentage
Basic Necessities	15	18	93	100
Children Education	10	7	54	58
Construction of Houses	45	35	10	10
Debt's repayment	25	19	93	100
Land Purchase	50	39	–	
Shaguns (Ceremonial gifts)	63	49	–	–
Savings	43	33	35	37
Health	–		35	37
Others	–	–	–	

Source Author's Calculation. Multiple responses

13.7 Conclusion

This study contributes to a better understanding of the significance of social networks in Punjabi migrant families enduring the expense of migration to Gulf countries. Only immediate family members do not promote migration from Punjab, according to the study; nevertheless, reasonably strong kinship links also had a substantial effect. Relatives and family members assist migrants through helping them in settling down in their host nation of migration rather than by giving them credits throughout the migration process. Migrants do not make migration decisions without consulting their families; therefore, trust in relatives is vital in assessing the risk of migration. As a result, kinship has a dual purpose in both the home and host countries. Kinship and family also aid in defining the kind of migration, the destination country, and job opportunities in the destination country.

Though it is commonly assumed that the expense of migration is a one-time investment with a guaranteed payoff, this is not the case for many families. The study discovered that while migration is a source of income for agricultural families, non-farming families become completely reliant on migrant income. In non-farming households, remittances are used first to repay debts, and their future is dependent on the wages of migrant workers.

Controlling remittances becomes difficult among migrant families that are left behind. Male members of patriarchal joint households control most remittances. Even if women or wives have authority over remittances in nuclear families, they are only used after consultation with migrants.

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Chapter 14

From ‘Brain Drain’ to ‘Capital Gain’: Indian Skilled Migration to the UAE



Omar Bortolazzi and Noor Khan

Abstract This study analyzes the magnitude of emigration of India’s high-skill population in the United Arab Emirates through the exploration of the determinants of emigrant mobility using both an empirical and qualitative approach. It also examines the historical patterns of migration to the GCC region with a focus on the socio-economic impact of skilled immigration of Indian expatriates in the UAE economy. Furthermore, the chapter attempts to assess the role played by remittances, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and knowledge and technology transfers as key economic resources towards the development of the national economy and the potential reversal of the impact of ‘brain drain’. This requires an evaluation of the role played by key stakeholders in the facilitation of migration, providing an alternate outlook on the perceived ‘drain’ and inequality that surrounds the dialog on South-to-North migration. Lastly, the research contributes to the limited literature on transnational entrepreneurs and return and reverse migration, as the most understudied aspect of international migration, to illustrate how the migrant identity is constantly fluid and evolving and ultimately beneficial to both the host and home economy.

Keywords Brain circulation · Skilled migration · Return migration · South-north migration · India · UAE

14.1 Introduction

India has been the source of the largest annual outflows to the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries. The increasing significance of GCC countries as a destination for migrant workers is illustrated by the change in total migrant stock in those countries, which grew from 8.9 million in 1990 to 22.3 million in 2013 (Sasikumar, 2015), accelerating the importance of the economic relations between India and the GCC to

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a measure that cannot be over-emphasized and continues to gain momentum over the years. Both the economic transformation and reform, and sociopolitical atmosphere across the Gulf is partially owed to its Indian immigrant population. Even though there is a relevant amount of literature available that examines the Indian low-skill, blue-collar labor migrants in the UAE, the international mobility of medium and highly skilled human capital and the resulting outcomes for the country of origin and country of destination have still not been appropriately explored.

This chapter attempts to shift the focus away from traditional analysis of labor mobility and poses an emphasis on the international transfer of human talent as a key for diplomacy, economic resources, and creative power in business, science, technology, arts, and culture. I am examining how the size and spread of the Indian community in the UAE endorses the rise of transnationalism, by which skilled emigrants participate in the full measure of economy and society in one country, while maintaining association with their country of origin, accelerating knowledge transfers and spurring creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. At the same time, the demand for directly productive talent in the workforce is interrelated with the demand for capital,¹ and with the UAE facing still low rates of local expertise and India developing high levels of under employment, a migration flow will inevitably form towards the country that offers superior economic opportunities (IT experts, real estate, banking sector, trade).

The migrant identity has evolved, mobilizing as transnational entrepreneurs or return migrants, who are uniquely positioned among the discourse of ‘brain drain’, ‘brain gain’ and ‘brain circulation’, and are increasingly influencing the policies and practices of both the Indian and UAE governments.

14.2 Revisiting the Brain Drain Debate in the Globalized World

Traditionally, the analysis of globalization has focused on trade and capital mobility.² However, a large part of the story of globalization is concerned with the international transfer of knowledge, ideas, and people (Solimano, 2008). Migration is defined as the mobilization of human capital, also known as the ‘talent’, as migrants enable the integration of multiple geographies, cultures, nationalities, ages, and work ethics (Rogers & Blonski, 2010) and increase economic, social, demographic, cultural, infrastructural, and political development³ (Kumar, 2014). Earlier associated with

¹ <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/economy> [Accessed March 2020].

² Cohen (2010) summarizes the influence of global workforce trends into three broad headings; Macroeconomic (the shift of centers of economic activity to and within Asia), Environmental and Social (the transition to knowledge intensive industries), and Business and Industry (the emergence of new business models).

³ The Migration Systems Theory, founded by geographer Mabogunje (1970), asserts a two-way, reciprocal and dynamic link between migration and development, establishing them as functionally connected processes.

the exodus of low-skilled laborers, scholarship on migration is now also focusing on the movement of highly skilled individuals⁴; researchers, engineers, doctors, managers, and entrepreneurs, whose movement from one geographical or administrative boundary to another, undoubtedly effects both the place of destination and place of origin (Kumar, 2014), and has significantly impacted business relationships and the global economy.

The Indian Diaspora⁵ is represented by a diverse and heterogeneous group with an estimated stock of 30 million emigrants in 190 countries⁶ that shares Indian origin and intrinsic value. As one of the largest diasporas and supplier of human capital for advanced economies (along with China), the Indian diaspora is found significantly in the Gulf region.

The attention on the implications of the phenomenon of talent migration stems from interesting academic debate that began in the 1960's among economists between the 'nationalist' and the 'internationalist' perspectives. Johnson's 'internationalist model' (Johnson, 1968) takes a cosmopolitan liberal position shared by many educated international migrants (Lipsey, 1978), who see the international flow of human capital as a beneficial process. This model finds its roots in Immanuel Wallerstein's world systems theory, which sees international migration as a natural consequence of capitalist market formation in the developing world. The internationalist view stresses that the mobility of talent is a result of superior economic opportunities found outside the home country that lead to direct benefits to the migrant and the world economy. This is due to the reallocation of resources from areas of low productivity to areas of high productivity, hence raising world income and global welfare (Solimano, 2008). Patinkin's 'nationalist' model, in turn, questioned the significance of the concept of 'world welfare' and argued the importance of human capital for national economies. According to the author, a middle-income developing country concerned with brain drain does not share the notion of "free flow of resources" when the resources are their high-skilled members of the population (Grubel & Scott, 1977). The topic of brain drain in the 1960's was strongly influenced by the impression of a one-way flow of human resources from periphery to core nations, indicating an asymmetric distribution of gains in the source country which initially made an educational investment⁷ in qualified human resources (Solimano, 2008). Patinkin rejected the viewpoint that "the 'world' should be considered as a single

⁴ From an economist point of view, what differentiates a highly skilled from low skilled workers is their potential ability to affect economic growth (Hvidt, 2016). Highly skilled workers are carriers of technology, entrepreneurship, innovative capabilities, and knowledge (Bodvarsson & Van den Berg, 2013), who typically have a degree in their field.

⁵ The term "Indian Diaspora" refers to all persons of Indian descent residing outside India in host countries, as long as they preserve some Indian ethno-cultural characteristics, through sentimental and material links. A common distinction with regard to ethnic Indians outside India, often referred to as overseas Indians, is made between non-resident Indians (NRIs), who hold Indian citizenship, and persons of Indian origin (PIOs), who do not (Naujoks, 2009).

⁶ Non-Resident Indians Online is an online community operating since 1997 providing a range of resourceful services for the global NRI population.

⁷ According to Becker's theoretical analysis "Investment in Human Capital", there are many possible sources of human capital and various different incentives to invest in them. These include investing

aggregate from the welfare viewpoint—and that the welfare of this unit is maximized by the free flow of resources between countries” (Patinkin, 1968). According to Johnson, for example, this reflected an illiberal nationalistic anarchism. Unlike Johnson, Patinkin was unsuccessful in envisioning the concept of brain circulation, a two-way or multi directional movement of talent and benefits, in response to new opportunities and possibilities brought in through globalization.

More recently, Beine et al., (2001), Kapur, McHale (2005), and Solimano (2008) have addressed the prospect of positive effects of migration on the source country. This new literature on modern brain drain theory challenges and distances itself from the old emphasis on the costs of high-skill emigration, highlighting beneficial aspects related to the ‘brain drain’, in terms of remittances, transfer of new technologies and ideas, and the resulting production of superior goods and services, benefitting both consumers and producers in the source country. Solimano (2008) argues that the emigration of talent reduces the supply of human capital in the source country. In the medium run, this may increase the development of education in the sending country as a prospect of higher salaries of educated migrants or as a “return of human capital and all complementary investment from rich to poor countries” (Kapur, McHale, 2005; Podemski, 2010). In the same vein, Chacko (2007) clarifies how skill outflow, although remaining a concern, is increasingly being regarded as a potential resource for the source country. If emigration follows a cycle and the migrant returns home, there can be a positive development effect for the home country. Brain circulation illustrates a new phenomenon in the perspective of “brain gain” where there is international brain exchange as migrants are considered as important transmitters of technology and tacit knowledge. The same individuals who left India in search for bigger and better opportunities are reversing and transforming brain drain into brain circulation as they return home to work, establish partnerships, or start new companies while maintaining business and professional ties with the United Arab Emirates. In this sense, the circular movement of highly skilled migrants is benefitting both sending and receiving countries (Riemsdijk & Wang, 2017).

However, a few empirical studies have shown that “(a) the brain gain is smaller than has been indicated in the new brain drain literature, (b) the brain gain implies a smaller capital gain, and (c) various negative effects on other sources, such as human capital, welfare, and growth” still remain to be properly assessed (Ozden & Schiff, 2006). The effects and consequences of brain gain and brain circulation are also presumably dependent on the patterns of migration and migration destinations (Podemski, 2010)⁸. For example, the level of brain gain from NRI (Non-Resident

through schooling, on-the-job training, medical care, and acquiring information about the economic system. Although the relative effects on earning and consumption may differ, respectively, investment in human capital improves the physical and mental abilities of people in their home country, and thereby raises their real income prospects at home or the country they have migrated (Becker, 1962).

⁸ One such consequence is the phenomenon of ‘brain waste’, i.e. the unemployment or underemployment of foreign professionals. ‘Brain waste’ describes also the situation where educated migrants earn less than equally educated natives or when their work duties in the destination country are below their qualifications.

Indian) migrants in the United Kingdom maybe differ significantly in size than NRI migrants living in the United Arab Emirates. This information, however, still requires exhaustive and detailed studies.

14.3 The United Arab Emirates as a Migration Destination

Prior to the discovery of petroleum in 1958, the economy of the UAE relied primarily on simple economic activities, namely fishing, pearl diving, subsistence agriculture, and herding, that attracted various flows of migrants such as merchants from the Indian subcontinent, Baluchi families, and traders from Persia (Bel-Air, 2015).

Following the discovery of oil, in both Abu Dhabi and in Dubai in small amounts, the local workforce abandoned their traditional industries and migrated to the new oil-producing sectors, where income was lucrative and stable. Petroleum, as the major economic resource, had substantial impact on economic and social life in the Emirates, providing finance for large-scale development projects assumed immediately after Independence in 1971 (Sh'arawi, 2004). The 'oil boom' in 1973 spearheaded dramatic changes in the economic and demographic landscape of the Emirates. Where previously the UAE was underdeveloped with high rates of fertility, low rates of education, low degree of industrial and service employment, and scant infrastructure for transportation, communication, or productions (Birks & Sinclair, 1980), the enormous oil proceeds enabled the UAE to "bypass the traditional stages of capital accumulation experienced by developed countries and to jump directly to the stage of mass consumption" (Shihab, 2001). The UAE launched ambitious development projects in various sectors of the economy, including the expansion of infrastructure, education and healthcare facilities, the introduction of Free Zones,⁹ Internet and Media cities, and the establishment of tourism, business, and financial sectors. Such desired growth and its operation relied heavily on the import of foreign manpower, specifically highly skilled professionals in a wide range of specializations. In the early 1980s, there were about 3000 merchant families in Dubai. These existing merchant families were joined by 'new' migrants, who progressively appeared in three recorded waves of migration; mass immigration succeeding the 'oil boom' in 1973, mass immigration following low immigration policies and demand for skilled workers for development projects in 1990, and mass immigration on account of soaring prices of oil in 2000¹⁰ (Kumar, 2014).

The impact of the UAE's expatriate population is vividly evident. The large-scale entry and surges of migrant inflow have characterized the country and its workforce, by numerically dominating at every occupational level and exponentially triggering

⁹ Free Trade Zones (FTZs) are special economic zones that offer tax concessions and custom duty benefits to expatriate investors. Through this framework, expatriates can open multinational companies without the need of a local sponsor.

¹⁰ *Annual Reports* of the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. Government of India.

a demographic imbalance. The fundamental structure of the UAE and its operations have been essentially directed by two unique characteristics embodied by the state; it is very rich in oil, and very small in indigenous population size. Coupled with the passionate will of its leaders in the use of oil revenues to construct an unparalleled state and economy, the two characteristics have toiled in attracting large sums of immigrants that has led to the present demographic imbalance, resulting in rendering the UAE as a ‘national-minority state’. The scarcity of qualified local manpower needed to establish the enormous nation-building infrastructural projects both after the state’s independence, and later to diversify the economy away from being oil-dependent, has led the UAE to heavily rely on the continuous migration of an expatriate workforce that soon outweighed the local population (Mansour, 2016). The ongoing process of mass infrastructural development, diversification of the economy from oil-dependent towards the tourism sector, and large-scale projects such as EXPO 2020 further promote the continued dependency on imported labor and expertise that has become a structural feature of the GCC economies, inevitably leading to an even higher population imbalance.

14.4 Historical Patterns of Indian Migration to the GCC

The Indian diaspora and its nature of settlement can be defined through three subsets, namely the ‘Old Diaspora’,¹¹ the ‘New Diaspora’,¹² and the ‘Gulf Diaspora’. While intrinsically part of the ‘New Diaspora’ after the 1960s, the ‘Gulf Diaspora’ merits its own standing as it is the fastest growing segment of the Indian diaspora and constitutes the bulk of India’s migration. All three categories of the Indian diaspora are nonetheless bound with consistency in that they were, and continue to be, created by a labor migration—unskilled labor from the 1800’s, and highly skilled labor after 1960. At one time, the fastest growing segment of Indian diaspora, the Gulf Diaspora, has now stabilized at around 5 million (Rao, 2013).

During the nineteenth century, the Indian merchant communities in the Gulf flourished.¹³ Previously, the Indian merchant diaspora had set up their base in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea areas, succeeding the international trade and exchange of textiles and spices in lieu of dates, pearls, and semi-precious stones across the ancient Silk

¹¹ The “Old Diaspora” (1858–1947) was a pre-World War II phenomenon that accounted for the first wave of emigration established under the British Raj and system of “Indentured Labour Migration” to Mauritius, Trinidad and Tobago, Fiji, Guyana, and Suriname—the French, British and Dutch colonies in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The diaspora was recorded to constitute approximately six million migrants (Rao 2013).

¹² The “New Diaspora” (1960-present) accounts for the mass migration to the developed countries of United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Western Europe, that has presently resulted in the creation of the fourth largest immigrant group in the United States and a large-scale “secondary migration” of PIOs to the United Kingdom (Rao 2013).

¹³ For an analysis on the Indian merchant community in the nineteenth century see: Markovits (1999).

road. The wealthy colonies of Sindhi and Gujarati merchants, who enjoyed religious freedoms, not only played a dominant role in maritime trade and finance, serving as bankers, importers, exporters, agents for local merchants, and government contractors (Suter, 2005) but also impacted the Gulf countries in terms of initial modernization, cultural renaissance, reform movements, and aspects of sociocultural life (Jain, 2005).

Although these earlier patterns of emigration were the result of British colonialism in India, India's tremendous post-independence labor migration imitated the same routes towards these upcoming high-wage economies. This new wave of mass labor migration was a result of two major developments. Firstly, the emergence of oil resources in the early 1950–1960s, which in spite of the restrictive nationality clause, accelerated the reliance of GCC countries on imported manpower for various skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled tasks (Jain, 2005). Since the 1960s, the dynamic of immigrant labor was amended to give preference to Asian over Arab workers. While prior, their linguistic and cultural compatibility¹⁴ with the local population made Arab labor more attractive to nationals than other immigrants (Kapiszewski, 2004), the fear of non-local Arabs spreading radical social and political ideas,¹⁵ cultivating undesirable loyalties, and attempted manipulation of the 'Arab identity' to justify regional distribution of the oil-generated revenues,¹⁶ prompted the Gulf authorities to look towards the East to diversify the source of imported labor. As a result, India became the preferred source of migrant labor. Indian migrants were cheaper to employ, smoother to expel, thought to be more efficient, obedient, and manageable, and unlike Arab immigrants did not make claims for the same benefits as the nationals nor bring their families to the Gulf in the hope of permanent settlement. There was little concern about the possible social consequences of the de-Arabization of the population as a result of Asian influence (Kapiszewski, 2004). Secondly, aside from the partiality towards Asian migrants, the rise of skilled labor migration accelerated further following the involvement of Asian governments in facilitating the recruitment and placement of their workers. The Emigration Act of

¹⁴ The contributions of migrant non-local Arabs were large, as they set up the familiar Arab-type government administration and educational facilities, developed health services, built the necessary infrastructure for these rapidly developing countries, and run the oil industries (Kapiszewski, 2004).

¹⁵ Arab expatriates promoted leftist, pan-Arab ideologies that called for the abolition of monarchies in the Gulf. Organizations like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, Oman, and the Occupied Arab Gulf were established and began anti-government activities in the Gulf states (Kapiszewski, 2004).

¹⁶ Oil-related arguments were at a high between Arab states in the 1980's. The invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces leading to the Gulf War (1990–1991) was one resulting culmination of the growing hostility over oil resources.

1983¹⁷ was introduced in addition to the ‘right to travel’ and issuance of passports¹⁸ by the Indian Supreme Court in 1966 (Naujoks, 2009), as a vital instrument in India’s path towards conducting foreign relations. This regulated the expanding emigration of Indian workers on a contractual basis, providing a constant supply of manpower to the Gulf states who, due to the shortage of skilled professionals in the local labor market, have implemented, and in cases exploited,¹⁹ the skills of India’s emigrant labor force for “turn-key” projects,²⁰ rapid national development, and unparalleled economic growth that the Gulf region is famously synonymous for.

The annual volume of Indian emigration to the GCC states has been rapidly accelerating, from 160,000 migrants in 1985 and an almost trifold figure of 420,000 in 1995 to 680,000 in 2006 and an astounding 820,000 in 2013.²¹ India is gradually inching towards losing one million of its citizens annually to the GCC alone. Yet, while the amount seems immense, the rate of Indian population alone increases by around 16.5 million per year,²² portraying the annual labor emigration from India in search of employment, higher standards of living and increase in knowledge concentration opportunities, to have no impact on the demographic landscape of India. The economic crisis in 2008, however, transformed the state-wise scenario, appointing Uttar Pradesh, the largest and arguably poorest state in India, the highest ranking in terms of outflow of labor migrants, from an annual migration of 19,288 in 2002, to surpassing Kerala with 226,798 migrant workers in 2014. The impact of the economic crisis resulted in the largest recorded decline in outward migration from India, plummeting from 849,000 emigrants in 2008, to 610,000 in 2009. The only other decline trend recorded has been between 1997 and 1999, where emigration levels slumped from 416,000 emigrants to 200,000,²³ as a result of a majority of GCC states adopting restrictive immigration policies in favor of localization—the

¹⁷ The Emigration Act of 1983 provides the regulatory framework for emigration of Indian workers for contractual overseas employment and seeks to safeguard their interests and ensure their welfare. The Act makes it mandatory for registration of Recruiting Agents with the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE).

¹⁸ The Passport Act of 1967 is an act of the Parliament of India for the issuance of passports and travel documents, to regulate the departure from India of citizens of India. In conformity with the Indian Constitution, the Act does not allow obtainment of a dual citizenship.

¹⁹ Systemic violations of the blue-collar workers’ human rights in the GCC has over the years received much criticism by Amnesty International. While injustice towards white-collar professionals also exists, it is nowhere near the degree of exploitation faced by the low-skilled workforce, especially in the construction sector (Sönmez et al., 2013).

²⁰ A ‘Turn-Key’ project describes a contract in which the supplier is responsible to the client for the entire result of the project and presents it to the client completely finished and ready to use. The relationship between the national and the foreign worker in the GCC is observed to be identical, where the bulk of the work is achieved by a non-national, while the position of the national is “just to turn the key”.

²¹ *Annual Reports* of the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. Government of India.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ *Ibidem*.

GCC states were undertaking policies of Kuwaitization, Saudization, Emiratization, and Qatarization (Kumar, 2014).²⁴

The local population in the GCC has, over the years, been overshadowed by the expatriate population, as about 48% of the total population of 44.6 million of the six GCC countries consisted of non-nationals in 2010.²⁵ In terms of differences across the GCC countries, in 2010 the UAE had the largest percentage of expatriate population with 88.5% of non-nationals, followed closely by Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain, while Oman and Saudi Arabia has the lowest percentage of expatriates with 31.4 and 31%, respectively (Shah, 2013). Following the '*jus sanguinis*' principle for citizenship, the GCC countries do not permit naturalization of their foreign labor. NRIs in the gulf region experience certain inequalities compared to their counterpart NRIs from other developed nations like the United States or Australia, that prohibit them from gaining a permanent status of citizenship or social security, purchasing property, and owning 100% of the rights to a company²⁶. This has represented the India-Gulf corridor as one of circular migration, where short-term stay and inevitability of returning home has become the hallmark of Indian migration to the region (Jain, 2010), resulting in keeping the demographic of the GCC states in a flux. Seeing as how the emigration flows have tripled over the past decade, the growing trend of emigration coupled with the objective conditions of development in the GCC countries spurred by sustained economic and social changes, rapid urbanization, better transportation and communication, and the strong Indo-Gulf migration networks, suggest that the next decade will most likely bring even more emigration from India into the GCC (Gurucharan, 2013)²⁷.

²⁴ These policies refer to the campaigns carried out throughout the Gulf to nationalize certain areas of employment. This stipulation by local governments is called Qatarization, Saudization, Omanization, Kuwaitization, and Emiratization. International companies in the region have to recruit a certain percentage of employees from the local workforce. Experts predict that this percentage will increase in the future (Hornok, 2020).

²⁵ Ibid; www.uaestatistics.gov.ae.

²⁶ Under the *kafala* (sponsorship) system, a migrant worker's immigration status is legally bound to an individual employer or sponsor (*kafeel*) for their contract period. A migrant worker cannot enter the country, transfer employment, or leave the country for any reason without first obtaining explicit written permission from the *kafeel*. Emerging in the 1950s, this system remains a routine practice in GCC countries. Both Qatar and Bahrain have claimed to abolish the *kafala* system. (<https://www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/docs/132/PB2.pdf>)

²⁷ Statistics drawn from the e-Migrate emigration clearance data, which captures emigration clearances issued to workers holding ECR (Emigration Check Required) passports, has shown a recent significant decline in blue-collar workers migrating to the Gulf States, which reached its peak in 2014. Launched by the Indian government in 2015, e-Migrate was created to regulate overseas employment and ensure the protection of Indian emigrants. The shrinking numbers stem from a variety of factors at both ends of the migration corridor. For an in-depth analysis, see: <https://www.mei.edu/publications/india-gulf-migrationtesting-time>

14.5 Determinants of Talent Mobility

Indian immigrants in the UAE constitute two major class segments; skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers; entrepreneurs and professionals with a relatively diverse profile. Unlike the employment demographic in other GCC states where Indian expatriates are massively clustered in semi-skilled and low-skilled occupations, the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora (2001) estimate that on average 24% of Indian workers are ‘white-collar’ workers in managerial positions and senior officials, with another 10% belonging to the professional category.²⁸ Known for their economic, professional, academic, scientific, and artistic successes, as well as for their generally peaceful integration, talented, multi-skilled, and cheaper to employ Indians have dominated UAE’s manpower pool in the health, education, management, information technology, media, development, banking and finance, oil, and architectural sectors, and have proven to be more adept at establishing social organization (Parekh et al., 2003).²⁹

The international mobility of human capital and the resulting outcomes for the country of origin and country of destination has shifted the focus of scholars and politicians away from traditional analysis of trade and capital mobility. There is a newfound emphasis on the international transfer of human talent, as a key economic resource and a source of creative power in business, science, technology, arts, and culture (Solimano, 2008). To answer the determinants and motivations behind Indian talent mobility towards the GCC, it is imperative to recognize first that no migration story is ever the same. The determinations vary between individuals and no longer conform to the theories of traditional international migration based solely on the wage differential. In any case, it is possible to establish six broad rationales based on the interviews conducted with highly skilled NRI entrepreneurs residing in the UAE, to determine the shared characteristics and incentives towards their decision of emigration.

1. *International differences in earning and development gaps.* Talent is generally expected to flow from countries with lower levels of development to countries with a higher level of development. The development gap—difference in living standards and productive potential among countries—between India and the UAE is substantially large. Employment opportunities and lucrative salaries are among the most substantial reasons for India’s ‘brain drain’ as the natives believe the compensation awarded in India is not an equivalent return for their hard labor. The economic benefit of migrating to a high-income country like the UAE, due to petroleum reserves, is systematically larger, as demonstrated by development economist Clemens (2009) whose research on the economic benefits of migration

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ Research study by Kanchana (2021) manifests that the ‘white-collar’ manpower was found to be relatively more influential and visible in the Indian communities in the UAE, as compared to Qatar where a lesser entrepreneurial participation and lower public profile can be observed. The majority of community leaders in the limelight almost necessarily represented the entrepreneurial segment in the UAE.

found a substantial “place premium”³⁰ for Indian workers migrating to the UAE. The significant differences in income generating capacity across countries and sectors of economic activity is particularly relevant for talent engaged in directly productive activities such as entrepreneurs as they are generally profit driven.³¹

2. *Non-pecuniary motivations.* Migrants may choose to relocate due to personal preference for exploring, ambition for improved career opportunities, or experiencing superior standards of living that the UAE is renowned for. The search for attaining political stability and security is also an important component of international migration. For Indians, the social and economic environment in India is dismal and congested with economic volatility and depression, weak institutions, health risks, insufficient working conditions, and political instability. Of the five NRIs surveyed, 60% revealed their motivation for migrating to the UAE were non-pecuniary. Among the reasons that attracted them in the UAE initially, they cited the fact that the UAE was offering a milieu that could allow them to live an “Indian lifestyle”, with large areas (Bur Dubai, Mina Bazar, Satwa, Deira, Karama, etc.) populated mostly by Indians.³² It is quite common though for this hardcore middle class to move out to other areas (or sometimes to go back to India) once it reaches the middle-upper entrepreneurial status.
3. *Demand for capital and talent.* The demand for directly productive talent in the workforce is interrelated with the demand for capital, and with the UAE facing high rates of unemployment and India developing high levels of under employment, a migration flow will inevitably form towards the country that offers superior economic opportunities. India has a large reserve of English-speaking, highly skilled workers available to fill the supply gap in labor-deficient economies. In contrast, the UAE suffers from severe shortages of qualified local manpower, generating a demographic difference that provided Indians the opportunity to work in the GCC. However, only 20% of the entrepreneurs surveyed claimed “demand for capital and talent” to be their motivation towards emigration as the large-scale development projects established after the ‘oil boom’ in the UAE initially demanded a higher reliance on low-skilled ‘blue-collar’ workers, than entrepreneurs and ‘white-collar’ professionals.
4. *Agglomeration and concentration effects.* As a general trend, it has been noticed that talent is attracted by the availability of other talented individuals, since

³⁰ The concept of “Place Premium” was coined by American development economist Clemens (2009). The term refers to the increase in earnings of a given person when the person migrates from one place to another, without any increase in the person’s skills or human capital (Open Borders, 2013).

³¹ The entrepreneurs interviewed have been residing in the UAE for over a decade, all of them are between 50–65 years old and their businesses are concentrated in the sector of textiles, general investments, food/grocery industry, and photography.

³² International migrations, inter and intra-continental, “qualified migrations” of a skilled cosmopolitan middle class (Fabbiano et al., 2018) require, like most migrations, a minimum of initial economic resources, as well as social resources (contact with family members or community members in the country of destination) and cultural resources (linguistic and professional competences imposed by the immigration country).

creative processes and research and development activities are rarely achieved in isolation. With the absence of an established research environment and availability of resources for knowledge concentration in India, highly skilled knowledge and technical talent face a lack of recognition, poor career prospects, inability to advance, modest salary, and the absence of a critical mass of professional peers. The internationalization of knowledge creation and the expansion of information, communication and technology centers in the UAE, such as the Dubai Internet City, Dubai Media City, Dubai Financial Center, Dubai Knowledge Village and Dubai Design District portray the UAE as a regional hub for research and development to the deprived and highly skilled talent in India. The lure of being in places where innovation and creativity takes place can be very important to technical talent in their decision to relocate.

5. *Linguistic compatibility, networks, and social cultural affinity.* Although the traditional cultural obstacles for the mobility of talent across nations such as differences in language, cultural traits, and social behavior are less of an impediment to well-educated, highly skilled migrants, the existence of these attributes can undoubtedly assist in the facilitation of international migration. The mass immigration to the UAE is therefore seen as a calculated decision, owing to the preexisting migration patterns, family and community ties, and established diaspora networks, illustrated by the NRI entrepreneurs surveyed as 80% affirmed to migrate from India in lieu of existing networks and social and cultural affinities. The ease of adjustment, element of familiarity and social ties, also influences the migrants' decision to relocate the family. As the migrant family relocates, they developed and maintain their own cultural networks, easing additional immigration from friends and community members from India.
6. *Policy regimes and immigration policies.* The mobility of migrants across nations is ultimately affected by economic and public policies. The broad policy regime in the home and host country is what determines the talent's ability and decision to stay, leave, or return. Policy implications are both critical and dynamic, in that a change of policy can severely impact the regulation of entry and exit of foreigners and disrupt migration patterns. Until recently, the demand for talent in the UAE economy and liberalization of immigration and economic policies have been successful in attracting large sums of migrants from India, who face adverse political conditions such as bureaucracy and instability back home. The UAE's tax-free³³ charm and free economic zones have allowed thousands of migrants and entrepreneurs to start their own international companies in a matter of days and lift their family in India out of poverty. Nonetheless, with increasing anxieties arising within the indigenous population around the over-dependence

³³ 'Value Added Tax' on goods and services has since been introduced in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, beginning January 1, 2018. The effect of VAT on immigration and remittances sent to home countries is yet to be established.

on and domination of Indian expatriates, these concerns may soon result in highly restrictive immigration laws and introduction of nationality quotas³⁴.

14.6 Evolving Migrant Identities

14.6.1 *Transnational Entrepreneurs*

The use of advanced information and communications technologies, as well as an initial capital of economic, cultural, and social resources (a capital of mobility), are what distinguish a diaspora community from a transnational skilled diaspora community that can gear development, maintain extensive professional relations, and successfully integrate their national economies into the global and political context (Mishra, 2016). Of the five NRI entrepreneurs surveyed, 60% mentioned ownership of a variety of assets in India and another 40% admitted to have previously contributed major donations in the private sector or towards NGOs in India, while 100% retained their loyalty to India, alongside to the cities of UAE that they have been able to prosper in, showcasing that the ties that migrants maintain with their home country can be displayed as outcomes of having both cultural and economic agencies. Given these ties to their country of origin, members of the Indian transnational diaspora have also been recorded to be more willing to engage in high-risk business activities or emerging markets, owing to their expanded knowledge of the local, political, economic, and cultural environment, their individual connections and linguistic abilities, and their use of global networks. These networks have created opportunities for investment, trade, and outsourcing; fostering strategic partnerships, leveraging access to relatively cheap labor and large talent pools; and utilizing sources of political and financial capital in facilitating the transfer of knowledge and technology, all without the requirement of physical temporary or permanent relocation.³⁵

The role of the “highly skilled diaspora” in developing knowledge-based sectors in India has now become well known. The growing attention towards NRI entrepreneurs in India, combined with the international success of Indian firms like Infosys and Satyam, is not only creating role models for young Indian entrepreneurs, but the NRIs are also, in turn, helping invest in promising start-ups in India (Saxenian 2001). As these members of the Indian diaspora prospered overseas as entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and top executives, they also played an active role in promoting and supporting the growth of India’s IT industry. Spearheading skill enrichment

³⁴ In an attempt to localize the private sector workforce, the UAE aims to reach an Emiratisation quota of 10 percent by 2025 as part of the UAE’s “Projects of the 50”, through a 2 percent year-on-year increase that began in 2017 (<https://www.clydeco.com/en/insights/2022/09/emiratisation-in-the-uae>). The Ministry of Interior has also called for the adoption of ‘quota systems’ to increase the percentage of UAE nationals to 51 percent and limit the ceiling of each foreign community to a maximum of 10 percent of the total population. (<https://www.khaleejtimes.com/article/quotas-system-proposed-for-foreign-communities>)

³⁵ See also: Newland and Tanaka 2010.

mentorship programs for Indian programmers (schools and universities with specific programs to form the next generation of IT expatriates), this highly skilled transnational population became pioneers of development; creating employment, stimulating innovation and knowledge transfer, and generating social capital across borders.

Transnational diaspora entrepreneurs and their networks have become important contours of the ‘new, post-national cartography’ of the global world. Yet, there is no empirical evidence on the size and mobility of these entrepreneurs. Transnational entrepreneurs succeed by identifying and exploiting opportunities and mediating through a complex array of production, circulation, and consumption activities that significantly contribute towards the integration of national economies into the global political context (Mishra, 2016). Nevertheless, the role of governments and multilateral institutions are of equal importance in facilitating these transitional exchanges. Taking full cognizance of this changing context, nation states are making significant efforts to redefine their approach towards traditional ‘national’ economic development processes and attract their diaspora. Transnational entrepreneurial networks promise to be a potent driver of economic development and can be massively capitalized by the Indian government establishing domains that support their diaspora entrepreneurs in the UAE and beyond.

14.6.2 Return Migrants

Human capital mobility has always been characterized through a South-to-North movement, but an emerging trend is operating in reverse, from high-income countries to middle-low income countries, reversing the ‘brain drain’ and its detrimental impacts. “Reverse Brain Drain” is a phenomenon that for the Indian subcontinent represents a giant inflow to the country of origin of both financial capital through accumulated overseas savings, and of human capital through the newly acquired skills and knowledge from working abroad (Wahba, 2004). It is important to note that while return migration as a general inward movement has been previously recorded, the return migration of highly skilled talent is severely under examined in the literature available, and its potential relatively untapped. Return migrants have become an increasingly important component of India’s social and economic development, as the actual physical return of skilled emigrants enables the utilization of skills and expertise at a scale incomparable to other channels of knowledge transfer.

Contrary to the traditional dialog on ‘brain drain’ and outward migration, it has been documented that a significant amount of Indians do indeed return back. Low-income nations that were once primarily migrant-sending states are now experiencing a boom³⁶ that is beginning to increase their attractiveness towards the highly skilled migrants and beckoning the diaspora home (Rajan et al., 2013). A survey conducted

³⁶ India could be one of the world’s largest trading nations, together with China, by 2030 as its economy continues to grow rapidly, if unevenly. The country is now successfully attracting

by the Center for Development Studies (CDS) on 1106 voluntary high-skilled professional return migrants in India illustrated that during the period of 2006–2011, 17% of return migrants had returned from the UAE, whose occupational profile ranged from Management Executives and IT Specialists, to doctors, teachers, and lawyers. The study revealed and categorized nine motivations towards the return of the professional migrant back to their motherland³⁷: aging parents, kinship ties and the desire to contribute to the family in the town of origin (21%); expired contract or visa (19%); global recession, loss of job, or fall in salary (16%); plans to set up their own venture in India or take over family business (11%); better employment and investment opportunities for highly skilled professionals (9%); non-pecuniary motivations such as harassment and job security (9%); family problems such as health emergencies and divorce (8%); dissatisfaction, alienation, and monotonous working environment in the host country (4%); and marriage and family planning (3%) (Rajan et al., 2013).³⁸ The study indicates a significant return migration that corresponds directly to 'pull factors' in the flourishing economic environment in India, with prospects of new opportunities, a booming IT industry, and encouraging investment incentives. The return flow of migration is additionally fueled by an adverse and unstable economic and political climate in the country of destination, with 'push factors' such as the soaring cost of living, increasing income inequality, promotion of Emiratization laws, and introduction of Value Added Tax (VAT) relegating the UAE as rather lackluster. The inability to attain permanent residency or citizenship status has characteristically represented the India-Gulf migration corridor as one of short-term stay and inevitability of returning home, with the OECD estimating that 20 to 50% of Indian immigrants return home within five years of their arrival in the Gulf region (Rajan et al., 2013)³⁹. However, scholars maintain that the return of the migrant is not the end of the road. Chair Professor of the MOIA Research Unit on International Migration, Dr S. Irudaya Rajan, after examining Gulf migration patterns of Keralites over the years, had announced the return of 40,000 migrants after the Financial Crisis of 2008, but furthermore reported that "in a year's time, they all went back" (Anima, 2016). A similar study in the third largest state of India, Bihar, recognized that of the Indian diaspora from the Gulf states, 25% were once migrants, 42% were twice migrants, 21% were thrice migrants, and 12% had migrated to the GCC region four times or more (Jain, 2010). The earlier survey conducted by Center for Development Studies (2006–2011) mentioned that the returnees had not initially planned on migrating back and that their return was spontaneous and voluntary (Rajan, Kurusu & Panicker, 2013). These findings portray the return migration from the Gulf region to be far from permanent and have little to do with migration policies or diaspora

entrepreneurs and the highly skilled from the diaspora and second generation, particularly to its booming IT industry (Rajan et al., 2013).

³⁷ Ibidem.

³⁸ The same motivations towards a possible return to India were reported to the author during the interview conducted to the NRIs in the UAE.

³⁹ Though foreigners still cannot apply for UAE citizenship, the introduction of Golden Visas in 2019—a long-term residence visa valid for 5 to 10 years with exclusive benefits—is regarded as an attempt to retain foreign talent and could signify a shift in attitude regarding naturalization

programs. In contrast to the migration patterns of transitional entrepreneurs, return migration correlates more with individual, non-pecuniary motivations to travel and explore opportunities, even in a possible third destination country if India nor the UAE provide the high-skilled mobile talent enough incentive to immigrate.

Although there has been a recorded, albeit not at a large-scale, return migration to India, equally imperative is the analysis of those entrepreneurs who are recalcitrant to the idea of returning. Among the UAE entrepreneurs surveyed, the reluctance to emigrate and return to India could be combined within three categories. The first are prevailing pessimistic mentalities shared by Indians abroad who view India as unsanitary, poverty ridden, dangerous, and lacking in good health care or educational facilities. This sentiment is commonly shared among second-generation entrepreneurs who have developed connections to the host country that are greater than their link to India. The second is the lack of development and scarcity of resources and opportunities available in India, which can be seen as both a cause and consequence of ‘brain drain’. The entrepreneurs surveyed cited a lack of updated infrastructure, inferior working conditions and standard of living, and lower salaries for the same employment position in India. The third and most detrimental factor behind the NRI’s reluctance to return is the lack of political, economic, and social transparency, making it an unfavorable environment for establishing businesses. Unsurprisingly, the rationale behind the reluctance of return to India is in many ways directly proportional to the determinants of the initial emigration towards the UAE. It has been observed that the incentives for migrants to return to developing countries have been insufficient to override the limitations at home—both real and perceived—and the attraction of opportunities found abroad (Dodani & LaPorte, 2005).

14.7 Capital Gain: Remittances and Foreign Direct Investment

An important aspect of Indian entrepreneurial migration to the Gulf has been its lions share in the transfer of remittances.⁴⁰ The NRI remittances and investments play a profound role as an important and stable source of external finance in India’s economic development program. Transfer of remittances to India accounts for 15% of the total global remittances to low- and middle-income countries⁴¹ that stands at an estimated \$466 billion (Nayak, 2017). Yet, India’s dominant position in remittance receipts is relatively recent, rising steadily in the last 25 years and rather dramatically

⁴⁰ Remittances are officially known as Private Transfer Payments in India’s Balance of Payments Accounts. Remittances are considered as private transfers and personal flows, without quid pro quo. In the Indian context, the following items are included as remittances: (a) private transfers by Indians overseas for family maintenance, (b) local withdrawals and redemptions from the non-resident deposits, (c) gold and silver brought to India, and (d) personal donations to charitable institutions in India (Bhaskar, 2013).

⁴¹ India is now labelled as “lower-middle income” as World Bank ceased the use of the term ‘developing country’, in view of the word ‘developing’ having no universal definition.

in the last 10⁴², with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reporting \$46.4 billion in remittances in 2008, \$13.5 billion in 2000–2001, and a modest \$2.1 billion for the period of 1990–1991.⁴³

It is important to note, however, the available figures for international remittances and NRDs (Non-Resident Deposits) solely account for remittances transferred through formal channels⁴⁴. Accordingly, the actual volume of remittances remain ambiguous and impossible to quantify due to the prominence of parallel informal channels. These 'invisible' channels evade official statistics and involve various operations such as money and material goods bought into the country by the migrant himself, money sent through a third person, and informal money transfer through the *hawala* system. *Hawala* or *Hundi* are informal community-based arrangements for remittance transfers, used predominantly in the Middle East and South Asia, that include ease of operation, lower transaction costs, faster transaction time, and potential anonymity, which explains their popularity.⁴⁵

Almost 60% of remittances received by India are derived solely from the oil-exporting GCC countries, showcased by a pattern of rapid increase in NRDs beginning mid-1970 (Naufel, 2010), following the 'oil boom' that directly corresponds to the influx in labor migration to these high-wage economies. Regarding the origin of remittances, the UAE ranks above the rest, singularly remitting over \$21.5 billion during the first half of 2017 according to the UAE Central Bank (Abbas, 2017). The UAE-India remittance aisle is the fourth largest⁴⁶ in the world, asserting the UAE as India's largest trading partner and investor. Notably, the progressively increasing levels of remittances from foreign workers in the UAE is principally in view of two elements unique to the GCC. Firstly, the UAE-India money transfer prevails as the cheapest in terms of the costs, with some expatriates even enjoying "zero per cent fees" and most UAE exchange houses charging a fixed fee of AED 15 (approx. \$4.1) (Maceda, 2017). The second motivation for the record high-remittance transfers from the UAE is the growing entrepreneurial market. Microeconomic evidence based on surveys of immigrants in several destination countries conducted by Bollard,

⁴² World Bank staff estimates based on the International Monetary Fund's Balance of Payments Statistics Yearbook 2008.

⁴³ RBI, "Balance of Payment Statistics" RBI Bulletin, December 1997-January 1999, January 2000, January 2001, December 2002, December 2004, January 2005, February 2006, November 2006.

⁴⁴ The most prominent routes of remittance transfer are Indian Banks through Correspondent Bank (CB), transfer through the SWIFT network, transfer through Exchange Houses, transfer through Money Transfer Service Schemes (MTSS), and transfer through the Rupee Drawing Arrangement (RDA)

⁴⁵ A *hawala* transaction operates via a network of money brokers, named *hawaladars*, entirely on an honor system transferring money without the actual movement of money. Although the exact amount of remittances transferred through the *hawala* system is difficult to measure due to its unrecorded nature, studies estimate that the *hawala* market in India could be as large as 30 to 40% of the recorded remittance transfers (Afram, 2012).

⁴⁶ World Bank 2015 (Development Indicators Group).

McKenzie, Morten, and Rapoport expresses a correlation between skill and remittance amount, suggesting that more educated individuals remit more, with tertiary-educated migrants from poorer countries being more likely to remit than those from richer developing countries (Bollard et al., 2011).

Evaluation of the impact of remittances on inequality in India is heavily subjected to its utilization patterns. Remittances carry important economic and social significance as these amounts maintain family ties, help reduce poverty, increase smaller business investments, contribute to higher expenditure on health and education, and escalate human and financial capital in India (Mishra, 2016). Surveys conducted to track the micro aspects of remittances by the Reserve Bank of India in 2006 and 2009 reported that frequent remittances of a lesser monetary amount indicate that the remittance is used mostly for family consumption. However, less frequent and high monetary size of remittances may be directed towards investment purposes rather than for family maintenance needs. It is important however to remember that more than 60% of personal consumption and spending are taxable, thus still providing fiscal benefits to the government of India (Gibson, 2010).

In terms of frequency and size, the RBI survey further indicated that 65 percent of remittances were received every three months or less, while 42 percent were received once a month, with 58 percent of recorded remittances to be of amount INR 50,000 (approx.\$770) or above. These findings, along with the examination of remittances transfer patterns over the years, projected that while size of remittances had generally increased, the frequency of remittances had fallen. Where once remittances were criticized for generating extra consumption spending and not being utilized for long-term investments, these trends suggest that over the years, a higher proportion of remittances are being directed towards investment purposes. Remittances potentially enable migrants and their family members to invest in agriculture and other private enterprises, giving them a chance to invest in India's economic activities and gain access to wealth (Haas, 2005).

Remittance flows to India over the years have remained stable and resilient, a feature that was best portrayed during the global financial crisis of 2007 where remittance inflows remained consistent: additionally, it showcased the NRI diaspora in the Gulf to be especially resilient in the face of adverse economic climates. This is due in part of the employment demographic in the region, and the UAE in specific, which portrays a large percentage of highly skilled and professional migrants who are mainly engaged in more secure sectors, compared to the construction and real estate sectors that were specially hit hard (Afram, 2012). For this reason, the Indian diaspora in the Gulf region is commonly and aptly referred to as "The Dollar Reliable Diaspora" since without the possibility of acquiring permanent residency or citizenship in the UAE, Indians migrants repatriate the majority of their earnings and savings to India under compulsion (Singh, 2009).

After remittances, a primary financial channel through which high-skill expatriates can provide tremendous benefit to the socioeconomic landscape in India is through their involvement in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and trade (Gibson,

2010). Inspired by the role of the Chinese diaspora in the development of its source economy and the policymaker's ability to capitalize on their foreign migrant labor, the government of India insistently set forth policy schemes to better engage their diaspora. Although the Indian migrant's share in the total FDI has yet to be as significant compared to China, India's technology-oriented diaspora nevertheless credits large sums of FDI in the country's emerging technology hubs in Bangalore and Hyderabad (Devan & Tewari, 2001) with prominent investments in the medical sector (Mahroum et al., 2006). The marked increase in FDI flows occurred with the commencement of economic liberalization in India in 1991, expanding the role of foreign investment. Yet, the initial years of liberalization maintained low FDI, particularly from the Indian expatriates, due to an unfavorable regulatory regime and the hostility portrayed by the indigenous capitalist class in India. Change has nevertheless come swiftly in India with the likes of some of the leading expatriate business magnates, Lakshmi Mittal, U.K. based chairman and CEO of steel producing giant ArcelorMittal, and Anil Agarwal, U.K.-based founder and chairman of mining and manufacturing Vedanta Group and Resources that have proposed to initiate massive FDI into the Indian economy primarily in sectors related to mining and metal (Mishra, 2016).

Through remittances and FDI, the Indian diaspora can actively participate in the regional development of India, as long as the government can establish appropriate measures to facilitate these investment flows. Being that the *raison d'être* for the government's engagement with the Indian diaspora has been to secure economic contributions for the development of India, major interventions in the economic sector became a necessary tool to overcome the underlying negative disposition of diasporic Indians towards the economy and its legislators. Already pursuing a policy of incentives and liberal norms conducive for the diaspora such as higher interest rates on monetary deposits, to ensure the expatriates of the well protection of their financial transfers and enforce the ambitious schemes of diasporic economic involvement envisioned by the government, several facilitating and coordinating agencies were urgently required. The most essential of these was the establishment of the Overseas Indian Facilitation Center (OIFC) in 2007, whose objectives were: to secure Indian diaspora investments; facilitate business partnerships; and provide advisory services to investors about opportunities and trends in the Indian economy. With the recognition of the expatriate labour force as a vital segment of the Indian diaspora, the government of India now focuses on strategies to both maintain and increase the outflows of human capital to the GCC countries and secure the welfare of workers in the host countries. This is ensured through a system of policy interventions and bilateral cooperation with the destination countries.

14.8 Conclusion

Earlier associated with the exodus of low-skilled labor, contemporary patterns of Indian migration towards the GCC region depict the mobility of high-skilled professionals and entrepreneurs. The spur of mass emigration inflows to the UAE was examined as the outcome of the existing pre-oil boom merchant ties with the region, and the post-oil-boom demand for high-skill labor. The influx of Indian expatriates permanently altered the size and complexion of both the immigration flow and demographic landscape of the UAE, generating a population imbalance and rendering the Emirati population a minority.

The discussion of talent mobility is incomplete without the exploration of its potentially positive impact towards the source country. The examination of remittances and FDI sent to India from the UA, clearly indicates members of the Indian diaspora to be funding national development, albeit, at a modest scale, as the majority of remittances are directed towards family consumption. Nevertheless, the developmental abilities of the diaspora are increasingly being recognized by the Indian government and their contributions are being facilitated through the establishment of diaspora engagement mechanisms. The gradual introduction of engagement policies, ranging from the very symbolic to concrete, can be seen as attempts by the Indian government to capitalize on its diaspora, and reverse the impact of ‘brain drain’.

Since the 1980s, there has been increasing attention paid to the idea that international migrants can maintain economic, social, cultural, and political links with their countries or societies of origin, even as they become incorporated in their host country (Patterson, 2006; Schiller et al., 1995). Brain circulation illustrates a new phenomenon in the perspective of “brain gain” where there is international brain exchange as migrants are considered as important transmitters of technology and knowledge (Davenport, 2004). The same individuals who left India in search for bigger and better opportunities are reversing and transforming brain drain into brain circulation as they return home to work, establish partnerships, or start new companies while maintaining business and professional ties with the United Arab Emirates. In this sense, the circular movement of highly skilled migrants is benefitting both sending and receiving countries (Riemsdijk & Wang, 2017).

One of the most important features of international migration is the ‘human capital’. However, this involves an analytical simplification that masks the reality in which there are different types of talent, each with their individual motivations to move and varied development impact. When assessing the socioeconomic impacts of human capital flight, the exploration of *directly productive talent* is crucial as these migrants are directly engaged in activities which lead to the actual production of goods and services. This includes the mobility of entrepreneurs—‘agents of resource mobilization, investment, and innovation’⁴⁷—who are relatively neglected

⁴⁷ Schumpeter’s (1943) classic model on the economic role of the entrepreneur gives insight on the characteristics of an entrepreneurial figure. Following Schumpeterian tradition, migrants are “extraordinary persons who bring about extraordinary events” through innovation and disruption of markets and organizational methods.

in the discussion of talent mobility (Solimano, 2008). Jain lists three categories of Indian entrepreneurs in the U.A.E: (i) independent entrepreneurs who operate mostly in Free Trade Zones, (ii) partner entrepreneurs (with local traders) who generally cannot be harassed or removed from the company, and (iii) sponsored entrepreneurs (Jain, 2005).

Innovation and entrepreneurship are often linked to long-run economic growth, as migration may preselect entrepreneurial individuals who contribute to new business formation, or 'stars' who generate new ideas (Honig, 2020). According to Fairlie's (2008) study on the contribution of immigrant business owners towards the U.S. economy, immigrants are nearly 30% more likely to start a business than non-immigrants in developed countries, with higher incomes and employment than native-owned businesses. The late twentieth century and early twenty-first century has also seen entrepreneurial immigrants from India providing an important human resource in the creation of high-tech industries. Saxenian's (2001) explains how transnational entrepreneurs are creating new opportunities for peripheral economies around the world and reversing the brain drain. She further discloses how these immigrants play a central role in both their destination and source countries:

By becoming transnational entrepreneurs, these immigrants can provide the critical contacts, information, and cultural know-how that link dynamic – but distant – regions in the global economy. They can create social networks that enable even the smallest producers to locate and maintain mutually beneficial collaborations across great distances and facilitate access to foreign sources of capital, technical skills, and markets (Saxenian, 2001).

Saxenian (2001) and Chacko (2007) both reveal how some entrepreneurs serve also as philanthropists, providing an anchor for second- and third-generation Indian migrants abroad while helping improve the social and economic infrastructure of their home country. Having said that, India still lacks a critical mass of transnational entrepreneurs compared to Taiwan and China, in building long-term relationships between India and the recipient country.

Furthermore, theories on innovation and entrepreneurial orientation (Miller & Friesen, 1982; Smart & Conant, 1994) give insight on why certain talent mobility may be more successful in foreign countries than others. Entrepreneurs have the ability to identify new market opportunities, contribute to business formation, and reverse the effect of brain drain. Yet, it can be noticed that literature on entrepreneurship and economic growth focuses mostly on the U.S. Not only is there lack of literature on Indian entrepreneurs in Gulf countries, but there is also an absence of examination of innate traits and competencies that contribute to one's entrepreneurial orientation, that develop as by-products of the migrant's upbringing, social interaction, economic environment, and psychological state (Ananthram, 2008).

International migration is an interdisciplinary phenomenon. The analysis of literature indicates that a full understanding on the subject of migration cannot be reached by the use of a single discipline's tool. Rather, a multi-disciplinary approach must be undertaken to unravel the complexity of the issue of migration, which is riddled with conflicting global economic rationale and the motivations and capabilities of the individual migrant. Within the investigation of theories on the emergence of

international migration and brain drain, perpetuation of migration, entrepreneurial innovation and brain circulation, and reverse migration, the gap in existing literature for the exploration of socioeconomic impact of India's brain drain and reverse brain drain can be easily distinguished. The scarcity of empirical studies on Indian expatriates in the Gulf establishes a need for further research that aims to showcase those specific migratory movements as an interaction of macro and micro structures, as well as an intrinsic part of a broader process of globalization and development.

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Chapter 15

The Choice for the “Zendegie Normal (Normal Life)”: Changes Among Iranian Young Immigrants



Gi Yeon Koo

Abstract Up to a few years ago, reasons of Iranians’ migration and immigration were personal development, free life, better educational environment, and social welfare among others. However, the situation appears dire as it is circulated on social media that today’s Iranian youth migrate overseas for “air to breathe, basic living, and COVID-19 vaccination for survival”—it is their choice for a “normal life”. Iranian dream of breaking away from the day-to-day politics of surveillance and escaping to foreign countries are like virtual worlds in their reality. This chapter seeks to examine the Iranian’s forms of migration and the social context.

Keywords Iran · Brain drain · Migration · Iranian young generation

15.1 Introduction

Up to a few years ago, the reason of young Iranians’ migration and immigration was for the pursuit of personal development, free life, better educational environment, and social welfare among others. However, the situation appears dire as it is circulated on social media that today’s Iranian youth migrate overseas for “air to breathe, basic living, and COVID-19 vaccination for survival”—it is their choice for a *normal life*. “Whoever can leave, goes” is also an expression that clearly shows the consensus for overseas migration in Iranian society as a self-deprecating yet longing voice for leaving their homeland.

This paper analyzes the historical and social background of overseas migration in contemporary Iran, and especially examines the phenomenon of upper middle-class elite group’s migration among the many branches of overseas migration in the country. Research on international migration in Iran is mostly conducted regarding the large-scale colonies of migrants or the process of settlement in the countries of destination, focusing on the matter of identity and adaptation in cases of successful Iranian diaspora.

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However, this study collects the voices of those still in Iran yet wishing to migrate or immigrate, instead of discussing the cases after immigration, and thus analyzes the structural background of society that urges people to choose migration or immigration. This study especially examines the brain drain issue to investigate the complex social structure as the background of migration. As the brain drain issue can be a key into not only the migration problem but also the realistic problems faced by the Iranian young generation, this study centralizes educational migration, one of the various types of overseas migration.

This study analyzes the educational actualities of Iran and the brain drain phenomenon through literature review, statistical examination, and anthropological in-depth interviews. Since this study set out to deal mostly with the international migration of people in or above the upper middle class, field research for this study was mainly conducted in northern and northwestern Tehran, where the upper middle class mostly reside. This area is one where many residents are parents whose children are dual citizens or students studying abroad. There is even a saying, “At least one child in every household in the Northern Tehran is away in another country,” which refers to the urban spatial characteristic of the area as being directly influenced by the diaspora culture. Also, many upper-class residents here are dual citizens themselves, and the efforts made to acquire permanent residency in foreign countries through relatives or children are not considered special here. The northern Tehran is full of expensive condominiums and houses of privileged upper-class residents, along with embassies, office buildings of foreign enterprises, international schools, and expat housing.

As Fig. 15.1 shows, the northern and northwestern areas of Tehran are the most economically rich regions, with different meanings in terms of class and culture from other areas of the city. Average household spending in northern Tehran is triple the amount in the southern part of the city, and the average size of living space is also over four times the average in southern Tehran. The northern and northwestern parts of Tehran also host famous commercial districts, shopping centers, and shops of foreign brands, and allow a direct observation of a global youth culture, hybrid popular culture, and the consumption culture of urban upper class (Koo, 2017, pp. 13–22).

Filling up the landscape of northern Tehran are large-scale electronics shopping complex, sleek cafes with fancy vibes, famous Italian bistros, Thai and other Asian restaurants, and flagship stores of foreign brands not easily found in Iran. Residents of northern and northwestern Tehran have different cultural tastes from those of residents in other areas. They especially show differences in economic level, class, and cultural standards beyond mere geographical difference from residents of southern area, thus portraying varying cultural topographies and cultural tastes. The northern and southern areas also show difference in class following their occupations and economic power; while citizens who are professionals or office workers such as managers mostly reside in the northern area, many citizens in the working class live in the southern area. The two areas show not only simple economic differences but also striking differences in political tendencies. Citizens in northern Tehran have reformist political tendency and are rather secularized in terms of religion, but the

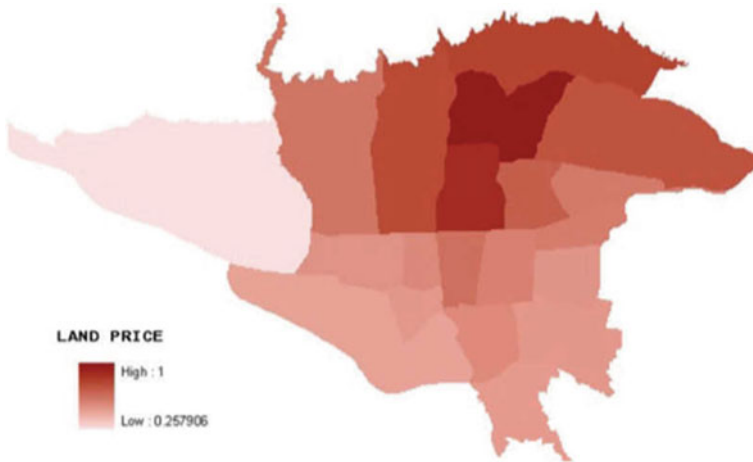


Fig. 15.1 Land price of Tehran (Chamanara & Kazemeini, 2016)

lower middle-class residents of the southern area are religiously more conservative and are considered to have a pro-government political tendency (Koo, 2017, pp. 3–21). Moreover, northern and northwestern areas of Tehran are crowded with international schools, overseas educational agencies, language schools, and immigration offices, so that they serve as the most suitable site for field investigation for collecting information on the immigration fervor in Iran and educational migration.

This study is based on a year-long field research in Tehran, Iran, in 2009 and a short-term field investigation of three years from 2015 to 2017. I conducted online interviews with eight subjects who were residing in Iran at the time of 2009 field research but later migrated to the U.S. and the U.K. I also interviewed ten Iranian students studying in Iran in 2020 and 2021.

As can be seen in the large-scale anti-government protest over December 2017 and January 2018, Iranian society still faces social problems of various textures due to economic and cultural factors. The chronic economic aggravation and high unemployment rate of Iran are especially the most urgent or hardest knot to untie, regardless of the government’s character. Through this study, I will trace the large frame of overseas migration in Iran in the wider scope and, in the narrower and deeper scope, examine the social and cultural background of the brain drain phenomenon. I will thus analyze one cross section of the Iranian migration issue, which ranges from short-term studying broad to long-term overseas residency.

15.2 The Historical Flow of Iranian Overseas Migration and Forms of Migration

The overseas migration of Iranians is seen in various forms depending on period and class. Large-scale overseas migration can be divided largely into three phases by socioeconomic and political conditions. The first wave occurred from 1950 to 1977, when upper middle-class families migrated to the U.S. or the U.K. to educate their children. It was especially with the people of the Pahlavi family in the center that international migration took place (Gholami, 2016). It is also notable that Iran's brain drains, which this study will mainly deal with, also has been occurring in diverse ways since the 1950s, and the issue of medical doctors migrating to the Western world, which is the most serious problem in current Iranian society, also started from this period. The situation of Middle Eastern countries' citizens' migration to the U.S. from 1953 to 1973 shows that the number of Iranian migrants increased from 160 in 1953 to 2,998 in 1973, and the number of students increased from 997 in 1960 to 4,832 in 1973. Furthermore, it is recorded that 2,229 doctors who graduated from Iranian medical schools were active in practice in the U.S. in 1973 (Askari & Cummings, 1977). In sum, international migration in this period was limited to the upper class, and it was around this time that highly educated Iranians started migrating overseas.

The second large-scale overseas migration occurred around the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. In 1979 when the Islamic Revolution took place, the migration started with 500,000 people and continued for several years after the revolution as nearly a million people left their home country. This *great escape* occurred mostly with political refugees, intellectuals, artists, skilled workers, professional workers (doctors, dentists, pharmacists, engineers, etc.), entrepreneurs, and ethnic minorities (Haberfeld & Lundh, 2014). One of the characteristics of Iranian migration in this period is that it was a large-scale migration of minorities who believe in religions other than Islam, such as the Baha'is, Jewish, Armenians, and Assyrians. Another characteristic was the migration of young male citizens who were evading being drafted into the military during the Iran-Iraq War (Hakimzadeh & Dixon, 2006; Naghdi, 2010). Although there is no accurate statistical figure for the number of Iranians who left their home country after the Islamic Revolution, it is estimated to be from 1.5 to several million (Mossayeb & Shirazi, 2006), and from 75,000 to about 150,000 Iranians come to migrate between 1979 and 1985 to the U.S. only (Hakimzadeh & Dixon, 2006; Mostofi, 2003).

Up to 1980, most Iranian migrants to the U.S. were on short term studying abroad for acquiring higher educational degrees, and later the number of migrants came to increase as their families joined them (Modarres, 1998). While 15–25% of Americans have bachelor's degrees, over half of the Iranians in the U.S. have degrees higher than bachelor's (Feliciano, 2005), which shows that Iranian migrants of this period were also mostly highly educated (Hakimzadeh & Dixon, 2006; Mossayeb & Shirazi, 2006; Naghdi, 2010). In Canada, too, Iranians displayed a differentiation from other groups of migrants, since highly educated people migrated there as much as the U.S. (Moghaddam et al., 1987). In case of the U.S., large-scale settlement before and

Table 15.1 The total number of migrants in the country and its growth rate in different periods

Period	Total immigrants	The proportion of immigrants to the population (annually)
1966–1976	5,224,790	17.8
1976–1986	5,820,625	14.0
1986–1996	8,718,770	16.0
1996–2006	12,148,148	18.6
2006–2011	5,534,666	15.2

Source Moshfegh (2013), Statistical Center of Iran, population and housing censuses of 1966–2011¹

after the Islamic Revolution took place in Los Angeles, which led to the creation of Iranian communities in the U.S. with nicknames like Tehrangeles or Irangeles. It was reported through survey that 41% of Iranian migrants in the U.S. were living in Los Angeles in 2000 (Hakimzadeh & Dixon, 2006).

The third wave of large-scale migration started in 1995 and is being continued in the present. A characteristic of this third phase is that low-educated migrant workers started their migration to Asian countries such as Japan and Singapore, different from the skilled workers or highly educated migrants who moved to the West in the past. The number of refugees also soared, as 92,367 Iranians submitted refugee application to the U.S., U.K., Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands from 1995 to 2004. In 2001, Iranian refugee applicants to the U.K. increased by about 300%, and in 2004, the rate skyrocketed so much that 10% of the total refugee applicants to the U.K. were taken up by Iranians. Gholami (2016) explains the background of such high refugee application rate among Iranians as the economic crisis, low employment opportunities, poor human rights situation, and political tensions in their homeland. However, as the refugee application process in Europe and other places became more complicated, quite a high number of Iranians came to stay as unregistered residents.

As shown in Tables 15.1 and 15.2, the rates and numbers of migrants are the highest around the Iran-Iraq War in late 1980s and early 1990s and decrease after the 2000s. This decrease is interpreted to be correlated with the ever-stricter conditions for migration in the American and European continents. It is also a major aspect of the background that migration conditions for Muslims from the Middle East have been made much stricter after the 9.11 attacks in the U.S. As overseas migration has become complicated and the economies of U.S. and Europe have aggravated, recent Iranian migrants tend to include only the students and their mothers, creating transnational families separated by children studying abroad (Fig. 15.2).

According to UN’s data, the U.S. is the primary destination for Iranian immigrants. Statistics of Iranian immigrants in America are presented upon two standards: foreign born and U.S. born. A statistical figure from 2017 shows that the population of Iranian-born immigrants living in the U.S. reached 385,000, while that of U.S.-born Iranians reached 477,000. Most (over 74%) of these Iranians have received higher education, with about 72% of them between 18 to 64 years old, meaning that they are

¹ <https://epc2016.princeton.edu/papers/160998>.

Table 15.2 Major destination countries of migration 1990–2019 and number of migrants (Unit: Persons)²

	Country	Population of Iranians in the world 1990–2019									
		1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2019			
	World	631,339	746,894	831,372	889,941	989,560	1,171,364	1,301,975			
1	USA	210,941	250,390	290,199	314,199	348,249	394,223	403,136			
2	Canada	29,467	51,266	74,284	95,395	120,685	153,473	164,463			
3	Germany	95,723	100,27	104,331	108,310	111,268	115,936	127,177			
4	Britain	31,563	36,022	41,087	58,694	61,831	79,072	89,794			
5	Turkey	23,816	13,188	13,427	14,397	14,728	39,332	83,183			
6	Sweden	40,154	47,650	13,427	54,470	62,120	69,067	79,308			
7	Australia	17,599	19,260	51,101	26,720	36,480	61,690	73,002			
8	Israel	47,785	51,220	21,360	50,950	50,732	52,322	50,881			
9	Netherlands	5,187	12,357	51,786	24,051	50,486	29,405	33,819			
10	France	23,359	24,114	19,921	20,643	25,486	23,705	25,091			
11	Norway	5,198	7,055	24,869	11,637	21,399	16,222	18,707			
12	Austria	8,535	9,629	8,857	11,986	13,086	15,495	18,291			
13	Denmark	8,022	9,753	10,723	12,029	12,352	14,689	17,716			
14	Italy	19,096	14,034	11,483	11,701	14,360	14,925	17,059			
15	Iraq	14,976	44,953	8,971	17,396	17,568	14,406	14,753			
16	Swiss	4,686	5,372	42,602	6,953	8,030	11,562	12,998			
17	Belgium	3,157	2,480	1,731	4,445	8,569	10,554	11,399			
18	Finland	558	1,1160	1,782	3,040	5,101	7,225	9,137			
19	Armenia	10,242	10,242	11,205	7,411	6,172	8,135	8,090			
20	Spain	2,159	2,159	3,477	4,212	4,920	5,888	6100			

² <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=MIG>

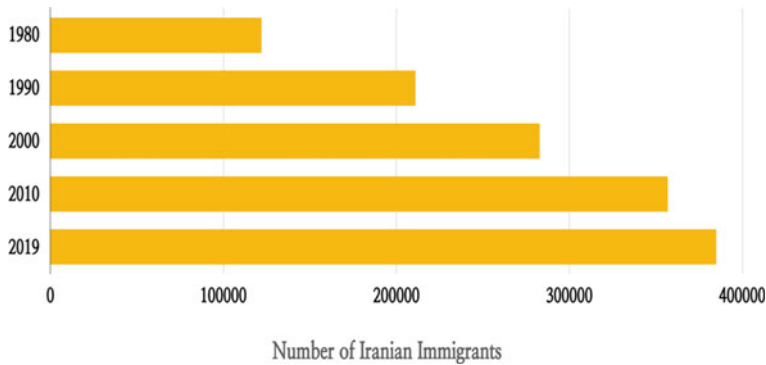


Fig. 15.2 Iranian immigrant population in the United States³

in the working age group. There is a rising percentage of people who have completed vocational college courses or received master’s degree or higher, and 29% of Iranians aged over 25 living in the U.S. have received graduate-level education.⁴

Though the number of Iranian naturalization cases decreased during Trump’s presidential office, statistics show that 8,000 to 10,000 Iranians became U.S. citizens annually from 2010 to 2018. During this period and especially after 2015, the number of Iranians who could be issued green cards or temporary work and study visas decreased.

Meanwhile, the destination countries preferred by those considering overseas migration or studying abroad are none other than the countries where their family or relatives are already residing. In case of the U.S., migration is impossible through invitation of relatives unless one is married to a permanent resident or citizen of the U.S., but European countries such as Germany or Italy have relatively simpler procedures for invitation, so that there are many migration cases that are achieved through being invited by relatives.

<Case 2>

In case of O, her aunt married an Italian man, acquired Italian nationality, which led to O’s mother and maternal grandmother getting residency in Italy. In 2009, her sister and her brother-in-law who is an attorney migrated to Italy as investment immigration with her uncle’s invitation. Her brother-in-law graduated from college in Bulgaria and his younger sister still lives there. O’s sister and nephew prepared for the migration to Italy while her brother-in-law kept his job in Iran even as he went back and forth between Iran and Italy. On the other hand, he even bought a house in France just in case it could help him receive right of residence there. O married a Korean man and lived in Korea for about two years but went to Italy after getting married to receive the right of residence in Italy along with her original family. It took her several years to go through the migration process, and as of 2018, she currently lives in Italy with her Korean husband. I asked O’s sister X, amidst her preparation for immigration, the reason for the relocation.

³ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/iranian-immigrants-united-states-2021>.

⁴ <https://www.eghtesadonline.com> (<http://abit.ly/dlurvck>).

“I decided to move to Italy for my seven-year-old son. Of course, I know well enough that there is no place better than one’s motherland. But with the Iranian nationality, it is so hard to even go on a trip abroad. It’s the same in Korea, and Americans only see us as terrorists. It is so inconvenient and difficult to enter other countries, too. But if we were to become Italian nationals with Italian passports, it would be so much more comfortable to live. My son asks me every day when we are moving to Italy. My husband has a good occupation as an attorney, but no matter how good one’s job is, if this country’s economic and social realities are this bad, there is nothing to get better.” (O’s family)

The people I met in Iran who had citizenship or residency in the U.S., U.K., or Canada had an attitude of bystanders. Whenever there were disturbances in Iranian society or political and economic crisis occurred, their stance was that although the situation is regrettable, they can just go back to the U.S. or the U.K. if it aggravates. It is from the display of such an attitude that lower middle-class people of Iranian society expressed a sense of incongruity, betrayal, and complaint for the upper class with cultural and economic capital. The estrangement between classes in Iran can only be represented as political conflicts, and this in turn became the most supportive background for the conservatives and traditional powers at the time of Ahmadinejad’s administration.

Iran’s conservative power with the former Ahmadinejad administration and supreme leader Khamenei in the center argue for the imperativeness of their regime by putting forward the lower middle class, army, and the clergy. Yet the upper middle class and upper class complain of suffocation by the conservative restraint of the Islamic regime, deepening the rift between classes in the polarized society. Thus, Iranian people have ambivalent emotions toward those who have already immigrated or those who have dual nationalities, seeing them as both objects of envy and the privileged class who look away from the difficulties of their homeland. In the following section, I will analyze the social and cultural reasons of overseas migration in Iranian society to inquire into the more fundamental causes of Iranian migration.

15.3 Why Are They Leaving Iran?

In Tehran, the Iranian capital, English kindergartens were prevailing among the rich even before 2009. The kindergarten tuition amounted to \$500, which exceeded the average annual salary in 2009 of \$300–400 (6), and expensive German cars lined up in front of the kindergartens, dropping off and picking up kids. Parents of these kids were mostly business owners, famous soccer players, actors, and expats in Iran. Though the English kindergartens were upper-class-oriented, this can be seen as a case that displays a cross section of Iranian society’s fervor for overseas migration since most of the parents in the English kindergarten were either considering immigration or already had dual nationalities.

A similar situation is made much starker in Tehran’s international schools. There are coed international schools in Tehran’s *Sharak-e Gharb*, a town where Iran’s nouveau riche and upper middle-class professionals mostly reside in. The kids in

Sharak-e Gharb usually wear clothes from American and French brands that are hard to find in Iran. The international schools in Iran are for foreign expats in Iran, but along with the British School and the Italian School, 70–80% of the student body is taken up by Iranian students who have foreign nationalities. As of 2009, the international school considered the best in Iran was the British School, and most of the students there were Iranians, with only a handful of British students. The annual tuition amounted to \$30,000, but the application queue was always full of prospective students. The international schools in Iran were mostly filled with students who had either migrated back to Iran after spending their childhood in the U.S., Sweden, Australia, or the U.K., or lived in Iran after acquiring citizenship through the means of maternity trips. The British School was closed in 2012 due to political reasons, and currently the German Embassy School remains as the international school preferred by expats and the wealthy class in Iran.

However, general international schools in Iran are under the influence of the Islamic government. Among those schools, Tehran International & Adaptive School is a national school and thus is heavily regulated by the Iranian government. Although it is an international school, it consists of different campuses for boys and girls from the elementary level, just like the regular Iranian public schools.

An enormous portrait of Imam Khomeini is hung at the entrance of the school. All subjects are taught with English texts in English, but the curriculum includes religion classes so that students are given mandatory education on Islamic studies. Girls at this school are not much different from those in Iranian public schools, as they are expected to wear dark colored uniforms and dark blue *maghnaeh*.⁵ Students in lower grades which are equivalent to elementary school wear lighter blue uniforms with white *maghnaeh*. If anything were to be different from regular local schools in Iran, it is that students may take off the *maghnaeh* in classrooms. All teachers of the girls' campus are female, as all teachers of the boys' campus are male.

Most students who have graduated from English kindergartens and international schools hold dual nationalities as do their parents, and naturally follow the steps of entering universities abroad. International school graduates mostly go on to universities in the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Europe. According to interviews with Korean students attending international schools in Tehran, most Iranian students there are children of high clerics in Iranian society, entrepreneurs, famous sports players or celebrities, and had pride in their global backgrounds. While there is a strong desire for international education with overseas migration in consideration, college entrance within Iran is also rather heated at the same time. From these aspects, it appears that there are people in Iran who dream of a one-way escape while upper-class dual nationals with cultural and economic resources are characteristic of domiciliating strategically between their home countries and foreign countries of settlement.

As shown in the popular saying “*Har kyashi ke mitune bere, mire* (Whoever can leave, goes),” immigration is an object of envy for all Iranians. Then why do they strive to acquire the right of residence in other countries, and why are they obsessed with

⁵ A type of hijab worn in public, official space. It is usually part of the uniform for companies, government offices, and schools.

dual nationalities? Though the background of immigration in Iran must be diverse and overlapped for everyone, the following four sociocultural backgrounds other than personal reasons are analyzed to be the main causes: (1) a choice in preparation for social instability; (2) political reasons; (3) a choice for ideological and cultural freedom; and (4) economic reasons.

First, let us examine the cases of people who chose immigration due to social instability. Political asylum including large-scale immigration took place in Iran around the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and number of people opting for immigration skyrocketed due to their anxiety from eight years of the Iran-Iraq War. After the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, countless people were purged in prison for the reason of different ideologies, while many were demoted and people like female judges lost their jobs. The painfully continued Iran-Iraq War had the Iranians recognizing their homeland as a *dangerous and unstable place*, and the social instability that followed gave prominence to the alternative of overseas asylum.

The obtainment of dual nationalities or immigration is mostly put into practice among the upper or wealthy class as shown in the above cases, but the fad of immigration was considered a dream to seek even for people in middle and lower classes. Due to the drastic sociocultural changes after the Islamic Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War that produced countless casualties, the Iranian people had directly experienced anxiety and instability. Young men especially opted for studying abroad or migrating alone during the war in order to evade being drafted into armed forces.

An entrepreneur born in 1976, A, of case 3, had married young and had a ten-year-old child at the time of our 2009 interview. His wife and son were living in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates close to Iran, and they were aiming for moving to Canada in the long range. He was part of the generation that had experienced the Iran-Iraq War, accounting the instability of Iranian politics and lack of freedom as his reason for migration.

<Case 3>

A: My generation experienced the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the war from 1980 to 1988. I still remember the sound of explosions that made us tremble in fear every night. My generation lived through extremely unstable times. My wife and ten-year-old son live in Dubai now, and my son attends an international school there. My family is very satisfied with this living arrangement. I can't just liquidate the business I'm doing in Iran, so I visit them two or three times a month.

Researcher: Why did you decide to let your son study in Dubai?

A: It is because I don't want my son to live in this chaotic world. What kind of world do we live in now? Is it not an era of English and computers? For my son to have a better future in this era, I sent my son and wife to Dubai two years ago. I want to prepare the best conditions for my son. For our long-term goal of migrating to Canada, I'm doing my best alone, although it is challenging. My son is ten years old now, and he is already disoriented when he visits Iran from time to time. He asked once, "Why is it bad to watch satellite TV?" so I told him, "It's illegal," and he was confused, saying "Why is it illegal? All my friends have satellite TV..." I don't want to let my son live in a society where you must lie and cannot show yourself. (A, aged 42, male, entrepreneur)

As shown in the above statements, Iran's middle-aged and elderly generations as well as those in their late thirties have vivid memories of the war with Iraq, and

always feel anxiety because they had experienced the chaotic society right after the revolution. The anxiety of dreading another national crisis functions as a major reason for migration. Obtaining American citizenship or green card became a fad among the wealthy people of Tehran, and most young people of rich or reformist families have already immigrated or are dual nationals. It is with this background that parents start preparing for immigration when their children are young, either for the future of their children or because it is much advantageous for them to study or work abroad later. The wealthy people carry out maternity trips for anchor babies.

<Case 4>

B's family applied for Green Cards in the U.S. five years before the Islamic Revolution (in 1974) and obtained them after ten years. B became a U.S. citizen twenty years after that. B has not lived in the U.S. continuously, having only lived there one year in her childhood and coming back and forth between Iran and the U.S., staying there only two months per year. Her sister and brother live in Los Angeles, and her parents and B herself mostly live in Iran. Her sister is a 42-year-old doctor, who is about to marry an American. B's sister has not returned to Iran for fifteen years. When she came back for the last time fifteen years ago, she went through a hassle at the airport. There was a CD of an American pianist in her bag, and it became the excuse of the authorities to go through her bags. She no longer wants to visit Iran since then. B's sister has almost become an American. On the contrary, B does not want to live in the U.S. There are some positive aspects of living in the U.S., but it is not as happy for her as the life in her home country. (B, female, aged 27, medical student)

I asked B, “Other Iranians are anxious to go to the U.S., but you are different. Is it because you could go whenever, if you wanted?” and she answered, “Perhaps so. Others can't even dream of it, but it's true that I can go there whenever I want.” Although B had said in 2009 that she was happier to live in Iran, she left for the U.S. in 2011 and currently works as a doctor there. Young urban Iranians and those with reformist and secular tendencies mostly find their reasons for migration in politics and ideological and cultural freedom. As free overseas trips are currently difficult with Iranian nationalities, the young generation endlessly seeks methods of migration such as studying abroad, marriage migration, and skilled worker migration.

Among the methods of immigration, studying abroad is considered a relatively easy method, and quite many young Iranians study English in hope of studying abroad. “We deliver what we promise!” This slogan was inscribed on the wall of a famous private English academy. Because of the economic recession and governmental control being continued since 2000, those in the younger generation, particularly the highly educated, dream of continuing their studies abroad. In Iranian society, they cannot show their authentic *selves* due to cultural and political constraints. The young Iranians have despaired in the reality controlled in numerous ways. The youth and the reformists are dissatisfied with the government and society in general and have shown self-mocking and hopeless attitudes about Iran's isolation in world politics. Especially in the Green Movement, an anti-governmental protest that arose before and after the 2009 presidential election, the urban youth vented that they could no longer find hope, and it was not hard to spot those who decided to leave their home country with Iran's hazy future (Koo, 2017).

For instance, C, aged 22, participated quite actively in the anti-government movement when the instability arose after the 2009 presidential election. Since he had

enthusiastically joined the protest, he was later classified as *siyasi* (translated into politics, interpreted as activist) at school and was expelled. Because of this problem, C's mother seriously considered immigrating to Malaysia. Eventually, he left for Malaysia in 2010 to study there. Though he had dreamed of migrating to Canada or the U.K. originally, the visa obtainment was hindered by Iran's nuclear issue in 2010 so that Muslim countries such as Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates substituted the Western countries as destinations.

Furthermore, D (female, aged 20 at the time), who had also actively participated the protest during the 2009 Green Movement, once registered herself on an international babysitter agency website for potential jobs in Europe with the mere hope of leaving Iran. She now studies in France. The Green Movement was especially an enormous shock to the reformist youth in Iran, and many of those who had high hopes for the new social reform came to a decision to leave home. The socially controlled environment and the 2009 uprising once again led the young Iranians to seek specific means of immigration.

Due to these young Iranians who are on the alert for an opportunity to go abroad, popular English academies in Tehran are full of enrolled students, and it is not hard to find hundreds of students queued up for twelve hours to register for IELTS (International English Language Testing System) needed for studying in Canada or Australia. The two major English academies that I attended for over eight months in 2009 were always crowded with young housewives dreaming of immigration, undergraduate and graduate students wishing to study abroad, and professionals preparing for professional migration through employment. Many young Iranians take the most ideal countries to be the U.S. and Canada, with Australia as their second choice, as the visa obtainment is relatively easier. Although the U.S. visa is the hardest to obtain, there are quite many people who try the U.S. visa lottery since it is the most desired country. Some choose alternatives of Southeast Asian Islamic countries (Malaysia and Indonesia) or India.

Many students stay in Malaysia in diverse forms varying from short-term language training to long-term studying abroad because Iranians can use English there and obtain Malaysian visas relatively easily. Also, due to the heated competition in entering domestic graduate schools, going for language training or graduate school in Malaysia have become other alternatives for young Iranians who have become jobless suddenly.

Lastly, let us examine Iran's economic situation, which is pointed out as the biggest reason for the recent large-scale migration. Iran's high unemployment rate is explained as the most influential reason for people to dream of migration and studying abroad. High unemployment rate causes many different social problems, and this issue is not only seen as a crisis for the young generation but also acknowledged as a national threat. The difficulty in job searching demands young Iranians, especially young female Iranians, even higher educational background. Entering master's programs and doctorate programs is as competitive as entering college, and it is not rare for applicants to try a second or third time to get into graduate school.

As Salehi-Isfahani argues, Iran's educational institutions are reduced to gigantic factories for degrees rather than fostering talented workers that corporations or

companies want, and it is a salient phenomenon that jobless students are absorbed into higher educational institutions such as graduate schools (Salehi-Isfahani, 2011). In the past ten years, the rate of students going on to graduate school from college has doubled. A total of 830,000 students applied for the graduate school entrance exam in 2010, and only 6% of them entered graduate school. Yet, succeeding to enter graduate school against stiff competition does not guarantee one’s employment. It only temporarily defers one’s state of unemployment. Furthermore, unless they are professionals, even those with high education cannot easily find jobs that match their majors. Many young people other than professionals or public servants succeed the family business or are self-employed. As more parents invested in their children’s education due to the decrease in birth rates in the past two decades, the education market expanded rapidly (Salehi-Isfahani, 2011). However, high education does not mean the unemployment rate will fall. The unemployment rate of university graduates increased from the statistics in 1997 (male 18.2%, female 18.5%) to those in 2007 (male 22.4%, female 52.6%). Currently, the unemployment rate in Iran comes close to 30%, at 29.2% as of January 2017, and comparing this to the overall unemployment rate of Iran, which is 12.5%, the youth unemployment rate appears even graver.

Though expectations for Iran’s economic growth have risen with the economic sanctions lifted, the realities are still not so kind. There are high hopes for market liberation and completion of nuclear negotiations in Iran, but the emergence of President Donald Trump cast a red light to Iran’s economic situation. As Trump won the U.S. presidential election and the U.S. senate prolonged the Iran Sanctions Act (ISA) for another decade in 2016, Iran’s exchange rate market swung and the polarization of the rich and the poor aggravated (Koo, 2017).

The migration issue in Iran has another huge strand of the political and social background, other than the economic situation. Through more than a decade of economic sanctions and the powerful control of President Ahmadinejad’s Islamic Republic, many Iranians attempted to leave their home country. In sum, the four backgrounds of migration examined in the third section are in fact different depending on individuals, rather complexly entangled. The fourth section will discuss the brain drain issue of Iran as an aspect of Iranian immigration.

15.4 Iran’s Brain Drain Phenomenon

<Case 5>

Researcher: How are you doing these days?

R: I received a master’s degree in law before, and now I’m pursuing a degree in business administration.

Researcher: You started studying another major?

R: (Laughing as if in embarrassment) Yeah. Just a typical Iranian behavior. Ha ha. Don’t you think Iranians earn their degrees as hobbies? After you get the master’s in law, there is

no hope. And then you study business administration, get a Ph.D., and then start studying another area because it's so hard to get a job.

Researcher: (Greeting his girlfriend next to him) Is your girlfriend at a job?

R: Ha ha. No. She's starting to study another major, too.

(R, male, in his thirties, child of a diplomat)

An informant I had not met since my long-term field research in 2009 and met again in 2017 gave me the updates in embarrassment. In Iran, it is not at all a rare thing for the upper middle class to receive more than two master's degrees and then going on to doctorate programs or trying more than two years to get into master's programs. The college entrance system, called *concours*, is the utmost concern for parents, and the educational fervor in Iran is so high that it is considered ordinary to take classes at academies or private tutoring for high performance at the *concours*.

The academic background in Iran becomes a barometer for the parents' face and honor, other than being the proof of individuals' achievement or development. In Iranian society where the family power and bond are strong, the children's great academic backgrounds and occupations become the parent's biggest source of pride. Thus, the educational fervor in Iranian society does not simply connect to the economic situation, but links to the honor of individuals and of the family by extension, so that academic background in Iran is traditionally given high values.

However, the overheated fervor for education in recent times can only be seen because of Iran's poor economic situation, which has been continued for over fifteen years. According to the November 10, 2016 article of *Financial Tribune*, an English newspaper in Iran, a survey of 232 students at University of Tehran showed that over 64% of the students are considering overseas migration for *whichever reason*.⁶ Also, considering the fact that the number of Iranian students studying abroad has recorded 431,000 in 2010 and 2011⁷ and about 200,000 highly educated people have left Iran as of 2016, we can clearly see the prevailing brain drain phenomenon in Iranian society and a high desire for migration among the people.

The term brain drain first appeared in a report by the Royal Society of London in 1963. It was a term given to the large-scale migration of British scientists to the U.S. In general, brain drain refers to "permanent or long-term international emigration of skilled people who have been the subject of considerable educational investment by their own societies" in developing countries (Salami et al., 2011). The problem of brain drain became a more serious issue in the 1960s not limited to Europe, as the phenomenon of personnel with high technical training migrating from developing countries to advanced countries accelerated over a long period of time. The emigration of highly educated talents has a high influence over a country's research capacity and competitiveness. However, since the Iranian society has limitations of political

⁶ "Brain Drain Continues in Iran", *Financial Tribune*, 10 November 2016. <https://financialtribune.com/articles/people/53254/brain-drain-continues>.

⁷ World Bank Group, Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016 (<https://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/3349341199807908806/45490251450455807487/Factbookpart1.pdf>).

and economic situations for brain circulation to happen or have the elite migrate back, this study will concentrate on the brain drain phenomenon.

According to the World Bank’s report “The Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011”, Iranian immigrants as of 2010 amount to 1,295,100, taking up 1.7% of the entire population. Major countries of destination are reported to be Qatar, Canada, Kuwait, Germany, Israel, the U.K., Sweden, the U.A.E., and Bahrain. The migration rate of highly educated population is particularly prominent, as 14.5% of the overall highly educated Iranians appear to have migrated overseas as of 2000. The migration rate of elites and professionals is so high that the rate of doctors educated in Iranian medical school and migrated abroad is ranked among the top ten in the world (6,101 persons, 8.4% of all doctors as of 2010). According to Esfandiari (2004)’s article “Iran: Coping with The World’s Highest Rate of Brain Drain”, 150,000 to 180,000 highly educated young Iranians are leaving for North America annually, mostly citing high domestic unemployment and absence of freedom as the reasons. From the position of Iranian government that supports the tuition of all professionals, the brain drain is a great economic and social loss. The brain drain to the U.S. shows the highest rate of Iranians among Asians who migrated to the U.S. for education (Torbat, 2002), while an IMF report states that over 250,000 Iranian engineers and doctors reside in the U.S. only and that the other 170,000 are migrants with high academic backgrounds (Chaichian, 2012). Most young doctors I met during my field research in 2009 were preparing for the medical licensing examinations of the U.S. or Australia, and all five doctors who were preparing for studying abroad then have now passed the exam in the U.S. and finished their residencies.

<Case 6>

Think about it. All national universities in Iran exempt you from everything, be it dormitory fee or tuition. In case of medical school, the government supports seven years of tuition, but medical students these days only think of leaving to the U.S., Canada, or Australia. All the highly trained personnel who graduate from domestic universities only think of going abroad once they can get the chance, so how much of a national loss is it? Also, when they go abroad, how much money should their parents send them? Of course, it’s a result brought by the Islamic Republic upon itself. (Male, aged 26, medical student)

The Iranian community has the highest average level of education among migrant communities, and the salient phenomenon of doctors and professors’ migration serves as a proof of Iranian economic loss (Torbat, 2002, p. 273). When medical students finish school with all tuition waived, they have two or three years of mandatory social service period, but most people prepare for migration to the West after just fulfilling the service obligation. It is due to this tendency that Iranian society continues to face problems caused by the brain drain as well as the economic loss caused by parents sending funds for studying or living abroad. In the background for the migration of the elite population including doctors, there are factors such as poor working conditions and low wage that play a large role. Australia is inducing the migration of Iranian doctors, offering housing, cars, high wage, and lesser working days. The brain drain of doctors in the present Iranian society is grave, as people say things like “The only remaining doctors in Iran are so unskilled that they can only treat simple colds” and “Europe takes all doctors from Iran as soon as they graduate.”

Lastly, let us examine what kind of choice the young Iranians make after they receive degrees abroad. With an annual census of individuals who receive doctorate degrees in U.S. universities presented by the National Science Foundation of the U.S., “2015 Doctorate Recipients from U.S. Universities”, we can estimate the situation after brain drain through the rate of Iranians who earned their degrees in the U.S. and those who remained there. Iran is placed at eighth among the top ten countries (with Korea at third) of foreigners receiving doctorate degrees in the U.S. from 2005 to 2015. The 2015 statistics in particular show Iran ranked fourth after China, India, and Korea among all countries of origin for foreigners who received doctorate degrees.

This study examined the brain drain issue of elite migration in different forms of immigration in Iranian society. Iran’s human resources and talent are acknowledged for their abilities in the world, as Iranians performed well in the International Mathematical Olympiad, the International Astronomy Olympiad, and the International Science Olympiad in the year of 2017. Compared to other developing countries, Iran invests much higher costs in education, spending 20% of the governmental budget and 5% of GDP on education (Nash & Sasmaz, 2011). Despite the national concern, effort, and investment, many Iranians face the reality of leaving their home due to the debilitation of domestic foundation businesses, economic difficulties, and the problem of controlled society. More specific and realistic measures are needed on the national level and worries for management of and investment for Iran’s human resources are being endlessly raised within the country.

15.5 Conclusion

Iranian society has been facing a grave economic situation since 2017 and is encountering a national crisis so that national donation is called upon for the first time since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. In March 2020, Iran even appealed to IMF for a rapid financial assistance of \$5 billion for the first time in 41 years. The Iranian people are complaining of mass depression due to a train of misfortunes, and overall medical and psychological crises in society are looming as domestic violence and child abuse cases are increasingly reported. Despite the government’s efforts including mass text messages promoting hotlines for domestic violence, there are unfortunate cases where families are falling apart due to the national crisis. Iran, having spent recent years of unprecedented difficulties even before the COVID-19 pandemic, faces severe aftermath of the pandemic that does not easily die out. Most of all, what become clearer is that trust is waning between the Iranian government and the people as misfortunes continue. In such a context, the desire for overseas migration is stronger than ever in Iran, but migration is becoming more difficult as time goes by with the seriousness of COVID-19 in Iran. Therefore, though the young generation longs for immigration, the conditions given to them have aggravated even further. The immigration problem in Iran is thus a social issue that illustrates both social change and conflict situation.

Young Iranians see themselves as hostages held in the grand prison of their country. They dream of breaking away from the day-to-day politics of surveillance and control and escaping to foreign countries that are like virtual worlds in their reality. The foreign countries they dream of are those of imagination, not any different from the ideals of utopian Islam community that their state presents. This study examined the Iranian young who dream of studying and relocating abroad and the reality that they do not return even after finishing their studies and earning their degrees. However, those who can leave to study only make up a minor percentage, since the opportunity for overseas migration also returns to the class issue which dictates that the larger population of young Iranians are trapped in society like birds in cages, forced to face their depressing actualities.

It appears that this is the time for Iranian society to acknowledge the brain drain as a more serious social problem and consider more active solutions for dealing with the social issues that serve as the background for the outflow of talent. The Iranian government should not just criticize the young generation for wishing to escape from Iran only if they could, but earnestly reflect on why outstanding young people of ability choose tougher lives in foreign countries away from home and why they do not wish to return home even after finishing their studies, in order to prepare countermeasures.

The anti-government protests that broke out all over Iran following the economic crises of 2017 and 2018 represents Iran's current reality in its totality. These more recent protests, unlike the Green Movement of 2009, were not led by the secular, revolutionary young generation but instead sporadically arose in small provincial cities and rural areas. Inflation after consecutive earthquakes and high unemployment rate were direct causes among others, but it is significant that the enraged cries of these protestors targeted not only the economy but the basis of the Islamic system, clamoring for “death to the dictator”. Although the voices of middle to lower classes in provinces with traditionally conservative and pro-government tendencies were much larger, the voices eventually encompassed different classes, political positions, and religious stances as they jointly criticized the Islamic regime. This, again, calls for attention to the cries of various demands for social reforms within Iran.

On the other hand, immigration to Western countries does not only serve utopian realities to Iranian immigrants. Not all Iranians with high educational backgrounds, who take up a considerable part of the overall immigrant population, can choose occupations in the U.S. or Europe that are compatible with their levels of education, and many suffer from mental and economic difficulties. As discussed above, many Iranian brains embarked on their studies abroad with high hopes and dreams but face prevalent discriminations against migrants and Muslim people in both North American and European societies, and this also calls forth diverse social problems. This study on overseas migration and brain drain must be linked to research on the Iranian diaspora. It should be noted that this linkage to diaspora studies remains an important task, especially in the reality where the Iranian diaspora has a profound impact on the reformists in Iranian society and operates as a strong force upon popular culture and mass media.

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Part II
Cultural Sphere

Chapter 16

The Threat to Cultural Heritage in Times of Conflict and Its Dynamic Relationship with Gulf Society



Amr Al-Azm

Abstract Cultural heritage, both material and immaterial, is an important representation of a nation's diverse cultures and vital to national identity. Yet this heritage is increasingly coming under threat from ongoing regional conflicts resulting in an unprecedented surge in looting and trafficking in cultural heritage materials throughout the region. Furthermore, social media has led to the exponential growth of this illicit trade of antiquities where an international network of traffickers, traders and terrorists utilize online platforms for the auctioning and sale of cultural goods. This paper seeks to address a number of questions pertaining to the evolving relationship of Gulf states and societies to cultural heritage (museums, private collections, etc.) and the international laws and conventions protecting them. The extent of trafficking that occurs in the region and changing attitudes to it.

Keywords National identity · Looting · Trafficking · Cultural property · UNESCO 1970 convention · Ratification · Social media · Facebook

The Arab uprisings of 2010–2011 also known as the Arab Spring broke out all over the Middle East region with citizens demanding democratic rights in response to enduring authoritarianism, and social and economic justice in the face deep held grievances. Most have since receded to simmering embers of resentment with recurrent flareups as seen in the recent protests in Sudan, Algeria, Iraq and Lebanon. The uprisings, however, also spawned hybrid wars with state and non-state actors fighting in Libya, Yemen and Syria. These hybrid wars involving domestic, regional and international actors have been very destructive to the countries they are being waged in with significant blowback into neighbouring states and destabilizing the region as a whole.

The political, economic and humanitarian dimensions of such armed conflicts are usually the primary focus of the international community, governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGO's). In 2015, the UN secretary General Ban Ki-Moon described the ongoing war in Syria as a "shameful symbol" and "the world's

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largest humanitarian crisis”, (United Nations, 2015) followed more recently by a similar description of the ongoing Yemen conflict (United Nations, 2019). It is not surprising therefore that cultural heritage an important casualty of these conflicts is often ignored or forgotten. Until recently that is, when the media started paying more attention to attacks against cultural heritage sites and monuments by radical Islamist groups. These include the Taliban’s destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas in 2001 (Centlivres, 2012) and later more famously the attacks by ISIS in Mosul and Palmyra (Lister et al., 2016).

The threat to cultural heritage during such conflicts is both directly through military action and deliberate destruction as well as looting and trafficking of archaeological materials. Looting and trafficking of antiquities, in particular, has been well documented in recent years with objects from conflict zones being sold openly on the international markets. These include Khmer art from Cambodia following the collapse of the Khmer rouge in 1979, Iraqi antiquities in the wake of the US invasion of Iraq and the looting of the Baghdad museum in 2003 (Losson, 2017). More recently, the extensive looting and sale of antiquities from Libya, Syria and Yemen have showed up being openly sold as well (Athar Project, 2019). Often, the sale and trafficking of such looted antiquities becomes a profitable source of income for the individuals or warring factions involved and may even fuel the conflict thus extending its life in some cases (Fearon, 2004).

This is exacerbated by the existence of a robust, and largely unregulated, international market for art and antiquities dominated by Western nations providing ample opportunities to launder movable cultural artefacts into the global marketplace—opportunities that are not always available when trafficking in narcotics, oil, weapons or other traditional sources of illicit/terrorist financing. Traffickers will often employ same pre-existing smuggling routes and connections used for traditional exports (Al-Azm & Paul, 2018). In Afghanistan under the Taliban, the volume of looting reached epidemic proportions almost rivalling profits from the opium trade (Nemeth, 2015).

In Southeast Asia, the antiquities trade continues to flourish alongside the narcotics one (Nemeth, 2015). While in Syria and Iraq, the foreign fighters who joined ISIS went on to occupy some of the most powerful roles within the terror network. In May 2015, US Special Forces raided the headquarters of a senior ISIS official, a Tunisian named Fathi Ben Awn Ben Jildi Murad al-Tunisi—or more commonly Abu Sayyaf. During the raid, US Special Forces found a hoard of information about ISIS’ inner workings. Among, their findings were evidence of a highly organized antiquities trafficking scheme. Abu Sayyaf’s compound not only yielded looted antiquities, but a trove of documents (Chulov, 2014) permits, receipts and computer files revealing how ISIS had made antiquities trafficking part of their institutional infrastructure (Al-Azm & Paul, 2017).

In fact, since the rise of ISIS and the establishment of the Caliphate in 2014, the looting and trafficking of antiquities in the Middle East and North Africa has reached unprecedented levels (Engel, 2016). In a region with tens of thousands of archaeological sites, antiquities are as easily accessible as oil for terrorist groups controlling such archaeologically rich territory. ISIS militants loot and sell movable artefacts within their reach. Antiquities have been found in ISIS strongholds in Syria,

Iraq and even Libya. However, this is not the only way cultural heritage is exploited to further the group's efforts—what cannot be moved is often destroyed as seen in Nineveh (Iraq) and Palmyra (Syria) (Al-Azm, 2015a, 2015b).

Looting, however, should not be seen as activity exclusive to war zones per se. There are many other reasons why looting occurs in times of peace as well, whether it is by organized criminal elements within society or due to poverty as with subsistence looting and these have been well documented elsewhere (Emberling & Hanson, 2008). Nor is looting and destruction of cultural heritage a recent phenomenon. For as long as, humans have been burying their dead with valuables, waging wars, sacking cities and carrying off the plundered wealth of conquered nations, cultural property has been the principal victim. The looting and destruction would then be celebrated by the victors with monuments and symbols of their own commemorating their victories. The sack of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD was depicted on the Arch of Titus (Cartwright, 2013) while the pillage of Dacia is graphically depicted on Trajan's column (Trajan's Column in Rome) to name but a couple of notable examples. Iconoclasm would soon become a phenomenon of wars and conquest with religious and cultural symbols being systematically destroyed. Government led iconoclasm begun by the Byzantine empire in the eighteenth century AD, would become widespread during the Protestant Reformation wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Eire, 1989). Large scale removal of cultural property and art during conquest and war are also well documented. During the sack of Constantinople by the 4th Crusade in 1204, shiploads of gold, silver, jewels, artwork, and sacred relics left the city that year for the ports and cities of Western Europe (Cartwright, 1204: The Sack of Constantinople, 2018).

During the Napoleonic wars, many of Europe's treasures and finest works of art were carted back to Paris and displayed, however the greatest orgy of looting and destruction of art and cultural property in the modern era would be perpetrated by the Nazis in World War II (Wills, 2015). They not only looted the museums and private collections from the conquered but also indulged in orgies of destruction of what they deemed to be "degenerate art" that did not conform to Nazi Aryan ideology (Holocaust Encyclopedia, 2020).

While there have been efforts throughout history to attempt to protect cultural property from theft or destruction. These ranged from placing spells in the royal tombs of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia that cursed any who would attempt to rob them to international treaties, national laws and agreements aimed at preventing the looting and destruction cultural heritage. It was in the aftermath of the World War II that the international community moves to establish the first international convention to address the issue of protecting cultural property during conflict (1954 Hague Convention). This is then followed by the 1970 UNESCO Convention in response to international trafficking in antiquities. The 1970 Convention prohibits the sale, export and import of illicitly acquired cultural property (UNESCO, 1970).

16.1 The Case of the Gulf States

The majority of Gulf, states and their societies adopt a seemingly paradoxical relationship with cultural heritage. In countries, where local tangible cultural heritage has only recently been taken into consideration from the 2000 onwards, with the exception of Oman whose earliest entry into the World Heritage Site list was the Bahla fort inscribed in 1987 (UNESCO), there has been a significant effort to engage in public international acknowledgement of historical sites in the region. There has also been increasing interest in highlighting private collections, as well as collecting in general among the general public for arts and antiquities. This is also evidenced by shifts, at least nominally, in the enactment of laws relating to cultural heritage trafficking and ratification of relevant UNESCO Conventions on the topic in some cases much earlier than their eventual signing and acceptance/ratification dates.

Beginning with the 1970 UN Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, Table 16.1 shows the current status of GCC countries.

As can be seen from the table above, with the exception of the UAE and Bahrain who ratified the treaty in 2014 and 2018, respectively, all the other GCC countries ratified or accepted soon after independence, within the first decade. A key question that emerges from this is where the theory of wanting to protect cultural heritage as indicated by the early ratification dates by most GCC states and the actual practice of doing so through the enactment of patrimony laws intersect. To further understand this matter as well as the status of antiquities trafficking in the region, we need to examine laws and case studies that emerge directly from the region including prevailing attitudes to private collections and their legal status within individual states as well as the region as a whole.

Table 16.1 Country wise Acceptance/Ratification Data of GCC states with regard to the 1970 UN Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (UNESCO World Heritage Convention)

Country	Action	Date of Notification	Date of Effect
Bahrain	Ratification	N/A	07/03/2014
Kuwait	Acceptance	22/06/1972	22/09/1972
Oman	Acceptance	02/06/1978	02/09/1978
Qatar	Acceptance	20/04/1977	20/07/1977
Saudi Arabia	Acceptance	08/09/1976	08/12/1976
UAE	Ratification	09/10/2017	09/01/2018

16.2 Laws in the Gulf Pertaining to Trafficking of Antiquities

In examining the laws regarding the protection of cultural heritage and antiquities, and in particular those pertaining to looting and trafficking that have been passed/amended in each country, it is interesting to note how recently many of them have come into effect. Especially, when compared to the dates when that the UNESCO, 1970 Convention on the means of prohibiting the illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property was ratified by those states. Listed below are the key laws found in each country concerning this issue and the dates that they were enacted.

Bahrain: (Woskinski & Renold, 2017)

- 1995: Decree Law No. 11 of 25 June 1995 Concerning the Protection of Antiquities. This replaced an older Bahrain Antiquities Law of 1970, which was amended by Decree Law No. 17 of 1985.
- 1989: Decree by the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA) on the listing of monuments (although many of the monuments no longer exist due to development and urban expansion).

Kuwait: (UNESCO, nd1)

- 1960: Law of Antiquities and amendments thereto.
- 1960: Princely Decree on the Antiquities Law No 11, 1960.
- 1994: Antiquities Law No. 9, 1994.
- 1994: Decree No 52 on National Library, 1994.
- 1999: Law on Intellectual (and artistic) Property No 64, 1999.

Oman: (UNESCO, nd2)

- 1976: Royal Decree No 14 of 1976—changing the name of the Ministry of Omani Heritage to the Ministry of National Heritage. (Oman) (Royal Decree No. 14 of 1976 Changing the Title of the “Ministry of Omani Heritage”, 1976) (e.Oman).
- 1977: Decree of the Sultan N, 20/77 on the functions of the Ministry of National Heritage.
- 1977: Law on the censorship of works of artistic composition.
- 1977: Law on the protection of Manuscripts.
- 1980: Law on the protection of national cultural heritage (UNESCO).
- 1997: Decree of the Sultan n.65/1997 on the adoption of a law to control Art Traffic.
- 2005: Decree of the Sultan n.24/2005 on the functions and structure of the Ministry of Heritage and Culture.
- 2005: Decree of the Sultan on the adoption of the UNESCO Convention of Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage.
- 2005: Law on the control of Art Circulation.
- 2007: Decree of the Sultan n.37/2007 on the adoption of international conventions related to the protection of intellectual property.

- 2007: Decree on the adoption of the Cultural Diversity Convention.
- 2008: Decree of the Sultan modifying intellectual copyright.
- 2010: Ministerial Decision regarding the list of Museums and Heritage Institutions.
- 2010: Ministerial Decision regarding the organizational list of religious recital groups.

Qatar: (UNESCO, nd3)

- 1980: Law N. 2 Antiquities Law (Meezan).
- 2002: Law N. 7 on the protection of copyrights.
- 2010: Law N. 23 of 2010 Amending Certain Provisions of Law No. 2 of 1980 on Antiquities (al Meezan).

Saudi Arabia: (UNESCO, nd4)

- 1972: Antiquities Law No M 26 on 23/6/1392.
- 1972: Criteria on cooperation between Ministry of Culture, Archaeological Research Centers, Scientific Department of Antiquities and Museums regarding Legislation on Antiquities.
- 1972: Regulations concerning the export of antiquities.
- 1998: Law on the protection of sites and the protection of archaeological and cultural objects/artefacts.
- 2000: Statues of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities.
- 2014: Antiquities, Museums and Architectural Heritage Law.

United Arab Emirates: (UNESCO, nd5)

- 1970: Law N.8 on antiquities and excavations (Abu Dhabi).
- 1992: Antiquities Law (Sharjah).
- 2017: Federal Law No. 11 of 2017 On Antiquities (Government of UAE, 2017).

The majority of laws that were issued in the 1960s and 1970s followed along the UNESCO Conventions of 1954 and 1970. These conventions were the impetus to begin establishing cultural heritage preservation institutions in the region, particularly post-independence. This was a time when newly independent countries in a region with shared cultures and traditions were being founded, thereby necessitating the development of state-building tools. Additionally, with the majority of the GCC countries providing early acceptance of cultural heritage conventions (1954 and 1970), it provides an opportunity for these young nations to present themselves and issues of importance to them on an international stage. Particularly, as widely demonstrated in the region, in the case of intangible, and more recently tangible cultural heritage. Even with states like Bahrain and the UAE who are late ratifiers to the 1970 convention, it is clear that they had enacted patrimony laws for the protection of their cultural heritage quite early on as well.

Oman, followed by Saudi Arabia, present the greatest legal investment in ensuring that laws concerning the identification, listing, sale, acquisition and transport of cultural heritage are enacted. However, it is interesting to note that the prohibition of

sales of cultural heritage in these two states in addition to Bahrain is only restricted to local finds. This raises the question of what oversight mechanisms are in place to determine the origins and provenance of objects found on the market, as well as in private and public collections. What trafficking networks have been identified, and whether there are official registries of collectors and sellers which brings us to the issue of private collections in the Gulf states.

16.3 In the Gulf too, Private collections have become a Trend

The question of private collections of antiquities is one that has not been well documented in the Gulf states. Legally, as demonstrated from the laws below, private collections are permitted with the exception typically of local artefacts, being purchased/sold as part of private collections. Acquiring such private personal collections has become a prestigious pastime for those with the ability to do so in recent years too.

In countries such as Qatar, such private collections are highlighted on national television, *AlRayyan TV*, on a programme called *Muqtanayat* (Al Rayyan Satellite Channel) where in each episode a collector and their private collection of art, artefacts, archaeological specimens and objects of curiosity are presented to the public and celebrated. Some of these do relate to Qatar and its regional history (such as Mr. Alfardan's famed pearl collection), but they are also often associated with other areas of interest ranging from scientific instruments to palaeontology. There are also with only occasional instances of high-profile private collections of art and artefacts being donated to the state as with the collection of Sh. Hassan bin Mohammed bin Ali Al-Thani and his donation to the *Mathaf Museum* collection, jointly owned by Qatar Museums and Qatar Foundation. Whereas in Oman, there is more emphasis on the celebration of collections and collecting of items of national cultural importance and concern in heritage preservation. Earlier this year, a national newspaper highlighted the personal efforts a collector in the region of Al Buraimi (A 'Treasure Trove' of Antique Collections in Al Buraimi, 2021). As well as, several locals who preserve their cultural heritage in small exhibits in their private homes (YouTube, 2021). Inherited cultural artefacts are not usually acquired by the Omani state, again as with Qatar, only occasional instances of high-profile private collections of art and artefacts being donated to the state. While in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), we see the active encouragement of participation in not only the viewing, but also the acquisition of tangible and intangible cultural heritage as a commodity that would draw a connection to a glorified past (Alhamawi, 2021).

The data concerning how and where these private collections are acquired, expanded, and are maintained is sparse. This is particularly so in the case of information available on the collections of private citizens who often are not public figures, and government tracking of these collections is practically non-existent. The majority

of the laws and decrees do not discuss or seem to apply to private collections beyond the need of defining what is and is not legal to acquire, typically correlating to international law/UN conventions, as well as tangible national cultural heritage. This reveals a potentially fruitful avenue for future inquiry which opens up questions regarding what purchasing choices are made by regional private collectors (is it what is available on the market, does it relate to the acquisition of cultural capital, and do private collections have thematic or period interests that overlap, and do these collections—whether consciously or unconsciously—contain trafficked artefacts and artworks?). Addressing these questions through further investigation would reveal important information regarding attitudes towards trafficked artefacts, as well as the mechanisms, networks and routes that are adopted to engage in these activities, as well as what the reaction would be should an artefact be discovered (after acquisition) to be a trafficked object with all possible implications surrounding its purchase.

16.4 Trafficking of Cultural Material in the Gulf

While publicly available media concerning the trafficking of goods through the Gulf region is not widely reported, a few incidences that have been identified and highlighted are listed below:

- One hundred and ninety fake Iraqi antiquities illegally trafficked to the UK via Bahrain. They were stopped and seized by UK Border police force at Heathrow airport after they were detected there on the 1 July 2019. The shipment was destined for a single buyer/collector. This demonstrates a route through Gulf airports to Europe (Bailey, 2020).
- Buyers from the Gulf region have been noted to travel to Turkey with the specific intent of purchasing looted antiquities mainly from Syria and Iraq directly from traffickers who have smuggled these goods into the country (Howard et al., 2016).
- Yemeni looted artefacts sold at auction in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and then smuggled to the US. This illicit trafficking in looted Yemeni cultural materials has increased significantly since 2015 and is thought to be worth millions of US dollars (Jarus, 2019). Yemeni artefacts have also been smuggled into European markets through Saudi Arabia. Later, these items began resurfacing in private collections in Qatar, Kuwait, and the UAE as well having been purchased from European dealers and auction houses (IADAA Newsletter August 2021, 2021).
- Looted Palmyrene statues were shipped to Switzerland from Qatar and UAE in 2010 and then discovered in Geneva in 2016 (McGivern, 2016).
- A Syrian looted mosaic that was discovered and confiscated in California (the US). It had been purchased from a well know Syrian artist based in KSA but frequently travelled to Turkey which is where the mosaic was acquired from (Felch, 2018).
- Hobby Lobby purchased and smuggled ancient Iraqi artefacts which were viewed for purchase in the UAE with vendors from the UAE and Israel (Newton, 2017).

- There is a high demand for Islamic art in the GCC states with Egypt as a major supplier (Wilson Center, 2016).
- Dubai has become a major hub for trafficking looted Libyan (and Yemeni) artefacts. Typically, the trafficked items are smuggled to Europe and US (The State of Illicit Trade and Looting of Libyan Antiquities 2011–2020, 2020). One example is a Libyan statue from Cyrene trafficked via a Dubai based art dealer, with forged documents. The statue was later recovered in the United Kingdom (Brodie, 2017; District Judge, 2015; Lee, 2015; Netcher, 2020).
- There is additional data to support the notion that Dubai has become a hub for the illegal trade in antiquities as shown in the 2020 RAND report: *Trafficking and Disrupting the Illicit Antiquities Trade* (Sargent et al., 2020).

16.5 The Rising Threat of Social Media in Looting and Trafficking in Stolen Antiquities

Since the Arab uprisings a new and more sinister threat to the looting and trafficking of antiquities comes from social media platforms. Social media has changed the way in which people interact with each other providing a means for the global dissemination of ideas and information. In the process, however, it has unwittingly expanded the communication abilities of transnational criminal networks the world over. The same features that allow us to share photos and videos about ourselves and communicate with others are also the ideal toolkit for traffickers to buy and sell illicit antiquities from some of the world's most conflict-ridden nations (Al-Azm & Paul, 2019).

Facebook is the most high-profile of the social media platforms that have been used as vehicles for the sale of illicit artefacts; others include WhatsApp, Telegram and Viber. Antiquities traffickers use these platforms to evade the authorities and circumvent regulations imposed by online auction and e-commerce sites like eBay, LiveAuctioneers and Etsy (Al-Azm & Paul, 2018).

Today, Facebook offers a veritable digital toolbox for traffickers to utilize including photo and video uploads, live streaming, disappearing “Stories”, payment mechanisms and encrypted messaging. Facebook is the perfect platform for a one-stop-shop black market. This, in turn, has made Facebook the wild west of social media, providing opportunities for violent extremist organizations and criminal groups to operate in plain sight with little recourse. Facebook and other technology companies receive broad immunity from responsibility for any content posted to their platforms by third parties under the 1996 Communications Decency Act Section 230. Aside from the law, Facebook does have its own internal policies laid out in the company's Community Standards that prohibit the sale of black-market items like drugs and wildlife. Illicit cultural property is not listed in the banned trades under Facebook's Community Standards. As a result, today we can find detailed information about the antiquities trafficking that has remained active on the platform for years. This data provides a rare look at the inside of the trade (Al-Azm & Paul, 2018). It is worth noting that unlike other black-market trades, there are few statistics on the

trade in illicit antiquities. Likewise, little data is available for the legal global trade in antiquities. Art market industry reports typically loop datasets for antiquities sales in with broader art market data (TEFAF, 2020). For a trade that can straddle the legal and illegal realm, it is difficult to get a handle on the amount of cultural property that is currently leaving Middle East and North African (MENA) countries in high volumes.

The 2011 Arab Spring served as a catalyst for Facebook's growth across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The platform's role in turning local protests into a viral global phenomenon generated widespread popularity across the region for Facebook (INESC-ID). In the years since, terrorists and transnational criminals have capitalized on the reach of social media platforms like Facebook and the gaps in online security and content moderation. The result has led to sprawling digital black markets on Facebook trading everything from drugs and human remains to wildlife and antiquities (Alliance to Counter Crime Online (ACCO)).

One may wonder, how prevalent are these buyers on Facebook groups and other social media platforms. How often are they from or based in the region? More importantly, why turn to these methods of collecting objects?

Facebook is currently the most widely used social media platform in the world. The company boasted 2.32 billion monthly active users at the end of 2018, more than one-third of the world's population (Facebook). From 2011 to 2017, its user base increased by over 1,200% in countries facing conflict like Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen.

The massive footprint and meteoric rise of the world's most popular social media outlet paired with an overall lack of content moderation have brought about new questions regarding Facebook's ability or willingness to police its platform (Al-Azm & Paul, 2018). Facebook's Community Standards were updated in April 2018 to develop a more refined set of guidelines. The update was timed with the appearance of the company's CEO Mark Zuckerberg before Congress as law makers addressed the litany of issues on the platform. The change included the addition of animals and wildlife to the "prohibited content" list in Facebook's Commerce Policies (Facebook). Illicit cultural property, however, did not make the prohibited content list this time (Facebook). The company's content moderation policies focus on activities and items that are forbidden by their Community Standards (Word Press). Without an explicit ban, Facebook isn't looking for the crime (Al-Azm & Paul, 2018).

The types of cultural property illegally traded on Facebook include looted artefacts from conflict zones, religious relics, historic pieces, and even artefacts in situ. Users in conflict zones like Yemen have even posted artefacts resting on their weapons in photos. As recently as March 2019, users in war torn Libya were posting images of a stolen church bell from Zintan. In Tunisia, even large artefacts like tombstones are posted while still in situ.

The reason why a criminal trade is able to take place on a public platform without any repercussions is because the law has not caught up with the technology. Facebook enjoys broad immunity under Section 230 of the Communications Decency

Act, which stipulates that technology companies cannot be held responsible for third-party content on their platforms (Cornell Law School). That means that when traffickers and even individuals affiliated with terrorist groups list stolen artefacts for sale on Facebook, there are no legal ramifications to compel Facebook to do anything about it.

Authorities in countries affected by the surge of the illicit Facebook trade in antiquities now have to deal with a black market on a digital platform in addition to on-the-ground smuggling networks. Egypt has led the charge in attempting to combat the illicit trade on Facebook. Since 2018, Egyptian authorities have arrested multiple individuals for selling or buying illicit antiquities on Facebook. In September 2018, Egyptian authorities arrested a man for setting up a Facebook Page to sell illicit Pharaonic artefacts (El-Deeb, 2018). Another case in February 2019 involved an attempt by an Egyptian man to smuggle mummy parts out of the country by concealing them in a set of speakers. The man was smuggling the parts for a buyer based in Belgium and the two had connected for the sale through Facebook (Maged, 2019).

In June 2020, Facebook finally announced a major policy change regarding historical artefacts. Under this new policy, Facebook banned and claimed that it would remove content that attempts to buy, sell, trade, donate, gift and or solicit historical/cultural artefacts. This change in policy represents an important shift in Facebook's position on the trade in cultural heritage and demonstrates that they now recognize that this illegal and harmful activity is being flagrantly conducted on their platform. The real issue, however, is how serious Facebook is in their desire to really stamp out this criminal activity and drive it off their platform. A policy is only as good as its enforcement and thus far there has been little enforcement on the curbing of trafficking and sale of looted antiquities on the platform (Al-Azm & Paul, 2020).

There are several campaigns that local Gulf governments and institutions are involved in to prevent the trafficking of antiquities across the region. One of the most prominent recent efforts was conducted by BACA (Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities) who have held a virtual forum in conjunction with the US State Department and the US-based organization entitled The Antiquities collection continuing their efforts with a Statement of Cooperation with the US government on this issue released in October 2021 (US Department of State, 2021). The second is the HIMAYA project run by Qatar National Library who also held a webinar in February 2021 as an awareness campaign as part of their efforts to counter illegal trafficking in the MENA region. (Qatar National Library). Kuwait in February 2019 also hosted a workshop on the prevention of illicit traffic king of cultural property in Kuwait (UNDP, 2019).

It is important to study, observe and understand trafficking in cultural heritage in the Gulf states. Here, certain key question that must be answered include: How is cultural heritage viewed in the region? How does the activity in the cultural heritage market play out here? How familiar are local groups with local cultural heritage? How is cultural heritage perceived? Is it in connection to identity, or commodified, etc. Do these perceptions impact behaviour? These questions require to be studied in-depth individually. Each of these questions has the potential to be individual research projects and provide direction for future research in this field.

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Chapter 17

Challenges of Communication and Identity in the Gulf: Insights from Qatar and the UAE



Rizwan Ahmad

Abstract In this chapter, I present the case studies of the State of Qatar and the UAE, two countries in the Arabian Gulf where although Arabic is the *de jure* official language, many foreign languages are widely used for communication because of a large non-Arab, non-national population. In addition to English, which is used as a lingua franca among the educated people, a host of Asian languages are used by blue-collar workers from South and Southeast Asia. While the presence of foreign languages does facilitate communication, it has also heightened a fear of loss of Arabic and Arab identity among the local populations leading to a series of measures by the governments strengthening the position of Arabic officially. I show how the two governments struggle to balance the needs of communication and identity. I argue that since the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are no longer monolingual, there is a need for the development of a language policy that balances the needs of communication and identity not only in Qatar and the UAE but also in Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, and KSA with less, but still significant non-national population.

Keywords Language ecology · Language planning in the Gulf · Language in Qatar and UAE · Migrant languages · Communication and identity

17.1 Introduction

At a conference dealing with multilingualism at the grassroots level organized by the University of Antwerp in Belgium in 2009, Christine Horner and Jean Weber presented their work on immigration and its impact on the diversity of Luxembourg, a small country in western Europe. While discussing its linguistic ecology, they proudly mentioned that about 40% of its population at that time was foreign residents (Horner & Weber, 2008). On the same panel, I presented my research on Kuwait and its linguistic diversity showing that 68% Kuwait's population at that time consisted of foreign nationals (R. Ahmad, 2016). At the end of the panel, Christine

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Horner said, ‘your data on diversity in Kuwait beat ours on Luxemburg’. Kuwait’s demographic composition may be unusual from a European perspective, but it is quite representative of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries consisting of the United Arab Emirates, the State of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, and the State of Kuwait.

Since the boom in oil and gas prices in the 1970s, the GCC countries have embarked on massive economic and social development projects, which could not have been accomplished with the small and not fully-skilled local Arab population, leading to migration of skilled and non-skilled labor force from within the Arab World and beyond (Shah, 2013). According to the statistics compiled by the Gulf Labor Markets and Migration (GLMM), an independent think tank focusing on migration into the Arabian Gulf, the non-nationals in the GCC outnumbered the nationals in 2016 constituting 51% of the total population (“GLMM,” n.d.).¹ Out of the six GCC countries, in four of them, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE, non-nationals exceeded the number of nationals (Shah, 2013). According to GLMM, the population of foreign nationals in Qatar and the UAE was staggeringly high with Arab nationals constituting only 14% and 11% of the total population, respectively. The proportion of non-nationals in the employed populations was even higher in all GCC countries reaching as high as 95% of the total workforce in Qatar.

Another marked feature of the labor migration into the GCC has been the decline of Arabs in the workforce and its replacement with workers from South and Southeast Asia. According to Kapiszewski (2006, p. 6), the strategy of de-Arabization of the labor force was adopted primarily for two reasons. Firstly, the presence of other Arabs in the GCC was seen as a security threat as they could potentially bring the radical political ideologies from their home countries, especially pan Arabism into the GCC. Secondly, the Asian workers were cheaper and more obedient and thus easier to manage than Arabs. The process of de-Arabization has resulted in the decline of Arabs in the foreign population in the GCC from 72% in 1972 to 32% in 2002/04 (Kapiszewski, 2006). According to Shah, in 2005, the Asians constituted 87.1% of the labor force in the UAE, 92.4% in Oman, and 45.6% in Qatar (2013, p. 45).

The presence of such a high percentage of foreign nationals especially Asians in the UAE and Qatar has led to two major consequences. Firstly, there is a practical need of communication between the large non-Arab Asian population and the government departments, which are mainly conducted in the official language Arabic and English, a *de facto* lingua franca—languages that most blue-collar Asian workers do not control well. To solve this problem, many government agencies in Qatar and the UAE have recently started to use Asian languages in official communications, which contrasts with data from Kuwait, where their use was largely limited to private businesses (R. Ahmad, 2016).

A recent example of the official recognition of Asian language in the UAE is the adoption of Hindi in 2019 in the labor courts in Abu Dhabi whereby non-nationals could use Hindi, besides Arabic and English, to lodge labor complaints (A.

¹ The governments of the GCC countries do not provide disaggregated data based on nationalities, and therefore, different data sources may show slightly different figures.

Ahmad, 2019). Similarly, in Qatar, the Ministry of Interior's mobile app Metrash-2 and the primary healthcare helpline *Hayyak* allow customers to conduct transaction in multiple Asian languages including Malayalam, Urdu, and Tagalog (Chandran, 2019; *Gulf Times*, 2015).

Secondly, the presence of foreign languages has also created a fear of loss of the Arabic language and identity among the local Arab population. Many Arabic and English newspapers have published reports on the purported decline of the use of Arabic among Arabs (Bibbo, 2007; Ḥamadān, 2007). In the last two decades, some academic conferences have also been held in GCC countries in which concerns for the vitality of Arabic have been discussed by academics and policymakers (Arab Council for Childhood and Development, 2007; Jal'ād, 2009). Furthermore, a few research publications from the UAE have further highlighted the issue of the decline of the Arabic language, culture, and identity among the local Emaratis as a result of the dominance of English in the educational domains (Al-Bataineh, 2020; Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011; S. L. Hopkyns, 2017). The fear of loss of language and identity can be gauged from the fact that the preservation of the Qatari heritage and Arab identity forms one of the challenges to be tackled in the Qatar National Vision, 2030 ("Qatar National Vision, 2030," n.d.).

This research is situated within the language planning and policy framework, which includes both official, top-down, *de jure* explicit policy statements and actual, bottom-up, *de facto* practices (Schiffman, 2012; Shohamy, 2006). I analyze government policy documents from the UAE and Qatar overtly dealing with regulations about the use of language as well as the actual linguistic practices. I show how the two governments struggle to reconcile the demands for communication which require use of non-national languages and the need for the assertion of Arab identity which mandates the use of Arabic. I argue that given that the GCC has become multilingual as a consequence of labor migration, there is a need for the development of empirical data and the formulation of a language policy based on that, to regulate the use of Arabic, English, and the languages of the migrant population.

17.2 Theoretical Issues and Data Sources

Language planning is a recent subfield within sociolinguistics which emerged in the 1960s with the goal of studying language situations in developing countries that had gained their independence from the colonial rule. The focus of the field was to study the process by which a particular language, out of possible many others, was selected as a national or official language for the purpose of modernization and nation-building. There are many definitions of the concept of language planning, but Cooper's stands out as it is short yet comprehensive; he defines it, 'Language planning refers to deliberate efforts to influence the behavior of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes' (Quoted in McKay & Hornberger, 1996, p. 110). Language planning involves two broad processes of corpus planning and status planning. While the former refers to the

changes that are brought *within* the structure of the language itself including, but not limited to, coining new words, reforming writing systems, and developing reference material such as grammar books and dictionaries, the latter deals with the political and ideological issue of assigning languages to different functions. Declaring a language as the national language or as the language of education, judiciary, etc., falls within status planning. This chapter is concerned with status planning in the Arabian Gulf.

This paper adopts a post-structuralist framework of language policy and planning research in which language policies are not seen as a neutral tool but a process that shapes people's decision and are simultaneously shaped by it. This framework goes beyond the official policy documents and allows for the inclusion of grassroots practices involving language. Unlike earlier studies, language planning in this framework is viewed as socially constituted, and thus, language groups may contest decisions made by their government. Additionally, there is now a recognition of how language policies at the macro-level of the state are interpreted by individuals and groups at more micro-levels (Schiffman, 2012; Shohamy, 2006). Shohamy alerts us that "the real LP [language policy] of a political and social entity should be observed not merely through declared policy statements but rather through a variety of devices that are used to perpetuate language practices, often in covert and implicit ways" (2006, p. 45). The data for the paper come from recent debates on language in the UAE and Qatar in the public forums such as academic seminars and conferences and Arabic and English language newspapers. Furthermore, recent policy documents from the UAE and Qatar regarding the allocation of languages to various social, educational, and economic domains have also been analyzed. I focus on the UAE Cabinet decision no. 21/2 and the Arabic Language Protection Law, passed by the Qatar parliament in 2019.

17.3 Analysis and Findings

Based on the two major issues emanating from the presence of large non-nationals in the GCC and the dominance of English, this section is divided into two subsections. The first section deals with the measures taken by the governments of Qatar and the UAE to solve the needs of communication with their large non-national Asian population. The second section deals with the fear of erosion of the Arabic language and Arab identity, which is attributed to the presence of Asians with different languages and cultures. Another element of this discourse is the introduction of English in schools and universities, which is believed to have contributed to the erosion of the Arabic language and identity. In this section, I also discuss the scientific measures that are used to study the decline of a language and the data, or lack of it, on which the assumed discourse of the loss of Arabic is based.

17.4 Communicating in a Multilingual Setting

The constitution of the State of Qatar, which was adopted in 2004 following a national referendum in the previous year, declares Arabic as the only official language of the country (Article 1). Similarly, the permanent constitution of the UAE adopted in 1996 declares Arabic as the only official language of the union of seven emirates. Although there is no mention of English in the constitutions or any other government documents, it is widely used in both countries in communication between the government and the non-nationals. Most communication aimed at the non-nationals emanating from the government is available in Arabic and English. Some government agencies have lately begun to use languages of the non-nationals, which is discussed in detail below. In terms of language use, another relevant factor is that both countries have a number of international English-medium schools and branches of Western universities, which are attended by local Arabs as well as non-nationals—Arabs and non-Arabs alike (Findlow, 2006). These schools run parallel to the Arabic-medium government and private schools, which creates two classes of graduates with different linguistic skills.

As mentioned above, the non-nationals in the GCC countries in general and Qatar and the UAE in particular constitute a significant part of the population. Table 17.1 (adapted from Shah, 2013) gives a good perspective on the percentages of non-nationals in the demographic composition and the employment sector of the GCC countries.

Table 17.1 Total population by nationality (2010) and labor force by nationality (2008) in the six GCC countries

Country	Estimated population, 2010			Labor Force, 2008		
	Total population	Non-nationals	% Non-nationals	Total employed (000s)	% citizens	% foreigners
Bahrain (2008)	1,107,000	569,000	51.4	597	23.3	76.7
Kuwait (2010)	3,566,437	2,443,223	68.2	2,093	17.8	83.2
Oman (2008)	2,867,000	900,000	31.4	1,169	25.4	74.6
Qatar (2010)	1,697,000	1,477,000	87.0	1,265	5.8	94.3
Saudi Arabia (2010)	27,136,977	8,429,401	31.0	8,455	49.4	50.6
UAE (2010) ^c	8,264,070	7,316,073	88.5	3,043	15.0	85.0
Total	44,638,484	21,124,697	47.3	16,538	33.1	66.9

As mentioned earlier, Asians form 87.1% and 45.6% of the total workforce in the UAE and Qatar, respectively (Shah, 2013). It is important to note that the term Asian is used as a cover term for the diverse people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and Indonesia who speak unrelated and mutually incomprehensible languages. Of Asians, Indians are the largest nationality in Qatar and the UAE. In Qatar, they constitute 21.8% of the total population (Snoj, 2019), whereas they form more than 30% in the UAE (“Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi, U.A.E.,” n.d.).

It is worth noting that Indians are not homogenous linguistically either, as they come from different parts of India speaking Malayalam, Tamil, Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, and Telugu. It is clear from this that the linguistic diversity in the GCC is quite complex. What further adds to the complexity is that bulk of the Asian migrants are uneducated, low-skilled workers who do not know English, which is otherwise used as a lingua franca. While doing research on the use of migrant languages in Qatar during COVID-19 campaigns, a government official in an interview told me that the most important thing he learned from the campaign was that English is not really an international language in Qatar (R. Ahmad & Hillman, 2021). Piller (2017) in her sociolinguistic description of Dubai, which applies equally well to Qatar, highlights the complexity of the use of the term lingua franca by noting, “the statement ‘Arabic is the official language of the UAE’ hides more than it reveals” and “the statement ‘English is the lingua franca of Dubai’ equally conceals as much as it reveals” (p. 15).

The governments in both Qatar and the UAE understand that relying on English for effective communication with the Asian population is fraught with danger especially in times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Both UAE and Qatar used Asian languages, though in different degrees, to reach the migrant population in their own languages. Although the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization (MOHRE) in the UAE government used Hindi, Urdu, Tagalog, and Chinese to assure the labor market of stability during the COVID-19 crisis (“Corona Virus- Covid19 Procedures,” n.d.), Hopkyns and van den Hoven (2021) show that its communication with non-national population during COVID-19 crisis in 2020 was largely in Arabic and English. The Government of Qatar, by contrast, used the migrant languages Malayalam, Tamil, Nepalese, Tagalog, Sinhalese, Hindi, Urdu, and Bengali extensively in both the print and audio–video modes during COVID-19 awareness campaigns (R. Ahmad & Hillman, 2021).

The use of migrant languages is not confined to what is known as directive signs, which are signs used by the authority to inform the public about a public order (Angermeyer, 2017; Mautner, 2012). In 2019, the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department in the UAE made a landmark decision to allow the use of Hindi, which is an official language of India, in the labor courts, whereby workers could file complaints related to wages, compensations of arbitrary layoffs, and other employment benefits in Hindi, in addition to the existing Arabic and English. The Undersecretary of the Judicial Department said that the inclusion will enhance access to justice for migrant workers (A. Ahmad, 2019). Although spoken Hindi has emerged as a lingua franca among South Asians (R. Ahmad, 2019), it is not clear if Malayalis, Bengalis, and others can

use it in its written form. The decision, even if not fully effective, holds a symbolic value as it is an official recognition of a foreign language in an Arab country.

Similarly in 2015, the Road and Transportation Authority of the UAE included seven more languages namely Hindi, Malayalam, Tamil, Bengali, Chinese, Russian, and Persian to the existing Arabic, English, and Urdu in the driving tests for licenses (Shahbandari, 2015). This allowed non-national residents to take the computer-based knowledge test in these languages; for those who couldn't read the test was also available in voice-over mode in these languages. In addition to the tests for driving license, these languages were also available for traffic lessons. The telecom service provider Etisalat and Du, which are partially owned by the government, allow mobile phone customers to select Urdu as the default language of the mobile SIM.

In Qatar, the migrant languages are utilized much more frequently and widely to communicate with the non-nationals. In recent years, the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs have taken a lead in the use of migrant languages in print and on social media. Similar to the UAE, in 2018, the General Directorate of Traffic, within the Ministry of Interior, added eight new ones to the existing ten languages in which knowledge test is available for those applying for a license (Mohammad, 2018). Ministry of Interior's popular mobile application Metrash-2, which allows citizens and residents to conduct transactions related to residency, exit permit, traffic violation, etc., from their smart phones, is available in six languages including Urdu and Malayalam (Fig. 17.1). Similarly, the round-the-clock emergency helpline number 999 is also available in multiple languages (Fig. 17.1). Hayyak, the helpline of the Primary Health Care Corporation, the government agency responsible for primary care of citizens and residents, is available in Tagalog, Urdu, and Malayalam in addition to Arabic and English (*Gulf Times*, 2015). Similarly, the Ministry of Labor allows residents to file labor complaints in nine languages including in Urdu, Hindi, and Malayalam (Fig. 17.2).

In addition to the examples mentioned above in which the residents can use multiple languages to communicate with government agencies, ministries themselves engage in creating materials in multiple languages, in addition to Arabic and English, in communicating with resident non-nationals. On June 10, 2021, the Ministry of Interior on its Facebook page posted awareness material about electronic



Fig. 17.1 Government services in non-official languages



Fig. 17.2 Sample fliers in Sinhalese, Urdu, Malayalam, and Nepali

crimes including identity theft which happens as a result of people sharing with others their one-time password (OTP) needed for online transactions. The awareness material was posted in nine languages, namely Malayalam, Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Sinhalese, Pashto, Nepalese, Tamil, and Bahsha Indonesia. I give below in Fig. 17.2 sample fliers in Sinhalese, Urdu, and Malayalam. To disseminate the safety measures, the Facebook page requests users to share the awareness posters with their family and friends’ circle. Similar contents related to other common issues affecting Asian workers are posted on the FB page in multiple languages. The Ministry on August 28, 2014, posted a flier titled ‘pedestrian safety’ which raises awareness about road safety among Asian workers. People coming from Asian countries, where driving is on the left, often look in the wrong direction before crossing a street in Qatar, where driving is on the right. The flier also contains other safety measures including not using the mobile phone while crossing streets.

On the non-official level, different languages-speaking communities, especially those with large numbers, have established linguistic and literary societies that hold activities in their respective languages. In Qatar, the *Bazm-e-Urdu*, *Anjuman Farogh-e-Urdu Adab*, *Karwan-e-Urdu*, and *Anjuman Muhibban-e Urdu* are some active organizations that hold literary events frequently including the popular *mushaira*, poetry recitation events in which poets from the India and Pakistan are invited. In the UAE, three Urdu weeklies, namely the *Janib-e-Manzil*, the *Urdu Akhbar*, and the *Urdu Weekly* are now printed in the UAE for Urdu speakers from India and Pakistan; in the past, Urdu and other language newspapers used to be imported from the subcontinent. Malayalis who are one of the culturally strongest communities in Qatar and the UAE publish local editions of the Malayali newspaper the *Malayalam Manorama*, the *Mathrubhumi*, and the *Madhyamam* from the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, and KSA. The local editions are modified versions of the mother editions published from Kerala, India. Sometimes the front page is modified to include important news items relevant to the specific country of printing. The GCC editions add pages to cover local news and events from the expat Malayali communities in the GCC.²

Having faced the challenges of communication in an extremely complex multilingual environments, the discussion above shows that the governments of the UAE and Qatar have realized that the use of Arabic, the *de jure* official language, and

² I would like to thank Shajahan Madampat, a writer and cultural commentator based in Abu Dhabi, UAE, for clarifying the Malayalam language publications in the GCC.

English, the purportedly lingua franca, is not enough to ensure smooth communication with the Asian non-nationals. Consequently, they have taken recourse to the use of their languages. The presence and use of these languages and cultures have not been without some implications for the perception of Arabic among Arab nationals. This has crystallized in the form of a discourse of fear of loss of Arabic in the GCC countries to which we return in the section below.

17.5 Perceptions of Fear of Loss of Arabic in GCC

Before I examine the discourse on the fear of loss of Arabic or its decline in the GCC, a word of caution and clarification is in order. The first question is: what are the measures or indicators used to assess the vitality of a language based on which the decline of a language can be determined? The best answer to this question comes from studies on the status of French in Montreal in Canada, which, in response to the discourse of its ‘decline’, has passed a series of language laws in the past several decades, to support French and protect it from being overtaken by English—the language spoken by most people in Canada. According to Arsenault Morin and Geloso (2020), two frequently used measures are the proportion of people who, in the government census, claim French as their mother tongue and those who report speaking French *at home* as their main language (p. 420). People who claim that French is experiencing decline in Montreal use statistics from the census that show falling numbers on these two measures. Interestingly, the census data also show that the percentage of people speaking French *at work* has, in fact, increased in the last few decades. Based on this, Arsenault Morin and Geloso argue that the existing parameters are problematic since people are becoming bilinguals in French and English because of, among other things, interlinguistic marriages. They argue that the criteria should be amended to include use of French *either at home or at work* (not both) as a measure of whether the use of French is declining or not. Their point is that the rise in bilingualism should be taken into account in the studies of the assumed decline of French.

Returning to Arabic, there are two major issues with the discourse of its decline in the GCC. Firstly, the claim is not based on any tangible data but anecdotal and impressionistic accounts from individuals some of which are outright incorrect. The government census in GCC countries does not collect data based on language spoken at home and/or work. Even articles written by the academics do not provide evidence of the decline based on other sources, for instance, ethnographic research in the community. Al-Farajānī, a professor in the University of Cairo, in an article entitled “the Harmful Effects of the Influx of Asian Work Force in the Gulf Countries” published on the Al-Jazeera website, argues that the presence of Asians has had negative cultural consequences the most important of which is *ifsād al-lughah al-‘Arabīyyah*, ‘corruption of the Arabic language’ (Al-Farajānī, 2008). He claims that due to the presence of large Asian work force “...words from Asian languages gain

currency so much so that their Arabic equivalent words disappear (*tatawārā*). Al-Farajānī, however, doesn't give even one example to support his claim. It is not even clear what he means by Asian languages, because the term Asian subsumes more than a dozen languages as different as Malayalam, Tagalog, and Urdu. Al-Farajānī does not stop at that but goes on to claim that the situation will not only distort the [Arabic] language but will eventually create a *huwīyyah hajīn*, 'hybrid culture'. Although he does not elucidate what he means by hybrid culture, it possibly means the influence of other cultures on his assumed 'pure' Arabian Gulf culture. This claim is even more problematic than the one about disappearing Arabic words as close contact with Iranians over the past centuries have led to the borrowing of many words of Persian origins into standard Arabic as well as the dialects spoken in the Gulf. Standard Arabic words, e.g., *tāzīj*, 'fresh', *kanz*, 'treasure', and *jāh*, 'high rank', are borrowings from Middle Persian (Gazsi, 2011). Similarly, words in the Gulf Arabic dialect such as *drīsha*, 'window', *bisht*, 'a formal male attire', and *darwāza*, 'door' are of Persian origin.

Let us now return to the discourse of the decline of Arabic in the GCC, which was the theme of a panel of an international conference entitled "Coordination Meeting of Universities and Institutions Concerned with the Arabic Language in the GCC Countries" organized by King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Center for Language Planning and Policies, based in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. On the panel, Dr. Lateefah Al-Najjar, professor of Arabic in the UAE University, presented a paper on the effects of Asian workforce on the Arabic language in the GCC in which she argued that the amount of standard Arabic a Khaliji child is exposed to is quite little as bulk of the input is the Arabic dialect spoken at home and the pidgin language (*lughat hajīn*) used with the Asian maids and drivers. Without giving any evidence, she concludes that the pidgin language will undoubtedly affect the acquisition of Arabic language (King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Center for Language Planning and Policies, 2013, p. 11). She recommends that the Asian workforce be replaced with Arabs and that the learning of Arabic be a condition of employment. Similar anecdotal arguments can be seen in a recent interview with his excellency Dr. Muḥammad A. Al-Kāfūd, former Minister of Education of Qatar, published in the Arabic newspaper *the Al-Rayah*. Among other factors, he also holds presence of non-nationals (*wujūd al-wafidīn*), mixing of cultures (*ikhtilāṭ al-thaqāfāt*), and foreign nannies (*murabbīyah ajnabīyah*), responsible for the decline of Arabic in the GCC countries. In a detailed academic study of foreign labor and its impact on the Gulf, Al-Najjār titles section five of his paper "fear of cultural melting" (*makhāwif al-dhawbān al-thaqāfī*) (Al-Najjār, 2013, p. 17). He argues that the increase in the size of the "foreign society" (*mujtama' al-ajānīb*) will lead to the submerging of the local identity by non-national identities (p. 17). Although he gives rich statistics on the proportion of foreign labor in different GCC countries, in this section, like other writers discussed above, he does not provide any data.

In contrast to the impact of large labor force on the decline of Arabic language and culture, some studies have examined the impact of English as a medium of instruction on Arabic in the GCC in general and the UAE in particular (Al-Bataineh, 2020; Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011; S. L. Hopkyns, 2017). The common premise of these studies

is that Arabic faces a threat *not* so much from the dominance of Asian languages and cultures but from the powerful global English, which has become not only the lingua franca among the educated Arabs and non-Arabs but also the medium of instruction in international schools and institutions of higher education in the UAE. As the title of Al-Issa and Dahan's work "Global English and Endangered Arabic in the United Arab Emirates" suggests, they argue that Arabic is already endangered in the UAE because of English, "...Arabic in the UAE is facing the very real possibility of becoming very limited in use within the next two or three generations" (p. 4). Although there is a rich discussion of how the UAE has introduced English in the private educational institutions and in higher education, the researchers do not present any primary data in support of their claim of the "endangered Arabic". One of the arguments mentioned is, '...the language itself is notoriously difficult to learn and has quite a complex grammar' (p8), which is not a fact of language, but a piece of ideology informed by certain interests, and therefore, cannot be used as evidence of the decline of Arabic. If this was really a fact of language, how would one explain mastery of Arabic by Arabs now and in the previous centuries.

While it is true that the use of English has changed the sociolinguistic landscape of the UAE and the GCC countries at large by reassigning certain domains of languages use, for instance higher education, to English, it does not follow from it that English as the medium of instruction will endanger or lead to the loss of Arabic. The study does not take into consideration the possibility of the development of bilingualism in which Arabic and English may get allocated to different social functions. English could become the language of education and workplace, whereas Arabic will function in other domains including home, religion, socialization among Arab friends, etc., as is the case in many countries including Montreal in Canada. Al-Bataineh's work (2020), based on primary data gathered in a public university, is more nuanced in that she does not make alarming and sweeping statements about the loss of Arabic, like the ones discussed above. Based on her data, she claims that the educational language policy in the UAE values English more than Arabic which is likely to strengthen the position of English further in education and marginalize Arabic. This is a reasonable conclusion as the introduction of English is definitely reconfiguring the language of education in schools and universities. Before I am misunderstood, I do not claim that this reallocation is insignificant, what I instead stress is that this is not tantamount to loss or endangerment of Arabic.

Secondly, in the discourse on the decline of Arabic, it is the standard Arabic that is believed to be facing a decline. This is often attributed to the English being used in private schools as a medium of instruction. Although sometimes in debates the line between the standard and the dialects may not be very clearly drawn, in one instance it was clear that the decline under debate was indeed the standard Arabic. On January 11, 2009, the TV host Nashwa Al-Ruwaini hosted a show entitled *Ghiyāb al-Lughah al- 'Arabīyyah*, 'Absence of the Arabic Language' on Dubai TV, which was widely reported in newspapers as well (Hajr al-Dād wa haymanat al-Injilīzīyyah ma'a Nashwah, 2009). In one section of this episode called *al-Arab al-ladhīna lā yataḥaddathūna al- 'Arabīyyah*, 'The Arabs who do not speak Arabic' she interviewed two young women and one man who went to English medium schools

and college in the UAE. The Egyptian young man was able to speak Egyptian dialect fluently, so it was clearly his ability in standard Arabic that was believed to be not good enough. The Emarati young woman interviewed on the show was fluent in Emarati Arabic, but she often switched between the Emarati Arabic and English. Clearly, there is an assumption that people should be speaking standard Arabic and that too without mixing English words.

The phenomenon of mixing words from another language or switching to it has been found to be a feature of bilingual speakers in other speech communities. Sociolinguistic studies have long shown that mixing and switching are linked to social factors such as the addressee, the relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor, the choice of the topic, the setting of the conversation, and the identity the speaker wants to construct for themselves (Clyne, 1998). Mixing and switching cannot be taken as evidence of the decline of Arabic. Similarly, the claim that the assumed decline is because of the Asian maids and drivers is also suspect because children may learn some foreign words from their nannies, but as they grow past their teenage and become conscious of their social identity, they stop using them. The phenomenon, referred to as age-grading in sociolinguistics, has been discussed in a study in which Canadian children watching American kids' shows pronounced the last letter of the English alphabet as 'zee', the American pronunciation instead of the Canadian 'zed', but they switched to 'zed' when they became older (Chambers, 2001).

The fact that there is no evidence of the decline of Arabic doesn't mean that it does not have consequences. In sociolinguistics, the discourse of decline is seen as a piece of language ideology, which are perceptions speakers have about structure and use of language, which are used to construct and justify social and political measure. Woolard and Schieffelin emphasize the relationship between ideologies and use by noting that, "ideologies of language are significant for social as well as linguistic analyses because they are not only about language. Rather, *such ideologies envision and enact links of language to group and personal identity, to aesthetics, to morality, and to epistemology*" (1994, pp. 55–56). Despite the fact that there is no tangible evidence of the decline, the ideologies have resulted into the governments of Qatar and the UAE taking measure to counter the alleged decline. We return to this in the following section.

17.6 Measures to Arrest the Perceived Decline of Arabic

Although Arabic is the only official language in the UAE constitution, on March 9, 2008, the UAE Cabinet passed Resolution Number 21/2 whereby all ministries, federal entities, and local government departments were required to use Arabic in all their transactions and correspondences (Cabinet's Resolutions, 2008). According to Dr. Ebtisam Al Kitbi, a professor of political science at the UAE University, this was done to stop the "invasion of foreign languages in government institutions". Hailing this as a landmark decision, Al Kitbi further remarked that the decision will

strengthen the national identity and augment the Arabic-speaking people in labor force and “restore the national identity” (Al-Baik, 2008). For Al Kitbi and those behind the resolution, notwithstanding constitutional status of Arabic in the UAE, the resolution was needed to ensure that Arabic language is also the *de facto* official language and not merely *de jure*.

A forceful execution of the Arabic language outside of the government domains could be seen in the violation tickets the Department of Economic Development of Dubai issued to twenty-nine restaurants, in 2015 for not having their menus in Arabic in addition to not specifying the prices. Ahmed Al Awadhi, the Director of Field Control, asked business owners to cooperate with the department in “establishing the values of the [Arabic] language” (Al Deberky, 2015). Here also, we see how the government agencies are enforcing Arabic in the domain of private businesses. Furthermore, Al Awadhi linked the violation with the rights of the Arab consumers to have the menu in their mother tongue. This may remind the reader of Montreal-style violation tickets issued to businesses for not having French on their signs in violation of the Charter of the French Language. In 2020, Deli 365 based in Montreal, Canada, was slapped a hefty fine of \$1500 by the Quebec Office of the French Language for having their signs and advertisements only in English (Eliot, 2020).

In Qatar also, measures have been taken to reinforce the status of Arabic in different domains. In 2012, the government passed a law regulating the public signs whereby no signs could be placed without securing an approval from the municipality. Article 5 of the law, however, dealt specifically with the language of the signs stipulating that Arabic must be the primary language of signs, but other languages can be added based on subject to municipality’s rules and regulation (Regulation and Control of the Placement of Advertising, 2012). In the same year, an Amiri decree changed the medium of instruction in schools and Qatar University from English into Arabic (Mustafawi & Shaaban, 2019). This was followed by a more comprehensive law in 2019 called Arabic Language Protection Law (ALPL), which may be considered the first language policy document in the Arab World that regulates the use of language in government and private institutions in Qatar.

Unlike the law in the UAE, discussed above, that mandates the use of Arabic in government institutions, the very first article of the ALPL, consisting of fifteen articles, stipulates that all government and private institutions are obligated to protect and support the Arabic language in all their events and activities (Qānūn Ḥimāyat Al-Lughah Al-ʿArabīyah, 2019). According to Article 2, the government institutions are under obligation to use the Arabic language in their meetings and discussions and all communications emanating from them in the audio, visual, or written forms. Translations in other languages can be made available in public interest. Article 3 further emphasizes that Arabic shall be the language of talks and negotiations with other governments and institutions with translation in their approved languages.

ALPL also reinstates Arabic as the medium of instruction in government schools and Qatar University, which is a public-funded university, allowing use of other languages if it is necessitated by a particular course or an academic program (Article 5 & 6). Private schools are required to include Arabic as an independent subject in their curriculum. In addition to the above government domains, the ALPL lays

down rules for commercial and other private entities. According to Article 8, private business, educational, and entertainment companies must carry Arabic names except international trademarks and brand names, which can retain non-Arabic names, but they must be written in Arabic as well. Similar to the Charter of the French Language in Montreal, Article 11 stipulates that entities violating Articles 2, 5, 8, 9, 10 will be fined a sum of QR 50,000.³ Dr. Hamad Al-Kuwari, the Qatari Minister of State, in December 2021 launched a Twitter campaign with the hashtag *ma ‘an li da ‘m al-lughah al- ‘arabīyyah*, “Together In Support of the Arabic Language” in which he stressed that the GCC needs to do more than other countries to support the Arabic language because the challenges it faces are greater (Ibrāhīm, 2021). He further mentioned the implementation of the law faces some formidable challenges.

Despite the concerns raised by the Minister, there are sign of its implementation in Qatar. On July 29, 2021, the Arabic language newspaper Al-Sharq reported that the courts in Doha refused to hear those civil, family, and criminal cases in which the required papers were not submitted in Arabic. These included a civil case filed by a lady seeking divorce, but the court didn’t look into her claim because the documents she submitted were not in Arabic which didn’t only violate the ALPL but also Article 16 of the Judicial Authority Act passed in 2003 whereby Arabic is the language of the judicial transactions (Al-Zā’id, 2021). In the report, Ali Al-Kaabi, Director of the Public Relations at Doha Institute of Graduate Studies, who was among the people interviewed, highlighted the importance of enforcing the ALPL and ensuring that the violations are properly dealt with.

17.7 Conclusions

Based on the case studies of the multilingual societies of Qatar and the UAE, where non-nationals constitute an overwhelming majority reducing the local Arab nationals to a minority within their own countries, I have shown that the presence of large foreign population has created two major challenges to the governments: (i) communication between monolingual Arab nationals and non-nationals, especially the uneducated blue-collar workers, and (ii) the fear of loss of the Arabic language and Arab identity among the population. I have shown how the governments of Qatar and the UAE are increasingly adopting migrant languages, in different degrees, for communication with them. In the UAE, the inclusion of Hindi in the judicial court of Abu Dhabi clearly reflects the government’s understanding that successful communication with the Asian population cannot be achieved without using their languages. The more free use of Asian languages by the government of Qatar shows not only their openness to the acceptance of migrant languages as effective ways to communicate with the non-national population but also that their use is inevitable in a multilingual society.

³ This is equal to \$13,700 US dollars.

I have further discussed that although no concrete statistics on the use of Arabic and English among the local population in different social, educational, and workplace domains, like the ones in Montreal, Canada, is available, a discourse of fear of loss of Arabic has grown in the GCC countries. Lack of statistics notwithstanding, I have shown that the ideology of fear of loss of Arabic has led to some consequences, which include the strengthening of the position of Arabic in Qatar and the UAE. In the UAE, despite the fact Arabic is constitutionally the only official language, a Cabinet decision in 2008 made the use of Arabic mandatory in government departments and agencies because its use was gradually declining and that the local population feared that their language will fall out of use. In Qatar, the perceived fear led to the inclusion of preservation of Arab identity as one of the challenges to be dealt with in the Qatar National Vision 2030. The discourse of fear, in the past decade, has further led to the reinstatement of Arabic in government schools and Qatar University, the only public university in Qatar. The most striking development in response to the discourse of fear was the passing of the Arabic Language Protection Law in 2019, which makes the protection and support of Arabic mandatory for both government and private entities. It is clear that in contrast to the UAE, where the cabinet decision made the use of Arabic mandatory only in government departments, the ALPL applies to both the public and private entities. Furthermore, this law is the first of its kind in the Arab World that imposes a hefty fine of QR 50,000 on violating entities.

While the needs of communication are critical in multilingual societies like those of the Qatar and the UAE with a large number of blue-collar workers, the fear of the loss of Arabic among the local Arab nationals cannot be ignored as this might lead to further strengthening of Arabic, which will go against the needs of communication. Communication and identity stand in inverse relation with each other. The needs of communication require languages other than Arabic, which may further heighten the fear of loss of Arabic among the local populations. In the talk Dr. Lateefa Al-Najjar gave at the GCC Meet on language, discussed above, she proposed different levels of proficiency in Arabic language, depending on the type of job, a condition for employment. Although this is not feasible, it shows the impact the discourse of fear can have on communication. The issue of communication and identity, therefore, must be addressed for a sustainable language ecology. Any such policy must be based on good data on use of languages in different domains among both nationals and non-nationals. This requires inclusion of language-based questions in the national surveys and expertise of linguists for their analysis and feedback.

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Chapter 18

Reverse Orientalism? French Salafis' Fascination with Saudi Arabia



Mohamed-Ali Adraoui

Abstract Recently, French Muslims have been seen by several media outlets and politicians to be increasingly influenced by some of the understandings of Islam that were born in Saudi Arabia. While some connections do undoubtedly exist, I show that what we are experiencing today has much more to do with a broad globalization of beliefs, symbols, and identities than with an explicit desire to make French Muslims embrace Salafism. More importantly, I show in this piece that the influence of some forms of Islam originating in the Gulf within French society can be first and foremost interpreted as the result of a desire to identify with a non-French way of being a Muslim. Analyzing the kind of relations between certain French Muslims and a country such as Saudi Arabia highlights the fascination for Salafism and the rejection of their home country's values. Interestingly, as shown in this piece through specific examples, French Salafis are perpetuating an Orientalist view of the Islamic world, starting with Saudi Arabia, seen as a "the land of religious authenticity." By essentializing identity, geography, and culture, this French Salafi Orientalist type represents an original way of looking and understanding "the Islamic East" today.

Keywords Salafism · France · Saudi Arabia · Transnationalism · Orientalism

This contribution attempts to shed light on the nature of the relationship between French Salafi communities and the most prominent contemporary Gulf power. Undeniably, Saudi Arabia historically perceives itself as an "authentic" and "orthodox" center for Muslims all over the globe. Moreover, as we have been witnessing for decades the globalization of certain religious "codes" which raise fears of I could call a "Gulf-*banlieues* continuum" that would undermine French interests and identity, this is high time to tackle the issue of how Saudi Arabia is perceived among French Salafi groups. In this piece, I will demonstrate that positive representations are at the heart of how Saudi Arabia is seen and valorized. The connection between French Salafis and this country can best be described as a "reverse Orientalism" as

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this country is seen through the very interesting and original eyes of people who are part of the West while they reject it and identify with Orientals who are, in the meantime, framed according to a very specific culturalist view but are finally superior to the West. Due to the interaction of several circles of socialization (Salafi community, French society, young generations...), the East ultimately comes to the point this is a moral and conceptual category as well as a cultural and geographical reality which stands for by essence what the West does not. By being subject to a very specific understanding, Saudi Arabia becomes thus established as a place to be praised for having always been constructed on “pure” Islamic principles.

This article is based on several years of doctoral work (2004–2011) in which I analyzed how French Salafis were socialized to become “orthodox” believers whose everyday morality and practices are governed by emulating the first Muslims. I met with over one hundred French Salafists, more than half of whom I conducted interviews with, in addition to hundreds of hours of participant observation at their mosques, homes, jobs, and spaces of socialization. This fieldwork led me to a number of cities within the Paris region, including Mantes-la-Jolie, Les Mureaux, Stains, Argenteuil, Saint-Denis, Nanterre, Villeneuve-la-Garenne, Montreuil, Levallois-Perret, Athis-Mons, Corbeil-Essonnes, Sartrouville, La Courneuve, Clichy-sous-Bois, Montfermeil, Asnières, Gennevilliers, Colombes, La Garenne-Colombes, Maisons-Alfort, Courbevoie, Vitry-sur-Seine, Draveil, Juvisy-sur-Orge, Epinay-sur-Seine, as well as the center of Paris. In addition, I spent several months studying Salafi socialization in the context of migrations of salvation that a certain number of Salafis undertake in order to guard themselves against the “infidel” French social body, choosing to go live in Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Malaysia, or any country with a Muslim majority in order to be reborn within a context that has been historically permeated by Islam. In terms of their sociological characteristics, about two-thirds of French Salafis are of North African origin. Within these puritan communities, which are estimated at between 20,000 and 30,000 people (Godard, 2015) (although this is difficult to estimate exactly as Salafism in France echoes to a bunch a local communities), a majority are the children or grandchildren of North African immigrants, primarily Algerian (namely, nearly half of the people that I met, the majority of whom are Kabyle). Converts to Salafism represent between 25 and 30% of the total (more than half of which also have ties to migration, even though a substantial part of this sub-group comes from French native families). The rest of the followers are from other immigrant-origin families (primarily from West Africa). It is important to emphasize that Turkish immigrants in France, as well as their children, have remained, since the beginnings of Salafism in the 1990s, unreceptive to this preaching. The geographical origin of Salafism as concerns France is double.

My research highlights the fact that the Salafi communities are generally composed of post-adolescents or young adults who mainly come from North African (especially Algerian) immigrant families. Their economic background is usually poor as coming mainly from immigrant families and living in the impoverished suburbs where geographical and social handicaps have been accumulating for decades. I also noticed that an important proportion of converts (between a quarter and a third) come

from non-Muslim immigration (mainly from Christian African families¹). Geographically speaking, the main regions in France where Salafism is influential are within the North and in the regions of Paris, Lyon, and Marseille - even though the movement has now spread across the entire nation. The two main channels through which Salafism has come to France are Algeria and Saudi Arabia, even though the latter country has always been more prestigious and central in terms of audience. In the early 1990s, at a time when the Internet was almost inexistent in France, the conflict in Algeria led some imams, who were rejecting both Jihadi violence and the government's policy, to head to France, where they had opportunities to start preaching in certain mosques. However, with the rise of the Internet and the much higher prestige associated with Saudi Arabia (Farquhar, 2016),² this country should be considered the main provider of Salafi narratives in France since the 1990s. Finally, it appears that the vast majority of Salafi preachers who have made this vision popular among certain Muslim communities since the 1990s have studied in the Gulf (mainly the universities of Medina and Mecca), or in institutions located elsewhere in the Muslim world but under the supervision of Saudi-trained clerics.

Most of the preachers who made Salafi narratives popular refer to the Saudi predicative apparatus. This consists of two levels. The first is organically and officially tied to the ruling power. Made up of the *Committee of the Great Scholars*³ (*Hayat Kibar al- 'Ulama*) and the *Permanent Representation for Research and the Islamic Fatwa* (*Lajnat ad-Daima lil-Buhuth wal-Ifta*), it provides the most significant religious referees within the Saudi state and society. Bearing the status of "Minister," each of the Committee's members provides counsel on crucial (and very diverse) issues, which not only relate to the monarchy's policies, but also touch upon all events involving Muslims around the world.⁴ In parallel, a network supporting the dissemination of Salafism is enshrined in Saudi Arabia's role as a center for teaching. The prestige and means attached to the universities of Mecca and Medina have attracted and taught numerous senior religious members (imams, etc.) who later put this Muslim current on offer around the globe. Unlike the official apparatus, this scholarly network, by hosting and training thousands of people (without all of them finishing their *cursus honorum*), does not only engage with Saudi nationals, but involves several dozens of French nationals since the 1990s as well.⁵

The presence of this puritan form of Islam in France is first of all due to informal networks of preaching linked to the Gulf countries, notably Saudi Arabia, or to Muslim majority countries (Jordan, Mauritania, etc.), where imams and preachers who were trained in Saudi Arabia have spread, and whose religious specialization, enabled for several decades by financial power linked to oil, has led to the emergence and globalization of an explicitly Salafi version of Islam, namely centered on the teachings (often exclusively) of Salafi clergy of reference. Among them are Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (680–750), Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), and Ibn Abdul-Wahab⁶ (1703–1792) (Bowering, Crone and Kadi 2012). The alliance of the latter with the al-Sa'ud family allowed the creation and consolidation of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Largely influenced both by official religious institutions in the country, which are perceived by the majority of French Salafis as the main poles of diffusion of contemporary Muslim orthodoxy, and by clerics having studied in this country before

spreading to the rest of the Muslim world (as is the case of the Syrian-Jordanian al-Albani [1914–1999]), this vision was brought to France by students who became preachers after training in Saudi universities (primarily in Medina and Mecca) or in other religious institutions in other Muslim countries that have been influenced by the same teaching. Since the 1990s, taking advantage of the Internet, this form of Islam has influenced individuals among young generations who have been disappointed by religious socialization within the family (often based on the country of origin) and who are looking for other forms of Islam deemed more authentic.

This work focuses mainly on Saudi Arabia insofar as this is the main pole today from which discourse, distinct religious conceptualizations and symbols originate for the use of Muslims around the globe. A large literature in sociology already exists when it comes to studying relationships between Muslims in France (whose presence today is principally due to past waves of migrations) and countries of origin, starting with Algeria, Morocco, and Turkey (Amiriaux, 2012; Bowen, 2010; Godard, 2015; Godard & Taussig, 2009; Kepel, 1987; Laurence & Vaïsse, 2007). It thus appears that these connections are first driven by states seeking political influence and Muslims seeking cultural affiliation (Godard & Taussig, 2009, pp. 74–76). Regarding religious contents, it is difficult to argue that official forms of Islam in these countries (except Turkey whose connection with its emigrants and families is much stronger) have been shaping the mentality of French-born Muslims, who are primarily indifferent to what seem to be discourses disconnected from their daily lives. On the contrary, there is very little work on Islam in France from a transnational perspective, which this contribution modestly attempts to remedy. The search for domestic legal and cultural forms of Islam (“Islam de France”) has for years turned attention away from other forms of Islamic identification whose origin is located in the Gulf. A few ground-breaking studies have addressed the issue of Salafism as a rising reality among French Muslims (Adraoui, 2020) as well as a transnational religiosity from the Gulf to Europe (Al-Rasheed, 2015; Meijer, 2009; Roy, 2014), but this is still an emerging field. More importantly, references in the French public debate to visible types of Islam originating in the Gulf are systematically interpreted as a danger for national identity and values. While North African countries such as Morocco and Algeria are subject to ambiguous discourse, such as when leading politicians call for a French form of Islam distancing itself from migrants’ countries of origin while in reality partnering with Moroccan authorities to bring imams to teach “moderate Islam” to their fellow citizens (Hoffner, 2017),⁷ it is clear that Saudi conceptions have been targeted as dangerous for a long time.

18.1 French Salafi Orientalism: A Construction of the Self and the Otherness

The individual is the actor of his existence and relations with the social world. The relationships he weaves, the positions he takes, as well as the identity chords that he plays to produce the meaning by which he is going to try and understand

society, all this results from a choice. Still, this angle of analysis does not suffice; an individual relationship with society must also be grasped in its interaction with an environment that is neither a tangible nor even an immutable given. Rather, it inserts itself in a reality constructed as much by the actor, whose vision determines a representation of the world that in turn will affect the meaning that he imparts to his actions, as it is affected by others who position themselves around different issues and with whom he interacts in interpreting a situation. However, beyond the real motivations advanced by the actors, what can explain the choice of such a process of identification? Here, I formulate the hypothesis according to which the analysis of the latter must be rendered by more than a purely psychological study, to the extent that the phenomenon constitutes a social fact that must be decoded as such by paying particular attention to changes in the rest of society. As social material, Salafism must be explicated by the social⁸ and not by an investigation of an exclusively religious nature that could only spark an essentialist reflection on the nature of this phenomenon (Roy, 2006, p. 12). In short, what are the factors framing the Orientalist views promoted by French Salafis?

In my research, I have interviewed dozens of Salafis who proclaimed in majority being fascinated by Saudi Arabia as the country wherein clerics are the wisest and closest to the version of Islam experienced by the first generations of Muslims. This does not mean that the state in itself is obeyed. Some Salafis, for instance, do not identify to regimes but only to clerics wherever they may be located. The Saudi state, in this regard, is no exception morally. Although, unlike Jihadis promoting political violence against any regime supposedly betraying Islam (by allying with the United States for instance), quietist Salafis do not advocate for overthrowing regimes, they may focus on strict religious considerations instead of defending or supporting explicitly Saudi Arabia for instance. However, French Salafis in majority clearly feel at ease in saying this country is to be seen as the true defender of “genuine Islam.” As clerics are deeply connected to the royal family, and more generally speaking, to the state apparatus, anything coming from them is perceived to be due to the nature of the regime. This contribution could have highlighted several cases of French Salafis speaking highly of Saudi Arabia, but three illustrations bring us to consider the Orientalist dimension of their relationship toward this country so specific. I am focusing here on Orientalism. This concept has been forged in the interaction of European and Eastern cultures (including Islam) in the context of the eighteenth century (MacKenzie, 1995).

18.2 French Salafis and Saudi Arabia: A Religious Utopia?

Saudi Arabia is perceived through the prism of religious imagination, which splits the world between those who identify with Islam and those who assign little importance to it. This division has the principal effect of producing a view of the Muslim world imprinted by an “Orientalist” dimension. This in effect is only possible because the practicing people see the world of “the exterior” as socialized actors in a context that

is first “European” or “Western.” For this part, we adopt Edward Saïd’s definition of “Orientalism” that proposes a conception of this artistic and intellectual tradition which permits grasping and criticizing its epistemological and moral postulates (Saïd, 1994). However, this specific Orientalist stance distinguishes itself by inverting the relation of superiority. Indeed, the essentialization of the Islamic East benefits it. In this respect, French Salafis introduce a new form of Orientalist construction even though their appeal to Gulf Islamic countries is largely built upon views similar to those held by the West.

The Salafis have an “Orientalist” view of the Muslim world because they develop a discourse about the Orient, an entity to which they above all give a religious consistency. The theme of the “refuge Orient” encapsulates their relationship with this “world of Islam” supposedly grounded in an ethical perspective diametrically opposed to what prevails in the West. The religious reference makes of this part of the world a veritable symbolic place of asylum. To name one example, Saudi Arabia is represented as the most telling illustration of the perpetuation of the time of the “Pious Ancestors.” A pole of religious stability remaining distant from the intellectual and political evolutions that have touched the rest of the world (Hobsbawm, 1996, 155), this country is favored because of how it would symbolize a constancy lasting centuries.

However, the study of the “Orientalist” socialization evidences certain peculiarities in this regard, reifying as much “the world of the Muslim Orient” and “the Muslim Oriental.” It needs nevertheless to be said that this Orientalism overturns the bulk of its historical postulates. The Salafi conception of the Orient is therefore distinct from the tradition initiated in Europe that saw in this part of the world a mirror reflecting favorably on “self.”

18.2.1 The Orientalism of the French Salafis: A “Western” View of the Orient

The fact of presenting the “world of Islam” like a unidimensional entity corresponds to an attempt at reification of these societies through a grid of culturalist reading. The “Oriental” is a Muslim. However, the relation to the Orient is not so much linked to a sensory or potent vision as it is to a “scientific” examination. Its principal attraction resides in the fact that it shelters the “scholars,” human vectors for transmission of sacred knowledge without which the human being cannot access the truth. “Land of science,” the Muslim Orient first of all distinguishes itself by representations linked to the *‘Ulama*. These are in effect the most powerful symbols of the singularity of this world. Because they call forth grace on the rest of society by the fact of preaching an “authentic” teaching, they incarnate the spinal column of the Islamic civilization. The Oriental is no longer a body, an impassioned character or even a human being inclined “by nature” to a magical reading of the world, but a person who “rationalizes” his relationship to religion and thus to the world by the “scientist” intervention of the

authorized clerics. It is the Westerner who is revealed as the passionate being by refusing to consider the Muslim religion. Unified in the Salafi perception, “the world of Islam” is foremost that of the “scholars” who are meant to rule over it, making of it the form of social organization most antinomic to the West. “Rooted” in history for its greatest advantage, the Muslim world thus separates itself from the Western sphere. The various divisions that arise from this furnish the substrate for the Salafi imagination. Cut off forever from the West, the Orient becomes the receptacle for a purely “Western” vision. Reducing the “Oriental” identity to the Islamic identity, the social rules that predominate in it are perceived as emanations from scholarly opinions.

The French Salafi, in solidarity with this country, can be viewed as “the guardian of the throne of the Saud” in the name of a reterritorialization of the religious identity that sees in this society the most excellent country for a “purified” practice of Islam. This “Saudism” induced by the love of “scholars” equally concerns the political power heading up this country, just as it can be confirmed with the defense of King Abdallah, on whom reflects the aura of the ‘*Ulama*. By their moral ascendancy, the Saudi state is thus able to control the representations or the feelings of allegiance of most of the practicing people in the world. Despite a discourse notably preaching “denationalization,” while the Salafi belongs to an “impious society,” the imaginary socialization indeed attracts a return of the feeling of belonging to the Orient. Improvising himself as the guardian of legitimacy of Arabia, the French Salafi is the loyal “defender of the throne of the Saud” (to paraphrase Leveau, 1985). In addition to rediscovering the Arab heritage, the Salafi career is equally synonymous with a certain “pro-Saudi nationalism.” The symbolic centrality of Arabia thus makes space for a true feeling of allegiance that can engender a militancy working for the defense of this country (Mayer, 2005).⁹ It expresses itself through images and stances tending to “exceptionalize” the Saudi Kingdom *de facto* and *de visu* as the state and social model for Muslims. Among the many videos that we can find on the Salafi web, there is one called that clearly shows how most of French Salafis perceive Saudi Arabia. The Salafi virtual world is a major site for the branding of Saudi Arabia, as is shown by selected French websites (www.salafs.com, www.sounna.com, www.labonnereference.fr etc.), which frequently allude to the religious pre-eminence of the Saudi state. A video shared by a French Salafi on the file-sharing website *Dailymotion* makes known this state’s prestige in defending—as its baseline—“authentic” Islam. The video’s title is explicit and should be understood as an answer to those vilifying the Kingdom’s putative hypocrisy: *The Tawhid’s Nation, like it or not!* The word *Tawhid* means “unity” in Arabic and makes reference to the Salafis’ pure monotheism. Saudi Arabia, due to the presence of “orthodox” clerks, is seen as the state whose preaching finds its most elaborate form in our age. Indeed, the most knowledgeable scholars on scriptural sources are available to the monarchy. The 19-minute video is a defense of the Saudi state as Islam’s protector, namely of the *Tawhid* (“Unicity of God”), and it is thus an element in the religious debate and competition sought by the practicants. We underline the second part of the title “like it or not,” which makes it sound like they are thumbing their noses at Muslims who vilify the Saudi state. In making it the incarnation of the defense of divine unicity,

the quietist Salafis reify this country, thus confirming a unidimensional—because specifically Islamist—vision of the Orient and of this country especially. Another interesting thing about this video is how it captures part of the Salafi imagination by projecting the symbols that carry along Saudi society and, beyond it, the Orient. We may note in this regard that the images¹⁰ correspond generally to those conveyed by numerous Western media in reporting on the societies of the Middle East. The video opens with these words written in white against a purple background after which rapidly scrolled the ritual formula “in the name of God the merciful in essence and excellence” (written in phonetic French):

We hear Saudi Arabia criticized a great deal and it seems to me wise to tell you one thing...
It is a strange fact...have you already asked yourself to what this stupefying consensus is due...?

Some of the final sequences in this video are even more interesting as they directly refer to how the former French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, had to recognize the political and religious importance of this kingdom. What needs to be the most emphasized here is how the classical diplomatic relations between two states are framed in the mind of the French Salafi authoring this video, who does not hesitate to mock Sarkozy’s desire to maintain positive ties with the Gulf state and relates this “hypocrisy” to the power of the religious ideal supposedly ruling this country. Described as the “CEO of the 5th world power [who] has to duck...,” Sarkozy is in turn inveighed against while images march across the screen of him delivering a speech in Riyadh, during his visit to Saudi Arabia in January 2008, in which he speaks of “[his] dear friends of Saudi Arabia” and his refusal to see “imposed a sole model of civilization.” At the end of the Sarkozy clip, the video segues into a second half. Now comes the moment when the author slips in the following comment, sounding like a quip aimed at the ensemble of the figures displaying their hostility or their self-interested allegiance toward Saudi Arabia in the video.

18.3 An Orientalism “of the Interior,” or How to Reify the Orient When You Are from It

The Salafi Orientalist view is also distinguished by the fact that it is a Western look at “the world of Islam” emanating from actors that, for the most part, come from families that are native to this reconstructed oriental space. Here the expression “Western Orientalism” seems justified because it allows building a “knowledge” of the Muslim world from the outside (the West) and to turn it into a homogeneous social body. But also, the Salafi vision can be seen as one of “Orientalism by the Oriental” for those who never stopped thinking of themselves as Arabs. This view of the Orient, endogenous because of its provenance from believers who resisted the discredit cast on the Muslim world in Western lands, thus manifests itself through a paradox. The positive vision of the Orient proceeds from a form of reification that is justified in part in the socialization within European society, even while the

Salafi refuses to think of himself as belonging to this society. Their Orientalism is thus typically “Western” in the way it represents the “the world of Islam” as a world apart, but also specifically “oriental” and thus in a sense endogenous because it insists on constantly valorizing this part of the world. Salafi socialization, if it opens into a sort of “pro-Saudi nationalism,” leads the devotees to perpetuate a sort of “paradise lost” syndrome.

18.3.1 An Orientalism “in Reverse”: An Orient Better Than the West

The supposed nature of the Oriental makes him superior to the Westerner; therefore, Islam is going to serve as a value scale for comparing the two societies. The view of the “world of Islam” valorizes the countries it comprises, starting with Saudi Arabia. The image conveyed by “the country of Holy Places” thus constitutes an illustration evidently of the fact that a Muslim society that applies its precepts and the “societies of the West” cannot be compared. Thought of as “the country of scholars,” Arabia is valorized by virtue of the continual irrigation by the preaching work of the *‘Ulama*. We see it in the images of order and justice echoed by the Saudi reference. Orientalized by a Salafi view that Islamizes the Saudi reality, this country becomes a model for the world. Embodying all that the West does not want to be, Saudi Arabia illustrates both temperance and requirements.

This double dimension of preaching forms the foundation of the “reverse” Orientalism the French Salafis adopt when they pay attention to the Muslim world and especially Saudi Arabia. The images that they associate with it in this respect are explicit, as illustrated by the words of Samir. Thirtyish, with a neo-traditionalist profile, son of a Tunisian merchant, he distinguished himself by a critical view of the other Salafis. A number of fellows, indeed, according to him are too inclined to think of themselves as “unique” Muslims. While disapproving of the “deviationism” of other tendencies, he exhibits a certain disdain for his peers who, barely converted, make a point of rejecting other believers. The principles of Salafism may be paradigmatic for him, but that does not justify vanity. On the contrary, in the manner of the *‘Ulama* he admires and many of whom live in “the country of the two sanctuaries,” his religiosity first of all commands a spirit of responsibility. As he himself says, one day he hopes to settle in this country so that he can be inundated by the “sacred science” behind which the “scholars” are the moving force.

Author: And, in your view, who defends the true Islam?

Samir: There are scholars, there’s science. We know all that’s needed is return to the scholarly texts. I know what they often say. They say that some young people apply what they hear, they dress like I do, they have the beard but their behaviors, let’s say...

(...)

Author: And which scholars do you identify with?

Samir: Frankly, well... Me, I say that the scholars, you find them in great numbers in Saudi Arabia already. Well, it's the country...the country which...where.... Right, we know that Saudi Arabia distributes cassettes for learning how to do the hajj ["pilgrimage"]. All right, after that, what can you say. They have scholars there, the mashaykh [plural of shaykh] who teach Islam correctly. You know where you're headed. There's one book, one Quran; everything that's added on is not my religion. There are movements that are heading for disaster trying to introduce things that are not in Islam.

(...)

Author: So, for you, it's the Islam practiced in Arabia which is the most...? The truest, the most authentic?

Samir: Like I told you. It's a country that practices the *da'wa*. It translates Qurans, it prints Qurans. Under King Feisal, Arabia has built mosques. There has been a historical continuity since. A king, it's a sheik with a thousand times the power, in a sense. If he decides to do the *da'wa*, then the country turns into a center of the *da'wa*.

Author: So, for you, the truth then is found over there?

Samir: The truth is known. The unfortunate thing is ignorance. All right, I won't hide my dream from you, it's to live in Saudi Arabia. It's the dream of all who follow the Sunna. I went there on the hajj. I touched the dream with my finger for three weeks.

Author: So Arabia is the dream for you?

Samir: It's the country of scholars. That's where they are, the scholars of the *Sunna*.

Author: And what do you answer to those who say that over there the scholars obey the people in the royal family? The political power is still in the hands of the monarchy.

Samir: Let's imagine it's a pear cut in half. Or an orange if you like. In this country, there is an eternal pact. The scholars and the king march hand in hand. Not like in other Muslim countries, like Morocco, for example. In Morocco, it's a picture of modernity. In Arabia, you can't; it's a pact between the two that dates back to...

Author: And what do you say to those who say Arabia isn't what it pretends to be? That there's a great difference between the country and the image it wants to project?

Samir: They attack Saudi Arabia, but I understand why. It is Islam's base. The Prophet warned against a time when Islam would be persecuted and Islam would find its home like the serpent returns to its burrow. This is Medina. Me, I don't reject anyone, but they reject the whole world. The Prophet, in a hadith, he said that the entire world will go to Paradise except those who turn it down. By that he wanted to say that you have to follow the Quran and the Sunna. We know therefore that religion is finished and that there is a sole path to follow. This road we know is the one taken in Saudi Arabia.

What we have here is a mixture of two sorts of feelings. First, disdain for French society, described as a place where traditional values are said to be no longer respected in addition to a distrust regarding Muslims. Second, the appeal to a country in the Gulf which is mentioned with no reference to its non-religious dimension. Only the fact of being built upon a fundamentalist understanding of Islam is paid attention to. The alliance with the United States as well as its "ambiguous" policy toward the Muslim Brothers or the Jihadis (sometimes conciliatory, sometimes foes over the last decades) is never mentioned. More precisely, it turns out that the first point cannot be considered to be specific to the French Salafis. Being extremely critical toward how Islam is treated in the public debate and the use of certain Muslims serving as "alibis" for the French authorities is indeed something quite widespread among numerous people of Islamic descent. However, a huge difference is related to how

Saudi Arabia gets praised as a moral alternative to what appears to be an absence of perspectives for Muslims in France. In other words, the “mirror effect” benefitting the Saudi religious model fully plays out in Samir’s words.

18.3.2 Constructing a West as a Negative Mirror of the Orient, or Salafi Occidentalism

If, for Edward Said, the main consequence of the Orientalist tradition in the political domain has been to justify the domination of oriental countries by Western states, starting with Europeans launching a colonial enterprise, the Salafi view contests that conception. A split is even clearly observable because, in a reverse move, the Western world, essentialized in turn, becomes the negative of the Muslim Orient. Burdened by all the defects that a civilization can have when it does not recognize Islam as the foundation of its values and its laws, the West finds itself reduced by virtue of the same reflex by which numerous men of letters, artists, or politicians for centuries conceived of the figure of the Oriental. This reversal of representations is at the heart of a true *Occidentalism*. This collection of supposedly homogeneous or even identical societies, because of hewing to the same attachment to values that deprecated the Islamic referential, thus becomes the favorite target of the practicing Muslim’s duty of rejection. The West becomes the “negative” mirror of the Islamic countries. Shriveled spiritually and built on sand, the Western way of life is decadent, removed from the “divine utopia” which Samir tells us about.

18.4 Concluding Remarks: an Imaginary Socialization?

The French Salafi Orientalist view of Saudi Arabia seems to refer to what I can call an “imaginary socialization.” It relates more generally to the part of reciprocal construction between the subject and the object. Here, the manner in which the Salafi constructs and is constructed by the Saudi society is the source of a vision of the world according to which the kingdom becomes a model of religiosity and piousness. The imaginary socialization echoes the polysemy of religious concepts but also the different ways of apprehending the social space, a single one perduring in this socialization in order to render coherent the acts and positions taken by the practicants. In other words, the believer finds on this path what he looks for there. Consequently, this imaginary socialization allows hatching a “utopian mentality” (Mannheim, 1991) which will frame the process of reifying the space and time on which this construction is based, allowing in the case of French Salafis to dream of an Islamic alternative that is all the most enviable that the French context gets depreciated.

Notes

1. They used to live the Catholic religion in a personal manner but one that is mainly characterized by a retrospective frustration at not having been sufficiently grounded on the theoretical and practical levels of this religious affiliation. Accepting to claim the heritage of Jesus, a positive personage whose ultimate message is represented by Muhammad's apostolate, the "post-Christian" Salafis are distinguished by a critical relationship with Catholicism and consider their entry into Salafism to be a more "rational" and "more logical" version of faith.
2. This is due to the presence of official Salafi institutions, global religious figures, and world-renowned Islamic universities that no other Muslim country can claim having, thus preventing them from reaching a transnational aura.
3. In Islam, "Scholar" (*'Alim*) refers to a person who has knowledge on matters including religious ones.
4. The 2014 conflict in the Gaza strip has led the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia (Abdul-Aziz Al-Shaykh) and the representative of the Committee to stand against public demonstrations organized in support of the Palestinians, which they viewed as leading to "anarchy" and the disunity of Muslims.
5. To my knowledge, only one person has successfully finished this course and now lives in France (in Gennevilliers). He is a young Imam and has confided that he had thought of settling in the Gulf region (having been offered a prestigious position in Kuwait) before finally deciding to return to France.
6. That is why many people today call Salafis 'Wahabis.' This is to highlight they are mainly following some teachings originating in Saudi Arabia. However, this calling is first of all meant to split them from a more ancient legacy echoing back to the very first centuries of Islam. That is why, we call them Salafis and not Wahabis (which is not a rigorous concept to describe these purist communities).
7. In 2015, for instance, French President Hollande signed an agreement calling for "a closer cooperation in the field of imams' training" in order to strengthen "values of openness and tolerance."
8. "The first origin of a social process of any importance must be sought in how the internal social milieu is constituted" (Durkheim, 2007, p. 111).
9. Jean-François Mayer coins the term "theopolitics" to describe the religious dynamics that structure new forms of solidarity with entities all or part of which attach to a religious resource.
10. http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8mv6u_la-nation-du-tawhid-ne-vous-en-depl_news.

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Chapter 19

Art in Contact Zone in the UAE and Qatar: Trans-Regional Cultural Policy and Rise of New Artistic Movements



Mohammad Reza Moridi

Abstract Dubai and Doha are attempting to be known as transcultural places. These cities are trying to be in a status that Mary Louise Pratt has named “contact zone”. Mary Louise Pratt as a postcolonial theorist tries to use “contact zone” concept to explain transcultural situation in which diverse social spaces merge together. But how can Dubai and Doha become transcultural zones? What are the cultural policies to build a trans-regional identity? How have these policies affected artistic trends and artistic experiences? This chapter addresses how trans-regional cultural policies have made Dubai and Doha to welcome marginal arts, hybrid arts and multicultural arts. This chapter shows how Iranian and Arab artists have played a complex and multi-layered role in shaping the contact zone.

Keywords Contact zone · Trans-regional art · Transnational museum · Qatar · UAE · Iran

19.1 Introduction

Wealthy countries in Arabian Peninsula are attempting to promote a new movement of Arab Art and Islamic Art. They want to form a new identity as the representatives of Islamic world. While, Islamic fundamentalists do display radical and rough Islam, these countries try to represent a contemporary portrait of the new Arab world in the era of globalization. This image is not based on nationalism, but on a transnational basis.

A transnational identity has been made in “contact zone” and this identity requires a high degree of cultural tolerance; In this region, Dubai and Doha are trying more than other cities to be known as “contact zone” and become a context for intercultural and transcultural experiences. In the transcultural statuses, different cultures merge and blend together. But can Dubai and Doha become transcultural zones? In other

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words, how can countries in Arabian Peninsula, as Salafi and Wahhabi lands, be able to accept cultural diversity? What new cultural policy does this trend change require?

In this article, we discuss the role of art in multicultural politics and shaping the contact zone; we also follow these questions: What are the cultural policies to build a transnational identity in the Arabian Peninsula countries? How have these policies changed artistic experiences? To answer these questions, we pursue changing policies from national museums to transnational museums, and changing policies from national art to transnational art.

Art studies in the region (including Iran and the Arab countries) are often referred to as Middle East art. Such as Lisa Farjam (2009) entitled “Unveiled: new art from the Middle East” which dealt with new forms and experiences in Middle Eastern art. Saeb Eigner and Zaha Hadid (2010) entitled “Art of the Middle East: modern and contemporary art of the Arab world and Iran” offers a more comprehensive view of the process of formation of Middle Eastern art. Also, the book “New Vision: Arab Contemporary Art in the 21st Century” that edited by Hossein AmirSadeghi (2009) has an important article.

Neda Shabout et al. (2011) in book “Sajil: A Century of Modern Art” introduces 120 Arab artists whose works are kept in the Museum of Modern Art in Doha. Omar Kholeif (2015) published part of the Barjeel Art Foundation in a book entitled “imperfect chronology: Arab Art from the Modern to the Contemporary Works”. Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath (2010) in “Told, Untold, Retold” published under the pretext of an exhibition at the Doha Museum of the same title tries to explain 23 narratives by Arab artists. The authors call the modern Arab art movement trans-modern. In this article, we will focus on Bardouil’s views on the new current of Arab art.

However, studies focusing on UAE and Qatari artists are limited. Melanie Sindelar (2016, 2017) is one of the researchers following the developments of art in Qatar and the Emirate. He has researched numerous articles on the art of the region and its impact on building a national identity. Robert Kluijver (2013) in a study entitled “Contemporary Art in the Gulf” has studied art in six countries of the Arabian Peninsula (Kuwait, Yemen, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar). With the establishment of major museums in Dubai and the UAE, numerous books and articles were written about the new situation of new Arab museums and museums; Like Karen Exell and Sarina Wakefield (2016) in the book “Museums in Arabia”, which deals with the central role of the museum in the construction of cultural heritage. According to them, the Arab museums in the region are more in the process of forming a trans-regional and trans-regional identity than of building a national identity. Suzy Mirgani (2017) in the collection of articles “Art and Cultural Production in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)” establishes museums, exhibitions and investment in art, especially in Qatar and the UAE. But previous research has often been limited to the study of artists’ works and collections. But in the present study, we will analyze the structural flow of art in the region and follow it in a postcolonial approach.

Previous research, however, has often been limited to the study of works by artists or museum collections. But, in the present study, we analyze the art movement in the region and follow the policies and functions of art with a postcolonial approach

and sociological analytical concepts. The methodological approach of this article is “trend analysis”. The process of political change that creates cultural policies and the artistic movement. By studying a series of events, concepts and works of art, we study the process of building a cultural contact zone in this region.

19.2 Theoretical Approach: Contact Zone and Trans-Region

Dubai and Doha are attempting to be known as transcultural places. These cities try to be in a status that Mary Louise Pratt (1991) named “contact zone”. Mary Louise Pratt as a postcolonial theorist tries to use “contact zone” concept to explain transcultural situation in which diverse social spaces merge together. She in “Imperial Eyes” (1992) tries to rethink the relationship between East and West by studying the “travel writing”; this relation is not hegemonic or cultural domination, but contact relation and cultural transition. This concept tries to challenge the relationship between European colonizer and non-European colonies.

His purpose to build this concept is to debate about a type of problematic nationalism; for example, nationalism for immigrants, exiles and dominated ethnicities. “This concept signifies intersecting categories of identity and experience (mostly national, race, gender, and class). Since contact zones are sites of asymmetrical power relations, they have often been locations of conflict and even violence; although contact zone can also be sites of mutual exchange and understanding; both aspects of the contact zone-as place of contestation and Struggle, or as site of mutual respect and dialogue are significant and should be considered” (Edelstein, 2005, p. 27).

“The concept is used quite widely in literary studies and Cultural Studies as well as Postcolonial Studies as a general term for places where white Western travelers have encountered their cultural, ethnic, or racial other and been transformed by the experience. Contact zones are most often trading posts or border cities, cities where the movement of peoples and commodities brings about contact” (Oxford Reference, 2020). The concept of the contact zone has generated considerable controversy among scholars. This concept has been used in Postcolonial Studies in the Literature (like: Banarjee, 2013), as well as Sociolinguistic Research (like: Edelstein, 2005), as well as Studies of Immigrant communities (like: Atari, 2013), also Educational Research (like: Howes, 2020). Moreover, the “museum as contact zone” has been a concept that has discussed the inclusion of different cultures in museums (see. Clifford, 1997). The understanding of museums as “contact zones” has been widely appropriated in the museum literature; like Philipp Schorch (2013) that has done ethnographic study of visitors acts of interpretation in museum as “Cross-cultural mediation”. Also, Giulia Battaglia (2019) that has studied staging intercultural encounters in Modern Art Museums and Biennials. Robin Boast (2011) that has researched neocolonial function in Museum as Contact Zone. Andrea Meyer and Benedicte Savoy (2013) have debated about history of museum as a product

of transnational processes and cultural exchange in contact zone ND Harriet Purkis (2015) has studied biennial and art exhibition as a contact zone.

The concept of “contact areas” by Marie-Louise Pratt and “third spaces” by Homi K. Bhabha and other similar concepts try to explain networked social communication in a global context. In this context, many kinds of cultural experiences have formed like transcultural, Cross-cultural, intercultural, mix-culture and multi-culture. These intertwined cultural experiences are more prevalent in commercial ports and border towns; Like Dubai, Doha, which cultivate this cultural context. But can Dubai and Doha be transcultural? Can they be transnational? To answer these questions, we should study the trend of nationalism to transnationalism in countries of Arabian Peninsula.

The countries of Arabian Peninsula were not interest in nationalistic movement. What promoted nationalism in this region was not language or race or national boundary, but Islam. For example, Saudi Arabia emphasized on the idea of Islamic world more than being interested in the idea of the Arab world. As Egypt tried to become leader of Arab world, Saudi Arabia has tried to become leader of Islamic world. Moreover, the idea of “national state” has not had a political function in monarchy with tribal political system. In Saudi Arabia, political system is not based on nation—state paradigm, then the concept of nation or “national art” has an ambiguous meaning. In fact, the problem is not only in the evolution of the concept of state but also in the evolution of the concept of nation, a problem that has gradually become more apparent since the 1990s.

The Migration of labor force to oil-rich countries have increased since the late of 20th and the beginning of 21st. Nowadays, a large proportion of the population in the Arabian Peninsula are foreign workers. How can we talk about “nation” in Qatar when migrant workers compose 86% of the population or 88.5% in the UAE? What can bring foreigners and national people together and prevent political tensions among the population is transnational identity and transnational art; at least the transnational image must be made.

Therefore, construction of national and transnational identity became one of the most important policy-making in these countries and “Museums grew with unprecedented explosions” (Alraouf, 2014, p. 3). Museums can make cohesive cultural identity by monuments and shared cultural heritage. They can even form imaginary communities and nations (Anderson, 2006, p. 167). In this situation that Qatari and Emirati people become minority in their countries, Arab museums have played an important role in making cultural identity (Eggeling, 2017, pp. 12–15). What links populations with different nationalities is the transnational image. But what does transnational identity mean? What are transnational museums?

Transnational is a dream land in the universal modernity; in this land, the boundaries of identities are merged and have gained universal unity. A unity beyond the differences that can be formed in a “trans-place”. The trans-place societies are formed by a wave of immigrant workers and foreign laborers. These societies in economic system are based on global trade, and in cultural system are based on universal culture. The universality has been the transcendent and ultimate point of modernism.

Therefore, the societies that are known as a trans-place are a kind of super-modernism or transmodernism.

However, from a critical point of view, super-modernism is not a place for all people or any person from every culture. Super-modernism is actually a kind of non-place; where it does not point to any geography, climate or history; the Sterilized space from history, memory and culture. Marc Augé—French anthropologist—used the term “non-place” to refer to spaces where concerns of relations, history and identity are erased (Augé, 1995, pp. 78–79). Non-place has shaped the same behaviors in transit, shopping, consuming, choosing and playing. This is a super modern world.

From this perspective, museums and galleries are like non-place that accept people as tourists or visitors. The non-place neither create a special identity nor a relationship, but create isolation and homogeneity. “The non-place is the opposite of utopia: it exists, and it does not contain any organic society” (Augé, 1995, p. 95). Actually “the non-place is same what Michel Foucault called a heterotopia” (Augé, 1995, p. 112).

Arab countries attempt to be trans-place but, in the critical point of view, they are non-place; they have accepted foreign workers and global immigrant labor and have formed a context for global identity. In the critical point of view, Dubai and Doha are artificial and non-organic countries. These cities are more touristic place that led people to certain places on certain routes to visit or shop in the city. Even the museums in these countries are touristy and have established branches of the Louvre, Guggenheim and the British Museum instead of being local or indigenous. Like the MacDonald branches that have kept tourists away from local food and have formed a standard taste, transnational museums have also propelled tourists to standard of consume of art. Thus, the “non-place” and “trans-place” concepts have optimistic and pessimistic function in these cities.

Qatar and UAE are international and transnational regions. In this meaning, these regions are not only an opportunity for exchange international art, but also, they are a context for the development of transnational art. But how can transnational art be made? Does that mean they are sterilized and non-geographic!?

19.3 Production of Arab Culture: National Museum to Transnational Museum

Georgetown University in Qatar published report about Art and Cultural Production in the GCC (2007) and emphasized that museums have significant role in creation of identity in Arabian Peninsula. Especially in the UAE and Qatar that established Islamic museums and some branches of famous museum like Guggenheim and louver. Also, they have been hosting for international events and festivals. These museums and cultural events are part of activities for display new portrait of nation in the global.

Countries need an “image of the nation” to build power, and museums do that. But most of population in Countries of the Arabian Peninsula are foreign and concept of “nation” in Qatar and Dubai is not clear. Actually, national citizens are minority in their countries. Therefore, museums in these countries instead of make an image of Indigenous culture, try to create an image of transnational or multinational culture that encompasses a wide spectrum of immigrants and foreign worker residing in these countries.

Unlike, national museums were built during the twentieth century based on racial prejudice and political unity (such as Egypt, Iraq and Syria), national museums in countries such as the UAE and Qatar do not seek representation of political unity or racial prejudice, instead they want to create common cultural symbol. The previous museums usually followed ethnographical and archaically approach; like “Qatar’s national museum that was opened in 1975 in an old royal palace, and displayed of archaeology, Bedouin ethnographic material and material relating to the pearling industry, complete with a lagoon with dhows, and an aquarium. Also the national museums in Bahrain (1971) and Saudi Arabia (1974)” (Exella & Rico, 2013, pp. 676). But the new Arab museums in the area are mostly the pioneer for art experiences and make new space for cultural developing. Like Zayed National Museum that was designed based on the feathers of a falcon as national symbol in the UAE by Norman Foster’s. Also, the new National Museum of Qatar designed by Jean Nouvel to look like desert rose, a crystal formation that materializes in Qatar’s deserts (Exella, 2016: 66). These designing refer to desert and Arabian traditional life, also these have become the new and identifiable trademarks in Qatar and the UAE that are being repeated as a brand everywhere. These museums are not only as a part of Cultural heritage of the past but are as a part of Cultural heritage of the future.

These are not museums of indigenous peoples but museums of global citizens with trans-cultures. For example, “Arab Museum of Modern Art (Doha, 2010) and The Museum of Islamic Art (Doha, 2008) are transnational museums not local museums” (Exella & Rico, 2013, pp. 678). They have collected artistic works from around the Arab world and the Islamic world and represented the image of this region as a global museum (not a regional or indigenous or national museum).

Dubai and Doha have cosmopolitanism thinking or they have tried to introduce themselves in this approach. “Foreign workers in the UAE is 81%, in Qatar is 82%, Kuwait is 68%, Bahrain is 40, Oman and Saudi Arabia is 25%” (Exell, 2016, p. 133) and they have made cosmopolitan identity in this region; so they need a transnational image. This image is made in transnational museums. These museums have given symbolic power to countries in the region that can exhibit their identity in the global. Moreover, for construction of transnational identity, the UAE has opened franchising of museums of the Louvre Abu Dhabi and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. These museums have become an important destination for contemporary artwork. Also, the establishment of Christie’s and Sotheby’ auction house confirms that these countries have international and global situation.

Arab countries in the region have developed international cultural policies to create a transnational image of themselves. “They supported global festival and art universal events for example Qatar has supported the Tribeca festival after 9/11, also joined to international artistic events for example Qatar-Germany partnership to open Philharmonic Orchestra in February 2017” (Eggeling, 2017, p. 16). A “regime of globalization” is formed in the increased cooperation with international heritage entities, like UNESCO, ICOM and ICOMOS. These countries are trying to register new sites in the UNESCO World Heritage List like Al Zubarah (in Qatar, 2013) and Umm an-Nar (in UAE, 2012) to show their connection with the world heritage. Also, cultural funding has been spent by Qatar and the UAE to cherish appreciate the global art and universal values of culture. They have spent a lot of money to buy Western art for their new museums. Purchases that reflect the appreciation of Arab countries for universal-Western art and for a new representation of Arab-Islam identity.

The construction of a cosmopolitan identity in this region can be critically examined. Actually, the construction of transnational identity in this region is not trans-place and cosmopolitan but is non-place. In the critical point of view, “The non-place construct a kind of dystopia rather than an embodiment of the utopia in which universal identities are formed” (Exell, 2017, pp. 56–57). The ambiguous space detached from the text and suspended in time and place, like what Michel Foucault called heterotopia or dystopia. Although transnational and trans-regional means common area, but this area is not neutral and has beneficiaries. For Qatar and the UAE, which are the hub of global trade, it is better that emphasize on transnational art. In this context, it is not unexpected that international institutes of art such Christie’s auction, louver and Guggenheim museums were established.

Actually, the emphasis on transnational identity is part of political economy also is part of planning for tourism developing. Usually, cultural heritage projects are justified as a program for the development of the tourism economy rather than as preserving historical value. Of course, cultural policymakers in these countries emphasize another aspect of transnationalism art; they are still trying to introduce this region as “contact zone” with highly cultural tolerance; an area that embraces cultural diversity, multinationals and intercultural and multicultural events. But how in the depths of Salafist-Wahhabi fundamentalism is such a cultural tolerance possible? The UAE and Qatar, with a focus on transnational identity, seek to reduce their local identity conflicts in the face of Western, often secular, cultural events. The solution is elsewhere; in shaping new Arab art. An art that has both local legitimacy and universal acceptance. A new type of Arab art experience that can both be a part of the art world events, as well as being able to live in a fundamentalist religious community. But what are the features of this new art movement?

19.4 New Art Movements in the Region: Post-modern Art to Transmodern Art

Formation of arts market of the Middle East in the United Arab Emirate and establishing of new museums in Qatar has been showing high effects on the contemporary art of Iran, Iraq and other countries of the region; some artists have found the opportunity to be engaged in searching contemporary narration of Islamic arts independent from governmental orders which, in turn, has led to the formation of a critical movement in contemporary art of this region.

They display their critical and political works on Islam and the cultural situation of Middle East in the Dubai galleries and exhibitions Dubai. For this purpose, studying the Middle East Art is somehow the study of the rejected and marginalized arts in this region. Thus, it is necessary to study the Middle East Art as a different concept of Islamic Art and different from art in the Islamic countries. Middle Eastern art is a postmodern narrative of art in Islamic lands that is different from contemporary Islamic art.

The Middle East art, more than being a new aesthetic type, is product of a specific type of cultural discourse. In this discourse, Middle East Art reconstructs the media stereotypes about Islamic fundamentalism (in reference to Al-Qaida, September 11 and ISIS). The Middle East art is not the Islamic art. The main theme of this art is expressing the challenges of religious life in the modern era. They emphasize on the disharmony of religious life and the heterogeneous composition of religious elements and everyday life. These are the features of postmodern art. But the proper description of contemporary Islamic art is transmodernism, not postmodernism. What creates postmodernism in art is an unstable and ironic mixture of modernity and tradition. What is experienced in postmodernism is not a return to tradition or revival of local culture, but is a combination of local signs with pop art. The Middle East art is produced and reproduced by art market and auction houses, museums and galleries. But cultural policy-making does not seek to deconstruct Islamic art, but to reconstruct contemporary Islamic art. Therefore, policy-makers follow the transmodernism, which is other way.

The transmodernism has critical view of postmodernism. Some theorists such Enrique Dussel (1995) and artists like Billy Childish and Charles Thomson (with remodernism manifesto; 2000), Nicolas Bourriaud (with Altermodern concept; 2009), Alan Kirby (with Digimodernism concept; 2009) and Luke Turner (with meta-modernism manifesto; 2011) have tried to calling for a period of new spirituality in art, culture and society to replace postmodernism. This approach is being developed by marginal and non-Western cultures. Ziauddin Sardar (Pakistani intellectual) thinks that: “transmodernism is the transfer of modernity and postmodernism from the edge of chaos into a new order of society. As such, transmoderism and tradition are not two opposing worldviews but a new synthesis of both. Traditional societies use their ability to change and become transmodern while remaining the same! Both sides of the equation are important here: change has to be made and accommodated; but the fundamental tenets of tradition, the sources of its identity and sacredness remain the

same. So, we may define a transmodern future as a synthesis between life enhancing tradition—that is amenable to change and transition—and new forms of modernities that are shaped and articulated by traditional cultures themselves” (Sardar, 2006, p. 296). Just as there are different ways to be human, there are different ways to be modern. “Traditional societies can be (trans)modern too and can shape their own models of modernities based on their own norms, values and worldviews. This shift restores parity to cultural relations. The conventional ideas that it is only ‘the west’ that modernizes ‘the east’ is turned upside down: ‘the east’ can just as easily transmodernise ‘the west’! The west thus has as much to learn from the east—and I am not referring here to obscurantist ideas on mysticism and ‘spirituality’—as it has to teach. Transmodernism thus introduces new ways of listening to non-western cultures. It directs the ear towards the debates that are going on in all cultures and civilisations striving to find contemporary interpretations of their basic values within the complexities of their histories, and contemporary relevance of their cherished ideas” (Sardar, 2006, p. 297). This approach has been accepted by countries such as Qatar and the UAE that are trying to create transnational and transnational policies.

Sam Bardouil and Till Fellrath (2011) as a curator in Mathaf (Doha Museum) wrote in their book “told, untold, retold” that the new Arab art movement is transnational. Bardouil think that concept transmodernism is postcolonial concept and in this context, world can hear the sound of art from the Middle East. Transmodern art is new opportunity for combination of abstract art (as a global form) and conceptual art (as a local Content). Artworks that emphasize on spirituality in the modern era. Bardouil classifies some experiences of Middle Eastern artists such as Wafaa Bilal, Adel Abidin, Mounir Fatmi, Kader Attia, Ghada Amer, Sadik Kwaish Alfraji, Lara Baladi, Ahmed Alsoudani under the concept of transmodern. Examining some Art works can clarify this conceptual approach.

In Magnetism installation (2009) by Ahmed Mater, we can see the black cuboid magnet is a small simulacrum of the black-draped Kaaba, the “Cube”, that central element of the Meccan rites. His circumambulating whirl of metallic filings mirrors in miniature the concentric tawaf of the pilgrims, their sevenfold circling of the Kaaba (Mackintosh-Smith, 2010). This work has a minimalist and abstract style. These styles are paid attention by other artists such as Mattar Bin Lahej and EL Seed. Abstraction and formalist style was re-noticed by artists in Islamic region, and many artworks were affected by this movement like Ammar Al Attar’s artwork. Attar in “Salah series” (2012) took a photo of portraits of people, when the people prayed and shift this theme to pattern which he made new concept of prayer. Also, zoulikha bouabdellah in “silence” series (2008) that made installation of shoes and prayer mat. In this work, she played with limits and illustrated the contradictory situation of the fashion hall and the prayer hall, which showed that Muslim women were standing in two different worlds. Arwa Abouon in one of her works show word of “Allah” (2008) in Vision test page (Snellen chart) as symbol of seeing and knowing; simple and minimalist work that shows religious concept. Adel Abidin in one of his works with title the Delicious (2007) made mosque with sugar. The ants attacked to the mosque, after a while breaking it into grains; this works mention to the instinctive motive of the worship. Mounir Fatmi in his work “the Wooden Cube”

(2004) reconstruct Kaaba as a medical assistance box. These artistic experiences go beyond of context and can make intercultural and transcultural experiences.

Reconstruction of Islamic geometric patterns by light and shadow is an important part of the new experiences of trans-regional art. Like the works of Rashad Alakbarov, Anila Quayyum Agha and Najat Makki.

Rashad Alakbarov (Azerbaijani artist) uses a clever arrangement of wooden planks and other such objects that somehow project intangible works that come to life through a play of shadows and lights (Bekhrad, 2013). In one of his works presented at the 2012 Sharjah Islamic Art Festival, the objects are cluttered in such a way that the shadows cast on the wall under the appropriate lighting create Islamic geometric patterns.

Anila Quayyum Agha (American Pakistani artist) creates a space of light and shadow from Islamic motifs in a work entitled *Intersections* (2014). Agha's *Intersections* is an immersive gallery installation centered around a suspended cube. Each of the cube's six sides is laser cut with the same delicate patterns, derived from decorative motifs found in Spain's historic Alhambra, an international highlight of traditional Islamic architecture and design. A single light bulb within the cube casts shadows of interlacing patterns onto the room's walls, ceiling and floor—and subsequently the people within the space. Describing his work, the artist says that the doors of this new sacred public space are open to everyone, even non-Muslims and the light shines for everyone.

Najat Makki created “Visual-Audio Flaps”, an installation that combines movement, sound and visual effects. *Sphere*, made of stained glass, rotates and produces a sense of rotating galaxies in the universe. The light emitted from the center of which reflects the motifs on the walls and the surrounding space and creates a galactic image of Islamic space. The sphere and its rotation, like the earth and the centralism of light in it, and regular reflection of the patterns around it, are a kind of reconstruction of Islamic geometry in new dimensions. This work was presented at the Sharjah Islamic Art Festival in 2018.

Zoulikha bouabdellah in “Walk on the Sky” work, a three-dimensional installation, embodied the constellation Pisces from conception of the astronomer Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi (903-986). The piece made use of the polygonal star, one of the symbols most depicted in Arabic art and architecture throughout the ages, and closed the space with a floor of mirror. This is an interactive work, and the viewer, by walking (on the stainless-steel floor) feels the changes above the head, thus creating an experience of walking on the sky. The work won the Abraaj Art Prize in 2009.

We can mention more artists. They usually work in abstract, conceptual and minimalist styles and are part of the Islamic art movement in the contemporary period. These works have a position beyond nationalism and have trans-regional audience. Artistic events and biennials of Arab countries such as Abraaj and Art Jameel have been able to support this trend to some extent. Transmodernism in art has created new hopes for the development of the experience of modernity in Islamic lands. Unlike postmodern art, which frustrates contemporary Islamic art in these lands.

19.5 Conclusion: Transcultural Contact Zone

The concept of the “Arab world” was formed in the discourse of nationalism, and today the concept of a “new Arab world” is being shaped in the discourse of transnationalism. Transnationalism means to the extension of social, political and economic processes beyond the sovereign boundaries of nation states. Transnationalism forms the “contact zone”; where cultures come together and shapes multi-culture, mix-culture, Cross-cultural and transcultural.

Arab oil-rich countries attempt to represent new image of their societies based on transnational and transcultural situations. First of all, since a large part of the population resides as an immigrant labor force in the region, arts and culture in these countries need a transnational image to link the population together. This image was created by transnational museums in the UAE and Qatar and developed with intercultural and intercultural policies. Second, the emphasis on transnational identity is a part of political economy in this region; Dubai and Doha have active global ports and international workforce with transnational relations.

In the end, it is worth to note that we cannot talk about Art, only based on local artists (Emirati or Qatari artists) in the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula. As it was mentioned, Art in this region can be transnational and trans-regional with artists from other countries that work in the same region. Art in this region is a product of cultural policies in the “contact zone”. Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese and Iranian artists who immigrated to Qatar and the UAE due to war or political bottlenecks and now work in new Arab art centers form transnational art. The UAE galleries and museums in Qatar have also welcomed them, and these artists have found their way to international exhibitions and markets.

These art movements on the one hand, try to be contemporary and a part of global art, and on the other hand, they are trying to be in line with the political economy of the Arab oil-rich countries.

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Chapter 20

The Gulf as a Global Contact Zone: Chronotopic Identities and (Linguistic) Landscapes



Letizia Lombezzi

Abstract The Gulf distinguishes both as a regional system in international relations and a global contact zone for the occurrence of many social issues. Migration, transformation, and urbanization emerge as the key factors for changes in the Gulf area. The concept of chronotope helps us to analyze the Gulf context and the richness of its repertoires, intended as language, cultures, activities, and identities. In fact, the multiplicity of contexts of interactions together with the actors involved gave rise to a number of landscapes inside the city, so contributing to superdiversity. This chapter attempts to analyze the phenomenon, and the reasons that led to such a reality.

Keywords Gulf · Urbanization · Contact zones · (Super)diversity

20.1 The Birth of Gulf States: From the Collapse of the Ottoman Empire to the Independence

The sense of cohesion conveyed by the definition of the Gulf as a regional system does not exempt us, however, from analyzing separately Gulf countries through the stages of their establishment as modern states. The Arab regional system has always faced the international system of Mediterranean Europe, so it is not possible to trace the historical and social framework of the area without mentioning the colonial period, included the events occurred just before the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In this long period of time, some main phases can be identified (Guazzone, 2016, pp. 13–16):

- the initial colonial phase, up to the First World War 1800–1920;
- the phase between the First and Second World Wars 1920–1945, with the emergence of Arab states led by local élites and backed by Europeans in anti-Ottoman fashion;

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- the phase of pan-Arabism and the conquest of independence 1945–1979, with the first clear differentiation between poor Arab states and rich Arab states, due to oil resources;
- the fourth phase 1979–2015, with the alignment of Arab countries to the neoliberal dictates of Western globalization, the consequent restructuring of the Arab regional system and, subsequently, the increasing pressure of protest against old leaders, up to the Arab revolutions;
- the post-revolutionary phase, still in progress and with some social conquests, but still weak and uncertain regarding political outcomes.

The autonomous states that overlook the Gulf derive from a common path and historically, in each country, one family has prevailed over the others and has seized power. Currently, the population is mostly composed of sedentary people, settled along the coast. The notables descend from common origins: the Banu ‘Utub strain of the Aniza from the Nejd, from which the Al-Sabah of Kuwait, the Al-Khalifa of Bahrain, and the Al-Thani of Qatar derive. The most significant historical milestones for the coastal area can be traced by following the more significant steps of the British presence: the signing of treaties, the collapse of British dominance, the withdrawal, and the proclamation of independence. In particular, it should be remembered that in between 1798 and 1820 Great Britain arrogated to itself the right to issue navigation permits and, in the absence of these, to accuse of piracy those who sailed in the area. In order not to run into this accusation, from 1820 to the end of the century, all states signed separate agreements with the British, also pledging not to interact with other external agents. The last signatory was Qatar in 1906. British hegemony weakened at the time of the discovery of oil, for which the first drilling began in the 1930s, while the crisis of 1929 was ongoing. The British, however, were able to impose themselves again, forcing the Gulf states to grant oil exploration permits to specific companies, and also granted the payment of royalties without being fairly commensurate with the value of the extracted wealth. The opportunity to gain greater autonomy thanks to black gold was therefore there, but it was necessary to wait for the end of the world conflict to be able to take full advantage of it. Two years after the end of the Second World War, India had obtained independence, and partly as a consequence of it, the British presence in the East was greatly lightened. This too, together with other factors, led the British to recognize the independence of the various Gulf states, starting with Kuwait in 1961. Gradually, in between 1950 and 1971, Great Britain gave way to the US and the first sign of this change was the sale of the military base in Bahrain to the United States. From this moment on, oil has guided the historic stages of the Gulf countries according to these phases: the boom of the 1970s; the emergence of regional conflicts that were source of instability and the confederation in the GCC; the collapse of oil prices during the 1990s and the increasing intrusion into the area by the US; the phase of liberalization of economies and societies, still in progress and of dubious success. In this frame, Qatar (independence 1971; oil 1949) stands out in terms of international alignments, for being the headquarter of a very important US military base. Internal dynamics reveal that the ruling family comes from a tribe whose members ramify into multiple branches, all resident in the

country and all aspiring to their place within the circle of power. Qatar is also home to the Al-Jazeera channel, the Arab voice of the media that gives it a respectable place in terms of diplomatic relations, and for affecting the orientation of the general public.

20.2 The Gulf as a Regional System

The classical theory of international relation affirms that a regional system is characterized by internal cooperation among its states (Cantori & Spiegel, 1973, p. 25). Effectively, the Gulf and its identity have historically distinguished from the wider Arab world, thing that was institutionalized by the creation of the GCC, from 1991 onwards. Despite the birth of the GCC, many reciprocal rivalries existed. In fact, it is true that “regionalism can be understood as a dialectical process since it brings in itself the perpetual tension existing between the forces pro-regionalism and the forces against it” (Ferabolli, 2014, p. 16). The charter¹ of the Gulf Cooperation Council opens mentioning the keywords of *takāmul* (integration), *tansīq* (coordination), and *taʿāun* (cooperation), which seem to replace the classical concept of *waḥda* (unity), taking into account the need of enhancing the degree of reciprocal assistance, instead of being concerned with the setting of a single leadership, thing that has represented the main concern in the Arab world for many years. The Gulf, across history, emerged both as a regional system and home of a regional identity, the *khaleeji* one. It is evident, however, that the field where integration succeeded more effectively has been the economic one. Oil made possible an high level of incomes, and the consequent richness of the Gulf states allowed them to emancipate from the role of Arab periphery toward the conquest of a wider space. Consequently, some researchers have mentioned the “gulfanization” phenomenon (Ottaway, 2010), and others spoke about “the Arab Gulf momentum” (Abdulla, 2010; Abdulla in Ferabolli, 2014, p. 88) compared to the hegemony played in the past by different countries of the Arab world. We could add that the internal cooperation reflects also in the high mobility and freedom of movement for its inhabitants, which is welcomed by the Gulf ruling élites or, at least, it is not hindered. It could be problematic to find a single precise definition for the Gulf region, given that Arab people find it difficult too. They share anyway a common feeling, and they have the impression that the Gulf is “a region across which they can move more easily than anywhere else in the world, they strength the structural effect of an Arab region whose location in the world map can be pointed out, whose boundaries can be outlined, and whose main features can be distinguished from other regions. An Arab region that, ultimately, exists.” (Ferabolli, 2014, p. 150). The regional system and the Gulf area are then identified as a political space, an economic, and a performative one (ibidem: 18,

¹ Available at <https://www.gcc-sg.org/en-us/AboutGCC/Pages/Primarylaw.aspx>, last visit 16/02/2023.

45, 156). The linguistic behaviors and attitudes that give birth to the linguistic landscape are perfectly aligned with the previous definition and its perception by Gulf inhabitants.

20.3 Social Change and the Gulf as a Global Contact Zone

Social change as changes in social interaction involve differently different segments of population, according to their statuses and functions. The Gulf embodies then a global contact zone, concept defined by Pratt (1991), and to be intended as a place where a plethora of *repertoires*—language, culture, activities, and identities—are brought together by community members. Although sharing the same macro-context (e.g., Doha), people live in their own settings, and behave consequently. Here, the concept of *chronotope*, literally meaning time–space, serves us well in order to take into consideration both behavior and context together, in the Gulf area. Originally adopted by Bakhtin et al. (1981, pp. 84–85) focusing on linguistics and literature, it is true that time and space remain critical factors for any kind of human (inter)action. Those two categories frame the individual’s daily practice and are subject to change along our day: the time–space of working shifts differs from the one of happy-hour or family commitments, so people are continuously placed and replaced in different frames, which have impact on their attitudes. In practice, although living in a same place (e.g., one capital city of the Gulf) time and space may be reordered many time along our day, and consequently our normative codes are reordered too. The multiplicity of contexts of interaction found in Gulf cities proves this. The same Doha offers several “landscapes” (Landry & Bourhis, 1997) where many languages and codes are visible and at stake: the Education city, the Diplomatic Area, The Pearl touristic haunt, the Mall area, and the Administrative district. Starting from the observation of the city, here taking Doha as a symbol, I want to suggest that the Gulf currently embodies a global contact zone, exposed to superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007) that is a challenging phenomenon from many point of view: culture, religion, language, economy, and diplomacy. Given the above, this chapter wants to explore the characteristic of such a challenge and the reasons that led to the current social reality.

20.4 Qatar: Population Trends Over the Last Century

According to Jill (Jill, 1990, p. 117), the population of Qatar decreased in the early 1900s, after the collapse of the pearl based economy, and increased later during the 70s when oil and gas—the exploitation of which was encouraged by the ruling family and Britain together—caused a new economic boom. That time the majority of the population was composed of non-Qataris, as many people from India and the South East were attracted to work in the new promising sector. The oil rent together with

the rulers' ambition to modernize the country allowed high-level standards in terms of health care, education, and housing subsidies; this led to the excellent positioning of Qatar in the Human Development Index ranking, among the highest in the world (#33 worldwide in 2015 and top one in the Arab region, UNDP Human Development Report, 2016, p. 212).

In 2003, the increase in oil prices caused another successful growth, so to attract many foreign investments in several sectors: for example, the building of new infrastructures, thing that both improved the landscape of the city center, and attracted tourism in areas like The Pearl and the Malls districts. Additionally, many US universities opened branches in Qatar, so to give rise to the Education City, the educational center for world élite professionals of the near future. In parallel with these factors, the need of workers increased again (e.g., for the building of new residential areas or new infrastructures), and the presence of foreigners was perceived as a challenge to the original local culture, more than an opportunity. The successful acceptance of the candidature of Qatar for the FIFA championship, and the recent celebration of the World Cup in Doha, also made this issue deeper, in term of workforce request.

Given the above,² one of the most important target of Qatar development planning remains to encourage knowledge-based economy, attract more skilled workers and high human capital professionals, with the hope that technology and modernization will substitute low-skilled general workers. Meanwhile, the implementation of some measures was attempted, so to promote higher fertility rates among Qataris too, in the period 2015–2017. After 2017, a reduction in oil revenues seems to have caused a reduction in the number of the resident population, included many Arab expatriates from Egypt, for example (Fig. 20.1).³

As for occupation, Qataris occupy the white-collar government positions, especially in public administration and defense (indeed, this is true for many countries!), while non-Qataris prevail in low-level occupations, although a very high percentage of foreigners is found everywhere.⁴

A sector that reveals to be critical for the monitoring of population composition is school: by the observation of schools it emerges that just one-third of the students are Qataris. Concerning the origin of foreigners living in Qatar, it emerges that India,

² A detailed study and analysis about Qatari population trends and composition is provided by De Bel-Air, Françoise, Demography, Migration, and Labour Market in Qatar, Migration Policy Centre, GLMM, Explanatory note, 8/2014 Retrieved from Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository, at: <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/32431>, last visit 16/02/2023.

³ Zahra (2016); <https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/01/11/2016/Population-policy-goals-need-to-be-re-evaluated-Minister>.

Permanent Population Committee (2012), last visit 03/02/2023; <http://gulfmigration.eu/qatar-law-no-1-2017-amending-provisions-law-no-21-2015-regulating-entry-exit-expatriates-residence/>, last visit 16/02/2023.

⁴ Labour Force Surveys, 2006 to 2015, and census 2010. The figures of workers include domestic workers. 2015 data (latest available data as of May 2017); 2015 data: <http://gulfmigration.eu/qatar-economically-active-population-aged-15-nationality-qatari-non-qatari-sex-occupation-2015/>, last visit 03/02/2023.

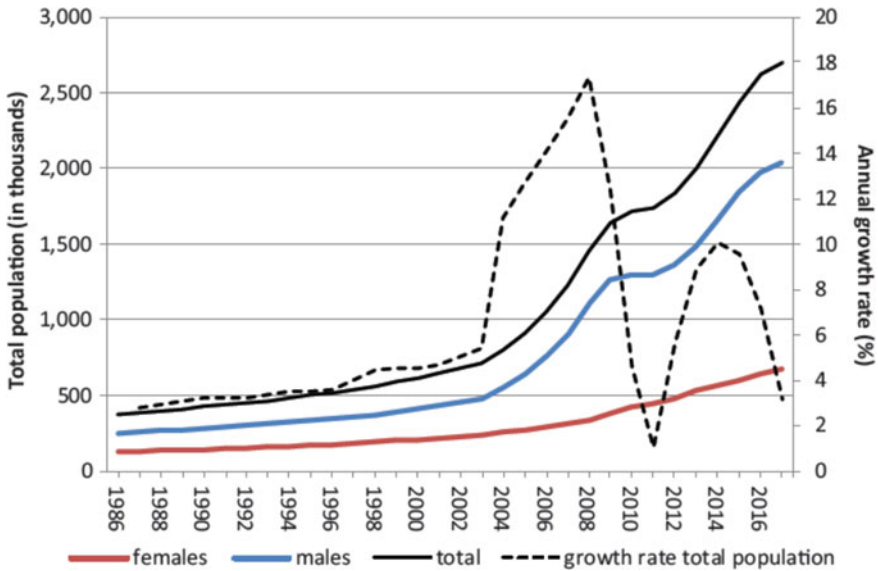


Fig. 20.1 Evolution of Qatar's population and growth rate (1986–2017) (Source QSA [Statistical Yearbook, 2016 and monthly figures on total population, June 2017])

Nepal, and Bangladesh are the first three non-Arab countries of origin, while Egypt, Syria, and Jordan the first-three Arab countries (Fig. 20.2).⁵

The composition of the resident population is also affected by some important factors like:

- marriage practices, to be considered separately for men and women;
- the lack of *jus solis* (birth right citizenship); and
- the lack of refugees status recognition.

In the place of aforementioned, the following practices are found instead:

- the concession of short term permits;
- the *kafāla* sponsorship system.

The mechanisms that regulate it are addressed here below in more detail.

⁵ Source: Annual Statistical Abstracts, Ministry of Education/Supreme Education Council (2003–2012).

Source: SNOJ (2017).

Sources: Asian Countries: Qatar National Human Right Committee (NHRC) estimates as of September 30, 2013, published in Al-Raya newspaper, October 1, 2013, ; Zahra Babar (2017).

20.5 Key-Concepts: *Kafāla*, Chronotope, Superdiversity, Transnationalism, and Linguistic Landscape

I want to introduce now a reflection on the system of *kafāla*, or sponsorship-based immigration, and the standing debate on it.⁶ It traditionally means taking care of a child, especially of an orphan, thing that is highly recommended according to Islam. Religion requires to exercise compassion and justice toward orphans, and to respect their true identity by keeping the name of the father. In fact, according to the Holy Book, one cannot become a person’s son by virtue of a declaration (Qura’an 33:4–5).⁷



Fig. 20.2 Foreign labourers by activity (Qatar, 2006–2015, selected activities) (Source Labour force surveys, 2006–2015 and population census 2010)

⁶ An example of this debate can be read at: <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/qatari-citizens-want-sponsorship-rules-tightened-further-survey-1.742530>, last visit 30/01/2023.

⁷ Source and details at: <http://islamicstudies.info/reference.php?sura=33&verse=4-5> last visit 30/01/2023. Different translations remain possible and may be provided by specialists. The translation reported here does not want to be representative of any particular orientation.

Surah 33 Al-Ahzab, Ayat 4-5

مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّنْ قَلْبَيْنِ فِيْ جَوْفِهِ ۗ وَمَا جَعَلَ أَزْوَاجَكُمْ الَّتِي تُظَاهِرُونَ مِنْهُنَّ
 أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ ۗ وَمَا جَعَلَ أَدْعِيَاءَكُمْ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ ۗ ذَٰلِكُمْ قَوْلُكُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَقُولُ
 الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهْدِي السَّبِيلَ ﴿٣٣:٤﴾ اَدْعُوهُمْ لِأَبَائِهِمْ ۗ هُوَ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۗ فَإِن لَّمْ تَعْلَمُوا
 آبَاءَهُمْ فَأَخْرَاجُهُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَمَوْلَايَكُمْ ۗ وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا أَخْطَأْتُمْ بِهِ ۚ
 وَلَٰكِن مَّا تَعَمَّدَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿٣٣:٥﴾

(33:4) Allah has never put two hearts within one person's body;⁵ nor has He made your wives, whom you compare to your mothers' backs (to divorce them),⁶ your true mothers; nor has He made those whom you adopt as sons your own sons.⁷ These are only words that you utter with your mouths. But Allah proclaims the Truth and directs you to the Right Path. (33:5) Call your adopted sons after their true fathers; that is more equitable in the sight of Allah.⁸ But if you do not know their true fathers, then regard them as your brethren in faith and as allies.⁹ You will not be taken to task for your mistaken utterances, but you will be taken to task for what you say deliberately.¹⁰ Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate.¹¹

In any case, the sponsored child does not inherit, does not receive the adoptive father's name, and cannot see the siblings without hijab, so his status is not equal to that of a natural son.

Today, *kafala* has been revisited in terms of certificate (of migration) for work reasons, but the worker seems to remain somehow “orphan” of some rights and opportunities.

Although there is a new law, it

did little more than change the terms used for “sponsor” and “sponsorship”, replacing them with “recruiter” and “responsibility”, respectively. Under this law, the employer can still exercise control over the exit of foreign employee from the country. The foreign employee may submit a petition to the exit petition committee to contest the decision of the employer or the competent authority prohibiting him from exiting the country. The transfer of employment is still subject to the approval of both the employer and the Ministry of Labour⁸

20.6 Chronotope

This concept overcomes the old dichotomy between micro and macro, or individual vs. social. It then integrates the two, in order to hopefully answer the question: who are we? Who are Qatari resident people?

The chronotope links behavior and context in the frame of precise time–space (lit.) coordinates. Then, some new categories emerge from the following pairs:

- context + sense of belong → identity
- context + roles → statuses
- context + codes → lawfulness

Identity, status and lawfulness help us in individuating superdiversity, and its facets.

20.7 Superdiversity

It emerges from the horizontal observation of a given city as an “unprecedented kind of complexity” (Vertovec, 2007, originally referring to London), due to migrants’ different origins, legal statuses, socioeconomic conditions, and education.

Superdiversity is comprised between the two contrasting poles of interaction and segregation. It is important to note that the scale, and not the dynamics, are new in the Gulf today, while the phenomenon *per se* has also been observed elsewhere, in the past. More, superdiversity concerns today countries other than Europe and the US, differently from what happened in the period between the 60s and the 90s. The challenge in the Gulf is caused by the high percentages of citizens, and their extremely

⁸ Zahra (2016).

varied origins. Such things ask for the need of new knowledge, included culture-sensitive practices and beliefs: clan and affiliations, culture and religions, languages and less common spoken languages, familiarity with culture-specific informal leaders and informal authorities, and awareness of other criteria of belonging are all factors to be taken into due account. Ruling powers and administrators are required to know well such facets for implementing best practices, effective planning, and allocating resources.

Superdiversity emerges as a characterizing element of the Gulf and its cities—here taking Doha as an example—motivated by the plethora of time and spaces (=contexts) that every resident experiments, according to his identity, status, and degree of lawfulness. Superdiversity implies the co-occurrence and interplay among three main factors, which are mobility, complexity, and unpredictability (Blommaert, 2010). Effectively, observed from a closer look, the global city reveals a high degree of mobility of its inhabitants, who travel to and from their original countries according to their personal plans and needs. This high mobility rate is neither predictable nor easy to monitor, thing that may trigger complexity in managing internal and external affairs.

Additionally, Meissner and Vertovec (2015, p. 542) defined superdiversity as the “new multicultural condition of the twenty-first century”, especially related to the heterogeneity of the urban condition in London. Their consideration remains valid for other cities too and the challenge here is between the diversification of diversity versus culturalization of citizenship (Duyvendak et al., 2016), and it depends on what kind of priority we set and what we intend for culture. For instance, is it to be intended as collaborative interaction or as homogeneity? Does culture result from exchange and contamination or should it be understood as a unique block?

Superdiversity as a phenomenon invites to consider culture as an open space, under continuous restructuring, but it is fundamental to understand what are the causes for superdiversity in Doha today. First of all, migration, albeit it can take place for different reasons by workers, by students, by spouses and family members, by asylum seekers and refugees, and by illegals.

Superdiversity also results in transnationalism, which in turn roots in exchanges, internal linking, and connections among migrants. The monitoring of their phone calls, marriages, cohabitation and house sharing, remittances, and episodes of mutual economic assistance revealed that migrants are a social class in solidarity within themselves.

As for the effects induced by superdiversity, they may spam from prejudice and inequality, in case of segregation, to creolization and cosmopolitanism, in case new cultural competences and awareness emerge from the host society.

The concept of **linguistic landscape** (LL) recalls the important implications of languages in the urban space, which is made of public and cultural spaces together (Blommaert, 2013, p. 3).

Landry and Bourhis explained that LL “refers to the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region” (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 25).

The resulting landscape effectively shows road panels and pieces of information provided in many different languages, both in a top-down and bottom-up fashion (Shohamy et al., 2010), depending on their intended function: informative, symbolic, public and general, and culture or status specific. The value of the information is to be read not only semantically. Such a linguistic landscape richness is motivated by actual circumstances, like the historical, social, political, geographic, and demographic ones.

The *S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G.* model originally created for oral communication by Hymes (1974) is worth mentioning here for summarizing the various factors involved in the communication process, even if not restricted to the oral dimension. The acronym stays for *Setting and Scene, Participants, Ends, Act sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, Genre*. Huebner (2009) readapted these concepts to the studies on linguistic landscapes and observed the following:

The scenario (setting) has a great impact on the signs themselves, while the scene (scenes) refers to the size and visibility, but also to the visual impact they create. Participants of the linguistic landscape are both active and passive communicators, even though there is usually not much interaction between those who produce and those who read the signs. Much more is determined by power dynamics: more precisely the communication direction, top-down or bottom-up as already mentioned above. The ends refer to the purposes that the participants to a communication event have. Usually, two main purposes in the public space are to regulate everyday life, as far as institutional signs are concerned, and to influence the behavior of people who read that sign, such as advertising for a specific product. One recurrent end is to inform the reader/public, of course. The key refers to the tone that a text takes: it can be formal or informal, friendly or aggressive, and serious or spontaneous. Instruments (instrumentalities) deal with the communication channel and the mode of communication, the written or the spoken language. Each channel follows its own rules, such as the use of vocabulary and the length of the sentences. The mode remains a main crucial factor that affects communication. For example, a conversation by phone tends to be different from one in person, due to the fact that the interlocutors cannot see each other. Norms equal shared social standards, such as how to address someone, formality, length of conversation, and distance. Other rules concern the volume of the voice, the vocabulary, and the topics to be avoided or treated. Official panels and boards may be subject to these rules, as they often tend to have formal, top-down styles. As for genres (genre), they are usually defined as clearly delimited types of expression. Therefore, the kinds of signs are road signs, billboards, gravestones, inscriptions, and notices. The signs are never neutral because they always show connections with the social structure, power, and hierarchies: they reflect and regulate the structure of the space in which they operate, contributing to the organization and regulation of that space by selecting the audience to which it is located or addressed, and imposing particular restrictions, offering invitations, issuing rules of conduct, and so on, to that given audience.⁹

⁹ More details in Shohamy et al. (2010, p. XIII), Schmitt (2018, p. 104).

20.8 The Urban Space in Doha: The Preservation of Cultural Heritage Faces Social Complexity

Studies about the urban space and its architecture have been conducted by Salama and Weidmann (2013), and Furlan and Faggion (2017). These architects examined the building planning and processes that led to the actual aspect of Doha city. Salama together with Weidmann examined the urban space diversity in Doha, according to both perceptions and inhabitants personal daily experience, so highlighted the interplay between space construction and inhabitants' roles (Fig. 20.3). They exemplified this with a scheme (Salama & Weidmann, 2013, p. 162).

Furlan and Faggion signaled that urban space has to be functional to human activities, but it is also culture specific. Recalling Falahat studies, the authors observed that the planning of a traditional Islamic city (or quarter) is hierarchically determined according to the centrality of religious buildings as the mosque, first of all. Differently, the mall areas or the touristic haunt are more functionally planned, in a way that impedes people get lost even if they do not know the area well. The coexistence of heritage and modern planning in Doha seems to preserve somehow the culture-specific city space, although characterized by a multilingual background which emerges from the city landscape.

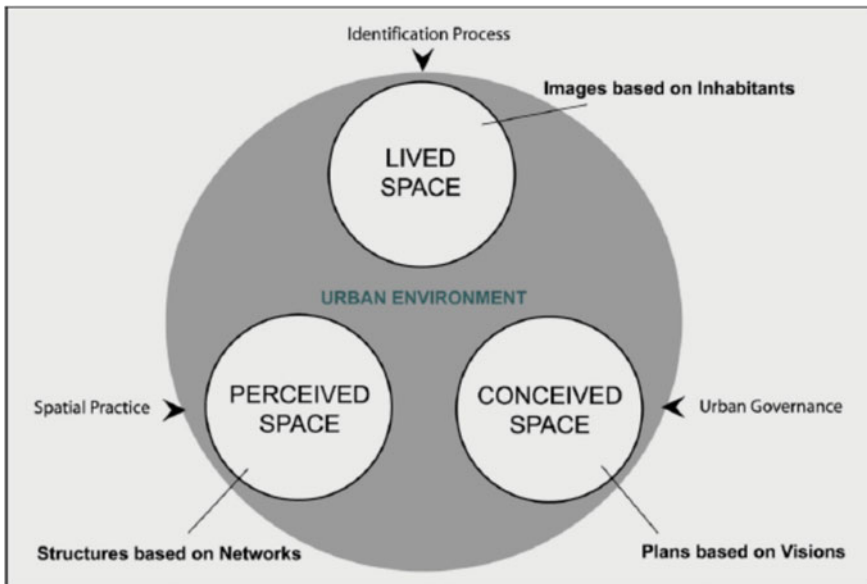


Fig. 20.3 Framework for investigating the production of urban environments based on Henri Lefebvre (Source Authors)

20.9 Multilingual Panels and the Relation Between Signs and Contents: Visualizing the Invisible

The various sign typology and characteristics show the adoption of different languages, with their different alphabets or ideograms that coexist in the global city. This confirms that diversity is the norm in communication (De Fina et al., 2017, pp. 56, 66, 97).

Effectively, panels that provide information by different languages may be based on¹⁰:

- identical duplication
- fragmentary multilingualism (selection reproduced in another language)
- multilingual writing overlap (e.g., by lines, but not full translation)
- multilingual complementary (e.g., for integration)

As for sign typology, we find¹¹:

- permanent signs, such as road signs, commercial signs, permanent advertisements, monuments, and graffiti;
- the signs linked to a particular event, such as posters, temporary commercial signs (sales, discounts, etc.), and real estate advertisements;
- the so-called noise, that is what is found by chance in the places of the city, especially with regard to advertising or written announcements on cars, vans, and public transport.

Considering the above, the appearance of so many codes and representations rises the reaction of city inhabitants, which may vary a lot according to the strength or weakness of local actors in terms of social relations and dynamics.

For example, foreigners can adopt their original language for a sense of identity claim, which manifests strength, or for lack of integration, which reveals weakness. Differently, Qataris may prefer to adopt and strive to preserve Arabic in response to their perception of cultural threat, or reply with a collaborative attitude supporting the teaching of Arabic to non-natives—as an example of cultural strength. The landscape of the city, then, is very rich in different linguistic codes and reveals that urban spaces can help us in visualizing the invisible. It means that we cannot ignore the presence of different cultures, groups, and languages when they are attested by written codes in panels and signs. These are the effects of changes brought by modernity, and its dynamics. Effectively, cultures find their strategy for emerging in a way that goes well beyond the city elite maneuver and purposes. Hauptmann (Read & Pinilla, 2006, pp. 13–15) recalled the concept formulated by Lefebvre, who highlighted that the nature of urban space and “the urban” is no longer recognizable as a totality or singular entity. The rupture of the supposed integrity and homogeneity of the city gives rise to a new form of knowledge. This knowledge has the city as its space,

¹⁰ Shohamy et al. (2010, pp. 21–25), Schmitt (2018, pp. 55–61).

¹¹ Blommaert (2013, pp. 53–68).

where events and cultural manifestations occur simultaneously at a very fast pace, so that new (linguistic) realities are created by city inhabitants, who perform as social agents. Power relations and the will of ruling élites weakens in front of the number and diversity of individuals that daily carry out their activities using both their codes and their languages: in different words, their habits.

In conclusion, it is evident that the high income available in Qatar allowed to deliver public services to a relatively wide sector of the population, and this has to be considered strategic for the stability of the area and societal wellness. Budgeting, then, reveals to be critical to the welfare of Qatar, and for avoiding the birth of conflicts among different groups that live together inside the same society. Migration has given rise to social change, and this led to the phenomenon of superdiversity. This extremely differentiated environment manifests its characteristics in the (linguistic) landscape of the city, rich in signs, panels, and various forms of advertisement. The dynamics of integration are crucial to the analysis of the phenomenon, and ask for widening the horizon of culture well beyond the limits of specificity and particularism. The risk is that superdiversity and the number of people it involves impact somehow the provision of public services, and trigger impair service delivery. As suggestion for further research, the issue of representation and decision-making could be further investigated in the area, with special regard to the more populous communities. In any case, even if delivery does not cover every person in need, people may still prefer impair service delivery in Qatar as the best alternative to extreme poverty in their homeland.

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Chapter 21

Vocabulary Changes in the Arab, Turk, and Persian Bilingual Societies in Northeastern Iran



Pooneh Mostafavi, Faryar Akhlaghi, and Hiwa Asadpour

Abstract This study investigates borrowability of basic vocabularies such as kinship terms, body parts, and natural and weather terms in nine bilingual villages in North-eastern Iran. The surveyed villages serve as a rich bilingual area for linguistic and societal change. Speakers in these villages speak at least one or more languages including Turkish, Turkmen (Turkic), Balochi (Indo-Iranian), and Arabic (Semitic). These languages are widely spoken in the Gulf area in countries such as Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Afghanistan, and other neighboring regions. Therefore, it can be a benchmark for further similar studies. The corpus is extracted from the database of Iran Language Atlas (ILA) which include questionnaire data and interviews in different genders, ages, and educational backgrounds. The results show deep basic lexical changes in the speech communities.

Keywords Social contact · Language contact · Lexical borrowing · Bilinguality · Iran

21.1 Introduction

In different societies, when different speech communities are in contact, they naturally tend to make compromise between their forms of speech (e.g., Winford, 2003, p. 2). Such contact may have different linguistic and societal outcomes but linguistic borrowing is one of the major manifestations of it. Traditionally, borrowing has been identified with lexical borrowing (Capuz, 1997, p. 87). According to Thomason (2001), contact is a cause of “any linguistic change that would have been less likely to occur outside a particular contact situation” (p. 62).

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Haugen (1950, pp. 214–215) believes that three types of lexical borrowing can be distinguished from each other: loanword, loan blend, and loan shift. In loanword, both form and meaning are transferred; in loan blend, only one part of the word is transferred and the other part is native; and in loan shift, only the meaning is copied from the other language and the elements are native.

In lexical borrowing, the language that acquires the loanwords is called the recipient language, and the one which serves as the source of the loanwords is called the donor language. A loanword can be defined as a word which is transferred completely with form and meaning from the donor language to the recipient one.

Treffers-Daller (2010) believes that it is not easy to define “borrowing” because researchers have used different terminologies to refer to various language contact phenomena, still he assumes Thomason and Kaufman’s (1988, p. 37) definition of this phenomena was a very influential one in the past decade. Their definition is as follows:

Borrowing is the incorporation of foreign features into a group’s native language by speakers of that language: the native language is maintained but is changed by the addition of the incorporated features.

Other scholars like Haugen (1950), Weinreich (1953), Van Coetsem (1988), Clyne (1967, 2003), and Johanson (1993) have also given some definitions for borrowing, some of them are close to the definition of Thomason and Kaufman’s and some are not. In some of them, other terminologies like “transference” and “code-copying” instead of “borrowing” have been used. However, there are other researchers like Poplack (1980), Poplack and Meechan (1995), and Grosjean (1988, 1995, 1997) who hold this view that it is necessary to distinguish borrowing from other terminologies like “transfer” and “code-switching” which are the other results of language contact (Treffers-Daller, 2010).

By considering various topics discussed in the previous research, the present research aims at studying basic vocabulary loanwords in all nine bilingual villages of Ahmad-Abad division in the Mashhad city of Khorasan Razavi province in the northeastern of Iran.

The languages which are spoken in these villages are as follows:

1. Turkic and Persian in three villages
2. Baluchi and Persian in three villages
3. Arabic and Persian in two villages
4. Turkmen and Persian in one village

These languages and cultures are widely distributed in the Gulf area, for example in Iraq, Turkmen, Arabs, in Arab Gulf countries, dominantly Arabic, in Afghanistan Balochi, etc. The current case study provides a foundation for further similar studies by considering outlier societies and languages in northeastern Iran which so far is overlooked. Because of intense contact between the two speech communities in each above-mentioned villages, lexical borrowing may happen according to Thomason and Kaufman scale and beyond their prediction, because of prolonged intense contact, also in basic vocabulary. To reach this goal, the main objective of the present

study include the evaluation of whether language and social contact can lead to the borrowing of basic vocabularies in some bilingual villages in Khorasan Razavi province. Therefore, the research questions to be tackled are as follows: (1) Are the basic vocabularies borrowed in the language and social contact situation? (2) Is the amount of borrowing statistically the same in all 9 studied bilingual villages, where four different languages (Turkic, Balochi, Arabic, and Turkmen) are in contact with Persian?

21.2 Research Methods

This research is descriptive analytical and is a field study, based on an original survey on natural linguistic data of the mentioned languages. Through this analysis, the cases of lexical borrowing in the mentioned data have been specified. Then the number of contact-induced Persian words in each category is expressed statistically for the above mentioned four languages separately. The data of this research had been collected from 19 informants, all of whom were men between 20 to 65 years old. Twelve people out of 19 were illiterate and seven were literate. Their occupations were carpet weaving, agriculture, and animal husbandry, and most of them were farmers.

The interviewees of the Iran Linguistic Atlas Database from which the data of this study were extracted are both female and male. It is a coincidence that the interviewees whose linguistic data were used in this study are all male, but this is in the interest of the purpose of this study because it provides the same background for the study of the effect of Persian language on its neighboring language in each studied village. The data have been extracted from the database of Iran Linguistic Atlas project (ILA) compiling at research institute for cultural heritage and tourism. The data of the mentioned project have been gathered in two phases, the first phase in 1970's and the second in 2000's, via face to face tape-recorded interviews with the native speakers of Iran's rural areas, using a questionnaire consisting of words and sentences.

The data for the present study—extracted from the ILA's database—consists of Turkic, Balochi, Arabic, and Turkmen equivalences for every fifty-eight basic words in the ILA's questionnaire: kinship terms (17 items), the terms related to the nature including the words for animals, plants, and weather (25 items), the terms for body parts (3 items), and the terms for small numerals (13 items). The data have been carefully transcribed in IPA alphabet first, and then analyzed based on the present study's theoretical framework.

21.3 Theoretical Issues

Borrowing leads to linguistic elements transferring or copying from one language to another. In language contact, lexical borrowing occupies a central role and occurs more than syntactic and phonological ones. In fact, words are the first elements that enter the recipient language. According to Weinreich (1953, p. 56), as words in one language are more loosely structured than grammar and phonemics, therefore they are more likely to be borrowed. However, in the case of long-term cultural pressure from source-language speakers on the borrowing-language speakers, bilingualism, syntactic, and phonological borrowing may also occur (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988, p. 37).

Some researchers propose hierarchies for borrowing elements in contact situation. For instance, Thomason and Kaufman (1988) have presented different levels of language contact situations in which borrowing occurs in different elements (see below under theoretical framework for more details).

Even within lexical borrowing, some elements are more readily borrowed than others. Myers-Scotton (2002) believes that among the words, nouns are borrowed easier than verbs because they receive thematic roles and do not break up the sentence structure but verbs are the thematic role assigners and they dominate other elements in the sentence (p. 240).

Different cultures have different attitudes toward borrowing. Some cultures are purist and their languages have very few loanwords (Haspelmath, 2008, p. 52).

Some great linguists like Müller (1875), Paul (1886), Schmidt (1872), and Schuchardt (1884) have studied language contact in nineteenth century (Clyne, 1987, p. 453). In twentieth century, the subject was addressed by Sapir (1921), Bloomfield (1933), and other structuralist. The scholars dealt with the topic from historical linguistic and sociolinguistic viewpoints. In addition, some researchers focused on specific geographic areas of contact linguistics. New important studies in this field referred to Weinreich's (1953) and Haugen's (1950, 1953) workings. They have studied language contact from both linguistic, sociocultural, and psychological perspectives. Weinreich's book has shown the importance of language contact for explanation of linguistic changes (Thomason, 2006, p. 340). But the strongest recent tendencies for researching the subject comes from Thomason and Kaufman's (1988) book. They have attempted to lay bases of typology of contact outcomes and an empirical/theoretical framework for analyzing them (Winford, 2003, pp. 6–9).

A few scholars have argued that language contact is the sole source of language variation and change, and some believe that language contact is responsible only for lexical changes and minor structural changes. According to Yaron (2009, p. 149), gaps in the structural inventory of recipient language and the prestige of donor language are two most frequent motivations for structural borrowing. Winford (2003, pp. 11–22) believes that there are three kinds of contact situations which involve three different linguistic phenomena: (1) language maintenance; (2) language shift; and (3) creation of new contact languages. In language maintenance, the speakers preserve their speech but the language changes occur on the lexicon and structure from the external

language with which the language is in contact. Borrowing, structural diffusion, and code-switching are the result of such kind of language contacts. In second contact situation, contact between different linguistic groups may partially or totally lead to language shift. The outcomes of the third contact situation are creation of pidgins, creoles, and bilingual mixed languages.

Filppula et al. (2008, p. 254) predicts that maintenance of the two (or more) languages usually leads to heavy lexical borrowing, especially in a prolonged and intensive contact.

Although both linguistic factors and social factors are important in determining the linguistic results of contact, it should be noted that social factors outweigh linguistic factors in predicting the linguistic results of contact. Linguistic factors, though important, are easily overridden by social factors. Thomason (2006) mentions that no matter how the donor language differs typologically from the receiving language, with intense and prolonged contact any feature can be transferred from one to other (p. 345). The type of sociohistorical conditions in a contact situation may also affect the nature of contact influences (Filppula et al., 2008, p. 2).

According to Thomason (2001, p. 10), the most common result of language contact is that language change occurs in some or all of them. She believes that at least one of the languages exert some influence on the other and the most common type of influence is the borrowing of words. (p. 12). As mentioned earlier, the degree of borrowability of words are different and some words are transferred more easily than others. In this regard, a distinction has been proposed between basic and non-basic words; the former resist to borrowing (Hock & Joseph, 1996, p. 257). It should be noted that basic words have not been usually defined by the researchers in their works, and they have referred to the list of “basic” words by Swadesh for it (cf. Thomason & Kaufman, 1988). The list proposed by Swadesh is based on intuitions and not on any systematic research (Thomason, 2001, pp. 71–72).

According to Swadesh (1952), basic words are core vocabularies that in some extent resist to be borrowed. These words are concepts which are ‘generic’ in the sense and represent objects or ideas that accompany human independently of their specific environment. Names of body parts, kin words, body-related activities, pronouns, interrogatives, and words for nature and geography are considered as basic words. Since the basic words exist in every human community, there would no need to borrow them from languages of neighboring communities (Yaron, 2009, p. 166).

Thomason (2010, p. 36) believes that in the receiving language, if the speakers are fluent in the giving language, the predominant interference features are lexical elements which belong to non-basic vocabulary, later under increasingly more intense contact situations, structural items, and basic vocabulary may be borrowed from the donor language.

Here we will talk about the different kinds of contact situations in which different levels of borrowing occur. According to Thomason and Kaufman (1988, pp. 74–75), there are five scales of intensity of contact which they believe the boundaries between them are fuzzy (p. 77): (1) casual contact; (2) slightly more intense contact; (3) more intense contact; (4) strong cultural pressure; and (5) very strong cultural pressure.

The first one of the above refers to the situation in which there is the minimum cultural pressure. Thomason and Kaufman expect only lexical borrowing (only non-basic vocabularies) in this condition (p. 77). In the second and third situations, function words like conjunctions, adverbial particles, ad-positions, and minor phonological, syntactic, and lexical semantic features are borrowed. Furthermore derivational and inflectional affixes may enter the borrowing language. From the third situation, personal and demonstrative pronouns and low numerals which belong to the basic vocabulary start to be transferred from the donor language to the recipient one. In strong cultural pressure conditions, major structural features are borrowed which cause relatively little typological change, so borrowed inflectional affixes and categories are added to the native words. The phonological borrowings in this stage are more extensive than previous stages. Under very strong cultural pressure, in the fifth stage, borrowing the major structural features that cause significant typological disruption may take place. Morphophonemic rules are added and phonetic changes may occur. The morphology may change from flexional toward agglutinative one (pp. 74–76). According to the above scale the more intense the contact, the more features can be borrowed.

Thomason (2006, p. 345) believes it is predictable that based on the mentioned scale, basic vocabularies are not borrowed before non-basic vocabularies and inflectional morphology is not borrowed before derivational morphology. Sometimes the out-of-scale borrowings may occur in exceptional occasions. The reason is the close typological congruence between the source and receiving languages which facilitate the borrowing in spite of less intense contact conditions.

Scholars have different views about the borrowing hierarchy. Romaine (1995, p. 64), for instance, predicts that morphology will be borrowed before syntax, while Thomason and Kaufman (1988, p. 345) predict the opposite borrowing order. Bowden (2005, p. 621) believes that nouns are more borrowable than other parts of speech. In the present research, Thomason and Kaufman's (1988) is regarded.

Thomason and Kaufman (1988) stated that in their survey "cultural pressure" means the combination of social factors like prestige, or economical forces that promotes borrowing and make bilingualism necessary (p. 77). Social factors outweigh linguistic factors in predicting the linguistic outcomes of contact. In fact, linguistic factors are important for transferring the linguistic features from one language to another one but as mentioned earlier, the social factors override them. For example, typological distance between the donor language and recipient language affects the diffusion of linguistic elements but intense contact situation is enough by itself for transferring the features from one language to the other no matter how typologically different the two languages are (Thomason, 2006, pp. 344–345).

Thomason (2006) believes that under the conditions of intense contact it is inevitable to have contact-induced changes. However, she asserted that this is not a safe assumption because there are some bilingual speech communities whose members do not engage in lexical borrowing (p. 344).

21.4 Data Analysis

Among the words and phrases included in the ILA questionnaire, fifty-eight basic words have been extracted. These words include kinship terms, natural terms, body parts terms, and small numbers.

The English equivalent of the extracted basic words from ILA questionnaire is presented in the Tables 21.2, 21.3, 21.4 and 21.5. As it was mentioned before, there are 17 items in kinship category; 25 items are related to the nature including the words for animals, plants, and weather; and the terms for body parts are 3 and the terms for small numerals are 13.

21.5 Results and Discussions

The detailed data analysis of Turkic, Balochi, Arabic, and Turkman varieties which are spoken in nine bilingual villages of Ahmad-Abad division in the Mashhad city (Khorasan Razavi province) along with Persian is presented below.

All data from the bilingual villages are discussed separately and shown in the related tables.

21.6 Turkic and Persian

The Table 21.5 shows that, in the all three Turkic-Persian bilingual villages, the most borrowing cases are in the two categories of kinship terms and natural terms. In the other two categories, no borrowing has been found. As McMahan (1994, p. 204) stated, unrelated languages are less likely to borrow from each other, but the case of Turkic and Persian which are typologically unrelated languages verifies that lexical borrowing could also occur in these unrelated languages in prolonged intense contact and as mentioned before, social factors predominant linguistic factors in the linguistic consequences of contact.

It has been stated (Yaron, 2009, p. 166) that since some concepts, including close kin, exist in every human community, there is no need to borrow them from another language. But as Table 21.1 indicates, not only distant relative terms, but also close kin are included in the borrowed list of the Turkic variety of these villages.

21.7 Balochi and Persian

In Balochi-Persian bilingual villages, the most examined lexical borrowing cases are in the natural word category: 7, 8, and 10 words out of 25 natural words are cases of

Table 21.1 Basic words borrowed from Persian (in the Turkic variety)

Name of Turkic-Persian villages	Borrowed kinship terms	Borrowed natural terms	Borrowed body part terms	Borrowed small numerals
Jamran	/baba/(father), /nænæ/(mother), /bæʃæ/(child), /ʔæmu/(father's brother), /daji/(mother's brother), /ʔæmmæ/(father's sister), /xalæ/(mother's sister), /damad/(son-in-law), /ʔærus/(daughter-in-law), /babu/ (grandfather)	/xorʃid/(sun), /setaræ/(star), /Gater/(mule), /xurus/(cock), /kæftær/(pigeon), /bærc/(leaf), /gol/(flower), /dæræxt/(tree)	–	–
	10 words out of 17	8 words out of 25	0 words out of 3	0 words out of 13
Charam	/baba/(father), /nænæ/(mother), /bæʃæ/(child), /ʔæmu/(father's brother), /daji/(mother's brother), /ʔæmmæ/(father's sister), /xalæ/(mother's sister), /ʔærus/(daughter-in-law), /babu/ (grandfather)	/xorʃid/(sun), /Gater/(mule), /xorus/(cock), /kæftær/(pigeon), /bærc/(leaf), /gol/(flower), /dæræxt/(tree)	–	–
	9 words out of 17	7 words out of 25	0 words out of 3	0 words out of 13
Mahkariz	/baba/(father), /nænæ/(mother), /bæʃæ/(child), /ʔæmu/(father's brother), /daji/(mother's brother), /ʔæmmæ/(father's sister), /xalæ/(mother's sister), /damad/(son-in-law), /ʔærus/(daughter-in-law), /babu/ (grandfather)	/xorʃid/ (sun), /setaræ/(star), /Gater/(mule), /xurus/(cock), /kæftær/(pigeon), /bælc/(leaf), /gul/(flower), /dæræxt/(tree)	–	–
	10 words out of 17	8 words out of 25	0 word out of 3	0 words out of 13

borrowing in the three villages. In the body part category, only one case of borrowing in one village can be seen and the other two villages have no cases of it. Considering the category of numerals, no borrowing could be mentioned, because all the studied items in Balochi are the same as the Persian. The close family relationship between the two languages may cause this amount of similarity in this category. Jahani and Korn (2009, p. 658) studied varieties of Balochi language in case of numerals they also mention that they are the same as Persian except in some pronunciations (Table 21.2).

Table 21.2 Basic words borrowed from Persian (in the Balochi variety)

Name of Balochi-Persian villages	Borrowed kinship terms	Borrowed natural terms	Borrowed body part terms	Borrowed small numerals
Jara Khoshk	/ʔæmmæ/(father's sister), /xalæ/(mother's sister), /xalu/(mother's brother)	/ʃæb/(night), /bærf/(snow), /boz/(goat), /miʃ/(ewe), /Gater/(mule), /xurus/(cock), /kæbutær/(pigeon), /gol/(flower), /deræxt/(tree), /bælg/(leaf)	/zeban/(tongue)	–
	3 words out of 17	10 words out of 25	1 words out of 3	
Hossein-Abad Kalate	/ʔæmmæ/(father's sister), /xalæ/(mother's sister), /ʔærus/(daughter-in-law), /xalu/(mother's brother)	/ʃæb/(night), /boz/(goat), /Gater/(mule), /xorus/(cock), /kæftær/(pigeon), /gol/(flower), /bælg/(leaf), /deræxtʃ/(tree)	–	–
	4 words out of 17	8 words out of 25	0 words out of 3	
Gal-e-No	/bætfæc/(child) /xalu/(mother's brother)	/ʃæb/(night), /bærf/(snow), /boz/(goat), /Gater/(mule), /bælg/(leaf), /gol/(flower), /deræxt/(tree)	–	–
	2 words out of 17	7 words out of 25	0 words out of 3	

21.8 Arabic and Persian

The Arabic-Persian bilingual villages demonstrate the least lexical borrowing cases. In the two villages, only three and four cases of borrowing in kinship terms are recognized, and just one case of borrowing in the natural terms in one village. No borrowings in the numerals in one village and only three in the other are seen. In case of Arabic language, the matter of borrowing in typologically unrelated languages is true. As mentioned in the case of Turkic language, in these cases social factors are more important than linguistic factors in determining borrowing cases. As Table 21.3 indicates in the Arabic variety of these villages, close kin terms (father, mother, etc.) have not been borrowed.

Table 21.3 Basic words borrowed from Persian (in the Arabic variety)

Name of Arabic_Persian villages	Borrowed kinship terms	Borrowed natural terms	Borrowed body part terms	Borrowed small numerals
Hossein-Abad Gazband	/ʔæmmæ/(father's sister), /xalæ/(mother's sister), /xaltu/(daughter-in-law)	–	–	–
	3 words out of 17	0 words out of 25	0 words out of 3	0 words out of 13
Kamar Zard	/ʔæmmæ/(father's sister), /xalæ/(mother's sister), /ʔærus/(daughter-in-law), /xaltu/(son-in-law)	/xrus/(cock)	–	/hezari/(thousand), /sæd/(hundred), /bist/(twenty)
	4 words out of 17	1 word out of 25	0 words out of 3	3 words out of 13

21.9 Turkmen and Persian

In the only one Turkmen-Persian bilingual village of the region, just one lexical borrowing in the kinship terms and five in the natural terms are seen and in the two other categories, namely body parts and small numerals, no cases can be observed. Turkmen and Persian are typologically unrelated languages; therefore, it is predicted that the cases of borrowing would be less. Here, apparently, the linguistic factor has played a more important role than the social factor (Table 21.4).

In this study, the borrowing of basic vocabularies are examined in four languages including, Turkic, Balochi, Arabic, and Turkmen in nine bilingual villages of Ahmad-Abad division in the Mashhad city of Khorasan Razavi province in the eastern north of Iran. In each of these villages, one of the above languages are spoken alongside Persian which is the official language of the country and therefore superior and prestigious. The data have been extracted from the database of Iran Linguistic Atlas project (ILA) compiling at research institute for cultural heritage and tourism since 1970's. The informants whose data have been used in this research had been face to face interviewed via a questionnaire in 1970's. They were all men between 20 to 65 years old and almost illiterate.

Many researchers believe that the borrowing does not take place in the basic vocabulary. However, an examination of the linguistic data in these bilingual villages shows that, contrary to their beliefs, the borrowing process has taken place. For a summary of the results, see Table 21.5.

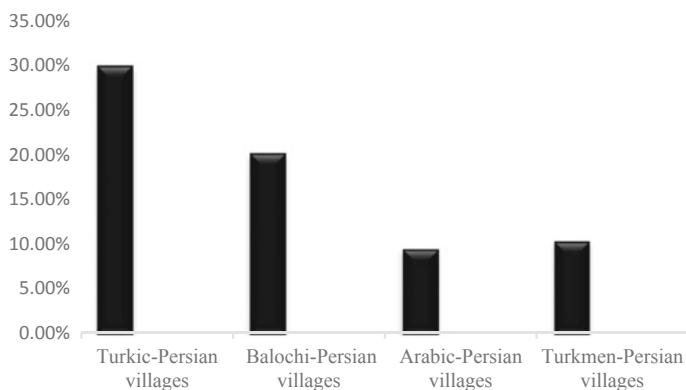
Figure 21.1 is a visualization of Table 21.5 and it shows that among various societies, the Turks are more prone to lexicon change, the next one are the Balochi society, afterward, Arab society of the region, and finally the Turkmen. The reason that the Turks borrowed more basic vocabularies is that they are more dominant and they have tendency to the center of administration. Having a proper job and official positions require a good command of Persian. Turkish families strongly stated that it is important for them to speak to their children from early ages in Persian. They do not like their children to have a non-Persian accent and that matters in their schooling and accordingly in academia. Basically, the families are doing suicide on their language and identity. In the second place, those Balochi are dwelling in northeastern Iran show a similar tendency but less than the Turkish communities. For example, the data for Balochi society in southeastern Iran show that they are more conservative than the northeastern ones. Those who live in northeastern Iran are more involved in official jobs and responsibilities and they have more integration and communication with Persian and other societies. In general, the Baloch in southeastern Iran are less educated and there is less opportunity to be involved in the official job positions and people are mostly smugglers or they are doing jobs which need no official education. Although in the northeastern Iran the multi- and bilingual societies trigger the change, Arabs show a very low effect on this respect. However, the degree of change is still significant because they constitute a very close and conservative society. The current effects can be mainly due to the social contact between the Arabs with other minorities in the northeastern Iran, education, and the mass media. Contrary to all

Table 21.4 Basic words borrowed from Persian (in the Turkmen variety)

Turkmen_Persian village	Borrowed kinship terms	Borrowed natural terms	Borrowed body part terms	Borrowed small numerals
Musa Abad	/xalæ/(mother's brother)	/Gater/(mule), /xorus/(cock), /kæbtær/(pigeon), /Gol/(flower), /dærext/(tree)	–	–
	1 words out of 17	5 words out of 25	0 words out of 3	0 words out of 13

Table 21.5 The average of lexical borrowing in each language

	The bilingual villages	Average of total borrowing (%)
1	Turkic-Persian	29.88
2	Balochi-Persian	20.10
3	Arabic-Persian	9.45
4	Turkmen-Persian	10.34

**Fig. 21.1** Borrowing statistics in the studied bilingual villages

previous societies, Turkmens show a very limited influence on the basic vocabularies. Although they are from the same language family of Turkic, they seem to be very closed. In general, Turkmens have the very low intercultural marriages and they are mostly dealing with farm husbandry and land working rather than official and administrative jobs. In addition, in terms of identity, the Turkmens distinguish them from other neighboring societies more radical than the Arabs and Baloch. The approximate 10% change is mainly due to education and mass media influence of Persian in the new generations.

21.10 Conclusion

This study has surveyed several societies in northeastern Iran which are linguistically very distinctive. These societies include Turks, Arabs, Baloch, and Turkmen which are represented in a wider Gulf geography. Basic vocabularies are selected because any change in this linguistic category may reveal a deeper social contact and change in different communities.

The reason is that the borrowing process of basic vocabulary differs mostly with non-basic vocabulary in terms of resistance. Any change in the basic vocabularies is not usually motivated by the need to fill the gaps of the recipient language or to

introduce new concepts in it easily. Any change in the basic vocabulary needs that the donor language generally possesses equivalent terms of the borrowed ones, but prefers to substitute the labels used for the same concepts from the donor language.

In theoretical studies, the general belief is that basic vocabularies are more resistance to borrowability. The main concept lies behind the strong communication and ties between different generations on this aspect. In each society, generally terms related to father and mother are acquired very early in the childhood and they are mapped in the black box of mind. During the span of life, children routinize such terms due to high intensity of usage with their relatives and people who dwelling in the same neighborhood. In spite of some theoretical explanations about the low level engagement of basic vocabulary in borrowing process, the results indicate that the borrowing has also taken place in basic vocabulary and the cases are not very few.

This shows that due to societal and linguistic contact over centuries the speech communities had more integration into each other's culture and they adopted more vocabularies to each other's need. The changes have occurred more in kinship terms and more or less in natural and body part terms in the said bilingual villages. Regarding numerals, the case is somehow different, that is, in Turkic and Turkmen no borrowing has taken place and in Arabic only in one out of two villages just 3 out of 13 numbers have been borrowed. The case in Balochi needs more survey, because all the numerals are the same as the Persian. This may root more in the origin of this language than contact with the Persian. This entails that there are deep rooted structures in the respective societies which can be due to interreligious, inter-marriages, education, job possibilities, or mass media. The strong impact of Persian and the lingua franca role of Persian has intensified such deep change and the new generations adopted new basic vocabularies. Various reasons include, for example, families wish to have children without vernacular accent. The main reason is that their children can have a better education if they speak Persian. This can influence their future career if they want to study in the academia or to have administrative jobs. Moreover, the families also try to prevent their children of being considered ridiculous at school which can have negative psychological impact on them. Such reasons which are directly mentioned by the families let them to start killing their mother tongue and to replace it with the vocabularies of a more dominant language which is Persian in this case.

Bilingualism and even multilingualism are widespread in many regions of Iran. Persian as a superstrate and prestigious language serves as the donor language in each region. It is not surprising that substrate languages borrow many words, including basic vocabulary from it.

Different cultures have different behavior in the borrowing process. Therefore, different communities may have various attitudes toward lexical borrowing. The findings of this study shows that although all of the attested languages in the article borrowed some basic vocabulary from Persian, the number of loanwords are not the same.

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Chapter 22

Shellyseer: A Literary Evolution



Fathieh Hussam Saber

Abstract The dramatic elements that are in *Shellyseer* have traveled for a long period of time and have been affected by dramatic elements from different cultures, which means that *Shellyseer* is a result of the evolution of drama. This chapter draws attention to the effect that the East and the West have on each other, by pointing out the effect that Aristotle’s *Poetics*—Western Theory—had on Ghanem Al-Suliti’s *Shellyseer*—Eastern Literature. This chapter combines comparative literature with literary theory and criticism in order to give an example of a globalized view of how drama evolves where there are no borders that limit influence. This chapter traces back drama back to its oldest documented sources to show how it evolved throughout history and offers deeper knowledge of Middle Eastern drama, the importance, and strength of political satire, and how strong of a mutual influence Eastern and Western literature have on each other.

Keyword Shellyseer • Blockade • Literature • The Gulf • Theatre • Political Satire

22.1 Introduction

Shellyseer is a political satire series that was created in the beginning of the blockade in Qatar. The series reflected the reactions and concerns of the Qatari people. Beside it reflecting the political and social situation of those times, it is also a product of thousands of years of literary evolution. Taking a deeper look at *Shellyseer* will reveal the influence of Greek Theatre and particularly the teachings of Aristotle. Aristotle’s parts of a tragedy, specifications for a tragedy and tragic hero, and unities were all present in *Shellyseer*. Harold Bloom, an American literary

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critic, explains criticism as “the art of Knowing the hidden roads that go from poem to poem” (Bloom, 1973). In this chapter, I will be tracing back dramatic works, to point out the effect of Aristotle’s *Poetics*, to find the hidden roads and development that lead to a Middle Eastern series that was uploaded on YouTube called *Shellyseer*, which aired at the start of the Arab Gulf blockade. However, by connecting these works I will also be proving that T.S Eliot’s theory of the effect of previous works on newer works can be applied on a larger scale than he envisioned.

A few theorists have explored the processes through which literary works evolve over time. For example, Bloom in his *The Anxiety of Influence* argues that a poem is a misinterpretation of an older poem. Applying it to other genres of literature like drama would mean that people will take their understanding of an older drama and try to create a new piece of drama based on their understanding of older work. T. S Eliot stresses the fact that literary works are products of a literary heritage of a culture in *Tradition and the Individual Talent*: “If we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously” (Eliot, 1919). Eliot mostly connected tradition to a group of people from a certain background when he says: “Every nation, every race, has not only its own creative, but its own critical turn of mind; and is even more oblivious of short comings and limitations of its critical habits than of those of its creative genius” (Eliot, 1919). One might say that both Bloom and Eliot are speaking within a specific literary tradition—Western theory. So, can these ideas be applied to a dramatic work from Eastern literature? Comparative literature has the answer, in an Inaugural lecture for comparative literature at Oxford in 1857, Matthew Arnold said: “Everywhere there is connection, everywhere there is illustration. No single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended except in relation to other events, to other literatures” (Arnold, 1993). What is comparative literature? Susan Bassnett defines comparative literature as: “the study of texts across cultures, that it is interdisciplinary and that it is concerned with patterns of connection in literatures across both time and space” (Bassnett, 1993). So, if literatures are connected, theories can be applied as well.

22.2 The History of Drama in the Middle East

To understand how *Shellyseer* could be connected to Aristotle’s *Poetics*, and how Eliot’s theory of influence can be taken on a more global level, it is important to look at the effect that East and the West have on each other. The Middle East has always been a rapidly changing region because of its long history of being the heart of the old world and one of the most strategic areas today. In the past, the silk and spice routes passed right through the area, which meant it was an oasis and mixing medium for many civilizations and kingdoms. Being an area of mixed cultures made it the perfect place to develop new ideas. They turned to literary works from Ancient Rome and Greece for the knowledge and inspiration, and led it to produce literary works

that were the basis for many contemporary works and art. Muslims consider Islamic philosophy to be the most affected by ancient Greece. In Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali's *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, he criticizes Muslims like Al-Farabi and Avicenna, and Greek philosophers for believing that they can understand God and the metaphysical world with logic. Al-Farabi even considered Plato and Aristotle to be prophets sent by God, and called them the grand masters (Almayadeen, 2015). As for an example of the Middle East's effect on the West, one that almost every person in the world today has heard of the *Arabian nights* and the imagery from its magical world which inspired Walt Disney's *Aladdin* in 1992. The Middle East continues to produce inspiring literary works and schools of literature that are parallel to other ones around the world. For example, Abdul Rahman Munif studied in Belgrade and was influenced by the modernist style of writing, which led him to write the five novel series *Cities of Salt* in the eighties using techniques inspired by the European modernist movement. Most of Abdul Rahman Munif's works give the reader the feeling that the characters suffer from the loss of identity, because of all the changes that were happening after the discovery of oil in the region (Aljazeera, 2014). Arab writers have used the techniques inspired by others in order to produce brilliant literature, and to find new ways to share their thoughts and feelings.

In his book called *The Islamic Theater*, Professor Ahmed Qassim brings to attention the fact that many critics and historians believe that the ancient Egyptians were the first people to produce and perform plays. The supporters of this theory support it by bringing into attention the similarities between Greek and Pharaonic myths and plays. Also, considering the fact that Pharaonic Civilization started about 3000 years prior to the Greek Civilization, meaning that Greek theater was most likely inspired and influenced by the ancient Egyptians (Qassim, 1980), Kurt Sethe in 1928 published the oldest sources of ancient Egyptian drama that are from about 2600 BCE (The Creeks may have, 2003). The documents are referred to as the Ramesseum Dramatic Papyrus, and seem to have been written during the Middle Kingdom. The documents were found in Ikhernofret's stela, and contain his description of a festival play done under the rule of Senusret the 3rd. Ikhernofret also addresses the visiting of foreign writers. "This text contains what has been interpreted as staging instructions concerning the actors for a grandiose play where a great number of performers including supernumeraries, props such as statues, and backdrops were used. Symbolic dances which may have been holy rituals and ballet scenes formed part of the performance" (The Creeks may have, 2003).

Moving forward to the pre-Islamic period which is called Jahiliyyah or 'Age of Ignorance', Arabs had connections with the Romans and Persians, and had admiration for thinkers like Aristotle and Plato (Qassim, 1980). However, we cannot be sure if they knew about Greek poetry and plays. They could have known about it but that it was lost because Arabs did not tend to document works by writing them down; they depended on memorization and the art of reciting poetry and stories. But this does not mean that the Arabs were not dramatic; the Arabs held literary markets. In certain seasons, Arabs from all over the peninsula would gather in a market and recite stories, epic poetry, and speeches. At some point, poets would have dramatic dialogs playing roles speaking to each other using only poetry (Qassim, 1980).

The Abbasid Caliphate was the golden age for science and arts. Two plays were documented during the Abbasid Caliphate, the first was called *Ibn Bisher's Court* and the second one was *The Pains of Alhussain*. Abdulrahman Bin Bisher is considered the pioneer of Islamic drama. His play is called *Ibn Bisher's Court* in which he played the part of a judge who goes through all the Muslim caliphates that have ruled since the death of Prophet Mohammed. He sends all prophet Mohammed's companions that ruled to heaven. Then he moves on to the Umayyad Caliphate and sends all the rulers of that Caliphate to hell except Umar bin Abd Al-Alaziz who was known to be a just ruler. After that he brings the rulers of the Abbasid Caliphate but does not send them to heaven or hell, instead he names all of their accomplishments (Qassim, 1980). It seems to be a political play that draws the Caliphate's attention to the importance of being a good ruler, so the people will remember them in a good way, and so God will send them to heaven. Napoleon's invasion of Egypt would plant the first seeds of a formal Arab theater in 1799; he built many theaters for the entertainment of his troops. They would be burnt down and rebuilt under the rule of General Menou (Shaeer, 2017). However, theater was neglected for a while till its golden age starting in 1869 when Ismail Basha ruled in Egypt and ordered the house of Opera to be built for when his guests would visit from Europe and would come along with the Egyptian National Theater. It opened its doors and would hold many plays for the next 139 years.

Egypt, being the pioneer in acting and theater, attracted drama lovers from the Arabian Peninsula. Elements like Arab teachers from Egypt, Lebanon, and Palestine moving to the Gulf looking for jobs, and countries like Kuwait sent their brightest students in the beginning of the twentieth century to Egypt to look for higher education (Fahmy, 1993). This led to theater taking a more important place among Gulf literature and the people became more interested in it. And as a result of Kuwait being the first Gulf country to send its students to Egypt, it had its first official play group in Al-Mubarakiya school in 1938. The group was made up of students, and they performed their first play called *The Conversion of Umar*.

The Qatari theater started small as well. All the way back until 1959, only small satire plays would be performed in people's guest rooms. The plays mostly dealt with community issues. But after that, sports clubs started holding musical events and between performances young actors would find the opportunity to show their skills and perform small plays. Schools became interested in plays and the Doha school held many plays, two of which were *Bilal bin Rabah* in 1959 and an adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* called *The Merchant of Al Basra* in 1963 (Alraya, 2008). Throughout the sixties many acting groups appeared. One of them was "The Populist Group", founded by Mussah Adulrahman and Yaqub Almass that held many plays like *Ali Baba's Dream* in the early eighties. Then in 1972, the Qatari theater band appeared on stage. It was made up of students that graduated from Mohammed Abdullah Al-Ansari's Dar Almualimeen. The pioneer actors in the band were Sayyar AlKuvari and Ali Meerza; they became popular for plays like *The Falcon of Quraish* and *The Garment Looks the Best with a Patch from its Own Material* (Alraya, 2008).

22.3 Background and Inspiration

One of the graduates of Mohammed Abdullah Al-Ansari's Dar Almualimeen was Ghanem Al-Sulaiti—the future writer of *Shellyseer*—who joined Dar Almualimeen to follow his dream of becoming an actor. He acted for the first time in the play called *The Garment Looks the Best with a Patch from its Own Material* in 1971. Later on, when the acting team of Dar Almualimeen became a separate acting group and called themselves the Qatari theater band in 1972, Ghanem found himself excluded from any acting parts. He asked one of the organizers of the team for the reason, and the man answered: “You are not fit for acting” (Gazal, 1998). Ghanem did not accept that he was not fit for acting, so he teamed up with a few of his colleagues and started their own group called “The Student Acting Band”. Their first play was written by Ghanem and was called *House of Phantoms* in 1973. Ghanem and the rest of his colleagues performed on the stage of Alsaad club for four nights, and *House of Phantoms* was a great success (Gazal, 1998). After Ghanem graduated from Dar Almualimeen in 1974, the minister of Mass Communication had promised to send him to get his bachelor's degree abroad. So, Ghanem was first sent to Kuwait where he spent a semester trying to major in acting but did not succeed because one of the administrators told him that he was a better drama writer and critic, and so he organized a transfer to Egypt. Ghanem passed his first three years but when it came time to choose a major once again, he was not chosen to be an actor, but again a drama writer and critic. So he went to find the person responsible, and he found out that it was the same man who told him that he should be a critic and writer. Ghanem accepted the man's opinion and graduated from the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts in Cairo in 1978, with a Bachelor's degree in Dramatic Art Criticism (Gazal, 1998).

Ghanem continued to write during his studies at the institute, in 1975, he wrote and performed in *The Bachelor's Club*. *The Bachelor's Club* is about a group of young men who decide to never get married because marriage is so expensive. However, the founder of the club falls in love and changes his mind, but his club members become angry, and the bride's family asks for a large dowry which causes big problems. He tries to forget about marrying his loved one. The play ends with all sides compromising and him getting married. The play came out at a time when young men were struggling to get married because of the large dowries set by brides' families. After Ghanem's graduation, he wrote and acted in many plays. Most of them were about problems in the society. For example, Ghanem acted in a play named *Girls Market* that was written by Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah and Assem Twfiq in 1981. The play dealt with the issue of men taking advantage of women by marrying them for their money. As for Ghanem's political plays, the two famous ones are: *Monster of the Night* that was performed in 1993 and *Hello Gulf* in 1995. *Monster of the Night* is based on the Turkish writer Aziz Nesin's novel *The Monster of Taurus*. *The Monster of the Night* was a critique of the American dominance of the world after the Soviet Union lost the Cold War (Gazal, 1998). Ghanem continued criticizing American dominance policies in a

play called *Hello Gulf*, where he pictures the gulf leaders as obedient servants of the American government.

Ghanem had always been a critic of political and social problems and that is why when the gulf crisis started on the 5th of June 2017, he looked for a way to respond to the countries of the blockade. Qatar was cornered and put under a blockade by its neighboring countries: The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, The Kingdom of Bahrain, and Egypt. The Qatari people were in shock because they never expected to be turned against by their GCC sister states. The people of the Gulf had always felt that they were one nation, and no other Arab countries were as close and united as they were. Ghanem Al-Sulaiti was one of the first Qatari artists to react to the crisis (Aljazeera, 2017). Considering that his mother was Bahraini and his father was Qatari, his whole belief system of the one great Gulf nation was ripped apart. And from the shock of crisis, *Shellyseer* was created. *Shellyseer*, which translates as ‘What is Going On’, is a political satire that gained popularity among the Qatari people because of how it reflected their feelings and thoughts, while drawing attention to all the problems caused by the blockade.

Unlike other works of siege literature like the epic texts *Jerusalem Delivered*¹ by Torquato Tasso, and *The Iliad*² by Homer, *Shellyseer* is a satirical drama. *Jerusalem Delivered*, *The Iliad*, and *Shellyseer* all share the same feature of documenting events, problems, and feelings of the people. However, popular culture affected their genres. So, what is popular culture? According to John Storey: “popular culture is simply culture that is widely favoured or well-liked by many people” (2008). Applying this definition of popular culture to *Shellyseer*, we can understand that it is a satire drama because it is popular among the people at this time.

Political satire was known from the time of the Ancient Greeks. They used comedy to criticize events and personalities in Athens. The only complete comic plays that have survived are those of the Greek comic playwright Aristophanes. He especially seemed to dislike a politician named Kleon, who he harshly beat down in play after play. It is most obvious in a play called *Knights*, where he created a dishonest politician named Paphlagon that is a proxy Kleon (Long, 2016). Elizabethan play writers followed the same method in criticizing politicians. For example, *Measure for Measure* is a political satire written by William Shakespeare to criticize the way governments put corrupt individuals in power sometimes. Moving to political satire on television, the first television show aimed at criticizing politics was in the United States. Its title was *The Smothers Brothers*. The show was broadcast in the 60 s around the time of the Vietnam War (U.S President Donald Trump’s, 2017). The aim of the show was to criticize the American government’s involvement in Vietnam. The Middle East also has a considerable number of political satire plays.

¹Jerusalem Delivered is a verse epic by the late-Renaissance Italian poet Torquato Tasso (1544–95).

²Homer’s Iliad describes the final year of the Trojan War, a legendary conflict between an alliance of Greek cities and the city of Troy in Anatolia.

Two of the most popular plays in the 90 s were *Sword of the Arabs* and *The Chief*. *Sword of the Arabs*, is a Kuwaiti political satire written in 1992 by Abdullhussain Abduredha, Hayat Al-Fahad, and Ruqayya Al-Kutt. The play was written to criticize the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. *The Chief* is an Egyptian play that was performed in 1993 and written by Farouk Sabry. It is about a young man who looks very similar to the dictator who runs their country. One day the dictator dies and is replaced by the young man with the help of the dictator's advisers. It turns out that the dictator is just a face, and his advisers are the actual cause of country's suffering. The play is a criticism of the way Arab countries' governments are run.

Artists use political satire to criticize political events and figures for many reasons. Anthony Thai draws attention to the fact that the popularity of political satire has risen significantly in recent years. He also states: "Satire has made politics more accessible, leading to more informed viewers who have the potential to form more educated opinions and discuss those views with others" (Thai, 2014). In other words, people feel more involved with politics if it is presented in a comic way, because they feel that the block between them and politics has been removed. Thai says that more people watch political satire than actual news reports because comedians are able to connect with the audience more effectively than news reporters. He explains that because people use satire in their everyday life, it easier to relate to, while normal news reports are separate from daily life. Danagal Young has done research on psychology and influence on political entertainment and has drawn attention to the power and danger of political satire. She explains that it has a strong effect on politics and positions, because of its ability to weaken counter arguments. However, she adds that it is only successful if seen as a joke first, then political (The National, 2017).

22.4 Shellyseer Meeting Aristotle's Elements

After understanding why the author chose to make *Shellyseer* a political satire, it is essential to draw attention to the fact that *Shellyseer* is connected to ancient Greek theater. But how can that be? It was built on dramatic elements that were documented during the time of Classical Greece. To understand this more clearly, we must simply look at the author's education. It was previously mentioned that Ghanem Al-Sulaiti went to the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts in Cairo, which means that he studied the basic history of drama, and learned all the techniques that have been used and their effects throughout documented history. And for a person to be able to say that they have majored in Dramatic Arts, he or she must have studied Aristotle who was the author of the first systematic work of drama theory in the Western tradition. Aristotle documented the elements of tragedy drama in his *Poetics*, and tried to pin down what makes a good tragic play. The broad guidelines for any dramatic work follow these elements. In Michael Tierno's book *Aristotle's Poetics for Screenwriters: Storytelling Secrets from the Greatest Mind in Western Civilization*, he comments on the importance of Aristotle's work

by saying: “In fact, I think it’s safe to say that Aristotle, besides being the greatest mind in Western civilization, was the world’s first movie story analyst!” (Tierno xix). This means that poetics are not just important for tragedies in theaters, but also, for any movie story in the modern era. Taking a closer look at the elements that Aristotle pointed out, we can see that there are six of them: plot, character, thought, diction, melody, and spectacle (Aristotle, n.d). This brings us to the next question which is how many of Aristotle’s guidelines did Ghanem actually follow? To find the answer, I will point out how each of the six elements were used in *Shellyseer*.

According to Aristotle, plot is the most important dramatic element. “So, the plot is the representation of the action: by (plot) here, I mean the construction of the incidents” (Aristotle, n.d). What is understood from this definition that can be applied to modern day drama is that plot is the order of events in a dramatic work like plays, movies, etc. Aristotle divided the plot into three main parts, which are beginning, middle, and conclusion. He also points out what everyone of the three parts should contain. The beginning of a plot—usually referred to as the exposition—should give the background of the story, and introduce the characters. The middle of the story is the part where the characters’ normal routines change, and finally, the conclusion, where the characters’ new routines are established. *Shellyseer* is made up of many episodes and each one has its own plot. Episode 4 titled *The Council at the Market Place* is a good example for explaining how Ghanem followed Aristotle’s guidelines. The beginning of the plot shows the main character at an auction, and there are wealthy looking bidders waiting to buy something. The middle of the plot is when the audience finds out that the main character is selling the Gulf Cooperation Council’s belongings. He tells the bidders that it is all worth 90.000 Qatari Riyals. One of the bidders asks him how much every piece would be worth if sold separately. He tells him that everything without the music tapes is 5000 Qatari Riyals. However, he pointed out that the music tapes alone are 85.000 Qatari Riyals. The bidders were surprised and asked him how that is possible? He answers saying: “What is the Gulf Cooperation Council but a bunch of songs?”. He continues saying that whoever buys the tapes would possess all 37 years of the committee. He points to a chair and says that whoever buys the tapes will be given a certain chair for free also. The bidders ask to whom the chair belongs, and he answers that it belongs to the secretary general of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The conclusion (end) starts when a bidder asks him why he wants to sell the Gulf Cooperation Council? Ghanem answers: because it is expired, and so they need a new one. Many drama writers write plots with beginnings, middles, and ends. Even maybe without reading Aristotle, but following Aristotle’s plot guidelines in what every part should include makes it more complete. Some artists produce beginnings, middles, and ends that make the audience feel they are missing something, and that is possibly due to the lack of inclusion of all the things associated with the plot, that Aristotle has pointed out.

Aristotle ranked character as the second most important element. He defined it as: “Character is that which reveals decision” (Aristotle, n.d). This means that actors must present the decisions that their characters make, and the actions that

they have performed. The characters should have four main qualities. When Aristotle wrote *Poetics*, women's parts were played by men, so he put emphasis on the importance of the characters acting appropriately for the character's gender (Childs, 2015). However, nowadays women appear in movies, theater, and television shows with no problem, so Ghanem let women play their own roles. The famous Qatari actress Hadiya Saeed played the main character's wife in episodes: 6, 9, 10, 16, and 18. Other women play different roles as well. Next, Aristotle said that the characters must have believable personalities. That is why Ghanem gave Qatari people the leading roles because he knew that their acting would seem more realistic, because they would be showing real emotions. It is clear from episode 1 called *Rumors* that all the characters in the show are Qatari, and they all seem to be acting realistically. Ghanem plays the main character in the episode. He is called Abu Salmeen. Abu Salmeen represents the generation of Qatari people who grew up believing that the Gulf countries are one nation, and that a blockade is unbelievable. His guilt trips another character because he thinks that the other character is spreading rumors about the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain having cut ties with Qatar. The same episode is a good example of another point, which is that every character must act consistently throughout the play. That means that they cannot do or say anything that is not part of their character; in other words, "acting out of character" is unacceptable. It is clear in the episode that every one of the actors sticks to their character and keeps the same attitude, which makes their acting very convincing.

Thought, reasoning, or moral are the synonyms for the third element. Aristotle's explains: "Reasoning, on the other hand, is that with which people demonstrate that something is or is not, or makes some universal statement" (Aristotle, n.d). The moral is the message that is sent to the audience through the play. Aristotle says that a message should be sent at each moment of the plot. And by that he means that other than the overall moral, there should be meaning behind every action. Episode 5, called *Sympathizing*, is a great example of having deep meaning behind every sentence. The episode starts with an old handicapped woman being put on trial for being suspected of having sympathy for her relatives in Qatar, the beginning itself sends a powerful message that says: the government officials of the blockade countries have no mercy for anyone, not even the old and weak. The jury says that sources have revealed to them that she has been known to visit Qatar four times a month, and to speak up. This part gives the impression that the people living in the blockade countries are being constantly watched. When she does not speak up, they threaten to use violence to make her speak, which sends the message that they use their authority to intimidate the powerless. She tells them to back off, and that she is not stupid to sympathize with her sister Maitha in Qatar, or her sister's children Sara, Hamda, and Maryam that she adores. This part tells the audience that the people living in the blockade countries do not agree with their governments. Then she asks one of the jury—and refers to him as the one with the bulging eyes—if he would sympathize with any of his relatives? Then she answers him and says: of course not, and if we did sympathize with anyone, it would be with strangers whom they do not know and with whom

they have no relationships. After that one of the members of the jury starts asking the others if she is serious, or just being sarcastic. She says: “just being sarcastic? I swear that you are smart”. This part tells the people watching that even the weakest citizens in the blockade countries are smarter and stronger than their governments, and will not submit to their governments. She yells at them to listen to her and tells them that they can keep the people from traveling or interacting with their relatives in Qatar, that they can cut off sending them yoghurt and milk, and possibly even cut off their air, but that they are not capable of stopping her and others from loving their families in Qatar. Unless they can erase their history emotions, and can find a machine that is able to separate the blood that runs in their veins, and only then, can they judge the people for having sympathy for their families in Qatar. After watching this episode, the audience should have understood that no matter what the blockading governments do to the Qatari people, they cannot stop their people from loving, supporting, and having sympathy for their relatives in Qatar, because at the end of the day, they are one big family.

“Diction is fourth. By “diction” I mean, as we said earlier, communication by means of language, which has the same potential in the case of both verse and [prose] speeches” (Aristotle, n.d). Aristotle believes that the words and language used in a play must be chosen wisely, and a good playwright makes up lines that are meaningful, and so well constructed that the audience can leave the play quoting the lines exactly. All Ghanem’s lines send strong messages, and in order to make it easy to quote and be powerful, he used phrases that are used in all the Gulf countries. For example, he uses a saying that is popular in the Gulf, which is: “A nail will never release from the flesh”. This saying as used in episodes 8 and 15 suggested topics that encourage unity among Gulf people. Ghanem also used words that are connected to the Gulf culture, for example, “yoghurt” in episodes 5 and 9, because it is an important part of the Gulf diet.

The fifth element is melody, or in other words the music that is used in the play. When it comes to music Aristotle says: “song is the most important of the embellishments” (Aristotle, n.d). He puts significant importance on music, even though he says that it is an addition, and that melody must blend in with the play appropriately. In *Shellyseer*, many songs were used for different reasons. For example in episode 10, called *Your Blockade is Cool*, the song *Ahbabona Seero* that was in the Arabic version of *Sesame Street* was a collaboration among the Gulf Countries. Ghanem kept the rhythm but replaced the lyrics. The original lyrics say: “Our beloved—referring to children—walk to the lovely river” with new ones that say: “Your blockade is cool -esthetic-”. Another song that Ghanem includes in the show is one that came out after the beginning of the blockade called *Hinna Bekhair Fee Deerat Al-Ezz*, which means: We are doing Well in the Home of Mightiness. Ghanem sings it as a sign that he is glad that Qatar and its people stand united as one, and they are all doing well during these hard times.

The sixth, and final element is spectacle. Aristotle says: “spectacle is something enthralling, but is very artless and least particular to the art poetic composition” (Aristotle, n.d). Spectacle is the visual element of a drama, and Aristotle says that it should be appropriate to the theme of the play. It is very important for the setting

to be fit for what the play is about. If the setting is not fit for the subject of the play, it could cause confusion and discomfort for the audience. Ghanem simply based his scenes in places that fit the theme, but at the same time did not take much effort to prepare. By doing this, the audience recognized the places where filming was done and that made it seem more natural and saved time, because the show produced an episode each time a new event happened. Souq Waqif was the setting for episode 1, and it is fitting because Souq Waqif is a traditional market that is very well known to anyone who has visited Qatar. It represents Qatari heritage, culture, and tradition. Episode 4 called *Sympathy*, took another turn because Ghanem wanted the audience to feel uncertain and concentrate on what is being said. So they made it simple: everything but where the characters were sitting was black which gave the scene a mysterious aura.

Shellyseer might not be a tragedy, however, it has an episode that can be considered a tragedy. The main character of this episode meets Aristotle's criteria for a tragic hero. "Such a person is one who neither is superior [to us] in virtue and justice, nor undergoes a change to misfortune because of vice and wickedness, but because of some error" (Aristotle, n.d). Aristotle makes it clear that a tragic hero must cause the audience to feel pity for him, because this misfortune does not come from becoming a bad person, but from this false judgment caused by the lack of knowledge. Episode 17, titled *Creating the Enemy*, can be considered a tragedy. It is about a young boy named Khaled, whose father is Qatari, and his mother is from one of the blockading countries. He is stuck in his mother's country because of the blockade, and slowly becomes influenced by the media and family there to believe that any Qatari person is a terrorist. So, he ends up being angry with his father and saying that he is not his father, but that he is his enemy. Because the main character is a child—that is innocent—he fits the category of being virtuous. Then because there is no certain information that we are given to make us assume that he is in some way superior to anyone, he meets the second requirement. And finally, the boy turns from loving his father to hating him and calling him a terrorist, which is his turn to misfortune. This turn is caused by a misunderstanding that he has, which is caused by what he hears and sees around him. This character's flow is the misunderstanding that is why the young boy Khaled can be considered a tragic hero.

Khaled met the requirements of a tragic hero, but did Ghanem follow Aristotle's instructions for the fate of characters in a tragedy? "Since the construction of the finest tragedy should be not simple but complex, and moreover it should represent terrifying and pitiable events (for this is particular to representation of this sort), first, clearly, it should not show (1) decent men undergoing a change from good fortune to misfortune; for this this is neither terrifying nor pitiable, but shocking. Nor [should it show] (2) wicked men [passing] from misfortune to good fortune. This is most untragic of all, as it has nothing of what it should; for it is neither morally satisfying nor pitiable nor terrifying. [1453a] Nor, again, [should show] (3) a thoroughly villainous person falling from good fortune into misfortune: such a structure can contain moral satisfaction, but not pity or terror, for the former is [felt for a person undeserving of his misfortune, and the latter

for a person like [ourselves]" (Aristotle, n.d). First, a good character must not go from having good fortune, to bad fortune. Khaled's father seems to be a good man whom Khaled loves. But when Khaled's mother is speaking with him on the I-pad, he tries to speak to Khaled and he tells him that he fed the pigeons at Souq Waqif, because he knows that he used to love feeding them. Even when Khaled refuses to speak to his father and shouts at him, his father stays a good man, which means that his fortune stays the same. The next two points are connected; no wicked people's fortune should change to the better, or change for the worst. In the show, we see Khaled's uncles speaking badly about Qataris, including Khaled's father's side of the family, but their fortune remains the same: we do not see any kind of change in their fortune.

It is important to mention that Aristotle also speaks about the unities, because the difference between drama and other forms of art are the unities. The unities are unity of time and the unity of action. Many people add the unity of place, but he does not mention it; it was added at the time of the renaissance, because medieval drama kept the unity of place.

The unity of time refers to the idea that the drama's plot must follow the normal timing within a day or 24 h, so it should not jump back and forth in time. And if the drama is not restricted to the time limit, he considers it to be an imperfect drama. Aristotle says: "Again, with respect to length, tragedy attempts as far as to keep within one revolution of the sun or [only] to exceed this a little" (Aristotle, n.d). Ghanem achieved unity of time since the episodes do not move back and forth in time. The only exception is *Creating the Enemy*, where events are fast forwarded.

Aristotle speaks of unity of action and says: "Therefore, just as in the other representational arts a single representation is of single [thing], so too the plot, since it is a representation of action, ought to represent a single action, and a whole one at that; and its parts (the incidents) ought to be so constructed that, some part is transposed or removed, the whole is disrupted and disturbed" (Aristotle, n.d). So, Aristotle means that all the events must be connected, and also be part of the main plot. In Aristotle's point of view, there should not be any smaller useless plots, they should all be part of the larger one. Ghanem achieves this as well; all his plots are simple and direct. Episode 6 titled *Qatar the Terrorist* is a good example, the protagonist simply speaks of many topics in the same setting, which we can consider to be smaller plots. The main character's wife is depressed and in bed saying that she wants to see her sister, brother, and uncle before she dies. Her husband answers and says that it is impossible because the borders are closed, and even animals are blocked off. Then he says that even a Qatari camel wanted to cross the border and they told it that it is not allowed in, so it turned around and came back. This can be considered the first small plot. Then the wife asks the husband why they are doing this to them, and he tells her that it is because Qatar is a terrorist nation. She is shocked and says: "Qatar is a terrorist nation?", he replies: yes, yes, yes Qatar is a terrorist nation, that Qatar is behind all the destructive wars in the world, and Qatari people were the ones who blew up the world trade center in America. He says 26 Qataris did it, then his wife says no 19, 19. The husband

says no, because there were 7 Qataris for backup. That ends the second small plot. Then he says that Hulagu Khan—a Mongolian leader that invaded Muslim lands and killed many people—was actually Qatari, the man who killed many Muslims is originally from Al-Khour. The main character gives Hulagu an Arab name and says that people used to see him and say: “Whowa ko” which is the Qatari dialect meaning “There he is”, and by running the two words together it sounded like: Hulagu. That is the third smaller plot. Qatar invaded the Korean islands, and Qatar was also behind the division in Sudan. He adds that a few of his close friends heard rumors that Qatar was preparing to invade the United States, and he also saw a bunch of war tanks big and small on the Corniche. His wife says: “May God damn us, all of this, what have we, the people of Qatar done?”. That all can be considered smaller plot number 4. The husband turns to his wife and says: yes, and adds that terrorism is in the Qatari people’s blood. He tells her that her grandfather was the biggest terrorist. He adds that normal children say: “mom”, and “dad”, while Qatari children say: “blood”. And during Karankao—a traditional Gulf celebration, the children of the Gulf go around asking for candy, meanwhile, the Qatari children go around repeatedly saying: “let’s go blow things up...”. This is small plot 5. In the 6th and final smaller plot, the husband turns to the camera and says that there is only one thing that he does not understand. That is, if Qatar has done all of this? How is it, that they have just now come to the conclusion that Qatar is a terrorist nation? In this way, Ghanem created smaller plots that are all part of one larger one that calls out the countries of the blockade on their lies. It is simple and interesting, and the person watching does not feel overwhelmed by the changing events.

22.5 Conclusion

The dramatic elements that are in *Shellyseer* have traveled for a long period of time and have been affected by dramatic elements from different cultures, which means that *Shellyseer* is a result of the evolution of drama. Following the movements of drama from ancient Egypt to Qatar in the present day makes it clear that it is a product of the influence of many civilizations, and not just Qatari heritage. To prove this point, the dramatic elements of the show were compared to the ones in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, which is the oldest known European dramatic analysis of the requirements of a good drama. The show was proven to follow most all of the requirements successfully like: Aristotle’s 6 elements, unities, and requirements for characters of a tragedy, which proves T. S. Eliot’s point when he said: “If we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously” (1919). Looking closely at Ghanem Al-Sulaiti’s *Shellyseer*, we find that Aristotle’s theories live on, and give him the immortality, in Eliot’s words. And it is also suggesting that the best parts of an artist’s production are not necessarily a product of his or her ancestors from

the same racial and geographical background, but a product of the human literary heritage. This study is expected to offer deeper knowledge of Middle Eastern drama, the importance and strength of political satire, and how strong of a mutual influence Eastern and Western literature have on each other.

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Part III
Economic Sphere

Chapter 23

Working for God (and Country): Religious Education and Economic Diversification in the United Arab Emirates



Sharif Ibrahim El Shishtawy Hassan and Zeynep Ozgen

Abstract While the role of state formation, British withdrawal, and the discovery of oil in transforming social life in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has received considerable attention, scholars have focused less on the role the state has played in leading particular forms of social change. In this chapter, we explore how the Emirati state has attempted to cultivate certain values among its citizens to support its goal of economic diversification. We find that the state has reformed its national education curriculum in an effort to equip Emirati youth with both the requisite skillset for transitioning to a knowledge economy and the mindset necessary to accommodate such a transition. Analyzing 24 Islamic education textbooks, totaling nearly 5,400 pages, we find that the revised curriculum reflects a concerted effort on the part of the Emirati state to develop a Muslim work ethic by framing capitalist values such as productivity and hard work as divinely ordained.

Keywords Islam · Employment · Education reform · Economic diversification · United Arab Emirates

23.1 Introduction

The United Arab Emirates has experienced significant economic growth since the union was formed in 1971, resulting in massive social change in a span of a few generations. In tandem with this transformation, the UAE has also worked to diversify its economy, shifting from an emphasis on hydrocarbons¹ and preparing itself and its people for the coming post-oil future (Ewers, 2016). In 2010, the UAE identified

¹ The UAE has been quite successful in this endeavor, reducing the portion of GDP from oil and gas to 30%, making it one of the most diversified countries in the GCC (The World Factbook, 2021).

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the lynchpin of its diversification plan as transitioning to a “competitive knowledge economy” (United Arab Emirates Government, 2018a), a system that depends less on natural resources and more on human capital, thus requiring an “educated and skilled population” (World Bank, 2013). Such a transition has been challenging for the UAE, because, lacking a sufficiently skilled citizenry of its own, it has relied heavily on foreign labor since the country was formed.

The influx of foreign labor into the UAE following the first oil boom established a unique demographic landscape in which expatriates, who have consistently outnumbered nationals, comprise nearly 90% of the country’s population (Malit & Al Youha, 2013; World Population Review, 2021). In addition to being imbalanced, the UAE’s labor market is also profoundly segregated, with foreign workers competing for jobs in the private sector while citizens are largely employed in the high-paying, public-sector positions reserved for them (Herb, 2019). Such a starkly divided labor market is the norm in the Gulf, where rulers, as part of a “distributional bargain,” have long cultivated loyalty to the state by providing citizens with well-compensated government jobs (Forstenlechner & Rutledge, 2010).²

The generosity of the Emirati state, sustained by the country’s abundant natural resources and small citizen population, has paid off in many ways: Citizens generally appreciate the country’s leadership and are loyal to the state, allowing the country to remain relatively stable.³ And yet, while such generosity has encouraged allegiance to the state, it has also fostered an increasing sense of privilege among the citizenry, giving rise to a generation of what Calvert Jones (2017) has called “entitled patriots.” With the citizen population growing, natural resources diminishing, and hydrocarbon revenues declining, even the wealthiest rentier states in the Gulf have recognized that guaranteeing public-sector employment for nationals is unsustainable. As such, most Gulf states list increasing the number of nationals employed by the private sector as integral to their recently introduced national plans for social and economic development.⁴

² Public-sector jobs in the Gulf often offer citizens higher entry-level salaries, shorter working hours, more vacation days, greater job security, and generous retirement packages (Barnett et al., 2015).

³ The political stability of Qatar and the UAE, relative to other Gulf states, was illustrated during the Arab Spring. As Jones (2019) noted, Qatar and the UAE were “among the only regimes in the region to emerge from the 2010–2011 pro-democracy uprisings relatively unchanged, despite their near absolutism” (p. 68).

⁴ These plans can be found in Saudi Arabia’s “Vision 2030,” Oman’s “Vision 2040,” Bahrain’s “Economic Vision 2030,” Kuwait’s “Vision 2035,” Qatar’s “National Vision 2030,” and the UAE’s “Vision 2021.”

23.2 Labor Nationalization and “Work-Readiness”

The UAE’s decades-long attempts to promote private-sector employment among its citizens have been only mildly successful (Hertog, 2014).⁵ In 1980, the UAE created a department within the federal government tasked with locating job opportunities for nationals and helping to connect them with prospective employers. A 2002 law promised “a special pensions fund” to nationals working in the private sector, while also guaranteeing them additional benefits (Davidson, 2013, p. 264). Then, in 2005, a quota system imposed on private-sector employers stipulated that companies with more than 100 workers employ a specific number of nationals (United Arab Emirates Government, 2021c)—after which, in 2009, private-sector employers were restricted in exercising discretion in terminating the employment of Emiratis (Sarker & Habibur Rahman, 2020, p. 181). Such strategies initially seemed promising but were unsuccessful and ultimately phased out, only to be reintroduced in a new form over a decade later.⁶

Earlier strategies were stymied by the fact that government incentives failed to motivate citizens to pursue private employment⁷ and that private-sector employers showed little enthusiasm for the mandated quotas, resorting to various tactics to avoid employing Emiratis.⁸ Resistance to hiring nationals stemmed in large part from a mistrust of citizens’ “work-readiness” (Al-Ali, 2008). As Al-Waqfi and Forstenlechner (2010) have described, managers in the private sector, including those who were themselves Emirati, regarded nationals as generally inefficient, unproductive, and unambitious. Indeed, a survey of nearly 250 recruiters and hiring managers found that the perception of Emiratis as relatively unmotivated “had the largest bearing on reducing a given employer’s willingness to recruit” nationals (Forstenlechner et al., 2012, p. 414). The fact that many Emiratis chose to collect unemployment benefits from the state rather than pursuing work in the private sector likely reinforced this stereotype.⁹

Employers were not the only ones to associate those from the UAE with a lack of drive and discipline; across the board, Emiratis, especially those old enough to recall the harsh realities of life before the discovery of oil, voiced complaints about

⁵ The UAE has been open about its efforts to promote private-sector employment among citizens, dedicating an entire page on the official government website to the history and development of the state’s “Emiratisation” campaign (United Arab Emirates Government, 2021a).

⁶ By 2007, the quota system was “de facto abandoned” in most private-sector industries (Hertog, 2014, p. 20). New quotas, however, were introduced in both 2017 (United Arab Emirates Government, 2021a) and 2021 (United Arab Emirates Government, 2021b). The outcome of these initiatives remains to be seen.

⁷ In 2009, Emirati nationals comprised an estimated 1.3% of the private-sector workforce in the UAE (Forstenlechner & Rutledge, 2010, p. 41). Emiratis continue to prefer public-sector employment (Daleure, 2016; Hertog, 2020).

⁸ These tactics include the “phantom employment” of nationals, a practice widespread in the UAE and across the Gulf (Hertog, 2015, p. 23).

⁹ In 2010, official statistics showed that 23% of Emiratis were unemployed; the government has claimed many of these individuals are jobless by choice (Solomon & Doherty, 2010).

rising entitlement and listlessness, especially among younger citizens (Bristol-Rhys, 2010).¹⁰ The country's leadership expressed similar concerns, state officials referencing a "lost generation" of Emiratis (Jones, 2017, p. 50), and senior members of the ruling families voicing frustration with the country's youth and even publicly criticizing their sense of privilege and indolence.¹¹

Troubled by the increasing prevalence of "rentier mentality,"¹² and aware of the obstacle this mindset could present to the country's plans for diversification, the UAE's leadership embarked on a vigorous social-engineering project to cultivate a new generation of citizens equipped with the necessary skills and training for a transition to a knowledge economy as well as the commitment and motivation such a transformation would undoubtedly require (Jones, 2017).

23.3 The Ideal Citizen and Educational Reform

The UAE seeks to cultivate a new generation of citizens who are industrious, self-reliant, and dedicated—individuals who demonstrate the "vigorous entrepreneurial spirit" required to build "a productive and fulfilling future for themselves and their nation" (United Arab Emirates Cabinet, 2010, p. 4). Guided by such capitalist values and neoliberal ideals, this new generation will aspire to "work harder, be more innovative, [and] more organized," while also helping to facilitate the country's transition to a "sustainable," "competitive," and "highly productive" knowledge economy (United Arab Emirates Cabinet, 2010, p. 16, 18).

While the UAE has introduced numerous changes to support this project, some of the most important have occurred in the field of education. UAE Vision 2021 emphasized educational reform by stating that to "successfully encourage Emiratis to play an active role in society as self-directed and responsible citizens, . . . a progressive national curriculum" would be initiated (United Arab Emirates Cabinet, 2010, p. 23). To this end, the government has invested heavily in restructuring the country's national education curriculum.¹³ Foreign experts and Emirati officials educated in

¹⁰ Data on unemployment in the UAE support the perception that younger Emiratis have experienced malaise. In 2012, the nation's youth unemployment rate was nearly 3 times higher than the rate was for the country overall (World Economic Forum, 2014).

¹¹ This issue was articulated well in Worth (2020, January 9), an article that also shed light on the perspective of the crown prince of Abu Dhabi—the de facto ruler of the UAE. See also Jones (2017, p. 48).

¹² Coined by Beblawi (1987), the term "rentier mentality" refers to a conceptual break between work and reward caused by the distribution of resource wealth in rentier states. For a rentier, reward becomes a "windfall gain, an *isolated* fact, situational or accidental" as opposed to having reward be "integrated in a *process* as the end result of a long, systematic and organized production circuit [emphasis in original]" (pp. 385–386).

¹³ The UAE's policy of "sampling" a variety of educational 'products' before deciding which to choose" has enabled experimentation in educational reform initiatives in the country (Thorne, 2011, p. 3). Certain notable examples include the Public Private Partnership (2006) and the New School Model (2009).

the West played an important role in directing these reforms,¹⁴ which, in addition to focusing on increasing students' proficiency in English and exposure to the sciences, have also targeted elements of rentier mentality by attempting to fashion Emirati youth into responsible, entrepreneurial, and achievement-oriented citizens invested in the country's future.¹⁵

In developing this progressive national curriculum, reformers have been challenged by the UAE's "educational dualism," which requires that the secular national curriculum respect what has historically been the primary purpose of the country's education system: fostering proper Islamic belief and practice (Findlow, 2008).¹⁶ Thus, in prioritizing practical components of the curriculum, such as English and the sciences, which are essential to creating a skilled and creative workforce suited to the knowledge economy, the state must fend off the perception that it has relegated religion to the periphery.

How have education reformers navigated this tension? What has been their vision for socioeconomic change in the UAE? Through an examination of revised Islamic education textbooks and Ministry of Education (MoE) documents, we argue that education reformers have not neglected religious education in the revised national curriculum despite the "quiet effort to reorient citizens' priorities away from religion and toward labor market skills" (Jones, 2017, p. 135). Reformers have, instead, "put Islam to work" (Starrett, 1998) by leveraging religious teachings to promote values central to elites' ambitions for social change, specifically the country's economic diversification plans. Following a Weberian logic (Weber, 1958), education reformers have coupled their efforts to develop students' skills in the service of capitalism with their attempts to cultivate a "Muslim" work ethic.

23.4 Islamic Education as a State Instrument

State-sponsored Islamic education textbooks in the Middle East have historically "objectified" Islam (Eickelman, 1992) by limiting religious knowledge to "a defined set of beliefs," practices, and values (Starrett, 1998, p. 9). But the state-sponsored Islamic education textbooks are also intended to serve as an important state tool in disseminating national visions of Islam (Doumato & Starrett, 2007).

¹⁴ Jones (2017) noted that the government enlisted "an army of foreign experts" (p. 80) to support the country's social-engineering project and described state officials attributing their drive for reform to their personal experiences studying abroad.

¹⁵ In the UAE, the "magic recipe for success" (Thorne, 2011, p. 2) is thought as right educational policy.

¹⁶ Reforms of the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Abu Dhabi Education Council have eliminated the country's two-stream curriculum, which had previously allowed students in public schools to choose between science or humanities tracks. In its place, these organizations instituted a singular curriculum in which science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields accounted for at least 50% of all subjects (Al Nowais, 2017, September 5).

These national visions of Islam are “tailor-made,” each designed “to cater to the historical, nationalist, and moral visions of particular regimes,” while still presenting themselves as “universally valid” (Adely & Starrett, 2011, p. 355, 358; Doumato & Starrett, 2007). In many cases, national Islamic education curricula are designed to promote loyalty to the state and to cultivate particular beliefs, values, and ideals among Muslim citizens (Adely, 2007; Doumato & Starrett, 2007; Kaplan, 2006; Ozgen & Hassan, 2021; Starrett, 1998). Thus, given the emphasis on economic development in the Middle East, “the values of hard work, obedience, and productivity are phrased as divinely ordained” in Islamic education textbooks throughout the region (Adely & Starrett, 2011; Doumato & Starrett, 2007). We observed a similar endeavor within the UAE while analyzing state-sponsored Islamic education.

23.5 Data and Methods

The data for this chapter, which draws on our previous work on the subject (Ozgen & Hassan, 2021), consist of 24 official Islamic education textbooks assigned for the 2020–2021 academic year. These books were developed for Muslim students in Grades 1 through 12, with two books assigned per grade. In Spring 2021, these textbooks, totaling approximately 5,400 pages, comprised the most up-to-date religious education materials and thus best encapsulated the reformed national curriculum. We accessed scanned copies of these textbooks through a public online forum created by Islamic education teachers in the UAE.

We also analyzed a 449-page document, authored by the developers of the Islamic education textbooks and published by the MoE in 2014, which articulates the function and goals of the curriculum as well as the purpose of the curricular reform. We coded and analyzed the data in MAXQDA, a qualitative data-analysis software, and relied on the grounded theory approach, that includes open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).¹⁷ During the analysis process, we identified a number of themes, which we coded as *modern science*, *rational thinking*, *strategic planning*, *lifelong learning*, *hard work*, *human capital*, *technological advancement*, and *environmental sustainability*. Centered around issues of education, employment, and economic development, we assigned these codes over 900 times, making them among the most consistent themes in the Islamic education curriculum.

To be sure, the textbooks also address a variety of traditionally religious topics. A significant portion of the chapters instructed students in the technicalities of Quranic recitation, encouraged the memorization of scripture, emphasized the authority of Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad), discussed the lives of previous prophets and nations, highlighted the biographies of notable Muslim figures, explained the

¹⁷ The first of these involves examining the textual data and using preliminary codes to describe and categorize emergent concepts; the second involves evaluating the relationship between these codes and identifying connections between them; and the third involves organizing related codes into code sets that map onto the central themes revealed in the data.

rules of ritual worship, and promoted observance of Islamic etiquette in daily life. The textbooks also included discussions on a variety of nonreligious topics, such as the importance of national identity, dangers of extremism, urgency for environmentalism, and so on. For our purposes, we did not code those portions, focusing instead on the instances where the curriculum advanced the vision for economic development as promoted by state elites.

23.6 Vision of Progress and the Textbooks

To support the state's vision of developing a competitive knowledge economy, the MoE has been tasked with cultivating ideal Emirati youth "driven by science, technology, and innovation" (United Arab Emirates Ministry of Education, 2017). Following this vision, Islamic education textbooks extol the virtues of exercising critical thinking, seeking knowledge, acquiring modern science, maximizing productivity, and investing in development—all central tenets of neoliberal market capitalism.

In the "Islamic education National Curriculum Standards from Kindergarten to Grade 12" document, published by MoE, the developers of the curriculum¹⁸ stress that the new curriculum prepares youth for the "requirements of the labor market" and focuses on developing "skills to enhance the productivity and effectiveness of the workplace" (United Arab Emirates Ministry of Education, 2014).¹⁹ Furthermore, the developers explain that the reformed curriculum emphasizes the connection between "work and worship in Islam" because it is a means to reach perfection in one's faith. To ensure clear articulation of this message to students, the developers encourage teachers to show "films showing the importance of work to build[ing] society" in class, present "examples from the Messengers' biographies regarding their professions" to students, and dedicate time to watch "programs about loyalty in work" or "documentary films on globalization and knowledge econom[ies]." The developers also explained that the MoE had comprehensively revised the Islamic education curriculum due to the subject's "active and prominent role" in building individuals "loyal to homeland" and contribute to the "development and advancement" of the nation. In the following subsections, we outline how the textbooks seek to cultivate an appreciation for scientific advancement, learning and knowledge, professionalism and hard work, economic development, and environmental sustainability (Fig. 23.1).

¹⁸ The document does not specify the authors; it states only that the curriculum developers comprise a "specialized committee" of individuals drawn from the MoE, the General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments, United Arab Emirates University, and Zayed University.

¹⁹ The English version of the document also omits page numbers.



Fig. 23.1 Illustration in an Islamic education textbook assigned to elementary school students in the UAE

23.6.1 *Religion and Science in Harmony*

A common narrative across the textbooks is that cultivating religious faith and acquiring modern science are not in conflict. Textbooks suggest that “science and faith are inseparable” (10a:31)²⁰ because their findings are complementary (11a:27), and they justify this claim by suggesting that Islam “does not differentiate between” different kinds of knowledge. To the contrary, Islam supports knowledge from any discipline so long as it “serve[s] a religious purpose or lead[s] to a worldly benefit” (6b:127). The relationship between revelation and reason moves in both directions: Islam supports science and science validates the teachings of the Qur’an, thereby affirming the “inimitability of Allah’s sayings” (11a:93). Thus, students are taught that Islam obliges individuals to “specialize, research and produce knowledge” (6b:127), and such instances bolster the assertion that acquiring modern science is a divinely sanctioned endeavor.

As Gregory Starrett (1998) argued in his work on Islamic education in Egypt, such purported “interdependence of Islam and science is stressed in order to avoid the pitfall of implying that secular knowledge is inseparable from secularism” (p. 139). In balancing Islam and science, the state tries to circumvent a tension: On the one hand, the government must equip its citizens with the necessary skills and knowledge to build a knowledge economy less reliant on foreign labor, therefore the reformed national curriculum prioritizes secular school subjects over religious education (which receives only 90–180 min per week of class time) (Bakali et al., 2018,

²⁰ We reference quotes by, first, identifying the grade level (e.g., 3, 8, 12), then using “a” or “b” to denote the first- or second-semester book, respectively, and then including the page number. And thus, “10a: 31” would refer to page 31 of the first textbook (of two) assigned to students in the tenth grade.

p. 10). On the other hand, the state needs to avoid appearing to privilege secular instruction because the monarchy legitimizes its rule through religion. Therefore, the UAE must present the pursuit of all kinds of knowledge—especially knowledge that advances the state’s economic interests—as an essentially Islamic endeavor, blessed by the Divine (Ozgen & Hassan, 2021, p. 1194).

23.6.2 *Work and Worship*

The value of hard work is another common narrative through which the textbooks attempt to harness religion for economic development. The textbooks stress this narrative in three interrelated ways. First, they highlight how Muslims have, throughout history, advanced different disciplines (6b:132; 10a:126) and exhort students to follow in the footsteps of their pious and studious ancestors. Second, they encourage emulating the Prophet. In a second-grade textbook, for example, the Prophet is depicted as someone who “loved to work” and “was keen on earning a living from his own work”—so much so that he served as a shepherd to provide for and thereby dignify himself (2a:85). Similarly, the textbooks stress that “[t]he Prophets and Messengers of Allah used to work hard to earn their living” (7b:81), a point underscored by an exercise that instructs students to research “the professions of Prophets Moses, David, and Shoab” and to present their findings to classmates (2a:91).

Third, textbooks re-present the act of working as a type of devotion, arguing that students should both “work hard in seeking knowledge” and apply that knowledge to “make [their] Lord pleased with [them]” (8b:298). This attempt to define academic endeavors as spiritual strivings is reinforced pedagogically in the assessment sections that typically come at the end of each unit. In the “I Assess Myself” surveys found in most lessons, for example, students are asked to rate how well they tend to perform certain tasks or embrace particular values. As such, in a fifth-grade textbook, students are asked to evaluate their success in “performing [their] prayers on time,” along with how much they “desire[d] to improve [their] scientific level” (5a:122).

The notion of hard work is also tied to patriotism and citizenship. In many chapters, students are urged to “work hard to make progress in [their] studies out of love for country” (4b:61). A third-grade book presses this point through a fictitious character named “Rashid the Thinker.” Rashid is an Emirati boy who loves learning, thrives in his studies, and goes on to become a doctor. According to the textbook, “being a Muslim who is aware of his religion and [being] a successful doctor who serves his country and society” (3b:15) go hand in hand. Studiousness, in this regard, both pleases God and serves one’s country, goals that frequently appear interconnected in the textbooks. The effort to connect work with worship is further demonstrated in a series of student assignments. In a seventh-grade book, for example, students are asked to compose an essay on “the negative effects of unemployment on the individual and on society” (7b:79), while also listing “the biggest possible number of

professions that the United Arab Emirates needs in the twenty first century” (7b:80), including their justification for each selection.

23.6.3 *Cultivation of the Earth*

In addition to scientific progress and hard work, the textbooks highlight the narrative of economic development. To embed the idea of production and development as spiritually authentic, textbooks draw on the Islamic concept of *emarat al ard* (construction of the land) (10a:17; 10a:28), which derives from a collection of verses in the Qur’an (2:30; 6:165; 9:105; 67:15) wherein believers are taught that God placed man on Earth in order to try him and thus man must cultivate and build upon the land, thereby serving as God’s designated successor or vicegerent (*khalifa*). The concept of *emarat al ard* expressed in these textbooks encourages students to be ambitious, productive, and forward-looking citizens, such as in the teaching that “it is the duty of a Muslim to build a strong economy based on knowledge as a necessary factor in achieving economic growth and prosperity” (12b:290). In this way, the UAE’s Islamic education curriculum appeals to Islamic ethics and mobilizes Islamic teaching in the service of the state’s economic interests and pro-market principles.

The state’s economic vision rests on the coupling of development and sustainability. For example, textbooks link environmental responsibility to attaining God’s pleasure by stressing that “Muslims work, produce and develop in obedience to Allah and also avoid aggression on the resources of the environment in obedience to Allah” (11b:93). The textbooks also delineate Islam’s approach to environmentalism, which rests on “the pillars of reconstructing the land, maintaining its cleanliness, preserving natural resources, and maintaining human beings’ health” (4b:221). This message is, additionally, reinforced through the discourses of founding fathers. In an assignment for sixth graders, students are prompted to write an essay explaining their understanding of the following statement: “The founding father Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan once said: ‘Protecting the environment should not be a matter that concerns only the government and official authorities... but every individual in our society’” (6b:166). Through these narratives and exercises, textbooks mobilize Islam as an instrument to foreground certain principles and to cultivate knowledge that furthers the state’s vision of social change.

23.7 Conclusion

Islamic education textbooks have been deployed to promote the state’s goal of transitioning to a knowledge economy. The textbooks support this goal by reinterpreting specific Qur’anic verses, Hadith, and edifying stories from Islamic history as supportive of the principles of progress and productivity. We argue that, broadly speaking, Islamic education textbooks emphasize science, learning, hard work, and

development for two primary reasons. First, the state must cultivate these principles and associated skills among the citizenry in order to meet both the demands of the global capitalist economy and its own developmental goals. As described above, these goals were set forth in the UAE Vision 2021 and Vision 2030, which pointed to “a reduced reliance on the oil sector as a source of economic activity and a greater focus on knowledge-based industries” (United Arab Emirates Government, 2021d). But this goal cannot be attained without an educated domestic workforce required to “assure the functioning of the institutions of the modern state” (Al Sayegh, 2004, p. 112) and without reducing reliance on skilled foreign labor.

Second, an indirect emphasis on critical thinking supports the state’s broader interest in alleviating the social and psychological consequences of the rapid enrichment following the first oil boom. In a span of one generation, oil wealth jolted nomadic Bedouin tribes out of poverty and turned Emirati society from one of the poorest in the region to one of the richest in the world. Generous rentier benefits—free housing, education, and health care—certainly improved Emiratis’ standard of living and helped achieve national stability, but these benefits came with sociopsychological costs, such as “listlessness, depression, [and] isolation,” while also encouraging, especially among younger generations, an unwillingness to be self-reliant or hard-working.²¹

In closing, it is important to recognize, as we have noted elsewhere (Ozgen & Hassan, 2021), that the Islamic education curriculum in the UAE has been mobilized not only in promoting certain values among young citizens but also in projecting a particular image of the country to the international community, which has, since 9/11, increasingly scrutinized Islamic education curricula for clues about the values, aspirations, and allegiances of Muslim-majority countries. Thus, with its keen interest in being a part of the global capitalist economy, the UAE, in its official religious education materials, makes a sustained effort to present acquiring modern science, engaging in hard work, and practicing critical thinking as not merely Islamically permissible but indeed required. These representations are crucial to the image the state projects both inwardly toward citizens and outwardly toward the global community. Seen this way, with ambitions that are reciprocal and outcomes that are mutually reinforcing, working for God *is* working for country.

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Chapter 24

Innovation, Technology Transfer, and Endogenous Growth in the GCC Countries



Erhan Akkas and Suleyman Orhun Altiparmak

Abstract This chapter investigates the economic changes of the GCC countries within the framework of the nature of economic diversification by analyzing innovation performance indices, economic freedom indices, and doing business indicators. This paper shows that the GCC states' economic strategies are still limited in their ability to affect economic performance so that their economies are still heavily dependent on natural resources. Thus, this study stresses the need for GCC countries to develop technology- and innovation-based private sectors aside from hydrocarbons in accordance with the endogenous growth theory. This research recommends that each GCC state should support investments in the private sector, which can contribute to the development of innovation and technology.

24.1 Introduction

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are rentier economies whose economic resources and wealth largely derive from extracting natural resources. Those countries seek to transform their economies through the creation of human capital, using and producing modern technology in private sectors. Therefore, these countries might manage to diversify their economies for the post-petroleum era through such policies and strategies in their national vision. As such, increasing the role of the private sector and reducing its dependence on hydrocarbon revenues by establishing technology- and innovation-based sectors are the most important factors that will help the economic change of the GCC countries (Ari et al., 2019). There are, however, difficulties in developing a sector that can serve as an alternative source of income for the GCC countries. Hydrocarbon exports still account for a large amount of total exports.

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In all but Bahreyn and UAE, the hydrocarbon sector contributes a significant share of the total GDP. This success of the UAE is largely due to the tourism and finance sectors. The developed countries, however, have a well-organized economy that is driven by technology and innovation (Archibugi & Michie, 1995). In a changing modern economy, technological development with innovation is seen as the main driver of economic growth. At this point, it has been suggested that endogenous growth models consider this issue and try to explain how some developed countries succeed in these areas and achieve rapid growth through the human and physical capital, while others suffer from a slower growth rate due to a lack of technological progress and innovation (Cypher & Dietz, 2008). Accordingly, the GCC countries aim to expand their private sectors, especially in the fields of technology and innovation, so their economies can transition smoothly from the oil-dependent period to the post-petroleum era. In spite of the question of whether these efforts by GCC countries to realize economic diversification will be successful or not, it is possible to conduct an economic analysis in the short run, although there will be a long-term answer.

This study examines the economic changes of the GCC countries within the frame of the nature of economic diversification through analyzing innovation performance indices, economic freedom indices, and doing business indicators by referencing secondary data. Accordingly, this paper argues that the effect of the GCC states' economic strategies of the last decades on economic performance is still limited so that the economies of these countries are still heavily reliant on natural resources. This study, therefore, emphasizes the importance for the GCC countries of developing technology- and innovation-based private sectors apart from hydrocarbons by referring to the endogenous growth theory.

As for the organization and content of the paper, following the introduction, Sect. 24.2 discusses the reasons for economic change by focusing on rentier economics as a political economy discussion and the hydrocarbon sector's role as a sectoral discussion. In Sect. 24.3, the role of innovation in determining economic transformation is examined by referring to the endogenous growth theory as a theoretical discussion, and by analyzing the innovation progress of the GCC countries. The final section concludes the study.

24.2 Why Do GCC Countries Need an Economic Transformation?

The GCC countries have around 30% of global proven reserves of oil and around 20% of global gas (EIA, 2021). Hence, oil and gas industries are the primary economic factors of GCC countries. Due to the fact that it also affects social and political dynamics, it produces a unique economic structure. In this context, "the rentier state" debate begins for the GCC countries (Anderson, 1987; Mahdavy, 1970). Natural gas and oil-rich countries depend heavily on their natural resources to generate income,

which is unrelated to the productivity of their private sectors. As a result, oil and gas companies are nationalized, and GCC economies are, therefore, determined by the public sector. The economic decisions (e.g., investment, banking) of resource-rich countries are governed by the public sector (Costantini, 2017). It does, however, result in wealth (rent) distribution problems in these societies. As in GCC countries, only a few are involved in the generation of wealth in corrupt and clientelistic environments (Beblawi, 1987). When the common people do not get benefits from the rent (Leber, 2019), it creates a resource curse issue, since unrest may increase and preventing policies may create an unbreakable problem circle. Furthermore, patronage networks lead to the integration of economic dynamics and social dynamics, leading to another political problem, which is a tendency for autocracy (Krane, 2019).

By sharing the wealth with a few, governments can prevent social unrest resulting from military expansion (Ross, 2001). However, this is not the only solution. To comply with the expectations of society, which are defined by the dominance of the public sector over the private sector (POMEPS, 2019), GCC countries need to maintain low taxes for their citizens. This fragile governance structure keeps the dominant political elite, who controls state resources, and the resources-rich elite, who is a merchant and a wealthy industrialist (Kamrava, 2011). An economic structure without competition and initiative results in the issue of a low labor workforce. There are two dynamics that solve this problem in GCC countries: foreign workers constitute the majority of the private sector, which also keeps wages low since they prevent Dutch Disease¹; and citizens work for the public sector at higher wages (Herb, 2019). Additionally, the latter decreases expectations from the public sector to increase surpluses. Furthermore, what if the commodity price that determines the state's revenue plummets as it did between 2014 and 2016 from \$96 to \$50 and then to \$42 per barrel? In the wake of the end of the era of oil, the economy becomes more vulnerable, thus making economic diversification necessary. However, due to the current dynamics, diversification can only be achieved through economic transformation.

The issue of economic transformation relates to both the social and the political spheres. Therefore, it requires the consideration of both private and public sectors. Due to GCC's current circumstances, the unearned oil and gas rent prevents competition at economic and political elite levels, so "capitalistic entrepreneurialism" and "hard work" are the only option. "The 'rentier state' came to be seen as a counterpoint to the 'production state'" (Rutledge, 2017, p. 136). A production state takes into account market dynamics, while rentier states are constrained by their resources (Adedoyin et al., 2017). Therefore, GCC countries face more challenges than other countries in their economic transformation. In attempting to stay away from such challenges, some countries have attempted economic change since the neoliberalism wave of the 1980s. It is fascinating how pre-socialist East Central European countries have embraced the European Union prospects and how authoritarian East Asian

¹ Following the discovery of the gas field in 1959, the export of gas led to an appreciation of the national currency and domestic inflation in the Netherlands. It also affects the nation's other exports, making them less competitive in the international trade market.

countries have succeeded (Ahrens, 2006). A strong enforcement of market economy regulations and a market economy regulatory framework can give agents a sense of comfort and make them more responsible (Ahrens, 2006). However, since GCC countries are already relied on natural resources-based income, manufacturing-based economy, which helps growing quicker (Al Awad, 2010), is difficult to be applied. In terms of the GCC countries, it is, therefore, possible to state that creating long-term value requires short-term sacrifices (Hertog, 2013).

In GCC countries, the business elite holds a significant share of GDP and capital formation rather than employment, “arguably the most important function of capitalism” (Hertog, 2013, p. 179). Their investments include schools, hospitals, telecoms, etc., with low-paid foreigners. This gives them a stronger connection with local regimes and economies, so involving local stakeholders in the consultation and planning stages is important in the GCC context (Ulrichsen, 2017). Using an economic diversification approach, Callen et al. (2014) suggest that three main points should be accomplished in order to solve above mentioned problems; limit government employment, improve social safety nets, and ensure that education and training systems provide workers with the skills they need for the private sector.

A difference in regional economic governance can also have an impact on the transformation of the region (Lawson, 2012). The view that autonomy of government would break patronage and bring competitive market dynamics with understanding of government leadership is very useful, as it was in the case of East Asia (Wade, 2015). For GCC, the cycle is more problematic since they are stuck with commodity exports that are not driven by market dynamics. However, collaboration between private and public sector is successful if there is commitment, coordination, and consultation between a government agency and one voice from the private sector (Ansu et al., 2016). A similar idea has been investigated on the GCC, however, where the oil and gas sectors determine economic growth, regulation is a challenging task for governments, operator, and regulator (Iwanami, 2018, p. 83).

In addition, the patronage-based, less democratic GCC system has also been integrated with the global economic system. There is awareness of the importance of economic diversification and transformation (Mishrif, 2018; Tok, 2018). There are attempts to fund projects on renewable energy sources in order to break up the reliance on fossil fuels incomes and prepare for the post-oil era, but again, those investments are largely funded by oil revenues rather than private enterprise (Mishrif, 2018). The change of economy aims energy diversification, which would be less dependent on fossil fuels and knowledge economy; however, it is still ongoing process.

As the GCC countries undergo economic change, the balance between public and private sectors is crucial to their development. To increase the share of the private sector in the economies of the GCC countries, technology, and human capital need to be developed. Taking technology and qualified human capital into account in industrial policies will play a crucial role in the economic change in these countries. This study stands out from the literature by drawing attention to endogenous growth factors in the realization of economic changes in these countries.

24.2.1 The Hydrocarbon Sector Dominates the Gulf Economies

As a rentier economy, the GCC countries primarily rely on a well-developed public sector to drive its economy. A public sector-dominated economy is unsustainable in the post-oil era or during periods of falling oil prices. That is why the GCC has sought economic diversification. In this sense, increasing the share of the private sector in the economy is one of the most important policies to help transform the economies (Hvidt, 2013). Accordingly, the national visions of each GCC country include targets for the development of private sector. Specifically, they prioritize goals such as developing a highly qualified and productive workforce, providing the necessary infrastructure to realize economic growth, supporting economic development projects, and supporting innovation and technology-based production (Economic Development Board of Bahrain, 2008; General Secretariat For Development Planning, 2008; Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Vision 2030, 2018; Ministry of Foreign Affairs State of Kuwait, 2018; Supreme Council for Planning of Oman, 2016; The Government of Abu Dhabi, 2008). A discussion of the reasons for setting such goals and the steps that must be taken to reach them is essential in establishing the overall framework. Thus, it is imperative to examine the role played by hydrocarbon revenues in their economies in Fig. 24.1 to demonstrate the need to realize the economic transformation of GCC countries.

In Fig. 24.1, Bahrain has the least hydrocarbon revenues and exports as a percentage of total GDP and exports among the GCC countries. In spite of this, hydrocarbon revenues represent more than 80% of total revenue. This is because Bahrain's natural resource reserves are smaller than those of other GCC countries (Kabbani & Mimoune, 2021). As for Bahrain's non-oil exports, it may be argued that it has diversified away from the endogenous growth factors since the products exported by Bahrain generally consist of food, manufacturing, apparel, fiberglass, and furniture (Zawya, 2019). The fact that Bahrain has a developed financial sector will also play an important role in the transition to the knowledge economy in that it has the human resources that this sector requires (Santosdiaz, 2020).

As for Kuwait, its economy is the least diversified among the GCC countries as seen in Fig. 24.1. Despite the fact that the hydrocarbon sector's share of GDP has decreased from 64 to 43%, especially with the policies made in the last ten years, Kuwait has the highest share of hydrocarbon exports with approximately 94%. Furthermore, Kuwait is the most oil-dependent GCC country, with about 5% of its exports coming from non-oil products. Especially thanks to the policies created over the past decade, the hydrocarbon sector's share in GDP decreased from 64 to 43% from 2012 to 2018. However, even with Kuwait's impressive state investments overseas, it is important to encourage other economic sectors apart from oil.

Although the hydrocarbon sector makes up a relatively small percentage of Oman's GDP, it contributes a significant percentage of Oman's revenue and exports. As this figure illustrates, Oman has low natural resources, as does Bahrain, but is highly dependent on these low reserves. In this respect, it is inevitable that Oman is

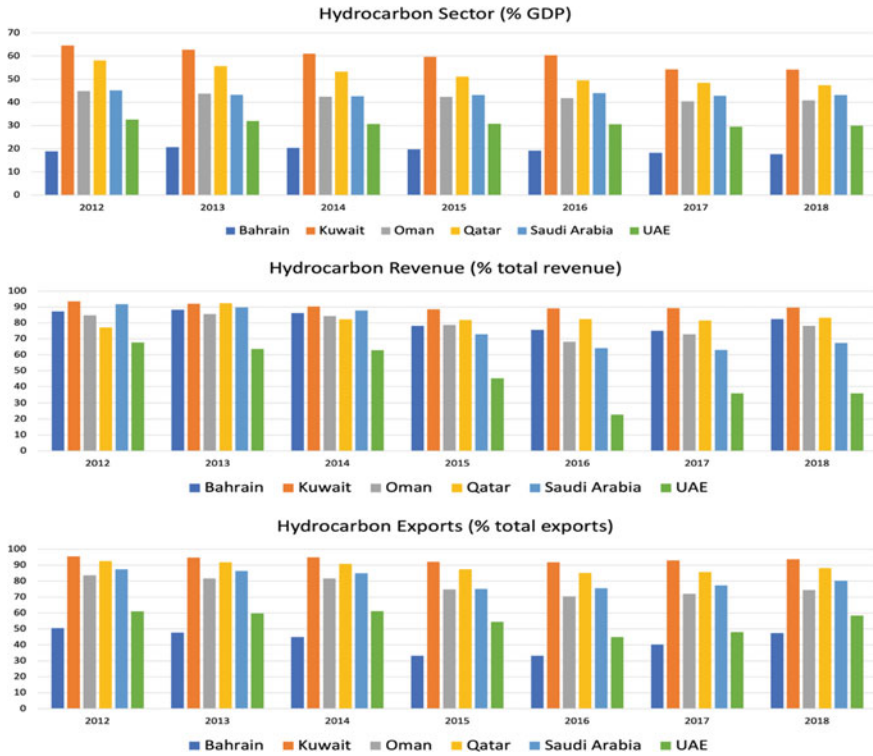


Fig. 24.1 Hydrocarbon shares in the GCC COUNTRIES (Source World Bank Group [2019])

one of the countries that attract the most attention to the nationalization policy of the country’s economy (Fromson & Simon, 2019). The fact is that in 2021, local citizens within the country expressed their displeasure due to the high unemployment rate (Barbuscia & Barrington, 2021).

Qatar, which has the third largest gas reserves with approximately 20% of the world’s gas reserves (MOFA, 2021), has a more stable economy than other GCC countries. Qatar, as illustrated in Fig. 24.1, comes in second place after Kuwait in terms of hydrocarbon sector share of GDP. Qatar’s hydrocarbon sector contributed 58.1% of its GDP in 2012, but this share decreased to 47.4% in 2018. Nevertheless, the share of hydrocarbon revenues in total income and hydrocarbon exports in total exports is over 80%. In order to reduce Qatar’s dependence on hydrocarbons, the country needs to diversify its economy.

In Saudi Arabia, which has the largest population and economy in the GCC region, the hydrocarbon sector represented 45.2% of the total GDP in 2012 and 43.2% in 2018. However, hydrocarbon exports in total exports decreased from 87.4% in 2012 to 80.2% in 2018. It is possible to see a partial reflection of Saudi Arabia’s diversification policies in the indicators, but the dependence persists.

UAE has minimized its dependence on hydrocarbons, as shown in Fig. 24.1. The hydrocarbon sector's share of the total GDP decreased to 30% in 2018. Additionally, around 58.4% of the UAE's total exports are hydrocarbons. By consistently implementing its national visions, UAE aims to further reduce its dependence on natural resources in the coming years (UAE Vision, 2021).

The assessment of the GCC countries, in general, reveals that they are still dependent on natural resource revenues. All countries in GCC are diversifying their dependency by focusing on specific sectors. To achieve this goal, Saudi Arabia aims to increase production in order to meet the daily consumption needs of the region, to expand foreign investments, increase the number of small and medium-sized enterprises, develop tourism, expand trade routes, and build an industrial sector focused on technology and innovation (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Vision 2030, 2018). UAE aims to diversify its economy by focusing on sectors such as media, tourism, manufacturing, telecom, technology, aviation, finance, and port management (The Government of Abu Dhabi, 2008). Qatar, on the other hand, aims to be a regional hub for education, research, and development (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008). Bahrain, in addition to its success in finance and banking, also aims to develop the industry and food sectors (Economic Development Board of Bahrain, 2008). On the other hand, Oman seeks to diversify its economy by developing its knowledge-based economy, as well as its agriculture and tourism sectors (Supreme Council for Planning of Oman, 2016). Finally, Kuwait plans to diversify its economy beyond natural resource revenues by increasing the productivity of non-oil sectors such as tourism, ICT, renewable energy, and health care (Ministry of Foreign Affairs State of Kuwait, 2018).

24.3 How Does Endogenous Growth Theory Affect the Economics Transformation?

The fundamental impulse that sets and keeps the capitalist engine in motion comes from the new consumers' goods, the new methods of production or transportation, the new markets, (...) [This process] incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one. This process of Creative Destruction is the essential fact about capitalism. (Schumpeter, 1942, pp. 26–27)

Schumpeter's Creative Destruction and Neo-Schumpeterian interpretation of growth have a primary distinction from neoclassical models: endogenous processes rather than exogenous processes (Romer, 1994). Unlike the exogenous dynamics of technological change and investment rate as the major determinants of economic growth (Bayraktar-Sağlam & Yetkiner, 2014), Aghion and Festré (2017) argue that the competition of entrepreneurs and firms creates growth. The destruction of the system would be caused by such competition, which can only be sustained by innovation. Thus, there exists an evolutionary historical perspective. As opposed to Karl Marx's class struggle, the Darwinian evolution view of Schumpeter is led

by the entrepreneur who is willing to take risks and try new ideas in the hope of profit (Alcouffe & Kuhn, 2004). However, even the Schumpeterian interpretation has evolved over time. Trade and economic openness played an important role in his theory during the early era, but that has changed (Dinopoulos, 2009). As a result of the dynamics of the 1970s and 1980s, skilled labor was required, which would conflict with the concept of economic openness. Despite this, direct reciprocal relationships between economy and technology never change (Lucas, 1988; Romer, 1986).

Due to the growing and deepening power of capitalism, it would be necessary to recognize the key role of two spheres. These are skilled labor (i.e., human capital) and technological development (i.e., physical capital) (Howitt, 2007). The accumulation of human and physical capital pushes a system into a new state. Such action can only be achieved via “knowledge”. In turn, intellectual capital and technological capital (e.g., Research and Development) work when they have intergenerational transfers (L’Angevin & Lab, 2005), so they can lead to endogenous economic growth. However, neither the technological growth of Romer (1990) (which is a function of human capital) nor the economic growth of Lucas (1988), which is a function of human capital accumulation (Growth in human capital determines the growth of the economy) (van Leeuwen, 2007, Chapter 6), are considered superior. Due to country-specific context, what matters most depends on that. However, it is important to clarify how knowledge is viewed and spread.

The knowledge of each person stimulates others. It sometimes creates connections even with other countries as a result of spillover effects (Tseng, 2014). New and successful ideas accumulated through this reciprocal process are referred to as innovation. If new knowledge creates a competitive advantage, this can result in a knowledge economy based on the production, distribution, and use of information. However, knowledge no longer creates its economic aspect alone but also contributes to societal development. Knowledge societies would affect both the social and cultural aspects of society in addition to the economic effects of the knowledge economy (Alfantookh & Bakry, 2015, p. 626). As knowledge spreads through social dynamics, it changes the era’s spirit. The accelerating evolution of knowledge has formed the societies in the knowledge age, which has taken place after the agricultural revolution, the industrial revolution, and the information age.

For those countries in a competition of technology, human capital, and innovation, Industry 4.0, which combines mechanization, electricity, automation, and the internet, will be the leading factor. Accumulation of knowledge on industry types would not just lead to economic diversification, but also to the improvement of current production systems under economic transformation. Petrochemical sectors in GCC countries may be positively impacted by the knowledge accumulation for innovation while taking into account the post-oil era (Wyman, 2018). Furthermore, GCC countries have already been in the midst of a developing knowledge economy (Alfantookh & Bakry, 2015; Modara et al., 2020). Innovation-based economic structures, which are based on government policies to encourage innovation and support innovation producers (e.g., industry, university, finance), reflect the new endogenous growth theory. Therefore, it is important that GCC countries are evaluated based on their innovation rankings to determine their progress.

24.3.1 An Assessment of Innovation for Economics transformation in the GCC Countries

A country's economic performance and competitiveness are greatly affected by the adoption of innovation and technology. Furthermore, investments in these areas also contribute to the diversification of the country's economy. For this to happen, institutions need to provide the necessary infrastructure in areas such as human capital, research, market and business sophistication, and knowledge dissemination to positively affect innovation and technology (Heng et al., 2012). However, innovation and technological development are difficult to measure directly, especially in rentier countries, where these areas are crucial to a country's economic change. Therefore, it would make sense to use the global innovation index created by the World Intellectual Property Organization in order to evaluate the innovation of GCC countries by looking at factors such as institutions, human capital, research, infrastructure, market sophistication, business sophistication, knowledge and technology outputs, and creative outputs (GII, 2021).

According to Fig. 24.2, the UAE is the country with the best innovation capabilities among the GCC countries between 2013 and 2021, ranking 33rd out of 132 economies in 2021. This figure proves Fig. 24.1, which illustrates how successful the UAE has been with diversifying its economy. The UAE's closest follower is Saudi Arabia, which ranks 66th in 2021. The widening of the gap between the UAE and Saudi Arabia in 2021, which was only four places in 2013, shows how the UAE has grown in its innovation capabilities. A similar performance is seen by Qatar and Kuwait, placing 68th and 72nd, respectively. However, Kuwait, which is the GCC country most dependent on natural resource revenues, had the lowest innovation ranking in 2015 among GCC countries when oil prices crashed. Accordingly, it shows that these figures are linked to oil dependence and diversification policies in the GCC countries' economies. Lastly, Oman and Bahrain ranked 76th and 78th, respectively, and their innovation abilities were the lowest of the GCC countries.

Figure 24.1 shows that in the period between 2014 and 2015 when oil prices declined sharply, the innovation capabilities of GCC countries with large reserves decreased, while Bahrain and Oman, which had relatively low reserves, increased. While it is true that Bahrain and Oman perform poorly on innovation levels compared to other GCC countries, their development in the opposite direction during a period when oil prices fell has made economic diversification policies more important than those of other GCC countries.

Table 24.1 displays the components of the global innovation index. In this table, institutions, human capital and research, infrastructure, market sophistication, and business sophistication appear as innovation inputs, while knowledge and technology outputs and creative outputs appear as innovation outputs.

On a component-by-component basis, UAE ranks 30th for the institution pillar, which evaluates political environment, regulatory environment, and business environment, while Saudi Arabia ranks 101st. In terms of the human capital and research component, which evaluates factors such as education, tertiary education,

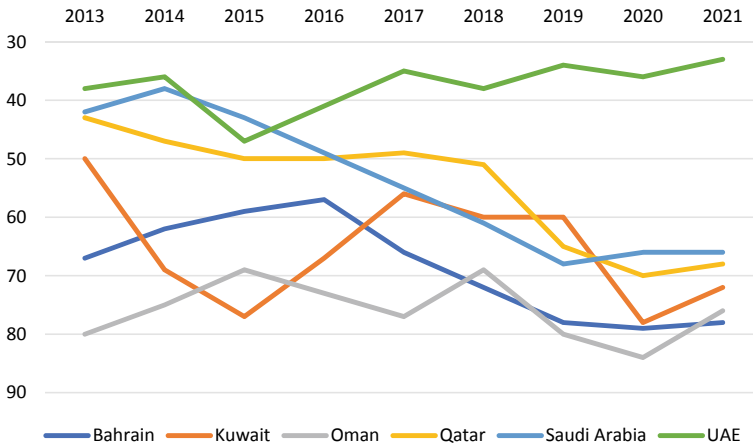


Fig. 24.2 Global innovation ranking of the GCC countries (Source <https://www.globalinnovationindex.org/analysis-indicator>)

Table 24.1 Global innovation ranking by indicators in the GCC countries (2021)

	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	UAE
Institutions	49	86	71	57	101	30
Human capital and research	83	69	45	75	32	22
Infrastructure	38	43	56	34	54	14
Market sophistication	78	94	84	83	39	26
Business sophistication	90	100	94	96	89	22
Knowledge and technology outputs	82	60	107	79	69	59
Creative outputs	106	89	71	63	78	40

Source <https://www.globalinnovationindex.org/analysis-indicator>

and research and development, UAE ranks 22nd out of 145, while Bahrain ranks 83rd. According to the infrastructure component, which evaluates factors such as ICT, general infrastructure, and ecological sustainability, the UAE performed best, while Oman performed poorly. On the basis of the market sophistication component, which takes factors such as credit, investment, trade competition, and market scale into account, UAE was the highest performing GCC country, while Kuwait had the lowest performance. According to the business sophistication component, which evaluates factors such as knowledge workers, innovation, and knowledge absorption, UAE is rated highest, while Kuwait is ranked lowest. For the knowledge and technology output component, which measures factors such as the creation of knowledge, impact, and diffusion of knowledge and is considered an output of innovation, the UAE had the best performance, whereas Bahrain had the lowest performance. Lastly, the UAE was the most successful country, while Bahrain had the lowest

performance rate based on the creative outputs component, which evaluates factors such as intangible assets, creative goods and services, and online creativity.

Table 24.1 shows that UAE was the most successful country depending on each indicator of the global innovation index. Particularly, it demonstrated outstanding performance by ranking 14th in terms of infrastructure, and the country is, therefore, seen to offer the infrastructure needed for innovation and technological advancement, thus promoting economic diversification. The fact that it ranks lower in the components related to outputs, however, illustrates that it is not yet contributing substantially to the economy. GCC countries have in general underperformed on components designated as innovation outputs. This demonstrates that these countries are still in the process of achieving their economic transformation. Results can be seen for a longer period of time due to the nature of this process.

To evaluate the innovation performance of the GCC countries, it is essential to examine the innovation inputs and outputs. In Fig. 24.3, the UAE is ranked 23rd in innovation output and 47th in innovation input among the GCC countries. By contrast, Bahrain has the lowest performance with a ranking of 63rd in innovation inputs and 99th in innovation outputs. This figure illustrates the difference between innovation input and output. From this perspective, while innovation input and output in Kuwait are at the same level, Bahrain has the largest difference. The UAE and Oman have a significant difference between innovation input and output, but Qatar and Saudi Arabia have a much smaller difference. The output performance of innovation is higher than the input performance of innovation among the countries with high global innovation indices, such as Sweden and the UK. Consequently, the innovation outputs of the GCC countries need to be at a higher level than their innovation inputs in order to reduce their dependence on oil and to ensure economic diversification. Accordingly, prioritizing foreign investments and developing the private sector are the most important steps.

For GCC countries, developing the private sector is the most important step toward reducing dependence on natural resources for a transition to a knowledge-based economy (Hvidt, 2013). To this end, foreign investments are needed in these sectors. In order to do so, GCC countries will need to develop indicators of ease of doing business. According to the World Bank's ease of doing business rankings in 2019, the UAE ranked 16th out of 190 countries, making it the most successful country in the region. The lowest performance in the region was in Kuwait, ranked 83rd (World Bank Doing Business, 2019). In addition, the "freedom index", which is generated by evaluating the "rule of law" in the country, the "government size", the "regulatory efficiency", and the "open markets", is important in order to gain foreign investors' trust. Figure 24.4 shows that the UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain perform above average, while Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Oman were close to the global average. The freedom indexes related to the business, investment, and financial sectors should be raised at a high level, especially for these countries that are looking to develop the private sector and attract foreign investment.

As a final remark, developments in innovation and technology contribute to economic growth in accordance with the endogenous growth theory. In recent technological developments, countries have tended to focus on technology-intensive

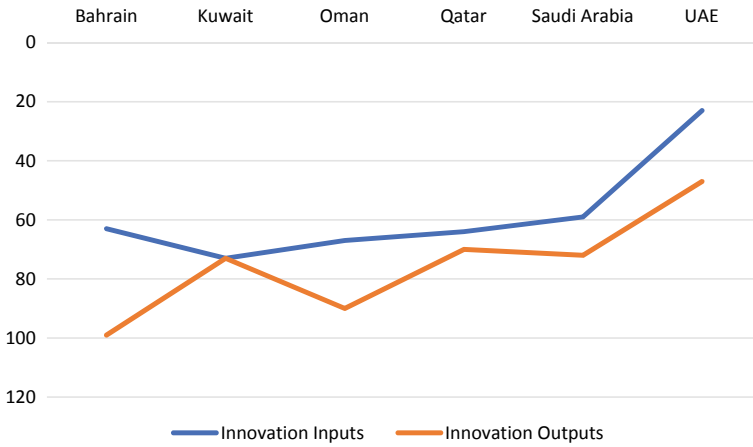


Fig. 24.3 Innovation inputs and outputs in the GCC countries (2021) (Source <https://www.globalinnovationindex.org/analysis-indicator>)

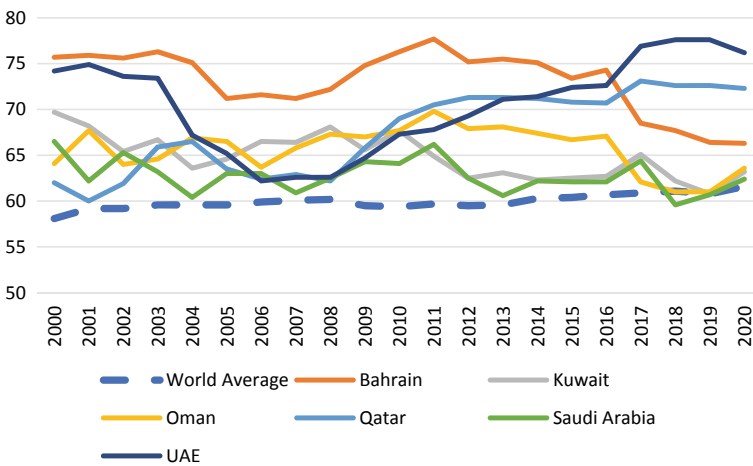


Fig. 24.4 Freedom Index in the GCC countries (Source Heritage Foundation)

production. Economic diversification is also an important strategy adopted by GCC countries to reduce dependency on natural resources. To achieve this, incentives should be given to develop the private sector, and foreign investors should be enticed to invest in production based on innovation and technology. In order to do this, the country needs to become a safe place to do business. By looking at the figures above, it can be concluded that the UAE has shown serious success in this area. Bahrain and Oman, however, should take more action in this regard to achieve economic diversification.

24.4 Conclusion

For the GCC countries, which are dependent on oil revenues, economic diversification policies, often included in their national visions, are critical for preparing their economies for the post-oil era. Therefore, the GCC adheres to policies that encourage the development of sectors such as finance, education, tourism, manufacturing, research and development, and technology. Moreover, GCC countries seek to transform their economies into knowledge-based economies, as technological development is regarded as a driving force for economic growth in modern economies. It has been concluded from this study that GCC countries are still dependent on hydrocarbon revenues despite their economic diversification policies and that endogenous economic growth is crucial to reducing economic dependency. To this end, it has been pointed out that each GCC state should support investments made in the private sector, which can contribute to the development of technology and innovation. Therefore, there is a need of innovation ecosystem that would provide the accumulation of human and physical capital.

Based on global innovation indices examined to assess the GCC countries' progress in this transformation process, it has been determined that there is a general difference between innovation inputs and outputs. It appears that innovation inputs have exceeded innovation outputs in GCC countries, but in order to present an innovation success, it needs to be the opposite. The UAE, however, is the most innovative country in the GCC, both in terms of non-oil revenues and innovation rankings. For the GCC countries to realize the economic change, it is very important for them to show that they are a safe haven for foreign investors in order to attract investments in technology and innovation. Despite UAE's relatively successful graph, all GCC countries, including the UAE, need to attract foreign investment to develop the private sector by providing a safe environment for business in order to achieve their long-term goals because of the fact that they still depend heavily on natural resources revenues and there is still no remarkable improvement in their economic transformation.

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Chapter 25

The New Arab Gulf: Evaluating the Success of Economic Diversification in the UAE



Saima Shadab

Abstract To date, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have remained oil-reliant, exposed to the vulnerabilities of the international oil price market. This study seeks to examine the role of economic diversification in the GCC, focusing on the UAE as a successful model. An empirical analysis is conducted to ascertain the short- and long-run relationship between diversification and economic growth in the UAE. Specifically, this study examines the role of export diversification in encouraging the UAE's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth. The findings reveal that economic diversification fosters economic growth in the UAE both in the short and long run. The UAE serves as a successful model of economic diversification for the rest of the GCC countries as they share a congruent economic structure.

Keywords Economic Diversification · United Arab Emirates · Economic Growth · Natural Resource Rents

25.1 Introduction

Ever since Sachs and Warner (1995) put forward their seminal work on the “Natural Resources Curse,” the effect of natural resources rents on economic growth has been a topic of contention among experts. A majority of studies from existing literature have both proven and critiqued the “rentier model” of natural resource-rich countries and confirmed an inverse relationship between economic growth and natural resource rents. Here, rentier model of countries mainly refers to those countries that are largely dependent upon external rents (Beblawi, 2015). In this context, the Arab Gulf countries are categorized as rentier economies as they are dependent upon oil export revenues. Specifically, for the GCC states, the share of oil revenues is over forty percent of the total government revenues. Such countries that are abundantly endowed with natural resources tend to grow more slowly than resource-poor countries (Sachs & Warner, 2001). Despite serving as a crucial source of government

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revenues, excessive reliance upon natural resource rents has negative implications and can significantly affect economic growth (Shadab, 2020). Corden (1984) coined the term “Dutch Disease,” arguing that countries engaged mainly in exporting natural resources experience a lack of development in other sectors such as manufacturing. In this connection, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are recognized as a core example of rentier economies due to their heavy dependency on natural resources (Shadab, 2021). The six GCC countries derive economic rents mainly from natural resources, particularly oil and gas (Mim & Ali, 2020). The volatility in the price of these commodities affect the GCC countries’ economic growth (Khalifa & Ibrahim, 2020). Many studies have emphasized ‘economic diversification’ as an essential policy to reducing dependency on natural resources. Apart from curbing dependence on oil and gas revenues, economic diversification also ensures sustainable and energy-efficient means of economic development (Hilmi et al., 2020). Such a transition is favorably aligned with the present-day global climate change and sustainable development targets.

In this light, this study attempts to examine the effects of economic diversification on growth in the GCC countries, with a specific focus on the UAE economy. Using various time-series techniques, including the Cointegration test, VECM model, and Causality tests, an empirical analysis is conducted to ascertain the short- and long-run relationship between diversification and economic growth. The study mainly seeks to determine whether the UAE economy can serve as a successful diversification model for the rest of the GCC countries to emulate.

The rest of the chapter is divided into sections. Section two discusses the GCC economies’ dependence on hydrocarbon revenues. Section three summarizes the GCC’s various economic development plans and diversification initiatives. Section four comprises the empirical analysis conducted to determine whether the UAE can be labeled a successful economic diversification case. The last section contains the conclusion wherein the study confirms that the UAE serves as a successful model of economic diversification for rest of the oil-exporting Gulf countries. The study is useful for policymakers and researchers as they can proceed further by examining different categories of exports or different non-oil sectors and their impact on the UAE’s economic growth. This can be beneficial in examining in detail that which sectors may specifically help the UAE diversify further and attain sustainable long-run economic growth.

25.2 Role of Natural Resources Rents in the GCC States

Despite implementing several widely publicized economic development plans and diversification targets, the GCC countries still continue to rely on the hydrocarbon sector (Miniaoui, (Ed.) (2020). The main reason behind the GCC’s inability to completely diversify is that most of these countries’ non-oil investment projects depend on oil revenues. Presently, the GCC countries are in the process of transforming their respective traditional economic structure under which oil and gas

capture the largest share of total GDP and government revenues. To be considered diversified economies, this share has to be replaced by non-oil economic sectors that are not directly or indirectly dependent on the hydrocarbon sector, which can contribute significantly to economic growth and government income (Kabbani & Ben, 2021). In this regard, the GCC countries have been able to reduce the share of natural resources rents in the total GDP over the past several years. Therefore, the extent of natural resources rents dependency varies for each of the GCC states. The performance of the GCC states in terms of the role of natural resources rents in total GDP has been analyzed in detail in the following part of this section.

As per the latest data provided by the World Bank, among the GCC countries, the share of total natural resources rents as a percentage of GDP was the highest for Kuwait (42.65%) in 2019. The second and third largest were secured by Oman and Saudi Arabia (26.67% and 24.08%), followed by Qatar (20.72%) and the UAE (16.75). Conversely, Bahrain has the smallest share of natural resource rents to total GDP with only 3.79% in 2019. Therefore, it can be inferred from the above-stated estimates that among the six GCC countries, Kuwait is the least diversified economy, whereas the most diversified are Bahrain and the UAE. Nonetheless, it should be noted that Bahrain is endowed with comparatively fewer natural resources than the UAE, which explains the former's smaller ratio of hydrocarbons revenues to total GDP. Despite being abundantly endowed with hydrocarbons, the UAE has, over the years, diversified its economy to an appreciable extent by building a vibrant and robust business, investment, and leisure destination.

The GCC countries' reliance on the hydrocarbon sectors is vividly portrayed by Figs. 25.1, 25.2, 25.3, 25.4, 25.5 and 25.6. As evident from the figures, the economic growth of the six Gulf countries is arguably dependent on natural resources rents (as a percentage of GDP). Impressionistically, the upward and downward fluctuations in the share of total natural resource rents are reflected, more or less, by similar fluctuations in the GDP growth rate in all GCC countries (see Figs. 25.1, 25.2, 25.3, 25.4, 25.5 and 25.6). This impressionistic correlation suggests that the non-oil sectors (such as tourism, industry, entertainment hub, sports hub, transport, and communication hub.) are not the main drivers of the economic growth in the GCC countries. Their contribution to the GCC countries' economic growth remains undermined by direct or indirect dependence on the oil sector (as reflected by international prices and income).

For these and many other reasons, the GCC countries have felt the urgent need to diversify their traditional production structures into more complex economic structures to reduce dependency on the hydrocarbon sector and secure sustainable economic growth in the long run. The diversification initiatives introduced in these countries are discussed in more detail in the next section.

Fig. 25.1 Natural resources rents received by Bahrain (Source World Development Indicators, 2021)

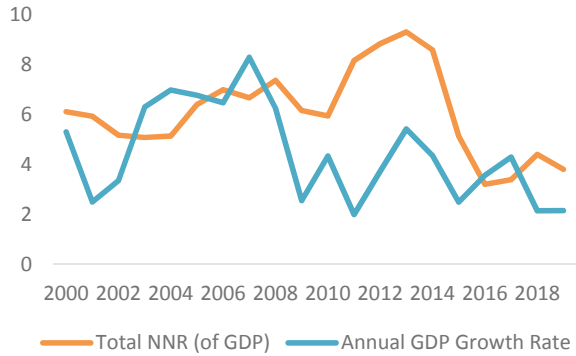


Fig. 25.2 Natural resources rents received by Kuwait (Source World Development Indicators, 2021)

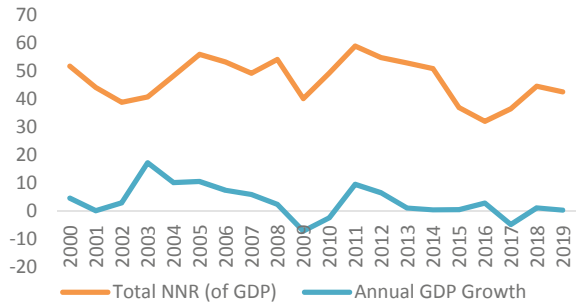
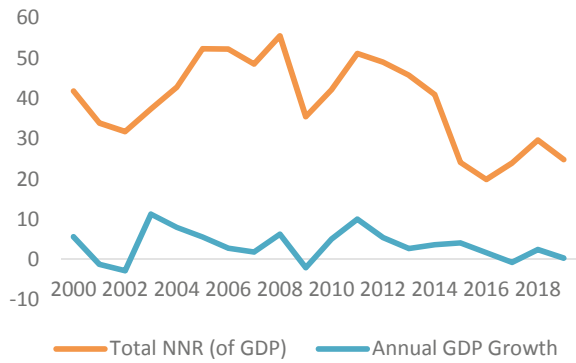


Fig. 25.3 Natural resources rents received by Saudi Arabia (Source World Development Indicators, 2021)



25.3 Diversification Initiatives in the GCC States

Table 25.1 summarizes the economic performance of the GCC countries through some important macroeconomic indicators. The GCC countries’ percentage share of natural resources rents in the total GDP has declined considerably between the period 2000 and 2018. Among the six countries, Kuwait had secured the largest share

Fig. 25.4 Natural resources rents received by Oman (Source World Development Indicators, 2021)

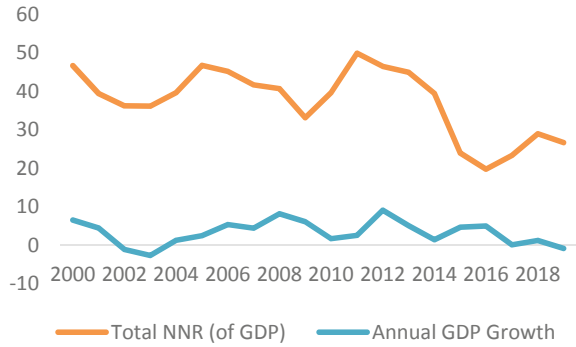


Fig. 25.5 Natural resources rents received by Qatar (Source World Development Indicators, 2021)

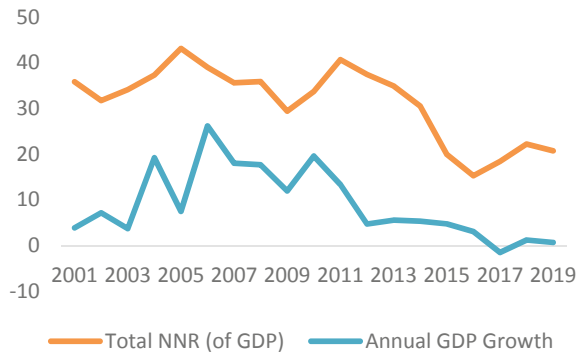
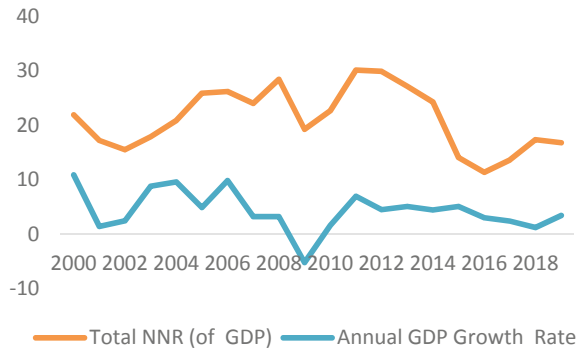


Fig. 25.6 Natural resources rents received by United Arab Emirates (Source World Development Indicators, 2021)



of natural resources rents (44.66%) in 2018, whereas, Bahrain secured the smallest share (4.39%) during the same year.

Kuwait also secured the largest share in terms of fuel exports as a percentage of total exports (93.05 and 91.02) during the year 2000 and 2018. This indicates that the country hasn't diversified its exports till date as compared to rest of the GCC countries. In terms of export performance, the UAE reports an appreciable decline

Table 25.1 Data for selected macroeconomic indicators of the GCC countries

Country	Total natural resources rents (% of GDP) in 2000	Total natural resources rents (% of GDP) in 2018	Share of Fuels (% of total exports) in 2000	Share of Fuels (% of total exports) in 2018	Total Population in 2000	Total Population in 2018
Bahrain	6.111296315	4.397892075	72.47	48.26	664,610	1,569,440
Kuwait	51.81570818	44.6634722	93.5	91.02	2,045,123	4,137,314
Oman	46.70241882	28.99231092	83.21	69.35	2,267,973	4,829,476
Saudi Arabia	41.81077884	29.66250967	91.79	78.63	20,663,840	33,702,757
Qatar	42.02880493	22.19538209	89.48	86.13	592,467	2,781,682
United Arab Emirates	21.90076447	17.32477033	76.25	31.34	3,134,067	9,630,966

Source Data for Natural Resources Rents (% of GDP) and Total Population was derived from World Development Indicators, 2021. Data for Share of Fuel Exports in Total Exports was derived from World Integrated Trade Solutions, 2021

in the share of fuel exports, as the share declined from 76.25% in 2000 to 31.34% in 2018. This indicates that the UAE has diversified its exports to a certain extent. With the exception of Kuwait, similar performance may be observed from Table 25.1 for the remaining GCC countries.

In terms of total population, there has been a significant upsurge in the population of all the GCC countries between the period 2000 and 2018. Saudi Arabia secures the top most position in terms of the total population as compared to rest of the GCC countries.

Since the discovery of petroleum oil, the GCC countries have channeled hydrocarbon revenues into various, arguably productive investments in non-oil sectors (e.g., industry, tourism, sports, education, etc.). These government-led investments were intended to bolster economic development. However, without strategies and frameworks to actively reduce reliance on the oil sector, the GCC economies continue to be vulnerable to fluctuations in oil prices. For instance, in periods of oil price downturns, investment projects in the non-oil sector (fueled by oil revenues) are immediately cut down to suppress economic shocks (El-Katiri, 2016; Gould & Atkinson, 2020; Kabbani & Ben, 2021). The growth and development of the non-oil sectors remain dependent on income generated by the oil sector. Another weakness of the GCC's economies lies in their industrial sectors, which remain highly concentrated around construction and petrochemical industries (Callen et al., 2014). Like the rest of the non-oil sector, most industrial production in the GCC is linked to the price stability and incomes derived from the hydrocarbons sector (El-Katiri, 2016; Samman & Jamil, 2021; Vohra, 2017).

Since oil is a highly volatile commodity, in terms of its fluctuating price and exhaustible nature, the GCC countries have been contemplating economic diversification since the 1980s. The ongoing shale revolution and shift in energy demand patterns make it even more urgent for the GCC to curb its reliance on the hydrocarbons sector. Over the past few decades, the GCC governments have introduced various economic diversification initiatives and development plans. The following section briefly summarizes these current efforts:

Bahrain: Bahrain is relatively the least resource-rich economy in the GCC. Yet, the Bahraini government is still largely dependent on the hydrocarbons revenues as a share of its total revenues. Presently, the economy faces serious issues such as low productivity, low wage rate, and low-skilled labor accompanied by weak job creation and growth driven by the public sector (Nakibullah, 2018). These challenges make economic diversification essential for Bahrain. In 2008, the government announced *Economic Vision 2030* as an economic diversification initiative that emphasizes the development of the private sector, creating jobs, attracting FDI, and building a 'knowledge-based' economy. In 2019, Bahrain also announced the implementation of VAT to obtain alternative sources of government income apart from oil.

Kuwait: Even among the six GCC states, Kuwait's economic structure is highly concentrated within the oil sector. The share of hydrocarbons in Kuwait's total GDP is the largest compared to the rest of the bloc. In 2010, Kuwait announced its own diversification agenda, *State Vision Kuwait 2035*, along with its first public five-year development plan. Kuwait remains heavily reliant on the hydrocarbons sector and lags far behind other GCC countries in economic diversification (Al-Sarihi, 2020). The population is largely composed of low-skilled expatriates who are engaged in the private sector (Gulf Bank Economic Research Unit, 2020). As per latest data provided by the World Population Review, non-Kuwaiti nationals account for almost 70% of the total population in Kuwait. Most Kuwaiti nationals are employed by the public sector, which has consequently become overutilized and burdened. The same above-cited Gulf Bank report also highlighted that Kuwaiti national reportedly lack the skills and trainings needed to contribute productively to the high-skill private sector jobs.

Oman: Like Saudi Arabia, Oman has long emphasized economic diversification. Oman was the second GCC country to focus on diversification as an essential development target when it announced *Oman 2020: Visions for Oman's Economy* in 1995. The main emphasis of this strategy was to expand the role of the private sector, ensure human resource development, and boost the skills and knowledge of Omani nationals. To a certain extent, an overall transformation was attained through Vision 2020 through a significant increase in the per capita GDP, jobs in the public and private sector, and contributions of non-oil sectors. However, the economy still remains exposed to vulnerabilities of the oil market. In 2015, the government implemented *Vision 2040* to address structural issues prevalent in the economy and problems related to human resource development. Climate change mitigation and encouraging the role of women were also other major focus areas, as outlined in *Vision 2040* (Oman Vision, 2040, 2019; Al-Sarihi, 2020).

Qatar: Unlike other countries in the bloc, Qatar is planning for a situation of plentiful hydrocarbons. The country holds abundant gas reserves and sufficient oil reserves to keep production going for 40 years (Hvidt, 2013). The Qatari government announced its first plan to diversify under *National Vision 2030* in 2008. Alongside this overarching strategy, the government released five-year development plans dealing with economic diversification goals. These plans collectively aim for ‘suitable economic diversification,’ which is understood as a diversified economy that gradually reduces its dependence on hydrocarbon industries, enhances the role of the private sector and maintains its competitiveness.

Saudi Arabia: The Saudi government was among the first GCC countries to announce economic diversification as one of its development targets. It did so in its first five-year development plan in 1970. However, it should be noted, after recovering from oil price crises the government seems to lose its diversification focus and revert to relying on oil revenues (Niblock, 2008). Nonetheless, in 2014, the shale oil and gas revolution that led to one of the most severe oil gluts reinstated Saudi Arabia’s urgency to diversify. Accordingly, the country’s tenth development plan issued in 2015 refocused government efforts on diversification. This was followed by the *National Transformation Plan: Vision 2030*, released in 2016, to devise strategies to diversify away from the oil sector. Given that oil revenues constitute the largest share of the government’s total revenues, the Saudi Arabian government introduced Value Added Tax (VAT) in 2018 to diversify government income sources.

United Arab Emirates: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is currently regarded as the most diversified economy in the GCC. Over the years, the UAE has managed to significantly reduce reliance on the hydrocarbons sector for GDP growth and government income. Oil sector’s share in the total GDP of the UAE has declined considerably over the past years. From 46.9% in 1980, the oil sector’s share in the total GDP of the UAE has declined to as low as 16.75% in 2019. The UAE has implemented various development and diversification initiatives such as the *Vision 2021* (announced in 2010). The UAE primarily focused on becoming one of the largest financial, business, and tourist hubs in the world and has also managed to emerge as the fastest growing investment destination in the Middle East region (Gulf News Report, 2021). The government has also actively imposed different indirect taxes to obtain non-oil revenues, such as VATs and excise taxes.

25.4 Can the UAE Serve as a Successful Model of Economic Diversification?

An important objective of this study is to empirically examine the short- and long-run relationship between economic growth and diversification in the UAE. Such an analysis will reveal whether the UAE can serve as a successful diversification model for the rest of the GCC countries. The time period under consideration for

this investigation is 1995–2017. Details related to the macroeconomic variables are summarized in Table 25.2.

Table 25.2 Descriptive summary of variables

Variable	Abbreviation Used	Definition	Source
Gross Domestic Product at Constant 2010 US \$ Prices	LGDP	LGDP has been set as the dependent variable in the model. It has been used as a proxy variable for measuring economic growth in the UAE	World Development Indicators
Herfindahl Hirschman Index (HHI)	LED	It is a proxy variable for measuring the degree of export diversification. The Herfindahl Hirschman Index (HHI) is one of the most widely used indicators to examine economic diversification within a country or region. It ranges from zero to one, wherein, values near to zero indicate complete or greater degree of diversification and values close to one indicate less or no diversification. It is often assumed that the HHI will have an inverse effect on economic growth. A decrease in HHI (i.e., a decrease in export concentration and greater diversification) should result in an increase in the economic growth of UAE, which in turn would imply a higher level of export diversification and vice versa	UNCTAD
Value added by the manufacturing sector as a percentage of GDP	LPD	LPD is a proxy variable used for measuring the production base of a country	World Development Indicators
Domestic credit to private sector as a percentage of GDP	LPS	LPS is regarded as a proxy variable for measuring the size of private sector of a country	World Development Indicators

Figure 25.7 graphical plots all the variables employed in the analysis. Figure 25.7a shows the trend of the UAE’s GDP over the period 1995–2017. It may be observed from the figure that the UAE’s GDP has shown an increasing trend over the period 1995–2017. Further, the trend of LPD as shown in Fig. 25.7b reveals that the share of the UAE’s manufacturing sector in total GDP has been subject to instabilities. The share of LPD was the highest (13.06% of total GDP) in 2001. However, this declined to 8.78% in 2017. Nevertheless, the contribution of the UAE’s manufacturing sector in the GDP has been satisfactory over the period 1995–2017. A similar pattern and trend may be observed for the role of LPS in the UAE’s total GDP from Fig. 25.7c. The Herfindahl Hirschman Index (HHI) is one of the most widely used indicators to examine economic diversification within a country or region. As seen in Fig. 25.7d, the export concentration index for UAE (HHI) depicts a continuous decline throughout the period 1995–2017. This means that over the years, UAE exports have diversified and are less concentrated within the oil sector. It is a normalized index that measures a country’s export products (excluding services). The index ranges from zero to one. Higher values or values closer to one imply a greater concentration of exports within a sector. In contrast, lower values or values close to zero imply a lesser concentration of exports within a sector and, therefore, a greater degree of economic (or export) diversification. With this, the study now proceeds to conduct the empirical analysis.

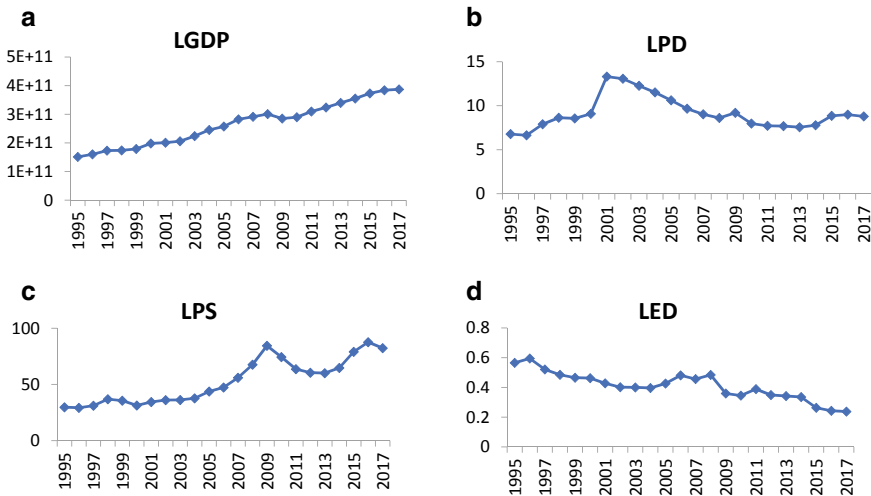


Fig. 25.7 Selected macroeconomic indicators in UAE, 1995–2017: **a** Log of GDP in UAE over the Period 1995–2017; **b** Log of Value added by the manufacturing sector as a percentage of GDP in UAE over the Period 1995–2017; **c** Log of domestic credit to private sector as a percentage of GDP in UAE over the Period 1995–2017; **d** Log of Herfindahl Hirschman Index in UAE over the Period 1995–2017. (Source Data from World Development Indicators, World Bank, 2018; and HH Index of UAE, 1995–2017 Source Extracted data from United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD, 2018])

Since this study includes a model consisting of time trend (t), a simple regression analysis will lead to misleading and unreliable results due to non-stationarity. Therefore, keeping the issue in consideration, this study employs the Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) unit root test. Results from the model's ADF unit root test at level and first difference form of the variables reveal that all the variables are non-stationary at their level form. However, the series is found stationary at first difference with highly significant p -values. This confirms that all the variables are integrated of order 1, allowing the series to be tested for cointegration. Since this study consists of small time-series data, the optimal lag length suggested by Schwarz Information Criterion (SIC) under the Vector Auto-regressive (VAR) lag order selection criteria test is three. For analysis purpose, this lag length has to be subtracted by one in order to obtain the optimal lag length. Therefore, with two as the optimal lag length, the study further estimates the VAR model as it ensures that the series is normally distributed, and free of heteroscedasticity and serial correlation.

With this, the study proceeds to test the long-run relationship between diversification and economic growth of the UAE using the Johansen Cointegration test. This Cointegration test allows ascertaining the co-movement between economic diversification and economic growth in the UAE. Economic Diversification and Export Diversification have been used interchangeably and are represented by the most widely used diversification indicator, Herfindahl Hirschman Index (HHI). Findings from the Johansen Cointegration test reveal that the null hypothesis of no cointegration among the variables is rejected at a five percent level of significance. The p -values of the hypothesized number of cointegrating equations at the five percent level of significance are less than the critical values. Therefore, the Cointegration test results confirm the existence of a long-run relationship between economic growth and export diversification in the UAE.

The long-run relationship among the variables was examined using the Johansen Cointegration test. Therefore, the study proceeds to examine the short-run relationship among the variables in the model using the Vector Error Correction Model (VECM). As evident from the results shown in Table 25.3, the Error Correction Term (ECM) obtained is highly significant at -0.14 . This term indicates that the model pulls back to its equilibrium state following an exogenous shock. The p -value of the ECM term is highly significant as it is 0.0011% and is much less than five percent. The significance of this term reveals and confirms the existence of long-run relationship among the variables incorporated in the model. It is also found that the ECM term is negative, which is an essential condition, required for the variables to converge at equilibrium in the long run.

The coefficients of the variables are also displayed in Table 25.3. The values of coefficients determine the short-run relationship between the dependent variable (LGDP) and the independent variables (LED, LPD, LPS). It may be observed that the coefficient of the export diversification variable, i.e., LNHHI is positive.

In the VECM test, the sign (positive or negative value) of the coefficients must be interpreted in the opposite way. For instance, coefficients of the independent variables with a positive sign denote that there is a negative relationship between the dependent and independent variable. From Table 25.3, it can be inferred that

Table 25.3 VECM test results dependent variable: LGDP Lags = 2

Variables	Coefficients	Standard Errors	T-statistics
ECT*	-0.142890 (0.0011)**	0.031705	-4.506900
Δ LED	3.279868	0.25239	12.9951
Δ LPD	0.783815	0.13117	5.97554
Δ LPS	1.298612	0.17296	7.50799
C	-30.07002		

R-squared: 0.79%. Adjusted R-squared: 0.61%. F-statistic: 4.304196. Prob(F-statistic): 0.016210. *ECT refers to Error Correction Term

** Indicates P-value of the ECT. Δ indicates first difference

the value of the independent variable LED is positive. This indicates that there is an inverse relationship between the dependent variable economic growth (LGDP), and the independent variable export concentration (HHI). This finding is consistent with similar studies (Al-Marhubi, 2000; De Ferranti et al., 2002; Osakwe & Kilolo, 2018; Hinlo & Arranguéz, 2017; Mudenda & Chigamba, 2014; Shadab, 2021) that found a negative relationship between HHI and GDP. A plausible explanation behind the feasibility of this inverse relationship result is that the export diversification measure used here is the HHI index. As stated earlier, the HHI reflects the degree of concentration of exports in a country. Therefore, a decline in the HH Index implies greater degree of economic diversification and vice versa. In Table 25.3, results obtained from the VECM reveal that a one percent decline in the export concentration (LED) would lead to a 3.27% increase in the GDP of UAE. The value of t-statistic for LED is 12.9%. The standard rule in this regard is that the value of t-statistic must be greater than 1.96% for obtaining a strong and significant relationship between the dependent and independent variable. Since the value of the t-statistic for LED is 12.9%, it can be stated that there is a highly significant and inverse relationship between LED and GDP in the UAE. This implies that export diversification has a significant impact upon the UAE's economic growth.

Further, a significant but negative relationship is found between the value added by the manufacturing sector (LPD) and economic growth (LGDP) in the UAE. A similar negative and significant relationship is also found between the LPS and LGDP. These findings are against the traditional theoretical studies that have put forward a positive relationship between a country's manufacturing sector, private sector, and economic growth. A positive relationship was expected between LPD and GDP as well as between LPS and GDP. However, the negative relationship between these two variables and economic growth indicates the effects of the Dutch disease on the UAE economy. The negative relationship between economic growth (LGDP) and manufacturing sector and domestic credit to private sector indicates concentration of the manufacturing industry with petrochemicals and construction industries that are subject to oil price volatilities and poor economic strategy. Therefore, although the economic diversification positively impacts economic growth of the UAE, the

Table 25.4 VECM granger causality test results

DEPENDENT VARIABLES				
Independent Variables	Δ LGDP P-value	Δ LPD P-value	Δ LPS P-value	Δ LED P-value
Δ L GDP	–	0.3464 (2.120505)	0.0001 (19.74528)	0.0437** (6.260148)
Δ L PD	0.0196** (7.865412)	–	0.8296 (0.882826)	0.2333 (2.910717)
Δ LPS	0.4790 (1.472144)	0.8197 (0.397739)	0.4736 (1.494795)	0.1562 (3.712958)
Δ LED	0.0008*** (14.27242)	0.8910 (0.230848)	0.7038 (0.702478)	–
All Variables	0.0001*** (28.54324)	0.5084 (5.280353)	0.7329 (8.645358)	0.0901* (10.94377)

Note *, ** and *** indicates significance at 10%, 5% and 1% levels of significance. Δ refers to change

country still needs to put forward policies to ensure the positive contribution of the industrial and private sector in its economic growth. Further, the negative relationship between LPS and LGDP indicates that the role of private sector needs stimulation in the appropriate target areas which the UAE government must identify in order to achieve the desired significant contribution of financial development (specifically to the private sector) to GDP, as stated in a study by Heshmati and Haouas, 2014.

In order to examine the short-run directional/causal relationships between the variables, the study proceeds further to conduct the VECM Granger Causality test (Table 25.4).

Table 25.4 summarizes results obtained from the VECM Granger Causality test. The results reveal that a short-run bidirectional causal relationship exists between economic growth and diversification in the UAE. This further implies that export diversification does impact economic growth and vice versa in the short-run. In other words, this indicates that the UAE has successfully attained economic diversification and lesser reliance on the oil sector for boosting the economic growth. Further, it is also found that a unidirectional relationship was found between economic growth (LGDP) and manufacturing sector (LPD). Lastly, a unidirectional relationship was found between domestic credit to private sector (LPS) and economic growth (LGDP).

The reliability and fitness of the short-run results are checked by running diagnostic tests of Normality, Heteroscedasticity, and Serial Correlation. The model is normally distributed, homoscedastic, and not serially correlated. Therefore, the results derived are fit and reliable.

25.5 Conclusion

Despite laying out different economic development and diversification initiatives, the GCC countries remain largely dependent on the hydrocarbons sector. Total natural resource rents continue to significantly contribute to the GCC states' total GDPs. This dependency on oil and gas to derive fiscal revenues and attain economic growth leaves the GCC states vulnerable to oil price shocks and severe economic downturns. Moreover, the ongoing shale revolution has made diversification an urgent need for the GCC economies. Owing to these challenges, the GCC countries have focused on expanding non-oil sectors such as tourism, finance, manufacturing, and education. Consequently, the countries have managed to attain overall improvement in the economic performance of different non-oil sectors. However, reliance on the oil sector continues to remain a pertinent issue that needs to be addressed.

Of the six GCC states, the UAE has presently emerged as an appreciable model of economic diversification. The study examines the impact of economic diversification on economic growth in the UAE to ascertain whether the UAE economy can serve as a unique diversification model for rest of the GCC. Results obtained from the Cointegration, VECM, and Granger Causality test confirm that export diversification plays a significant role in boosting the UAE's economic growth. The Granger Causality test results also indicate that private sector, particularly the manufacturing sector, causes economic growth of the UAE. However, the VECM test results revealed that the impact of both the sectors is still negative. Therefore, the UAE economy should continue to focus on expanding and developing the manufacturing sector as well the private sector to enable them positively to contribute to the UAE's economic growth in the future.

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Chapter 26

Economic Development Models of Doha and Dubai: A Comparative Analysis



Aldana Jassim Althani

Abstract This chapter explores the development models of Doha and Dubai by highlighting the economic, political, and social factors in Qatar and Dubai. This research examines the historical context of Dubai and Qatar and digs deeper to explore how each state adopted a certain development path, and then the role of leadership in promoting the development through states' strategic visions. This chapter reports that profound political, economic, and social factors lead to different development strategies for Dubai and Doha.

Keywords Economic Models · Doha and Dubai · Urban Development · Development Models

26.1 Introduction

More than any other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, Dubai and Doha have had vital political and economic connections, which led to, similar economic development in both states. Shared oil boom experiences and early political cooperation brought up several significant opportunities, which can lead Doha and Dubai into similar economic development. The economic and political linkages between Doha and Dubai have encouraged scholars, researchers, and even ordinary people, to compare both states, judging, measuring, and evaluating the economic development based on the similarities between the two societies. Judging from the views it offers, its impressive skyline and the massive infrastructure of the state, Dubai's government was able to develop and diversify its economy and became one of the largest economic hubs in the world. Doha was not able to match Dubai in its economic or urban development; the similar political and economic foundations did not support Doha to have a similarly accelerated development. Previous studies concerning the economic and urban developments that have happened in Dubai and Doha tend to focus on the economic factors in both countries and why these factors gave better

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results in Dubai than in Doha. Scholars and economists believe that these shared linkages could have enabled Dubai and Doha to adopt similar development strategies and perhaps achieve progress, especially in the economy. This has made their analysis limited to the economic aspects without taking into consideration other political and social dynamics.

This chapter intends to examine the roots of Dubai's massive urban and economic progress since 1970 till 2000s, and the factors which supported its development process. To avoid limitations of previous studies, this chapter will consider wider aspects of the development of the two states and the political, social, and economic elements will be tested and analyzed. Previous studies, comparative analysis researches, and counterargument works will be utilized in order to find out a more holistic approach that can provide a clearer explanation regarding the different economic development growth between Doha and Dubai.

Since development in Dubai started, the merchants' role should be illustrated as they are the first and main contributors to Dubai's early as well as current development. Dubai's development is strongly linked to the early role merchants played in the coast of Dubai. Al-Sayegh (1998) explains, "in fact Dubai owes much of its prosperity and development to its merchants who played a key role in restructuring the economy and in the government decision making process. As the main contributors to the economy, they played a fundamental role in implementing economic and political reforms, and were the driving force behind Dubai's development in the pre-oil era" (p. 87).

Before the oil boom, that is, till early 1950s, Dubai was not more than a traditional poor city that depended on fishing and pearling and suffered from the lack of resources and difficulties of life before the discovery of its oil. However, in the early 1960s, the situation changed due to a momentous turning point; a smart leader came into power and decided to change the city and to promote its overall development. Krane (2009) in his book, *The City of Gold*, discussed the early stages of Dubai's economic growth, which started more than fifty-five years ago. He states that Dubai was no more than a cluster of shanty shacks used by the itinerant pearl divers from the Persian Gulf. However, the first export of oil in 1969 transformed the fate of the city (Krane, 2009, p. 51). The oil boom has flourished Dubai's economy and improved the lives of its people; it actually transformed Dubai from a desert to a more developed city.

The process of development in Dubai has passed through several stages, starting in the early 1960s. Certain events related to the abandonment of the traditional economy took place; the end of traditional monarchy and the accession of a modernized ruler supported the development of Dubai. In other words, the death of Shaikh Saeed, who was in favor of the traditional economy, was a turning point for Dubai. Krane (2009) observes that "the death of Sheikh Saeed and the end of his forty-six-year rule marked the final stage of Dubai's long slumber in old Arabia. Very little changed on his watch, his death came like a catalyst, a dam burst that allowed fifty years of pent-up modernity to flood Dubai" (Krane, 2009, p. 67).

In discussing the developing of the new economic model of Dubai, Hvdit (2007) illustrates how the Dubai government adopted a unique economic model that was different from those in any other GCC state. He shows that the Dubai model did not

emerge in one day or in one stage; rather, it has passed through several stages to reach the current stage of development over time and is the outcome of a combination of a broad range of contextual features such as historical, external, location/size, cultural, institutional, and political factors (Hvdi, 2007, p. 7).

Fazal (2008) discusses the divarication of Dubai and shows how the economy of diversification has enhanced the development of Dubai. She mentions that “during 1971-1980 the urban area expanded enormously as the emirate now had more capital at its disposal, in large part due to the oil revenues. After the oil discovery in 1966 major infrastructure and urban development projects were planned. Investments were used in improving the current road system, building tunnels, bridges, container terminals, trade harbors as well as industrial and residential areas. Likewise financial, business, and administrative centers were established in different parts of the city” (Fazal, 2008, p. 5).

When it comes to Doha, however, its experience in economic development has been different from Dubai, where the main economic system depends on oil revenues and rentierism. Even though Doha decided to diversify its economy and made great efforts to draw its smart economic vision, diversifying away from oil and natural resources seemed to be very difficult due to certain social, political, and economic aspects. Supporting this argument, Callen et al. (2014) explain that GCC tried to impose and implement several policies to support economic diversification for many years. These policies aimed to provide a stable and strong business environment; investing in infrastructure, education, and skills; targeting the development of specific sectors. Yet the experiences of other oil-exporting countries show that it is very difficult to diversify economies that rely on oil (Callen et al., p. 18).

Rizzo (2014) also argues that “in recent years, Doha’s government has implemented several megaprojects that have provided for modern urban facilities and increased tourism. However, the implementation of such large-scale projects in the absence of a national planning framework has contributed to Doha’s urban primacy and therefore to more traffic congestion, localized environmental impacts, affordable housing shortages, and land value inflation. To confront these issues, since 2005, the Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning (MMUP) has worked on a new Qatar National Development Framework (QNDF): a strategic document to be followed by a more detailed national master plan” (Rizzo, 2014, p. 31).

Yet it does not mean that Doha did not achieve development or enhance its economic growth; rather, its development tended to adopt certain strategies that could serve the overall interests of the states. While Doha’s development was achieved through its large gas and oil revenues, a diversification plan was included in Doha’s agenda but due to certain factors, it decided to delay the diversification of its economy and achieve its development under the rentierism system. Several reasons mentioned in previous studies regarding Doha’s delayed diversification shed light on this issue. Fulfilling the domestic need and maintaining the state’s stability was major reasons that led Doha to adhere for a longer time to the rentier state economy. Ibrahim and Harrigan (2012) explain that “in the first phase of the development of its North Field gas resources, which got underway in the early 1990s, Qatar focused on meeting its domestic needs. But given the vastness of the resource, Qatar was fully aware that a

successful exploitation would require exports. Early plans to supply Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) neighbors through a pipeline grid did not materialize” (Ibrahim & Harrican, 2012).

Again, this chapter’s main goal is to illustrate how the political and economic factors worked differently in Dubai where it supported an accelerated process of economic and urban development. At the same time, it will investigate the reasons behind Doha’s delayed economic and urban growth and the main factors that have prevented Doha’s development from matching Dubai’s development.

As the literature review above showed, there is a clear gap in the literature with regard to Doha’s delayed economic development and its comparison with Dubai. The literature does not provide a complete picture about why Doha could not achieve a development comparable to Dubai. To address this issue, the following discussion attempts to answer the question why Doha failed to match Dubai’s economic development. To what extent different political and economic factors have led the two states to develop at different rates. This is done by examining the historical context of both Dubai and Doha, and how each state decided to implement its development strategies for economic growth, along with the certain political and economic aspects of Dubai and Doha. This includes the role of elite-driven development and the design of the state vision, economic growth factors and development strategies of both states and finally how the traditionalism of Doha and cosmopolitanism of Dubai, respectively, impacted their development strategies.

26.2 Development Paths: Theoretical Orientations

The comparison between Doha’s and Dubai’s development strategies covers several political and economic factors and includes multiple state actors. For this, the chapter applies certain related concepts and theory that have a close connection with the research theme. Since the research is concerned with a state’s development, this section will discuss the main assumptions that attempt to explain the major concepts of the research. They include a definition of development, the Rostow model of growth theory, the concept of absolute advantages given by Adam Smith and finally economic diversification. Then, it will explain how the perspectives of these concepts and theory were adopted by Dubai or Qatar which subsequently influenced the progress of their economic development.

Defining the type of development studied here is essential as there are many types of development and it should be clear which meaning of development this research is concerned with.

State economic development refers to the economic strategies adopted and followed by the state in order to enhance or improve its economic system. Lanahan (2014) clarifies that “economic development is about positioning the economy on a higher growth trajectory; it is less uniquely a role of market forces. In fact, economic development is an outcome of long-term investments in the generation of new ideas, knowledge transfer, and infrastructure, and it depends on functioning social and

economic institutions beside the cooperation between the public sector and private enterprise” (p. 1). Urban development is about the state’s initiatives to promote more investment activities in the constructive sectors. The urban development theory states that “urban politicians and governing regimes are subordinate to the overall economic principles that force cities to compete to capture new investment and capital” (Fainstein & Campbell, 1996).

The most applicable traditional model of growth was given by Walt Rostow in 1959. His growth model is one of the best models that can be applied on the process of development in Dubai as it consisted of several stages that show how the development took place at a certain point in time. Dubai has passed through certain stages of development that can be understood by Rostow’s stages of growth. Although the model expresses the growth stages in European states, it can illustrate how Dubai developed through certain chronological stages. Yet, applying it to Doha will be different as development in Doha did not really go through stages. However, there are two stages in the Rostow model that can be applied to Doha’s case due to the features these stages exhibit. Still, testing the development in Doha using another theory is important. The Rostow stages are: the traditional society, the precondition for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and, finally, the age of high mass consumption.

26.2.1 Traditional Society (Dubai Before 1971)

According to Rostow (1959), traditional society is defined “as one whose structure is developed within the limited production function based on pre-Newtonian science and technology and as pre-Newtonian attitudes towards the physical world” (Rostow, 1959, p. 4). As applying to Dubai, the first stage defines the early economic stage in Dubai. Mainly, the period before the oil boom, or the pre-Rashid era, during which the city suffered from the lack of tools and devices for development and at the same time it also witnessed many regional wars that encouraged Dubai city to maintain its social and economic security by focusing on fishing, pearl diving, and trade. Moreover, a traditional society signifies a simple society that is not exposed to modernization. Its main knowledge is based on local primitive technology and primitive attitudes. The main feature of this stage is that food production is the greatest and most important production by the workforce. Moreover, in this stage, people’s knowledge is limited to their sphere of activities. There is no great access to knowledge. This is why Rostow defined such a society as traditional society (Little, 2007, p. 14). There is a little manufacturing but it is not significant and does not help the city to experience serious development. This stage can be applied also to Qatar as the traditional features of the society of Qatar and Dubai were almost the same. However, the traditional stage of society in Dubai was shorter than that of Qatar as Dubai had decided to reform its economy and to develop earlier than Qatar.

26.2.2 Pre-Condition for Taking off (Early to Mid-1970s)

Rostow (1959) describes this stage as the gradual evolution of modern science and modern scientific attitude, and “the lateral innovation that comes with the discovery of new lands and rediscovery of old, converging with the impulse to create new technology at strategic points” (Rostow, 1959, p. 4). However, applying this stage to Dubai would be little different as the discovery of the new was the discovery of Dubai as an independent state in 1971. Moreover, it also reflects the discovery of the new Dubai, a modernized city under a modernized monarch, Sheikh Rashid Bin Saeed, who reevaluated the limited reserve of oil and reconsidered about remaining an oil economy system. This stage is a longer stage as it spans the largest transformation of the city’s elements. However, it also includes the discovery of oil and the beginning of the era of rentierism, which converted Dubai from a desert village into a developed state. While the discovery of oil had happened during the rule of Sheikh Saeed, the exporting of oil did not begin until Sheikh Rashid took over. This stage reflects the role of oil in enhancing Dubai’s economy and how the rentier state was the main economic system for Dubai. This stage also witnessed the emergence of important elements, that functioned as key toward development, and were thereby integrated in the state’s vision. The state’s vision for development started in this stage, however, it was designed in 1960s by Sheikh Rashid. The vision included reformation of certain economic policies, which facilitated the process of economic diversification aspects in Dubai such as manufacturing and ports’ development.

26.2.3 Take-Off (From Late 1970s Till 1980s)

The take-off stage is defined by Rostow as the application of modern industrial techniques, which is a self-sustained rather than an abortive process (Rostow, 1959, p. 7). The third stage covers the late 1970s and late 1980s during which Sheikh Rashid decided to transform Dubai and improve its development aspects through massive constructions and huge urban plans. This period witnessed the expansion of industrialization, manufacturing, and port investment. The stage of take-off also determines the increase in population and the introduction of new technology and new knowledge. However, the growth in different economic sectors was still limited as the city was still in the beginning of its transformation and growth in the oil sector still dominated this stage. This is the second stage that can be applied to Doha as the take-off stage for Doha came directly after the traditional society, where much construction and massive urban development took place that covered a large area of the state.

26.2.4 Drive to Maturity—The Period of Self-Sustained Growth (1990s–2000s)

The general definition of this stage given by Rostow is that it is “the period when a society has effectively applied the range of then modern technology to bulk of its resources” (Rostow, 1959, p. 8). The fourth stage reflects the massive development of Dubai that took place between 1990 and 2006 during the rule of Sheikh Maktoum and continued till the time of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid. This stage witnessed further expansion of the economic divarication in the city. It also includes the emergence of new economic sectors and commerce. Furthermore, employment of higher-skilled workforces increased because of migration and labor regulation reform. In addition, it includes the introduction of a knowledge-based economy through several technological projects initiated by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, such as Dubai Smart City.

26.2.5 Stage of Mass Consumption

This stage does not apply to Dubai and Rostow too applied it only to the United States. Establishment of social security in Dubai was before the drive to maturity stage; and therefore, the establishment of a welfare system is not an applicable measure for Dubai (Little, 2007, p. 26). The inclusion of this stage in this research is only to provide a complete and wider picture of the Rostow growth model.

Defining diversification is also substantial for this chapter as it shows Dubai’s current development model that depends on the mixed economy system and diversified production. In Dubai, moving away from the rentier economy has coincided with the introduction of diversification in which Dubai’s economy system was exposed to smart economy features. One of the diversification requirements is to adopt a more liberal economy aspect. This is why Dubai adopted liberal economic policies. Adam Smith explained liberal economy as reforms that advocate free market economics, and encouraging free trade with least government interference. Such reforms emphasize the role of markets in an economy and seek to reduce the interference of government regulations (Wyatt-Walter, 1996). Liberalism in the economy is classically defined as an attempt to limit the power of the state for the sake of individual freedom (Hayek, 2012). The major elements of a liberal economy are less state intervention and free markets. Dubai decided to support free market, support commerce, and enhance its tourism sector in order to diversify its economy. Still, its economy can be considered liberal comparing the other GCC states, since Dubai has not implemented full liberal economic features and thus certain studies have defined Dubai’s economy as Dubai model or Dubai liberal economy. The theory of liberal economy is discussed in this chapter as Dubai liberalized certain economic policies in order to achieve its development target.

26.3 Elite-Driven Development: The Vision of the State

Dubai's success story is the result of a great leadership with a great vision. At an early stage, the vision of Dubai's Sheikhs placed Dubai onto a more suitable development path and helped it become one of the most important economic centers in the region. The story of Dubai's vision started a long time ago, mainly in the 1970s. It was designed and controlled during the rule of three Sheikhs, Rashid bin Saeed, and his sons Maktoum bin Rashid and Mohammed bin Rashid, who believed in the importance of development. The state vision created by Sheikh Rashid is considered to be the key vision as it was the primary reference for the later state visions created by Sheikh Maktoum and Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid. Even though his vision is not directly stated anywhere, many books and studies on the history of Dubai and UAE have expressed the great vision of Sheikh Rashid Al-Maktoum through his actions and his achievements.

Flashes of Thoughts by Sheikh Muhammad bin Rashid is, however, a great resource in which he explains the lessons he learnt from the first man behind Dubai's current development. The early vision of Dubai was built on the concept of development and economic growth. It aimed to improve the economic and social life of the state and to introduce modernization. Through the smart vision by Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed, Dubai has managed to utilize its resources and its geographical features to enhance its economic and urban development. It devoted its efforts to move away from an oil-based economy, flourish its industries, and raise investments in different sectors.

Dubai's geographical location, its leaders' personalities, and oil revenues were the main factors that encouraged Sheikh Rashid to draw a significant vision for Dubai. Dubai's location helped it to be one of the main export centers as it is strategically located where major continents Africa, Asia, and Europe meet. A leader's personality can encourage him/her to initiate his/her vision. For example, Sheikh Rashid's big thinking, creativity, adventure, and optimistic nature made him overcome different challenges in order to develop and modernize Dubai. Early oil revenue was also a vital factor and Sheikh Rashid invested much of the oil revenues in order to reform Dubai's infrastructure to create more jobs and to create a conducive environment for a diversified economy. The main themes of his vision revolved around rejecting the traditional knowledge and starting a new way of life inspired by Dubai's oil economy, diversifying the income source, introducing modernization and reshaping Dubai's economic position on the global economic map. According to his vision, Sheikh Rashid designed his plan that included diversification of economy and liberal economic policies. These themes are discussed in detail in Krans' works on the development in Dubai, where he discusses the early stage of development made possible by Sheikh Rashid and mentions that the plan for building the future drawn by Sheikh Rashid in late 1960s included a reconsideration of the oil economy. Sheikh Rashid believed that his vision and his goal of developing Dubai cannot be achieved with oil revenues only (Krane, 2009, p. 61).

In addition, to achieve modernization, Sheikh Rashid welcomed and gradually facilitated the diversification of the economy and its revenues. Modernization encouraged the state to adopt more free economic laws and benefit from the geographical advantage of Dubai through establishing Jabel Ali port in 1979 and opening the doors to different sea trades. However, making Dubai a port city was not enough for Sheikh Rashid; he wanted Dubai to become more than a port; he wanted to see Dubai as a major shipping point for different industries (Krane, 2009, p. 77).

His vision of Dubai passed through several stages controlled by a chronological schedule that could ensure achieving the state's objectives. However, understanding the economic and urban development of Dubai requires a close analysis of the ideas of the vision, and what kind of factors and concepts that Sheikh Rashid considered before deciding to change and reform Dubai. His vision for Dubai was built on the desire of changing the economic system and reforming the economic and trade policies of the state. This explains the liberal economic policies that were adopted by Dubai's government at the early stage. However, it is important to clarify that Dubai's liberal economy was unique in a way that state intervention into the economic practices was high. Liberalizing certain economic policies and demolishing the traditional economic aspects paved the way for the economic diversification and economic growth. Sheikh Rashid's first port project was the first sign for economic diversification in Dubai city, his tendency to change the traditional economy and implement the diversified economy encouraged him to deal with international traders who came for a work in the Middle East; he decided to cooperate with them in order to achieve his vision (Krane, 2009, p. 43).

Even though oil revenues were a vital element in enhancing the lifestyle of the people of Dubai through providing employment opportunities and facilitating a better quality of life through electricity and clean water. Still, complete dependency on oil revenues was not what Sheikh Rashid had envisioned. In other words, the early consideration of a possible depletion of the natural resources made Sheikh Rashid think of changing the nature of the society in order to make it more productive. Since Dubai was trying to reduce its dependence on its natural resources and encourage establishing other industries. Dubai's name was linked to many great Western cities like Venice. Venice in the early thirteen century supported industries in different fields and did not fully depend on its natural resources. Furthermore, the government of Venice implemented many laws that supported free trade and different types of investment in order to enhance its economy and improve the city (Krane, 2009, p. 12).

Competition among different states and merchants, mentioned previously, are crucial elements that supported the vision of Dubai and its development. Competition was one of the important factors behind Dubai's current diversified and developed economy. Looking forward to imitate the development of other countries, whether in the same region or beyond, was a vital element that pushed Dubai's emirs to adopt a global vision that accelerated the development process of Dubai. Imitation was not the only influence; Dubai was also influenced by the need for competition, which made it a vital competitor. This was another feature that enhanced and supported visions of Dubai's leaders.

Even though Bahrain and Oman are considered to be the weakest economic systems among the GCC states, these two states were major economic actors where traders from India and Iran used to settle and invest in various goods such as spices, clothes, and gold. In his study about the commercial activities of Oman and Bahrain, Al-Naboodah (1992) explains how Oman's location enabled many commercial relations. He mentions that Omani commercial centers enjoyed trade relations with other trade centers in the Gulf, as traveling through Indian Ocean and Gulf waters the trading ships used to either break their journey in Suhār or restock food and water supplies before continuing. He further adds that Bahrain was also an important trade zone due to its geographical location near the Persian Gulf, which acted as a crossroad for many traders from the region (p. 82, 84). Bahrain was a vital actor in the region at the time Dubai's government decided to shift from traditionalism to economic diversification and development. However, Sheikh Rashid's brilliant thinking drove him to compete with Bahrain instead of investing his oil revenues in different trades through Bahrain. According to Krane (2009, p. 77), "Sheikh Rashid was not going to invest \$500 million of Dubai oil revenues in Bahrain, Dubai's main competitor. He was intent on diversifying his own economy. His answer 'Why do not we compete with them instead'".

Besides competition among the states, merchants' role and ties with monarchs too have played a great role in developing Dubai's economy. Their role can be divided across two periods of time. The first period was the pre-Rashid era when a group of merchants went against Sheikh Saeed bin Maktoum's traditional regime and decided to depose him in order to enhance the economy and the trade of Dubai. This opposition resulted in a positive outcome and Sheikh Saeed agreed to allow some groups of merchants to work on enhancing the trade in Dubai. In October 1938, 400 merchants from various families, including the ruler's, tried to impose a set of political and economic reforms on Sheikh Saeed. The merchants aimed to set up a consultative Majlis that allowed them to contribute to the development of the city. In addition, the merchants aimed to enhance the city environment through several infrastructure projects and buildings that can serve the trade in Dubai. Furthermore, the opposition meant to increase the economic activity for the merchants, especially after the decline of the pearling and fishing (Ramos, 2009, p. 10). Some of the ruling family members were also merchants, who contributed to the process of development and economic growth through their different trades and their ties with Sheikh Rashid. According to the Rostow stages, Dubai state's vision was in the precondition of the take-off stage as it was the key element for reform and development in Dubai.

In 1990, after Sheikh Rashid's death, Sheikh Maktoum took over as a ruler of Dubai and continued the development plan of his father. Sheikh Maktoum's personality was like his father's, and he accepted the modern life and desired to develop Dubai further. Again, his vision was not specifically written down but his brother Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid has included certain historical contexts for his own vision that illustrate Sheikh Maktoum's vision of Dubai and his great achievements till 2006. Tourism development through several gigantic tourism projects was one of Sheikh Maktoum's plans. He focused on enhancing several facilities that could attract more foreigners to Dubai and at the same time grab more valuable investors

who desired to start big projects in Dubai. From 2000 till 2004, the construction development in Dubai expanded to cover much of the area of Dubai, the economic growth accelerated and so did the investment level. More development projects were planned to support and encourage urban growth. Efforts were also made to attract tourists from all around the world. In 2004, the emirate covered an urban area of 605 km² and is planning to add another 501 km² by 2015 (Fazal, 2008, p. 6).

The developmental strategic plans continued and expanded when Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid came into power in 2006. As has been mentioned in Chapter 3, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rasheed Al-Maktoum's vision was one of the best visions that has gained a huge reputation globally as stated indirectly in several newspapers. Rahman, a journalist from *The Gulf Today Business*, states that Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid's visionary leadership has found a great resonance in the media. His smart vision transformed Dubai into one of the leading cities in the world, and he helped his city to adopt a unique development path that the rest of the world wants to replicate (Rahman, 2016).

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid's main focus was directed toward expanding Dubai's economy. He tried to expand the development strategies through initiating more infrastructure. A report in the *United Emirates Year Book* (2008) confirmed the establishment of a number of infrastructure projects and further expansion of free zones during 2006-2007. These projects are result of a detailed strategic planning to reach the economic growth target set by the government. It should be mentioned that Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid's role was not limited to his era; he was active since 1970s and contributed to the development plan and huge development projects in Dubai. In fact, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid's role in developing Dubai had started during the rule of his father. In his vision, he mentions that he was a lieutenant to his father and he used to direct and oversee some development projects such as the launching of Emirate airline in 1985. He also was a vital contributor to his father's plan in the establishment of Rashid Port in 1972. Moreover, even when Sheikh Maktoum was the ruler of Dubai, he gave Sheikh Mohammed the power to approve some of the development projects, such as merging Jabel Ali, a free trade zone, and Rashid Port to form the Dubai Ports Authority. These are clearly mentioned in Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid's book. He narrates, for instance, how he was able to control and give the approval for constructing The Palm Island (Al-Maktoum, 2006, p. 14).

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid's role in designing his vision of Dubai revolved around improving and developing the vision of his father. He aimed to expand the development that was started by his father to include all sectors of the state and to improve some of the projects that were taken up during his father's rule. Enhancing commerce, tourism, real estate investment, and technology were important elements in his strategic plan. He aimed to introduce knowledge-based economy through several professional projects such as Dubai Internet City, Dubai Smart Government Department, and Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Space Centre. Knowledge-based economies refer to the economies which are "directly based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge and information" (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1996). In his vision, Sheikh Mohammed mentions

his goal for the Dubai Smart City initiative, clarifying that enhancing technology can simplify everyday life and can make it easier, efficient, and more convenient (Al-Maktoum, 2006, p. 44). The vision of both father and son was a great resource for Dubai's development. They managed to implement their strategic plans in a certain timeframe.

This chapter tries to look at Doha's vision during the 1970s in comparison, so it can explain the difference between Doha and Dubai at that time and provide a clear analysis. Rostow stages of growth cannot be fully used in the context of Doha as it did not pass through all the stages; rather its development came in a single stage (after the traditional society stage) that included all reforms and changes. In addition, certain constructs such as competition among merchants and different states did not exist in Doha's case; and therefore, its analysis would be different from Dubai.

Doha's vision in the 1970s is not mentioned in any literature or previous studies. The concept of vision was not even defined, neither by Qatari government or society. In fact, Doha did not have development strategies before the Qatar National Vision 2030. Under Sheikh Khalifa, Doha has experienced some development that covers some of the sectors and administrative and ministerial organs of the state. Moreover, development aspects were also included for society, media, sports club, and universities. Comparing with its status before 1972, Doha had witnessed a modern revival that also included the economic sector in which Sheikh Khalifa boosted the rentier economic system through increasing the amount of oil production and exported the first shipment of natural gas in 1991 (Alzaidi, 2011, p. 53).

Yet, Doha could not manage to adopt a fast pace of development, especially in the economic and urban sectors. Sheikh Khalifa maintained the oil-based economy and wanted to develop Doha using the rentier system only through exporting its natural resources. He believed in the power of oil economy which did not encourage him to attempt to change and adopt a more advanced development system. In other words, the oil boom gave Doha a sense of power and encouraged its monarch to keep the oil-based economic system that depended on oil revenues as the main income source. From 1972 till 1994, economic development initiatives in Doha were limited to rentierism and increased export of its natural resources.

However, despite the policies of engaging in natural gas industry, other ideas related to the traditionalist state in terms of buildings and social values that control or prevent the modernization were mostly demolished when Sheikh Hamad came to power in 1995. Doha has experienced an extensive change and a great shift in most spheres. "Qatar too has experienced a remarkable socioeconomic and urban transformation since Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani came to power in 1995. The country enjoys unique prosperity and exceptional economic and urban progress secured by its substantial hydrocarbon resources, which provide a solid foundation for its economic profile. The export of gas and related products still accounts for half of the country's GDP, and provides Qatar with abundant wealth" (Scharfenort, 2012, p. 211). From Sheikh Khalifa to Sheikh Hamad, the shift expresses the difference between the father and the son in embracing modernity and the desire to develop and to change. Moreover, the concept of development and evaluation was not introduced

to Doha before Sheikh Hamad came to power. He also welcomed modernization that changed Doha's traditional infrastructure to a more developed one.

Sheikh Hamad was the first person who devised a long-term plan and strategic vision for Doha's economic and political development. He introduced neoliberal policies to prepare the state for different development stages. The neoliberalism aspects he introduced include the trade and other economic sectors as the aim was to support free trade and private sector of the state. In order to implement his vision, he processed certain changes related to the economic and trade policies and liberalized some of rules that could encourage diversification. He aimed to diversify Doha's economy and diversify its sources of income through enhancing industrial and investment sectors. He also succeeded in initializing the development of the economic, political, and social sectors.

Yet the political power gained by a rentier state and its benefits did not encourage Doha to take an earlier decision about reforming its economic structure or adopting a fully diversified economic system. There are certain reasons that can explain why Doha did not reform its economic system or decrease its dependency on oil and natural gas exports. These reasons can be gleaned from Doha's actions and initiatives related to international relations. First, the interests and desires of Doha's leadership were directed toward gaining political benefits and a powerful political position in international relations. Oil and gas can determine the status of a state in international relations, by which a country can gain power and play an effective role. Though Sheikh Hamad's era was a turning point in that he managed to transform Doha into a modern state, his desire and political focus made the state depend more on its natural resources as a source of power and at the same time a tool to attract economic investors.

Despite the fact that Doha's vision included a decrease in the dependence on oil and natural gas, it was not able to achieve this due to two major factors; the lack of economic diversity resulting from the restrictive economic rules and the political focus of its leadership. Political branding was a major motive behind Doha's high dependency on oil and natural gas to keep its political power in global international relations intact. Moreover, Doha was and still is not ready to adopt a fully diversified economic system due to its fear of losing its political power in the region.

Even though its leadership had decided to design a new state vision in which the economic pillars would depend less on natural resources, Doha's real development plan was dependent on the revenues from its natural resources. Natural resources, mainly natural gas, are considered to be the political driver for Doha by which it can sustain its political influence in international relations. Since the discovery of the north field, Doha has stormed the gates of the global markets of natural gas and becomes one of the main players in the energy markets. It was placed as the leader of the global energy trade in 2006, overtaking Indonesia (Dargin, 2007, p. 141).

Another reason for Doha's inability to achieve the same level of development as Dubai is that implementing the full pace of development in a later stage is not easy for a conservative society; the state-society relation can be harmed if the development process tends to cover many state aspects and impacts many cultural and religious concepts. People of Doha have lived for a long time with conservative beliefs and

aspects, and any change that would impact their social life can cause social chaos and dissatisfaction of people. Moreover, the rentier economy supported Doha's development and at the same time supported the state-society relationship in which the citizens are satisfied with the authority and its way of distributing the oil revenues among the people.

However, the Qatar National Vision 2030, released in 2007, was the first state vision that included several pillars built on comprehensive development, and it shows how Doha's vision and goals were modified and how the aspiration of the state government was changed. "Qatar has ambitious aims: to bring all outlying towns and settlements together, to offer a modern, prosperous urban culture featuring breathtaking stadium designs, accompanied by a new metro and railway network and a much-expanded international airport and port, as well as bridging the gulf between Bahrain and Qatar. These objectives are all part of the Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030), a comprehensive long-term plan agreed in 2007 that visualizes Qatar's development up to 2030" (Scharfenort, 2012, p. 210). This vision defines Doha's projects and goals until 2030. It clarifies the mission and the effort that Doha should make in order to achieve the desired development and economic growth.

The vision of the leadership was an important factor behind Dubai's accelerated development. This can be summarized as:

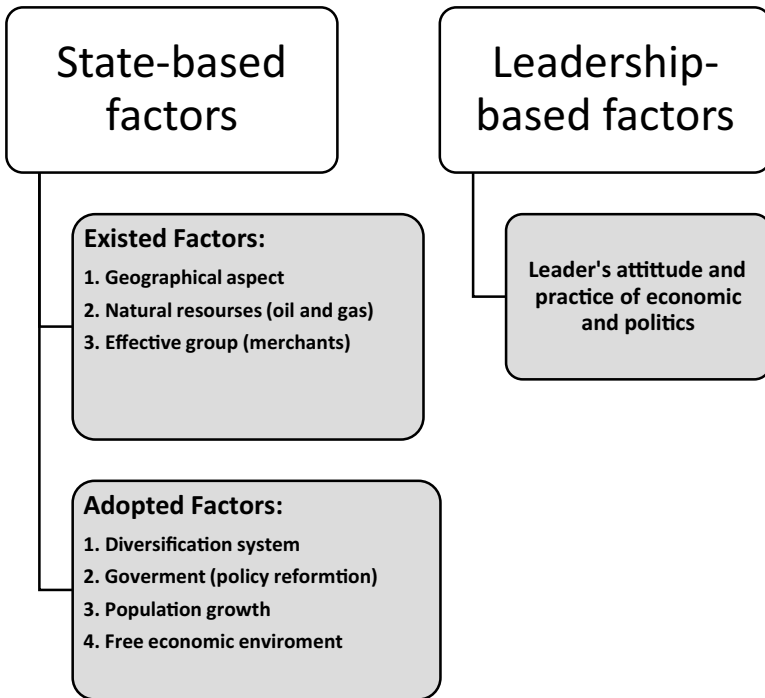
- The time of vision was crucial in the process of development, as it made Dubai achieve faster development than Doha. The elites' interests and the time at which the vision was created impacted the development of both countries. The elite background and their interests were vital elements for the leadership in designing a successful state vision for Dubai.
- The historical events and the role the state elements play determine a state's development approach. The small reserve of Dubai's oil encouraged its leaders to adopt a more advanced economic system, while Doha's rich gas and oil reserve encouraged Doha's leaders to continue with the rentier economy.
- Dubai's modernized monarch who ruled it enabled it at an early stage to experience and to be exposed to many renaissance aspects. Sheikh Rashid's desire of modernizing and developing Dubai made him design a successful state vision that included a plan for an overall development of the city. Moreover, his son Mohammed bin Rashid, who contributed to the process of development since his father's time, has also implemented advanced development strategies and continued the vision of his father through adopting thoughts on enhanced economic development.

26.4 Development Factors and Comparative Advantages: Dubai and Doha

According to *Business Dictionary*, economic factors are "the set of fundamental information that affects a business or an investment's value. Various economic factors need to be taken into account when determining the current and expected future

value of a business or investment portfolio” (*Business Dictionary*, 2016). However, development and economic factors are not fixed elements; rather they depend on many aspects of the research. Several studies on economics and development discuss the economic and development factors on a global level. This chapter, however, will explore some of the factors that are particular to the states of Dubai or Qatar. Hvdit (2007) argues that “The development of the emirate must be seen as an outcome of a broad range of economic, institutional, political, and cultural factors that function in interaction; that is, this development lends itself to multiclausal explanation” (p. 397). It will also clarify how these factors played different roles in Dubai and Qatar and how the absence of certain factors in Qatar and their presence in Dubai made it develop and diversify faster than Qatar. These factors also determined how each state decided to adopt development in a different period of time.

Since this chapter is concerned with the economic and urban development, it will explain the different factors that change the direction of the state and control its future. There are two types of factors that this chapter aims to clarify in order to provide a more accurate analysis, the first type of factors are leadership-based factors. These factors are related to the practice and authority of the leadership. The second type is related to the states’ resources and the important parties that contribute to the process of development. There are some shared development factors between Doha and Dubai.



26.5 Dubai's Development Strategies and Economic Factors

Leadership-based factors are the key factors that enabled Dubai to take the first step toward evolving and developing. The early planning and management of development is considered to be the first step toward a successful overall development, and this happened in Dubai. Many studies and research discuss the role of leadership in developing the state and how its leader's capability and skills can impact the state's evolution and overall growth. Leadership in Dubai, mainly in the 1970s, was a turning point for Dubai where a modernized monarch with worldly-wise beliefs took over Dubai and decided to consolidate the development in the economic, urban, and social sectors. This wave of modernization was highly accepted by Sheikh Rashid as he wished to transform Dubai from a desert rentier city into a global developed economic zone. In fact, modernization allowed the state to experience great freedom in order to achieve its different goals. Nyarko (2010) supports this by stating that "Dubai's economic strategy is simple, and is, indeed, being mimicked by others. Recognizing very early that oil would run out, Dubai focused on becoming the trade and tourist mecca of the region" (p. 9).

Another fact about leadership factor is the leader's role in designing a smart vision for the state that includes smart strategic plans and future projects. The economic focus Sheikh Rashid had was another vital factor that facilitated the process of economic diversification and economic growth. Leaders' focus and direction can control the level of development of their state

in certain sectors or areas depending on the leader's interests and directions. In a press release by the Dubai Chamber, Hamad Buamim, the President and CEO of Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said that "Dubai has come to be known internationally for its favorable business environment due to our visionary leaders who encourage future-focused planning and formulating innovative strategies that reflect positively on the competitiveness of Dubai's imports in the global markets. This leads to increased global demand for the emirate's imports and, subsequently, to a more developed trade network" (Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2016).

State-based factors include the natural resources, geographical location, and merchants. The oil boom and oil revenues were vital elements that enabled Dubai to reform and move toward being a modernized and developed city, even though rentier economy was the reason behind Sheikh Rashid's early desire to change and adopt development. However, Dubai's oil revenues still contribute about 30% of the state's GDP. Aarti Nagraj, an economic analyst from *Business Gulf*, mentions that during 1970s Dubai used to depend 80 to 90% on oil revenues; however, the current diversification environment supports Dubai economically and reduces its dependency on oil to only 30% (Nagraj, 2015). Non-oil export was one of the early targets that Sheikh Rashid intended to achieve, and through smart strategic plans designed by him and his son Sheikh Mohammed, the current Sheikh of Dubai, the oil revenue was exploited and invested in multiple areas of investments and development.

The geographical factor was an early element that gave Sheikh Rashid the inspiration to diversify Dubai's economy and introduce development plans. There are two important features about the geographical location of Dubai. The first is that it is located in a unique place that allows it to connect to many regional states, mainly the GCC states, and at the same time makes it close to East Africa and South Asia. The second geographical benefit for Dubai is the nature of the Trucial States, known today as UAE. Dubai is one of the most powerful emirates that is considered as the economy capital of UAE.

Another existing factor was the contribution of a certain group of people who exercised great power in trading and economy. Merchants are the most important human factors that participated in the evolution of Dubai since its early developing stage. "What is good for the merchants is good for Dubai" was a famous motto for Sheikh Rashid during the 1970's (Krane, 2009, p. 44). He believed in the capability and experience of the merchants to develop Dubai. The role of merchants and their significant ties with Dubai's leaders supported the early stage of Dubai's development as they played a significant role in connecting Dubai with other parts of the world such as Iran, North Africa, and India. Moreover, merchants represented a vital link between Dubai and other trading exchange states. This was due to their high skills in languages and their flexibility in relocating anywhere.

State-based factors (Adopted factors): The term *adopted* here means the external elements that Dubai took from the successful economic models of other states in order to achieve its development vision. It borrowed certain Western policies and rules related to economic growth and free markets. Government policies reformation was one of the important adopted factors that contributed to the economic transformation and development of Dubai. Sheikh Rashid's decision to reform and develop Dubai encouraged him to look for policies that could ensure the success of his desired reform. First, he started to review the economic legislations of the traditional economic system and removed any polices that could prevent any reform from taking place. Moreover, his high motivation to change Dubai persuaded the government to promote production and increase the employment opportunities in the government and private sectors.

Importantly, the journey of the development of Dubai did not end with Sheikh Rashid's death. It continued and flourished more when Sheikh Maktoum came into power. Sheikh Rashid's death in 1990 was a new phase for Dubai in which his son Sheikh Maktoum aimed to continue his father's vision and boost Dubai's development even more. Moreover, the policy reformation and the government incentive to promote change expanded to include more liberal aspects related to tourism and global commerce.

The year 2006 witnessed even more changes and reforms in Dubai as Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid came into power. He introduced more liberal economic policies to attract foreign investors to invest in Dubai and to initiate more real estate projects. His policy reformation includes the introduction of knowledge-based economy and supported technology adoption in Dubai. "The initiatives launched by Dubai under the leadership of HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum in recent years, for example, those with a strong focus on creativity, innovation and

smart services, are aimed to achieve sustainability and promote competitiveness” (WAM, 2015).

Reforming economic policies and imposing more secure and liberal economic rules have attracted huge global capital to develop Dubai. The liberation of economic policies has been a key factor behind cementing Dubai’s position as a liberal business destination. However, liberality in Dubai is unique as it does not adopt a complete diversification system; rather it preserved certain elements related to the culture of the gulf region. This fact can be explained through the nature of a gulf monarch and the way he wants to protect his authority even if he has initiated any reform.

Population growth is another effective factor that contributed to Dubai’s massive economic and urban development. In his development plan, Sheikh Rashid focused on making Dubai an attractive economic zone for all international groups who desired to invest or live in Dubai. To fulfill this desire, he attempted to create a suitable environment that could encourage different people from different places in the world to relocate in Dubai and contribute to the process of its overall evolution. Especially in the early stages of development, skills and knowledge-based economy was absent in Dubai and thus population influx from different countries helped Dubai access different populations with different skills who could manage great projects with a high quality of work. According to Shihab (2001), “The UAE population is essentially a small one. However, after the discovery of oil and its export in the last four decades, it has experienced very rapid growth, the result of a combination of high natural rates of increase among the UAE’s indigenous population, and a massive inward migration of expatriates who now comprise more than three quarters of the population” (p. 251).

All these developmental and economic factors were placed between the traditional society stage and the take-off stage. According to *Economic Times* (2016), “the benefit or advantage of an economy to be able to produce a commodity at a lesser opportunity cost than other entities is referred to as comparative advantage in international trade theory” (*Economy Times*, 2016). So, it is the ability to produce certain products or provide certain services at a lower cost.

The comparative advantages Dubai had could be divided into two stages; the early stage, which included oil revenues and geographical location and the second stage included the environment and economic freedom that became available in Dubai after the reformation of its economic system.

The early and permeant comparative advantage for Dubai is its geographical location, which has strengthened its trading environment. The geographical feature supported Dubai’s trading as it connected several trading states from South Africa and East Asia. The unique geography of Dubai has supported its trading activities since 1970s. It used to support the merchants by facilitating goods’ moving process from port to port. Currently, due to globalization and the increase of global demands, trading through Dubai has increased and the economic exchange activities between Dubai and other regional and global participants has increased.

Trading came to be known as one of the central elements for developing the state’s economy. A recent report by the Emirate Competitive Council (2012) discussed the importance of trading by stating that “trade has become a vital element for countries’ economic development, as countries are becoming less likely to produce all the goods

and services they need within their borders. Goods and services in today’s globalized economy move freely across the world, as both final and as intermediary products. When countries lower trade barriers, they create enormous potential benefits for business and households alike” (p. 2).

The second stage of the comparative advantage includes the services and commodities Dubai produces or owns after it diversified and reformed its economy. The free economic environment and massive infrastructure in Dubai are great comparative advantages that have contributed to its current massive development. Environment of economic freedom has attracted lots of global capital and a large number of investors to invest in Dubai. Its economic freedom and low trade barriers have made Dubai top the list of countries with economic freedom more than once. In other words, the liberal economic environment has facilitated many economic development aspects. It gives the individuals who desire to invest great opportunities by protecting their rights and making them free from following certain laws or traditional habits. According to Economic Index (2016), the United Arab Emirates is competitive in many areas of economic freedom, and this is due to its low trade barriers. Its political stability and economic environment have boosted its competitiveness in the global markets. The following index shows the extent of economic freedom in most of economic sectors of UAE including Dubai (Fig. 26.1).

Infrastructure and massive constructions are another comparative advantage for Dubai where the modern buildings and large areas full of towers, skyscrapers, and high rise buildings with unique architecture have also enhanced the global identity of Dubai. “Meanwhile, Dubai has invested heavily in infrastructure and logistics to overcome its comparatively poor natural resource base and become a global business, trade and tourism hub” (Saidi, 2011).



Fig. 26.1 Economic and trade freedom in Dubai (Economic Index, 2016)

26.6 Doha's Development Strategies and Economic Factors

The discussion of Doha's development factors will include different facts to address the early reasons that made Qatar adopt different development strategies than Dubai.

Leadership-based factors: Leadership factor in Doha is considered to be an effective development factor starting from the rule of Sheikh Hamad. However, during the 1970s and till early 1990s, Qatar had adopted the rentier economy that depended only on one source of revenue which was oil exporting. Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad preferred rentierism and did not welcome any change regarding the Qatar's economic system. He tried to improve many sectors such as media, education, and politics but his belief in the power of rentier state system did not waver. The discovery of North Field even strengthened Sheikh Khalifa's decision to continue with the rentier system. Huge amounts of natural gas were exported during his time. "In the early 1970s, Qatar flared about 80 percent of the 16.8 million cubic meters of natural gas produced daily in association with crude oil liftings. In that decade, the country made progress in using its natural gas resources despite several setbacks. Whereas nearly 66 percent of onshore gas was flared in 1974, by 1979 that proportion had fallen to less than 5 percent" (Helem, 1993).

Nevertheless, in 1995 Doha witnessed a new phase of transformation when Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa took the throne. Sheikh Hamad was the first modernized Qatari monarch who wanted to reform and develop Doha. He aimed to boost the economic sector of Doha and cement its position in the global economic map. He initiated many urban projects and started to reform the infrastructure of Doha by large constructions that could support the economic development of Doha. Yet his desire for economic development was not greater than his political interests. Even though he developed Doha and enhanced its economy, his goal of gaining a global political reputation and political power prevented him from reforming certain economic policies and from abandoning the rentier system or reducing the state's dependency on oil and gas export. Thus, the leadership factor was effective when Sheikh Hamad came into power but his interests and political aspirations were a factor behind Doha's different development strategies than Dubai.

State-based factors (existing factors): Oil and natural gas are the main existing state-based factors for an overall development. These natural resources are the sources for Doha's current development. The large amount of oil and natural gas was a strong point for Doha as it enabled the state to develop in many sectors and improve the lifestyle of its people by providing them more jobs opportunities. In fact, the oil reserve and later the natural gas reserve played a vital role in Doha's development today. They control Doha's economic model in which oil revenues cover approximately 80% of the state's GDP. "The export base of Qatar was heavily concentrated in crude petroleum until 2002, when exports of LNG became the country's most important foreign exchange source. The share of LNG exports in total merchandise exports rose from 12.2% in 1998 to 43.7% in 2002, while the share of crude petroleum declined from 61.2% to 35.9%" (World Trade Organization, 2003).

Other state-based factors like merchants and geographical location were absent or less effective in Doha than in Dubai. Merchants were a weak development factor for Doha, who though existed in Doha, played not as effective a role as that of the merchants in Dubai. Even though many merchant families have come and settled in Doha since 1957, their role in enhancing the economy of the state has not been very significant. In addition, the merchants seem to have no ties with Sheikh Khalifa as in Dubai nor he seems to have allowed them to contribute to any development or economic growth. Thus, the merchant factor was not effective in Doha’s development. While the geographical location of Doha is also considered strategic, it did not support trading activities like Dubai.

State-based factors (adopted factors): Reformation of government policies was a factor for Doha’s development, yet the freedom of economy and liberal economic environment was limited. Labor policies and legislations are still restrictive in Doha even during the development phase initiated by Sheikh Hamad. The high dependency on its natural resources and complete adoption of oil-based economy encouraged the state to maintain its restrictive economic policies. Protecting the society through traditionalism has made Doha delay the diversification of its economy and adopting a liberal development system. Since development aspects were introduced in a late stage of its history, the country wanted to avoid any adverse effect on the stability of the society (Fig. 26.2).

Other state-adopted factors were not effective for Doha’s development and did not support its development strategies. Due to its restrictive policies of economy, achieving diversification and increasing the population for more production was hard to achieve. Again, the conservative aspects that control the society and the desire to protect its identity made Doha more conscious in implementing any change that could shake the citizens’ satisfaction, impact its identity, harm the demography of the society, and affect the policymaking.

Energy supplies is one of the most important comparative advantages of Qatar. The key comparative advantage is its great preserve of natural gas which was found



Fig. 26.2 Qatar economic freedom (Economic Index, 2016)

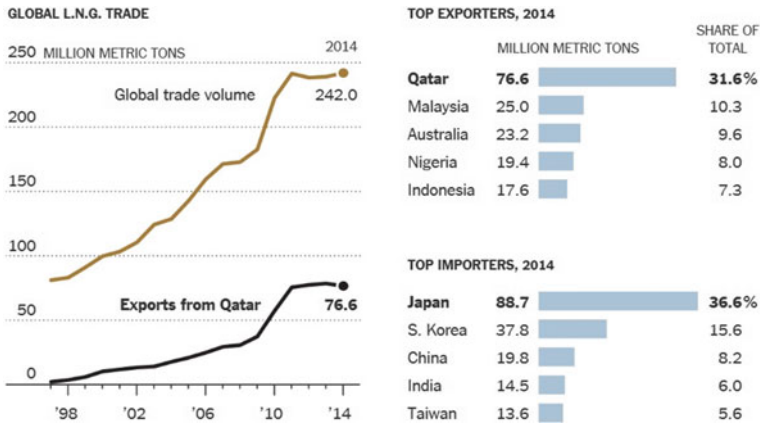


Fig. 26.3 Qatar LNG export size and directions (Energy and Capital, 2014)

in the North Field and made Qatar a strong competitor in the global market of energy. Even though he diversified the economy and state revenues, Sheikh Hamad’s political desire encouraged him to maintain the rentier economy for a longer time. The power of energy in shaping the political position of the state led Sheikh Hamad use the natural gas as a political tool in becoming a major political player. Qatar’s Triennium Work Report, published in 2010, mentions that extensive surplus gas ready for export made Qatar lucky and blessed as it did not only benefit Qatar’s commercial and economic interests, but also enhanced its political leadership motivations on the regional and global level (Yedros, 2012, p. 132).

The large amount of new-found natural gas led Qatar to be a major player in the global energy market and it exported it to big markets in Asia, Europe, and the United States. According to Ritz (2015), “Qatar is the world’s largest exporter with a global LNG market share of almost 35%. Its largest LNG destinations are both .mid-price. Europe (especially UK and Italy) and .high-price. Asia (especially Japan and South Korea), with a split of around 25% and 75%. The next largest LNG exporters are Nigeria, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Trinidad & [sic] Tobago which all have market shares in the range of 6% to 11%. In addition to Qatar, multimarket LNG exporter serving Europe and Asia, Include [sic] Nigeria, Trinidad & Tobago, and Peru” (Ritz, 2015, p. 8) (Fig. 26.3).

26.7 Conclusion

This chapter asked the question why Doha failed to match Dubai’s economic development, to what extent political and economic different factors led the two states to develop at different pace. The chapter relied on the theoretical framework of the Rostow Growth Model, which suggests that a state’s development and economic

growth takes place according to certain stages. The chapter then examined these stages and discussed how the model can be applied for Dubai's development. Moreover, the chapter also discussed aspects and elements that had to do with the different development strategies adopted by Dubai and Doha. The overall findings depending on the analysis are as follow:

1. The early realization of the small oil reserve of Dubai encouraged its rulers to seek development and enhance its economic growth from an early stage while Doha's huge oil and gas reserves encouraged its leaders to maintain the rentier economy.
2. Unlike Doha, which came to be ruled by a modernized monarch in 1995, Dubai's accelerated development can be attributed to its being ruled by modernized monarch since the 1970s.
3. The early existence and design of the state's vision supported Dubai's development to succeed whereas the concept of the state's vision in Doha was not defined before Sheikh Hamad's era (Qatar's National Vision 2030).
4. The differences in development strategies, economic growth factors, and the respective state's comparative advantages in the cases of Dubai and Doha were also vital elements in explaining the different development paths the two states took.
5. Finally, the environment and the nature of the society also played a significant role in controlling the development strategies and economic model of both states.

The chapter adds to the current knowledge concerning the different development strategies adopted by Dubai and Doha and why Dubai was able to develop at an early stage. It also tried to cover all dimensions of each state that impacted their development paths. The main finding of this chapter is that Doha and Dubai adopted different development strategies and their economic growth resulted from different economic, political, and social considerations. The shared political and economic foundations between the two states are not necessarily able to make Dubai and Doha achieve equal development; it is, rather, about how these political and economic factors worked and how they contributed to the development of the state.

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Chapter 27

The 2017 Gulf Crisis and Changes in Qatar's Economic Landscape



Sharique Umar and Salem Ghurab

Abstract This chapter analyzes the major transformations that Qatar's economy went through during the 2017 Gulf crisis. This chapter argues that the Gulf crisis has proved to be a "blessing in disguise." Qatar confronted unprecedented economic challenges immediately after the blockade, which forced it to take three broad policy initiatives: domestic production, trade diversification and crisis management strategy. This broad policy shift spawns immediate benefits for the country in managing the crisis effectively as well as in making the country resilient to international shocks, whether it is the COVID-19 pandemic or Ukraine war.

Keywords Gulf Crisis · GCC States · Qatar's Economy · Food Security · Qatar's Resilience

Since the discovery of oil, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have become the economic hub of West Asia. Oil revenues have transformed the socio-political, and economic structures of the Gulf region (Al-Sayegh, 1999; Crystal, 1990). The GCC states are now characterized by cutting-edge infrastructure and vast investments in social sectors. Their ascension to development has tied their economies together, making them interdependent and tightly knitted (Sturm et al., 2008).

Partly due to their similar socio-economic developmental trajectory and political arrangements (Davidson, 2019), the Arabian Peninsula has been seen historically as a homogenous region (Al-Hamad, 1997). However, the recent political and diplomatic rift that befell the region challenged the perceptions of its unity. On June 5, 2017, GCC member states Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain (alongside Egypt) imposed a land, sea, and air embargo on Qatar. In addition to severing all diplomatic ties with their smaller geographically besieged neighbor, the four embargoing countries, commonly referred to as the 'Quartet,' abruptly halted trade, financial, and commercial dealings,

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banned all forms of transport and deported Qatari residents while recalling their citizens from Qatar.

At first glance, the crisis appeared to be a culmination of Qatar's political tug-of-war with Saudi Arabia for regional dominance and with the UAE for a greater "market share" (Krieg, 2019). Some observers argued that the crisis was grounded in the personal rivalries among the ruling families arising from the clash of visions for the region's future (Davidson, 2019; Ramesh, 2017).² A few days following the rift, the Quartet put forward a list of thirteen demands Qatar had to fulfill to normalize its relationship with them (AlJazeera, 2017). These demands revealed that the driver of the 2017 political fiasco was Qatar's insistence on forging an independent foreign policy which its neighbors, primarily Saudi Arabia and UAE, perceived to go against their political interests.

Experts predicted that the embargo would have disastrous consequences for the economy of Qatar and the Gulf region at large.³ While the crisis adversely impacted other GCC states, it was Qatar's economy that was hit the hardest (Bouoiyour & Selmi, 2019). With the majority of imports coming from or through Saudi Arabia and the UAE (Collins, 2018), the cut-off in the supplies of essential daily products meant that the country faced an imminent political and logistical crisis. The disruption in the supply chain crippled the flow of goods and services, impacting almost all economic activities. The Qatar Stock Exchange index took a nose-dive, losing up to 10 percent of its market value in the first few days, while imports fell by nearly 40 percent (Kerr, 2017). The ensuing frenzy provoked anxiety and confusion among investors and business firms.

Despite the dire situation, Qatar's economy displayed resilience and growth after the initial crisis period, defying the embargoing countries' expectations (Kucsera, 2021; Ulrichsen, 2020). The government's pragmatic approach dampened the shock on the economy. The country launched several national initiatives, including those encouraging self-reliance, increased domestic industrialization, and easing restrictions on foreign investment. Acting ultimately as a "blessing in disguise," the crisis provided the necessary momentum for the government to push forward economic reforms and legislation (Gharatkar et al., 2021).⁴

This chapter takes a snapshot moment of Qatar's resilience during the 2017 Gulf Crisis and discusses how the embargo catalyzed changes in Qatar's economy. It traces Qatar's approach toward economic policies and its developmental trajectories in the wake of the 2017 Gulf crisis. Although the embargo impacted the political and social spheres as well, this chapter will primarily focus on the changes in the economic sphere. The chapter consists of four main sections. The first section examines the development in the food sector, Qatar's most vulnerable economic front. The second section deals with the aviation sector which was severely hit by the embargo. The third section focuses on evolving changes in Qatar's trade relations, and the fourth and final section, followed by the conclusion, provides a brief study of the country's efforts to boost domestic production and enhance its capacity to conduct trade through sea routes.

27.1 Food Security

By natural default, Qatar is a food-import-dependent economy. Marked by its desert and hot climatic conditions, Qatar's arid terrain is not conducive to agriculture. Its location in one of the world's most water-stressed regions offers a limited option for food production, forcing the country to rely on imports for almost 90 percent of its total food consumption (Ismail, 2015). Such trade-based reliance makes Qatar's food security vulnerable to any disruption in trade, be it political, natural, or economic, as seen during the 2017 embargo. The crisis sharpened food insecurity when the neighboring states cut off all trade to Qatar and prevented ships destined to the peninsula from docking at their ports. For this reason, securing food was one of the foremost priorities of the government.

Nonetheless, food security has been on the Qatari government's agenda long before the embargo. Similar to other food import-dependent economies, Qatar also felt the urgency to secure its food supplies during the 2008 food price crises. In 2011, the Syrian civil war further hampered the supply of fresh vegetables and fruits to the Gulf region (Fathallah, 2019). In addition to this, the country's geostrategic location also makes its trade supplies vulnerable to disruption. Around two-thirds of the country's imports are transported through the narrow Bab al-Mandab and the Strait of Hormuz, which have always been centers of political conflicts (Amery, 2019). Hence, Qatar has sought to shrug off its complete reliance on food imports in the past. In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, the country made its first attempt at enhancing food security through the Qatar National Food Security Program (QNFS). The program aimed to boost domestic production up to 40 percent by 2030. However, the project remained dormant until the 2017 crisis (Almohamadi, 2017).

The Gulf crisis forced the Qatari government to reconsider its food security policies. In 2018, the government launched a new action plan, Qatar National Food Security Strategy (2018–2023), which was focused on four pillars: diversifying international and trade logistics, boosting local production, securing strategic reserves, and protecting domestic markets (QNFS, 2020). As evident by the strategy, the government appears to accept that the country will always have a food trade deficit, but the major lesson learned from the embargo was to promote diversification of import sources by geographically diversifying trade partners and limiting exposure to external factors affecting trade, such as political rifts or natural disasters. In addition to trade diversification, the government recognized the importance of increasing self-sufficiency in perishable commodities and securing adequate but sensible reserves to act as buffers against temporary import or production disruptions. The strategy while acting as an insurance policy against long-term shocks, also encouraged streamlining the domestic market model (from farms to retail stores). It ensured transparency in the price-setting process and assisted farmers in improving their productivity and quality. An example of this is *Mahaseel*, a government-established company that helps market farmers' products, giving them time to focus on production rather than packaging, labeling, and retail marketing.

With investments in food projects, Qatar moved into an uncharted territory with no substantial experience of domestic food production. However, the reports suggest that the country's new initiatives were aimed in the right direction (Mazzoni, 2022; Peninsula, 2021). There was a rapid increase in agricultural activity across the country and local food production witnessed a significant boost (Peninsula, 2019). Founded just a month before the rift, the aptly labeled farm *Baladna* (i.e., our nation) became the main domestic supplier of dairy products (Sayegh, 2017). It was widely recognized as a symbol of national resilience and one of the first steps towards achieving self-dependency in the food sector. With little experience in large-scale dairy production, the country was able to meet its domestic demand for dairy products within a short period. Qatar's self-sufficiency in dairy products increased from 27% in 2016 to 68% in 2018.⁵ By 2020, domestic production exceeded domestic demand (self-sufficiency reached 106%), and *Baladna* considered exporting its dairy products to other countries as well (Pathak, 2020). Similar noteworthy achievements were made in poultry and fish production (Table 27.1). The successful trial of local food production boosted the nation's morale.

Before the rift, Qatar had invested in agricultural land overseas in Australia, Sudan, and Tanzania to secure an uninterrupted food supply in the future. It also invested in agricultural projects in Cambodia, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Vietnam (Ismail, 2015; Wellesley, 2019). In 2008, Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) established an agricultural investment arm, *Hassad Food*, to manage country's domestic and foreign investments in the food sector. In addition to intensifying foreign investments in the agricultural sectors following the rift, the government also increased its investment in the domestic market to support local producers and develop their marketing capabilities (Wellesley, 2019).

Table 27.1 Qatar's self-sufficiency, 2016, 2018, 2020

Key perishables	2016 (%)	2018 (%)	2020 (%)	2023 Plan (%)
Dairy	27	68	106	100
Eggs	13	19	28	70
Cereals	7	6	0	0
Poultry	6	17	124	100
Vegetables	12	15	28	70
Fodder	28	13	54	63
Red meat	12	12	18	30
Fish	28	30	74	95

Note Table 1 details Qatar's self-sufficiency rates in key perishables. By 2020, Qatar had not achieved its 2023 targets for all categories, but it exceeded the target for some categories such as dairy and poultry production. Since the strategy explicitly discourages exports, its recommendation for these two over-produced products is to go into dairy derivatives and to turn some poultry farms into eggs farms. *Sources* The above data were compiled from Qatar's Planning and Statistics Authority agricultural estimates and the Qatar 2018–2023 National Food Security Strategy.⁶

Qatar also received support from other states in the Middle East region. Prior to embargo, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were among Qatar's top ten import partners, supplying almost 30% of total food products. In 2016, Saudi Arabia exported 14% of total food imports of the country, while the UAE exported 13%.⁷ With the severing of trade relations with its primary trade partners, the besieged peninsula was forced to find alternative food sources and direct trade routes. Its neighbors, primarily, Iran, Turkey, Oman, Kuwait and India extended their supports. By sending hundreds of planes and ships carrying essential food supplies, these and other states played a crucial role in ensuring that the Qatari population did not face acute food shortages.

Iran, arguably, saw the 2017 Gulf crisis as an invaluable opportunity to fulfill the gap created by Saudi Arabia. Even though Qatar's relationship with Iran was one of the prime concerns of embargoing countries, Qatar and Iran boosted their economic ties during the blockade (Sudetic & Cafiero, 2021). According to a report published by Fars News Agency, Iran sent a significant stock of fruits and vegetables to ease the pressure on Qatar's food sector.⁸ The spokesman of Iran Air, Shahrokh Noushabadi, said that some 90 tons of food items such as fruit and vegetables were sent to Doha by five planes.⁹ He added that the country would continue to deliver food supplies as long as there was a demand for it. Moreover, three ships loaded with 350 tons of food were set to leave an Iranian port for Qatar.¹⁰

The blockading countries also resented Qatar's relations with Turkey. One of the thirteen demands issued by the Quartet was that Qatar should cut its military ties with Turkey (AlJazeera, 2017). Despite the demand, the relationship between these two countries grew stronger during the blockade. Immediately after the embargo, Turkey sent food stocks to Qatar to ensure the supplies were not disrupted (Simmons, 2017). Four months after the blockade, Qatar's imports from Turkey increased by 90 percent.¹¹ In an interview, Nihat Zeybekci, the then minister of economy, said that Turkey had sent more than 100 cargo planes with food supplies.¹²

Kuwait and Oman, the GCC's remaining member states, did not participate in the embargo imposed on Qatar. Both had since significantly improved their trade and economic ties and supported the besieged country at various fronts. Meanwhile, Qatar's Mediterranean ally Greece also offered to help amid the crisis. The country was planning to share its expertise on agricultural technologies to enhance Qatar's capacity for domestic food production (Alagos, 2018). In his interview with Gulf Times, the Chairman of the Greece-Qatar Business Council, Panagiotis G Mihalos stated: "in line with the Qatar government's efforts towards food security and achieving self-sufficiency, I hope we can play a role in all of this" (Alagos, 2018).

Due to its pragmatic economic and foreign policies, Qatar was able to secure its food supply in the subsequent period after the embargo. It also began exporting some food items to other countries, largely as a show of strength. In a 2019 interview with Al Arab newspaper, Dr. Mohammed bin Saif Al Kuwari, Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry of Municipality and Environment, asserted that Qatar had achieved an unprecedented level of independence from importing food items and that

the government is expecting growth in food exports of dairy products, vegetables, and poultry.¹³

The Qatari government's investments and increased spending on the food industry played a crucial role in supporting the country's food sector. Governmental support ranged from subsidized utilities for new farm owners to business development funds for new food processors.¹⁴ The Ministry of Municipality and Environment initiated several projects collaborating with various national companies to enhance agriculture, dairy, and fish production. As a result, Qatar's local production doubled in 2019 compared to 2014. Furthermore, the country aimed to cut its agricultural import up to 70 percent by 2023 (Karanisa, et al., 2021).

The challenges that Qatar encountered during the embargo resulted in the preparation of sudden crises such as COVID-19 pandemic as well as Russian-Ukrainian conflict. During a public webinar on May 20, 2020, prior to the Gulf reconciliation, the Qatari Minister of Municipality and Environment, Abdulla bin Abdulaziz Al Subaie, shared that Qatar's experience from the embargo helped it mitigate the food shortages that occurred due to the global pandemic. He stated: "On food security, we have learned the hard way due to the blockade. We developed many strategies to deal with a crisis... When the global COVID-19 crisis began, the State of Qatar was one of the countries least affected" (Shoeb, 2020). Shortly following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, concerns of energy and food supplies rose again all over the globe. With respect to Qatar, Dr. Masoud Al Marri, Director of The Food Security Department at Ministry of Municipality, stated that "wheat stock in Qatar could serve the country up to 6 months."¹⁵ Due to these preparations, Qatar ranked 24th in Global Food Security Index and first in the Middle East region in 2021.¹⁶

27.2 Aviation Sector

After the discovery of oil, the aviation sector in the Gulf region has grown manifolds. Its strategic location, abundance of natural resources, low operating cost, and high disposable income have facilitated the smooth development of the aviation industry (Petcu, 2021). So far, the GCC states have invested almost US\$313 billion in their aviation sectors (Capital, 2015). The region hosts some of the world's busiest airports and largest airlines such as Qatar Airways, Emirates and Etihad (Economist, 2020; Ulrichsen K. C., 2015). These three airlines account for almost 75 percent of total air traffic in the region (Petcu, 2021). Between 2007 and 2013, the Gulf aviation sector saw an increase of 27 percent in tourist arrivals, and reports suggest that the numbers will rise up to 92 percent by the end of 2024 (Tessler & El Beyrouty, 2015).

Qatar's national carrier, Qatar Airways, saw a rapid development between 2000–2008 (Hansman & Ishutkina, 2009), reporting an annual growth of 20 percent until 2016 (Law, 2017). By 2019, the airline had acquired 250 aircraft and was contemplating to further expand its fleet size (Qatar Airways Group, 2019). With an order of more than 100 new aircraft worth US\$18 billion in 2016, Qatar Airways sought to

challenge the hegemony of UAE's Etihad and Emirate Airlines (Law, 2017). Additionally, the airline employed more than 46,000 staff by 2019 (Qatar Airways Group, 2019). In tandem with the investment in its national carrier, the Qatari government heavily invested in the infrastructure of its new national airport, Hamad International Airport, valued at US\$16 billion—making it the highest value investment in a single project in the Gulf region (Petcu, 2021).

With a resident population of less than three million, Qatar relies heavily on incoming and transiting travelers for its aviation sector. Through massive investments in the expansion of its national airline and airport, the country has embarked on a project to facilitate the smooth flow of goods and people. Furthermore, the aviation sector plays a central role in projecting the country as a favorable tourist destination, and it is an indispensable asset in achieving the country's "Vision 2030".¹⁷ Any disruption to the sector is likely to hamper Qatar's national development.

Such was the case in 2017 when several GCC members imposed a ban on Qatar Airways from flying into or over their territories and airspaces. The ban sent a shock wave across Qatar Airways operations, making the aviation sector the most impacted industry during the embargo (Capital, 2015). Consequently, hundreds of Qatar Airways' flights that previously cruised through the airspace of neighboring Gulf countries, now had to either stop flying or change their previous routes (BBC, 2017). Flights to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, and Egypt were grounded. The airline used to operate around 20 flights daily to Dubai alone. The ban led to the dropping of 18 regional routes (France24, 2018). Moreover, Qatar Airways offices in the embargoing countries were banned from operating, with hundreds of employees left out of job overnight (Law, 2017).

The airspace restrictions put immense pressure on the airline as it had to find alternate flight routes. For the most part, Qatar Airways' flights had to take longer routes through the Iranian airspace, which led to significant delays in flight durations and increased fuel expenses. Another consequence of the airspace restrictions was that Qatar's air-bound imports decreased considerably in 2017, shrinking by 40 percent from 2016 to 2017 (Law, 2017). As a result, Qatar Airways' revenues saw a decrease of up to 19 percent, with a 20 percent downfall in the number of travelers flying with the airline (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 2019). Due to this, the airline significantly lost its revenues during the first year of the Gulf crisis. Dubbed as the "most challenging year in its 20-year history," in 2017, Qatar Airways announced a financial loss of almost \$69 m.¹⁸ In the following fiscal year, 2018–2019, the loss was estimated to be up to US\$500 million (Group, 2019).

Despite facing the tremendous challenges to keep its operation running, the airline expanded its services to new destinations. Significant among these were its services to several countries in the African continent, such as Morocco, Somalia, Botswana, and Angola. By expanding its operation to lesser-known destinations in Africa, Qatar Airways cemented its position in these niche locations and proved its capacity to bounce back. Moreover, defying the embargo's impact, Qatar Airways acquired a 49 percent stake in Meridiana, an Italian Airline company (Law, 2017). In 2019, the airlines bought a five percent share of China Southern Airlines and obtained a 25 percent stake in Vnukovo International Airport in Moscow as well (Qatar Airways

Group, 2019). Besides that, Qatar Airways Cargo placed an order for five Boeing 777 Freighters in 2018 to meet increased transport demand.¹⁹

To increase the airline's revenue, the government developed a strategy to attract foreign tourists by implementing a visa-free travel scheme eligible to more than 80 nationalities (Qatar Airways, 2017a, 2017b). Qatar also launched public relations campaigns aimed at nation branding to further enhance the country's image (Kamel, 2017). The use of social media was instrumental during the crisis to reshape the narrative and counter negative perceptions. Qatar Airways published a video message titled "No borders, only horizons" to denounce the unjustified embargo (Kamel, 2017). The video was viewed more than 54 million times on social media sites (Qatar Airways, 2017a, 2017b).

Furthermore, a Qatari artist designed a black and white sketch of Qatar's Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, which was painted on a Qatar Airways Cargo, Boeing 747-8 Freighter (Prabhakaran, 2017). The sketch became an iconic symbol that encapsulated Qatar's resistance against the abrupt embargo. Qatari citizens and residents alike used the sketch as stickers on their vehicles and on buildings' exteriors to showcase their solidarity with the nation.

27.3 Emerging Trade Partners

In the aftermath of 2017 crisis, Qatar needed to proactively engage in the Middle East region to ensure its economic and political interests were not jeopardized. The country strategically increased its engagements with Iran and Turkey. In addition to supplying food and other essential goods, Iran provided Qatar with a crucial air passage to connect its airline to the rest of the world (Kabbani, 2021), while Turkey was a source of both material and political support. After the embargo, Qatar boosted its military and economic ties with Turkey (Altunışık, 2021). In 2018, the trade volume between the two countries stood at US\$1.4 billion, an increase of 57 percent in comparison with 2017.²⁰ Furthermore, Qatari investments in Turkey increased considerably, surpassing US\$22 billion (MEMO, 2020). On the military front, the country acquired a 49.9 percent stake in Turkish tank maintenance company BMC (Altunışık, 2021).

The embargo also provided Qatar an opportunity to strengthen its relationship with Malaysia and Indonesia, the Muslim-majority countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Previously, Qatar and Malaysia had enjoyed a steady trade partnership. Hossain and Mohamad Shukri (2021) noted that, "the state of the Malaysia-Qatar bilateral relationship is good and has withstood the changing nature of the international and regional orders in the Middle East and Southeast Asia." In comparison with 2016, Qatar's trade volume with Malaysia increased by 18.6 percent in 2017, an amount equal to US\$672.4 million (Hossain & Mohamad Shukri, 2021). After the embargo, the Malaysian and Qatari governments signed four memorandums of understanding (MoU) (Cafiero, 2017). In the aftermath of the 2017 political crisis, Qatar also forged a favorable relationship with Indonesia. Ridwan Hassan, the Indonesian Ambassador

to Qatar, asserted that the trade engagement between the two countries grew during the crisis (Agonia, 2021). In 2017, Qatar Chamber Chairman, Sheikh Khalifa bin Jassim Al Thani, mentioned that Qatar was “very keen” on strengthening its cooperation with Indonesia in all fields (Qatar Chamber, 2017). Qatar’s Emir also traveled to Indonesia and signed memorandums in health, education, and aviation sectors (Agonia, 2021).

Moving beyond its traditional trade partners in the Arab world, Qatar boosted its trade relations with other Asian partners such as South Korea and Azerbaijan. In 2018, the trade volume between South Korea and Qatar stood at almost \$12.5 bn.²¹ Both countries vowed to increase their economic engagements through investments in private sectors. In January 2019, trade representatives from both the countries met and discussed ways to strengthen their bilateral relationship. During a meeting with his Qatari counterpart, the South Korean Trade Minister, Kim Hyun-Chong, praised Qatar’s pragmatic approaches during the crisis and reiterated his government’s support to Qatar (The Peninsula, 2019). Additionally, he suggested that Qatar use this crisis to expand its trade outreach.²²

Meanwhile, Azerbaijan’s sovereign wealth fund (the State Oil Fund of the Republic of Azerbaijan) significantly increased its engagement with Qatar. The fund’s executive director stated: “once we find investment opportunities in Qatar, we will invest” (Mohamed, 2019). Azerbaijan’s leaders signaled further support for Qatar when Aslan Aslanov, the Chairman of the Board of Azerbaijan State News Agency (AZERTAC) and President of the Organization of Asia–Pacific News Agencies (OANA), stated that “we have a good relationship with Qatar News Agency, and we have signed a memorandum of cooperation to exchange information between the agencies” (Mohamed, 2019).

Qatar also galvanized further international support in its favor. Major powers such as the United States, Russia, France, and the United Kingdom signaled their support for a peaceful de-escalation of the brewing political crisis.²³ The United Nations, similarly, requested the embargo nations to “de-escalate the tensions and engage in direct dialogue” and cautioned them from taking any “unilateral steps.”²⁴ Qatar’s global outreach helped the country build new relationships with other states and paved the way for increased investment and trade partnerships with major international companies while boosting global confidence in its economy. Contrary to its aim, the embargo bolstered Qatar’s ties with countries around the globe. It provided Qatar with further incentive to continue charting its independent foreign policy. Along with solidifying relationships with its traditional partners, Qatar’s foreign policy during the embargo successfully brought many other countries to its list of strategic partners.

27.4 National Seaports and Domestic Production

As Qatar’s economy dominantly relies on imports, the trade embargo initially affected the country’s overall economic performance. Qatar reported an import deficit of almost \$1.6 billion during the first year of embargo (Law, 2017). In 2017, the volume

of imports decreased by nearly 40 percent (Petcu, 2021). This decline in imports highlighted the economy's vulnerability to political events. As Egyptian columnist Mustafa Amin noted: "the current blockade, not imposed against a background of war, yet obtaining between countries of the same religion, culture, and language, is unambiguously intended to harm Qatar's economy, besides demonizing it regionally and globally" (Ali, 2021). In a bid to overcome the disruption to its economy's supply chains, the government galvanized the private sector to lead the effort towards finding alternatives (Kabbani, 2021). Qatari policymakers had no choice but to encourage costly yet necessary local production, diversify trade partners even if at a cost to the government, relax custom regulations, and reconfigure trade routes to meet the local population's demand for goods (Oxford Business Group, 2019).

One of the major developments during the crisis was the inauguration of Hamad Port a few months after the embargo. The port connects the Gulf nation directly to its traditional partners such as Pakistan, India, Oman, and Turkey.²⁵ Although the rift limited shipping options and made them less competitive for local importers in the short to medium term (Tan & Jaganathan, 2017), Qatari commercial ports benefited from the embargo. Qatar's maritime connectivity improved significantly between 2016 and 2018, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD) Liner Shipping Connectivity Index (LSCI)—a measure of a country's port connectivity and access to international markets (UNCTAD, 2019). In 2016, Qatar's index was at 9.15, among the lowest globally and the lowest in the GCC; the index rose to 33.7 in 2018, making Qatar one of the few countries whose index has made such a remarkable leap in mere two years (see Table 27.2 for comparison with other GCC port indices). During the rift, Qatari authorities increased domestic port capacities and established new direct and connecting trading routes, linking Doha to major trading hubs. As a result, by the end of 2018, Qatar began transporting 39% of its imports via air cargo and 61% via sea cargo (see Fig. 27.1). Qatari importers had learned to live without the use of neighboring ports.

To reduce its reliance on imports, the government also encouraged domestic production. In 2017, Qatar's Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) launched the initiative, "National Product," to support domestically produced goods.²⁸ Under the theme "Together to Support National Products," the initiative aimed to promote

Table 27.2 GCC liner shipping connectivity index

Country	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Bahrain	22.9	21.4	18.6	25.9	30.2	17.2	16.8
Kuwait	11.0	11.0	10.5	10.7	11.1	11.7	11.2
Oman	44.4	41.3	46.8	53.1	55.1	53.0	58.6
Qatar	8.8	9.5	9.5	21.4	33.7	34.2	37.2
Saudi Arabia	51.8	54.1	52.2	56.1	57.9	62.4	68.2
United Arab Emirates	64.0	66.7	69.5	71.1	72.3	71.6	75.5

Source United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2021²⁶

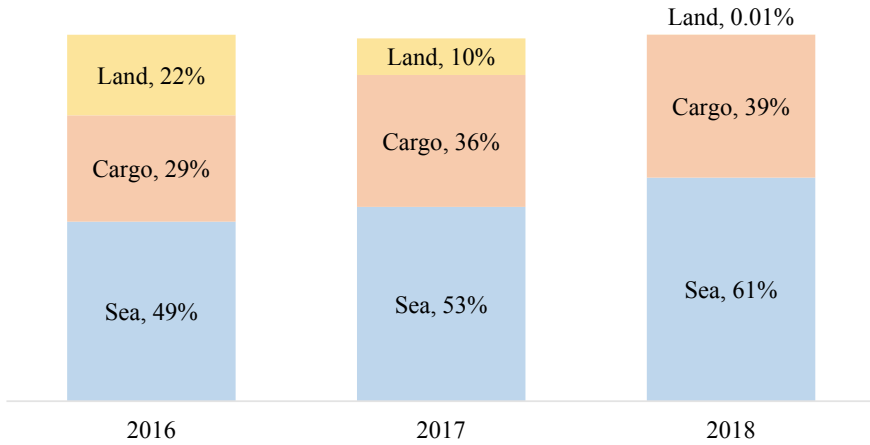


Fig. 27.1 Qatar’s Imports by Port of Entry, 2016–2018 (*Note* A peninsula nearly encircled by water, Qatar’s only land border is the one it shares with Saudi Arabia. Before the embargo and shutting of the land border, nearly a quarter of Qatar’s imports were transported through this land border. Similarly, Qatar’s market size was too small for direct shipments to be delivered to it directly. Like other smaller Gulf states, Qatar relied on UAE ports to redistribute nearly half of its imports. By 2018, Qatar shifted reliance on its domestic sea- and airports to transport goods in and out of the country. *Source* Data from the State of Qatar’s Planning and Statistics Authority [2018]²⁷)

local industries and businesses (Peninsula, 2017).²⁹ All malls and retail shops in Qatar were advised to place goods with the “National Product” logo on display (Marhaba, 2019). MoCI also passed a decree banning all the products originating from the embargoing countries (Reuters, 2018). According to Qatar’s Government Communications Office (GCO), the decree was intended to “protect the safety of consumers,”³⁰ given that products from the embargoing countries no longer passed through the necessary channels “to undergo proper import inspections and customs procedures.”³¹ The project boosted the confidence of local business enterprises which saw the embargo as an opportunity to expand their presence in their national market (Gulf Times, 2017). Previously, local products were in direct competition with often heavily subsidized imported products from the neighboring Gulf countries. Now, in the absence of fierce competition, Qatari new businesses had grown rapidly during the Gulf crisis.

Qatar’s economic initiatives during the embargo left a significant international mark. Various international economic organizations praised the country’s economic resilience. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported that the embargo had not significantly impacted the economy; rather, it had served as an opportunity for the small Gulf nation to realize its economic potential.³² IMF reported that the country was readily able to thwart the negative consequences of the economic embargo and turn the tide in its favor. A report published by Qatar’s Ministry of Finance suggested that the country had made a significant recovery after the embargo, reaching a surplus of 2.8 percent in 2018 compared to a deficit of 1.6 percent in 2017.³³ For its effort in

improving the economy, World Economic Forum (WEF) termed Qatar the second-best competitive economy in the Arab world (Myers, 2018).

In a show of support, Qatar's Emir praised the country's collective effort and resilience in a public speech given in November 2019.³⁴ The leader of the besieged but economically-resilient nation suggested that the country needed to push further to sustain the rapidly growing private sectors, promising to review the burdensome bureaucratic process that "hampers progression and development."³⁵

27.5 Summary

As expected, the calculated nature of the Gulf crisis carried significant economic consequences, but beating the odds, Qatar's economy displayed resilience and adaptability. The economic impacts of the crisis were alone expected to bring the peninsula to its knees, but the slew of reforms, mostly driven by government initiatives, helped the country turn the tide in its favor. While causing significant losses to certain sectors, the crisis, arguably, provided an impetus to much-needed reforms in the Qatari economy.

During the embargo, one of the most notable accomplishments was the significant development in Qatar's food sector. The halting of trade with some neighboring countries posed a threat to food security since Qatar relied on imports to fulfill 90 percent of its domestic food demands. To turn scarcity into abundance and decrease its dependence on food imports, the government enacted a new food security agenda, helping the economy achieve self-sufficiency in fish, poultry and dairy products. Consequently, the crisis shaped Qatar's food security policies for years to come. The embargo also transformed the country's aviation sector. Despite being heavily impacted by the 2017 Gulf crisis, Qatar airways managed to thwart the challenges posed by the embargo. It emerged as a key symbol of the country's defiance. Notwithstanding significant revenue loss, the airline expanded its commercial interests worldwide. Its decision to acquire stakes in major international airlines showed its willingness to open new windows of opportunities.

Experiencing the Gulf rift better prepared Qatar for the COVID-19 global pandemic. Its experience with diversifying trade routes, partners, and import sources, gave the peninsula leverage over its neighbors during the early months of global disruptions to food and trade supply. Qatar had a strategic food reserve to utilize during the pandemic's disruption to the global food trade, not to mention local production and a range of geographically diverse trade partners to lean on, developed primarily during the embargo. However, the question remains whether Qatar's diversification and self-reliance policies will withstand future challenges. To date, it appears that the government is serious about preserving the infant industries it nourished during the rift. Given these hard-learned economic lessons, it is unlikely that Qatar will return to pre-rift levels of dependence on its neighbors. To sum it up, it is not far-fetched to argue that the embargo proved to be a "blessing in disguise."

Notes

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Chapter 28

Green Supply Chains: A Comparative Efficiency Analysis in the Gulf and Beyond



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Abstract We compare the development of Sustainable (Green) Supply in three regions of the world, the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the Middle East, six countries in Europe, and six countries in Latin America, which were selected based on their Logistics Performance Index over a 10-year period. We based our empirical analysis on UN SDGs concerned with clean energy, innovation, sustainable communities, and climate action (SDGs 7, 9, 11, and 13, respectively). Using a modified RAM-DEA model, our results showed high logistics performance but significant divergence in green logistics performance among GCC countries. Countries in Western Europe led in terms of inputs that result in green outputs. Strong contenders in green supply chains include the UAE, Oman, México, Panamá, and Ecuador.

Keywords DEA · GCC · Sustainable Development Goals · Green Supply Chains · Logistics Performance Index

28.1 Introduction

Global competitive pressures are forcing countries to strengthen their position in the world market through regional integration. With trade and customs agreements, individual countries have been enabled to improve their competitive position within a single regional market towards other regions and countries globally. This was also the incentive for the Gulf countries to establish a Cooperation Council for the Arab States

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of the Gulf in 1981, also known as Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), comprising Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Gulf integration has enabled facilitation of the movement of production, removing trade barriers, and coordinating economic policies, extending the size of the market to 35.65 million people who live in this region (Fernandes & Rodrigues, 2009). Moreover, it has created the preconditions for establishment of supply chains and sophisticated logistics networks with the aim of joint GCC exposure connecting the GCC as a region and globally. Internally, the GCC is an area of economic cooperation comprising the four freedoms akin to the EU. Externally, the GCC has a growing network of free trade agreements with various parts of the world, most notably with EFTA countries, the US (Framework Agreement for Trade, Economic, Investment and Technical Cooperation), Singapore (GCC-Singapore FTA), and Australia, and bilateral cooperation agreements of individual countries such as UAE with Mexico (World Bank, 2021; World Trade Organisation, 2021). According to the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-Stat), total export of GCC countries was approximately USD 652 billion in 2018 with an increasing trend. The export of oil, natural gas, and chemical products are the most important exports; however, many other products form an important share of exports from GCC countries. For example, non-oil exports contribute 70% to the GDP of the UAE; however, these are mostly other commodities such as gold, jewellery, and electronics; a notable exception are the aerospace and defence sectors in which the UAE also excels and exports (OEC, 2021). No other country in the GCC has reached the same level of economic diversification as the UAE. On average, the oil and gas sector represents 70% of exports from the GCC (OEC, 2021).

Durugbo et al. (2020) found that supply chains in the GCC region confront three main challenges including “strategically selecting and integrating network resources”, “reliably contracting and delivering high-quality solutions”, and “cost effectively controlling and financing operational expansions” (Durugbo et al., 2020, p. 13).

One of the most rapid developing world regions by increasing worldwide circulation of commodities is the region of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries which have become a central node in global trade (Ziadah, 2018). The GCC region has a strategic geographic position between Asia and Europe and strong trade links with Africa. Durugbo et al. (2020) estimated that this region accounts for around 30% of the globally known oil reserves. According to Ziadah (2018), authorities in this region have recognised the possibility of economic diversification by making significant investments into logistics infrastructure: maritime ports, roads, rail, airports and logistics cities (El-Nakib, 2015; Stojanovic & Puska, 2021; Ziadah, 2018). According to Fernandes and Rodrigues (2009), GCC countries are positioning themselves to be logistic hubs by strengthening transport, and connectivity, and this can lead to attracting foreign investments. Durugbo et al. (2020) provided a useful insight into the existing literature of the supply chain management of the GCC region and found high levels of complexity and uncertainty within this regional business environment. One of the complexities found by these authors is related to strategically selecting and integrating network resources within the GCC region, focusing attention on

the views of multinational companies towards regional supply chains. According to them, multinational companies located in the GCC region are very focused on regional supply chains. According to Memedovic et al. (2008), oil-producing countries, with exception of the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, perform below their potential and their logistics systems usually focus on their main export commodities rather than focusing on diversification on trade logistics. These authors pointed to an example of Dubai Ports World that has become one of the most important global port operators, operating 42 port terminals in 27 countries. In addition, the UAE has focused on its attention on cementing its maritime logistics efficiency by capitalising on its unique geographic advantage as the only country in the GCC with access to two bodies of water—the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman (Indian Ocean) rendering the country independent of the conflict-prone Straits of Hormuz. As a result, a number of efficient ports exist on both coasts, all of which are connected through superb road infrastructure inside the country. Memedovic et al. (2008) also pointed out that countries with better logistics capabilities can attract more foreign direct investments, decrease transaction costs, diversify export structure, and have higher growth. Accordingly, the UAE has posted the highest economic growth rates and has the highest LPI within the GCC and is in 11th place globally among its GCC peers (World Bank, 2021). In terms of supply chain competitiveness, the UAE is comparable to industrialised countries such as Switzerland, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Finland which are countries within two ranks (above and below) the UAE. As a result of the logistical strength of the UAE, the GCC therefore has a high overall mean LPI. The UAE is followed by Qatar, Oman, and Saudi Arabia in logistical strength at ranks, 30, 43, and 55, respectively, placing them into similar categories as industrialised emerging economies such as Poland and Slovenia in Europe, and Mexico, Chile, and Panama in Latin America (World Bank, 2021).

28.2 Relationship Between Trade Competitiveness and Supply Chain Efficiency: Examples

Supply Chain (SC) has become a key competitive advantage for companies globally (Bhatnagar & Teo, 2009; Hasani & Zegordi, 2015; Hülsmann et al., 2008; Johnson & Pyke, 2000; Kwak et al., 2018).

Effective management of Supply Chains can lead to a competitive advantage by supporting market strategy (Li et al., 2004). Since 2005, the company Procter & Gamble (P&G) considers three moments of truth as a part of its market strategy. The first moment of truth is when the consumer finds the right product on the shelf. P&G describes this as the “moment a consumer chooses a product over the other competitors’ offerings” (P&G, 2005). The second one is when the consumer uses the product to capture the perceived value (P&G, 2005). The third is when a customer shares feedback with the company as well as other prospective consumers (P&G, 2005). Moreover, in 2011, Google introduced the concept of *Zero Moment*

of Truth (ZMOT). It happens when a customer searches websites and reviews about a product before purchasing it. In 2014, Eventricity Ltd. proposed the *Less Than Zero Moment of Truth* (<ZMOT), which is when a factor triggers a consumer to start looking for or searching a product. E-commerce provided a push factor towards optimisation of supply chains since profiting from all these moments of truth requires a fast, responsive, reliable, and resilient supply chains that is always ready to support any intended disruptive business model.

Many other studies have been conducted on the management of logistics operations that support the mentioned examples. One of these issues, as stated by Akkermans et al. (1999), is related to managing goods flows between facilities in a chain of operations, thus putting focus on the importance of coordinated planning approaches that can reduce costs. Several scholars have warned of the need to have an appropriate coordination in decision-making on the design of international facility networks. Coe et al. (2004) argued that with establishment of the global commodity chain approach, the importance of regions in economic activities arises. Önden et al. (2018) argued that the location of the logistics centres is a key element of the transport system and location decisions should be done strategically. Due to advantages for the economy, regional authorities want their region to be considered for logistical centres and this could lead to rising logistics costs, increasing travel distances by trucks, and lacking multi-modal transportation possibilities. This is particularly an issue for countries that follow a federal system of government (e.g. the UAE), where competing interests among regional rulers can lead to duplication of infrastructure and therefore non-optimisation of costs in the long term. However, negative effects are often cushioned when oil prices rise and are therefore not always given the sense of urgency it deserves. On the other hand, redundancies in infrastructure can also have positive effects, for example when back-up options are needed when a critical road undergoes maintenance. In some GCC countries, notably the UAE, examples of duplicate infrastructure can include too many roads connecting the same city pairs as well as transport hubs and companies in close proximity (e.g. Dubai and Abu Dhabi airports, Emirates Airline and Etihad Airways as global airlines) which are fully owned by the governments of their respective emirates (states), and ultimately the ruling families. Ownership is not shared, which means these are not federal assets and therefore sometimes may lack a coordinated approach when it comes to planning and shared resources, which could affect efficiency (Ziadah, 2018).

In his study of countries in the GCC, Ziadah (2018) also finds support for the argument of a large degree of duplication in port infrastructure in the region. Therefore, an analysis of GCC countries and their comparison to emerging and industrialising countries in Latin America for perspective is therefore justified and forms the focus of this study.

The chosen pair of regions which includes 6 countries in the GCC as a baseline (default), 6 countries selected based on high LPIs in Latin America, and 6 countries selected based on high LPI in Europe, is relevant because of the necessity to build long-term relationships and trade links between regions, which, according to Li et al. (2011), are critical factors in establishing successful logistics systems. Trade volume

between the three regions has been rising as a result of multilateral trade and economic partnership agreements among the countries concerned (World Bank, 2018).

We selected the logistics indicator as a proxy by using the Logistics Performance Index (LPI) developed by the World Bank for the time periods 2000–2019.

The chapter is organised as follows. We discuss the conceptual and theoretical background, the research methodology, and results of our research followed by a discussion.

28.3 Green Supply Chains

Supply chain management is an area of increasing strategic importance due to global competition, outsourcing of noncore activities to developing countries, short product life cycles, and shortened lead times in all aspects of the supply chain (Skjøtt-Larsen et al., 2007). Management attention has moved from competition between firms to competition between supply chains and value chains (Ferrantino & Koten, 2019; Mangan & Christopher, 2005; Raei et al., 2019). The capability to establish close and long-term relationships with suppliers and other strategic partners has become a crucial factor in creating competitive advantage. At the same time, various stakeholders, including consumers, shareholders, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), public authorities, trade unions, and international organisations, are showing an increasing interest in environmental and social issues related to international business. Concepts such as supply chain sustainability (Abbasi & Nilsson, 2016; Koplin et al., 2007), triple bottom line (Elkington, 1997), environmental management (Handfield et al., 2005), corporate greening (Preuss, 2005), green supply (Bowen et al., 2001; Sarkis, 2003; Vachon & Klassen, 2006), and corporate social responsibility (CSR) in supply chains (Maloni & Brown, 2006; Pedersen & Andersen, 2006) have increasingly been studied and resulted in new findings by Kwak et al. (2018), Stekelorum et al. (2020), and Chan et al. (2020) across various industries, company types (MNCs and SMEs), and countries. An increasing number of companies, especially large multinational corporations, have implemented environmental annual reports, sustainability strategies, and voluntary codes of conduct. However, despite many multinational corporations' efforts to implement social and environmental issues in their supply chains, a gap exists between the desirability of supply chain sustainability in theory and the implementation of sustainability in supply chains in practice (Bowen et al., 2001).

The green supply chain management model, which fully considers resource consumption and environmental impact of the supply chain has received wide attention in politics and business (e.g. Esen & El Barky, 2017; Meckling & Hughes, 2018; Zimon, 2017). The promotion of ecological aspects in many parts of consumer life and the continuous improvement of consumers' environmental awareness, not only are green products becoming favoured by the market but also sustainable supply chains (Kuiti et al., 2019). Therefore, implementing green supply chain management practices and selling green products have become important measures for supply

chain enterprises to occupy a favourable market position and obtain sustainable competitive advantages, so the topic is significant.

According to Christopher (2017, p. 304), “effective logistics and supply chain management can provide a major source of competitive advantage”. Having in mind the necessity of GCC countries to be included effectively into global supply chains while conforming to sustainability mandates set by the UN through its SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), we analysed logistical and green supply chain performance of GCC countries and a similar number of the most developed countries in Latin America.

The main research questions are:

1. How sustainable are Logistics Networks in the three regions in terms of not only their LPI but also their contribution towards green supply chains (GLPI), mainly in fulfilment of SDGs 7, 9, 11, and 13?
2. Which of these regions is likely to have an edge in terms of both Logistics Performance and Green Supply Chains combined in future?
3. Are more logistical green initiatives being propagated as part of CSR and corporate image compared to their actual impact?
4. What will be the implications of the findings for policymakers and businesses in the three regions?

28.4 Logistics Performance Index (LPI)

The Logistics Performance Index is a tool developed by the World Bank to identify the strengths and opportunities the countries have in their performance on trade logistics and what can be done to improve their performance. Logistics Performance Index attempts to provide a standardised method to compare supply chain efficiency among countries (World Bank, 2018).

The LPI is developed through a worldwide survey of operators on the ground (global freight forwarders and express carriers), providing feedback on how friendly is the logistics of the countries in which they operate and quantitative data on the performance of key components of the logistics chain in the subject country (World Bank, 2018).

According to the LPI 2018 edition, the UAE ranked first in the Arab world and 11th globally, followed by Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait in the 2018 LPI report, while Egypt ranked seventh in the Arab standings, followed by Lebanon, Jordan, and Djibouti, with 67, 79, 84, and 90, respectively. Tunisia, the Comoros, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, and Mauritania followed in the rank, while Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Iraq, and Libya were placed in last regionally (World Bank, 2018).

28.5 The Green Logistics Performance Index (GLPI)

Kim and Min (2011) introduced the GLPI by combining the LPI with the Environmental Performance Index (EPI) to develop a new performance measure that can assess the competitiveness of a country from the perspective of ecological sustainability and logistics productivity. Moreover, they declared the existence of interdependence between the LPI and the EPI. Similarly, Lu et al. (2019) adopted an approach of developing GLPI, but at company level. He measured the performance of a surveyed firm in various green logistics activities. The GLPI relies on the self-assessment of firms to report their performance in the surveyed green logistics activities.

Our method of DEA which closely follows Lu et al. (2019) focuses on the country level.

28.6 Green Supply Chains and LPI

Several authors have proposed Logistics Indexes related to Environmental impact. Some have correlated LPI and Environmental parameters such as CO₂ emissions and oil consumption (e.g. Mariano et al., 2016). Mariano et al. (2016) proposed a CO₂ emissions and logistics performance composite index “considering the importance of good logistics performance for low/no fossil-carbon economies especially because the transport sector is responsible for a substantial portion of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions”. They proposed a low carbon logistics performance index (LCLPI). This composite index and the ranking of countries in terms of logistics performance and CO₂ emissions can help to identify the best performing countries in low carbon logistics.

Lu et al. (2019) proposed an improved composite index measured by logistics performance index (LPI), CO₂ emissions, and oil consumption from the transport sector. The main finding of this research is that ELPI is strongly correlated with LPI, and countries with high performance in LPI generally perform well in ELPI.

28.7 Green Supply Chains and Sustainable Development Goals

Since SDGs are part of the global agenda, countries are expected to show progress in SDGs metrics (UN, 2021). It is important to confirm if that progress is really reflected in supply chain infrastructure and operation. Otherwise, SDG metrics improvement will be only a matter of public relations and image in face of the international community rather than pursuing a true positive impact on the environment.

During the last decade, some Arab countries such as the UAE have reported improvement in their SDG metrics associated with Sustainable Supply Chain factors (SDG Arab Report, 2019). Up to this point, we have not found formal evidence that this metric's improvement is related to progress on sustainable (green) supply chain implementation in all subject countries of our research.

28.8 CSR and Green Supply Chains

It is now an established fact that radical innovations should be introduced for low carbon emissions; but most of the time, organisations are more interested in making marginal changes rather than going for emission prevention innovations (Berrone et al., 2013). Furthermore, cost minimisation being a significant economic objective for these organisations, they focus more on their budget constraints instead of focusing on low carbon emission front by making minor changes to their existing working styles, regimes, and functions (Jones & Levy, 2007; Neuhoff, 2005). Nations being aware of profiteering of the business sectors, have introduced corporate social responsibility (CSR) Act to align environmental protections clause with expanding future economic activities in order to reduce GHG emission along the value chain. Kleemann and Murphy-Bokern (2014) have shown that agriculture and agro-based firms have improved efficiency as a result of benefits of training, awareness, and networking of producers with improvements in the implementation of CSR.

In the UK, the Companies Act 2006 makes CSR an integral part of good governance especially for large companies; in the US, the corporate social responsibility (CSR) team in the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs directs businesses in the promotion of responsible and ethical business practices. France, Denmark, South Africa, and China have a mandatory reporting on the amount spent on CSR activities. Alternately, it has also been observed that organisations are pushed to come out of their old established manufacturing mindsets by the competitive society and demanding customers to improve their environmental performance (Shultz & Holbrook, 1999). Besides these societal and customer pressures, there are also regulatory pressures (Qu et al., 2013; Okereke & Russel, 2010; Reid & Toffel, 2009). Consequently, management tends to channel the organisational sources and abilities towards complex climate change issues (Reid and Toffel, 2009; Howard-Grenville et al., 2014). However, the reality is sometimes far from theoretical assumptions; in fact, the important question here is: are organisations doing enough to face this problem?

In response to governmental policies and general awareness on environmental issues among all stakeholders, organisations have been incorporating environmental ecosystem for better carbon performance and sustainability (Seuring & Müller, 2008). Organisations need to move beyond economic objectives of minimising cost, saving water and energy (Pinto-Varela et al., 2011).

Multiple business operations like sourcing, manufacturing, and logistics have been found to be actively responsible for environmental problems (Beamon, 1999).

28.9 Research Design

Martí et al. (2017) highlighted that international trade has been affected by increased competitiveness of lagged regions that in the past did not play such an important role in the world. Thus, they believe that only those countries prepared to implement the advances that commercial globalisation requires can benefit from improved logistics performance. Measurement of performance must recognise the role of an organisation in a supply chain. Önden et al. (2018) pointed out that logistics performance is an accelerator of the competitiveness of a country and thus, they need to evaluate their position using various indicators including logistics performance index (LPI). Memedovic et al. (2008) indicated the usefulness of LPI as a composite index which shows that building the logistics capacity to connect firms, suppliers, and consumers is even more important today than costs. Thus, within logistics performance analysis for GCC countries, we will use LPI data. Biswas and Anand (2020) performed a comparative analysis of the G7 and BRICS countries on the basis of logistical competitiveness, and they expanded the criteria by using the adoption of information and communication technologies and CO₂ intensity in addition to the LPI criteria.

Studies can be found in the literature that deal with the problem of selection of logistics centres using multi-criteria decision analysis, such as studies by Li et al. (2011). Li et al. (2011) analysed among 15 regional logistics centre cities and thirteen criteria to identify logistics centre location.

Pham et al. (2017) developed a benchmarking framework for selection of logistics centres and found that freight demand, closeness to market, production area, customers, and transportation costs are most important factors for selection. Biswas and Anand (2020) applied Proximity Indexed Values to perform a comparative analysis of the G7 and BRICS countries, while Wang et al. (2010) put their focus in selection of locations that maximise profits and minimise costs. Focusing on several criteria, such as proximities to highway, railway, airports, and seaports; volume of international trade; total population; and handling capabilities of the ports, Önden et al. (2018) combined spatial statistics and analysis approaches to evaluate suitable levels of performance for logistics centres.

We followed the method used by Martí et al. (2017) and Wang et al. (2018), who used improved composite indexes to compare the impact of green logistics on international trade in developed and developing countries using DEA.

28.10 Results

Using Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA), which is a data-driven and nonparametric mathematical programming approach, we obtained results for 18 countries in three regions using 6 parameters, divided into three parameters of slack inputs and 3 parameters of slack outputs. According to Cooper et al. (1999), the countries to be compared need to be three times the sum of slack inputs and outputs (18 countries)

in order for the model to function. The slack inputs consist of three variables under SDGs 7 and 9, namely Clean Fuel (SDG 7), Articles (SDG 9), and Research and Development Expenditure (SDG 9). The slack outputs consist of three variables under SDGs 7, 9, and 13. These are Logistics Performance Index (LPI—SDG 9), CO₂ emissions from fuel combustion/electricity output (CO₂TWH—SDG 7), and energy-related CO₂ emissions per capita (CO₂PC—SDG 13), respectively.

The DEA method utilises multiple inputs and multiple outputs for evaluating the relative efficiency of homogeneous and comparable Decision-Making Units (DMUs). In contrast to radial models, the Slacks-Based Measures (SBM) identify all inefficiencies of the concerned DMU by taking input excesses and output shortfalls into the evaluation. The SBM model identifies all inefficiencies of the concerned DMU by taking input excesses and output shortfalls into the evaluation. All DMUs can be partitioned into two mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive sets efficient and inefficient by the SBM model, nevertheless, the model fails to discriminate between efficient DMUs (Table 28.1).

According to the table above, the results show that those countries showing 0 in the tables run at optimal efficiency in terms of inputs versus output ratios. However, it should be noted that all results are relative, both across countries, and across inputs versus outputs, which does not automatically mean that “efficient” is “good”. Efficiency can also be a result of low inputs and low outputs, which is not necessarily good. The interpretation for efficient countries simply means that their outputs are efficient relative to inputs if the result shows 0. What we can see from the results is that.

Table 28.1 Data envelopment analysis of countries in Latin America, Europe, and GCC

	Efficiencies	slack_input			slack_output		
		7_cleanfuel	9_articles	9_rdex	9_lpi	7_co2twh	13_co2pc
Chile	0.97111	0	12.25	0.00	0.00	2.70	8.38
Panama	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Brazil	0.89985	0	0.95	15.04	0.00	12.01	9.02
Mexico	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Argentina	0.86972	0	1.95	1.25	3.88	1.67	0.00
Ecuador	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Germany	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Netherlands	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sweden	1	0	11.98	33.04	0.00	21.39	25.22
Austria	0.99797	0	0.00	13.14	0.00	3.56	10.48
UK	0.98251	0	8.20	0.00	0.00	4.61	29.22
Switzerland	0.98032	0	27.76	39.92	0.00	15.48	24.01
Emirates	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Bahrain	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Kuwait	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Oman	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Qatar	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Arabia	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Source Authors’ Analysis

(1) The countries of the Middle East, in general, are very similar. Their efficiencies are adequate for the inputs and outputs they have. However, the results do not indicate absolute values of inputs and outputs.

(2) For European countries, the results are more mixed. Some inefficiencies can be seen for Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and Austria. However, these countries overinvest in R&D (SDG 9) in the case of Austria, and in Articles (SDG 9) for the case of the UK and Switzerland. Despite having efficiencies of 1, the case of Switzerland is special, since it has excesses in publications and R&D investments, being able to further reduce its CO₂ emissions.

Hence, for the amounts of investment, the outputs are not yet satisfactory. Output inefficiencies can be seen in CO₂TWH (CO₂ emissions from fuel combustion—SDG 7) and CO₂PC (Energy-related CO₂ emissions per capita—SDG 13). This is not necessarily a negative aspect; it simply means that the mentioned countries invest a great deal, but have not yet obtained matching returns on their investment.

In the case of countries in the Middle East, they may not be investing enough relative to their GDPs and the outputs are correspondingly matching the inputs, still showing up as efficient. As a matter of fact, several large projects aimed at building renewable energy capacities and sustainable cities in the Middle East have failed or been abandoned since inception. A prominent example is Masdar City near Abu Dhabi, which was meant to be a large-scale green city powered by solar electricity with one of the largest fields of solar panels in the Middle East, but it has been abandoned since 2015. However, the UAE has plans to increase investment in sustainable energy production by 500% in the coming decade (2020–2030) (Reuters, 2020), but the outcome is yet to be seen. According to IRENA (2021), GCC countries intend to reach 72 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030 through solar power. However, the output across the GCC in solar energy in 2019 was only about 800 MW, led by the UAE and Oman (IRENA, 2021). As the largest economy, the share of Saudi Arabia's output in renewable energy was significantly smaller than the former two neighbour countries (Statista, 2021) indicating that there is still a long way to go in investment in green energy.

In Latin America, it should be noted that Chile, Brazil, and Argentina have some inefficiencies. Brazil and Argentina have efficiencies below 90. Brazil has an excess in research and development (9_redex—R&D Expenditure) relative to its CO₂ emissions outputs. In the case of Chile, it has an excess of publications and could improve its CO₂ emissions indicators. As for Argentina, it could improve its performance in the Logistics Performance Index (LPI).

28.11 Extended Model RAM-DEA

In addition to the model above, we conducted a more specific analysis using the Range Adjusted Measure DEA model (RAM-DEA), which is a non-radial and non-angular model. In addition to the previous model, this model avoids subjectively setting model parameters (Lu et al., 2019). The model supports good and bad outputs. The

Table 28.2 RAM-DEA analysis of countries in Latin America, Europe, and GCC

Country	Efficiencies	slacks input	slacks good output	slacks bad output		
		oil consumption / pop	sdg9_lpi	sd7_co2twh	sdg11_pm25	sdg13_co2pc
Chile	0.9182	0	0.01374499	0.4172016	10.437927	1.685191
Panama	1.0000	0	0	0	0	0
Brazil	1.0000	0	0	0	0	0
Mexico	0.8893	0	0.00383475	0.7491509	9.789111	1.147607
Argentina	0.8818	0	0.24880736	0.7504053	1.396596	1.955532
Ecuador	0.8476	0.974588	0.51406246	0.8357081	2.750121	0
Germany	1.0000	0	0	0	0	0
Netherlands	0.8545	28.436985	0	0.6905334	2.444003	2.93779
Sweden	1.0000	0	0	0	0	0
Austria	0.8457	0	0.40368432	0.7976046	6.094739	2.205929
United Arab Emirates	0.5558	47.705637	0.389807	1.3621163	31.024	17.910526
Bahrain	0.5274	10.864393	1.05375	0.9105406	55.8	18.428576
Kuwait	0.3926	90.989133	0.934662	1.0848241	48.665	18.373526
Oman	0.5188	7.581091	1.209135	1.9309983	30.752	10.350959
Qatar	0.2129	72.034962	0.654609	1.8570852	71.874	39.752532
Saudi Arabia	0.3745	70.537221	0.75157	1.4805146	68.649	14.116663

Source Authors' Analysis

selection of the inputs and outputs aims to create an index which considers green logistics SDGs indicators, specifically SDGs 7, 9, 11, and 13.

Since the model aims to minimise inputs, we selected oil consumption as the only input. In a similar way, the model maximises the good outputs and minimises the bad outputs. Following the same logic, the only good output chosen was the LPI. The rest of the outputs are related to CO₂, and therefore it is desirable to minimise them (bad outputs). To run the programme and adapt the free library for R programming, the bad outputs were introduced as inputs (Table 28.2).

According to the model results, there are four countries which could be considered efficient: Panama and Brazil in Latin America, and Germany and Sweden in Europe.

GCC countries obtained an inefficient index compared to countries in Europe and Latin America. The most inefficient components for these countries are the oil consumption and the annual mean concentration of particulate matter of less than 2.5 microns of diameter. The most inefficient countries were Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

28.12 Conclusions

It can be seen that countries are generally moving in the direction of sustainable logistics. The data for European countries shows that significant investments (inputs) are being made while results relative to the investments are not yet always obtained. However, countries such as the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Austria have other constraints of not being fully integrated with the EU, either due to being non-EU members (Switzerland and UK), being landlocked (Switzerland and Austria), or being geographically insular in addition to outside the EU (the UK). Therefore, inefficiencies in the LPI could have result from these factors. The other results are as expected, in that countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden, are fully efficient in terms of green LPI.

The scenario was more mixed for countries in the Middle East. The initial model listed all as being efficient; however, the inputs have not been consistently high or of significant duration, such as the green project of Masdar City in Abu Dhabi, the very low share of solar energy generation in the largest GCC economy Saudi Arabia, and generally low inputs from countries such as Kuwait and Qatar. By this account, it can still be seen that the UAE and Oman are ahead of the remaining four economies of the GCC in terms of sustainable logistics.

For countries in Latin America, the results were more mixed, especially in the second model. A common problem is CO₂ emissions, especially those experienced by the larger economies of Brazil, Chile, and Argentina. Although the model shows that investments in research and development are being made (Rdex—SDG 9), especially in Brazil, the effects of these investments have not yet materialised in the case of Brazil. We can also see that Chile is making headways in academic research of sustainability as evidenced by SDG 9 – Articles in Table 28.1, but, similarly, the effects are not yet matched by outputs. A similar scenario of academic research applies to Argentina, albeit on a smaller scale, where inputs are not matched by outputs.

With respect to the results of this study, further areas of research could therefore focus on examining methods to increase “good” inputs in the GCC effectively, such as research regarding green technologies as well as research and development expenditure relative to GDP, in accordance with SDG 9, as European countries and several emerging countries in Latin America seemed to have an edge with regard to “good” inputs. For countries in the GCC, such research could focus on how technologies outside the oil and gas sector with already high existing local potential and several globally competitive local companies (e.g. in the metallurgy, aerospace, chemical sectors in the UAE) could be leveraged (Elrahman et al., 2020).

28.13 Implications for Countries in the GCC

A strong argument in the pursuit of the development of green energies and supply chains in the GCC has come from the opportunities for technological progress and job creation that renewable energies offer (Al-Ubaydli, 2021). In many traditional sectors, productivity growth has stagnated during the last 20 years, but the renewable energy sector continues to allow for large improvements in productivity, and this is reflected in the sharp declines in generation cost witnessed by solar energy during the last decade. This view is supported by Qudah et al. (2016), who found that high reliance on oil and gas has resulted in the reduction of productivity in other sectors resulting in lower aggregate economic output, hence lower country competitiveness. This is a strong incentive to turn towards a green economy by investing in renewable energies that could boost economic growth through its impact on productive efficiency. With the shift in investments come positive effects for programmes of localisation of the workforce, which all GCC countries have been pursuing through programmes known as Emiratisation, Saudisation, Qatarisation,

Omanisation, Kuwaitisation, and Bahrainisation. As technological advances in IT and artificial intelligence have increasingly begun to replace even white-collar jobs, presenting a threat of structural unemployment among GCC citizens, renewable sources of energy could create a considerable number of attractive and sustainable jobs, which would ultimately benefit the citizens of GCC countries.

In addition to economic benefits at national levels, there are strong indicators that countries in the GCC have also recognised the value of pursuing green economies as a matter of international reputation and geopolitical influence in the region. At the recently concluded COP26, the UAE has announced a net-zero energy goal by 2050, while Bahrain has announced the same goal to be achieved by 2060 (Osman, 2021). In addition, the UAE will be the host of COP28 in 2023, further highlighting its commitment to green goals while taking advantage of the opportunity to assume a regional leadership role, which might incentivise neighbour countries to step up, and ultimately have positive aggregate effects for environmental sustainability at a global level.

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Chapter 29

Greening the Desert: Sustainability Challenges and Environmental Initiatives in the GCC States



Meredian Alam and Izni Azrein Noor Azalie

Abstract Oil, gas, and other minerals contribute significantly to the growth of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, however their development always affects the environment. The GCC countries are therefore taking measures to ensure economic growth, job availability, social equality, and natural resource management by incorporating environmental considerations into economic policy and aspiring for green growth at the national and regional levels. With this in mind, this chapter explores various sustainability initiatives for environmental conservation in the GCC. This chapter focuses primarily on the national efforts of each of the GCC states to prevent and control hazards and to reduce the effects of environmental challenges (such as air pollution, climate change, oil spills, and declining quality of coastal and marine environments).

Keywords GCC states · Environment · Sustainability initiatives

29.1 Introduction

Sustainable development is a growth pattern that attempts to meet human needs while maintaining the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the short term but also in the long term (Spiess, 2008). The GCC states are dealing with significant maintainability challenges in accomplishing ecological objectives (Hayman, 2019). The large quantity of wastewater from big industries and increasing demand for energy presents many challenges to GCC states. Air quality is a significant part of personal satisfaction prompting maintainable improvement in numerous spaces of the world (Zaidan et al., 2019). The atmosphere is polluted by gaseous emissions from the exploration and burning of fossil fuels (Abulibdeh et al., 2019). Moreover,

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the GCC states have higher emissions of nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and volatile organic compounds than other countries (Waheed et al., 2021). On both the regional and national levels, air pollution control policies are now being taken seriously, and governments have taken significant initiatives to reduce pollution (Zafar, 2020). This chapter elaborates on these matters, reviewing the role of oils for GCC states' development, its environmental challenges, and environmental initiatives.

29.2 Role of Oil in the Development of Arabian Gulf Countries

According to Moneef (2006), the countries of the GCC (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)) are home to a large supply of fossil fuels and various types of minerals, and they are rich concerning Arabic and Islamic culture and history (Al-Saidi et al., 2019). The GCC countries' economies are defined by their substantial reliance on fossil fuel exports (Al-Zubari, 2003). These exports have generated significant revenues that have resulted in high per-capita income levels and decent living standards. Oil and its relations have shaped Arab economies in one way since the Arab World's independence and/or the foundation of nation-states, in one form or another (Elrahmani et al., 2021). The discovery of oil, as well as the awareness of its importance and potential for satisfying global energy needs, raised the strategic relevance of GCC states and aided their economic integration into the global economy (Sheik et al., 2019).

The worldwide political economics of oil, on the one hand, shaped the socio-economic and political change of GCC states and their ties with major powers over the twentieth century, and on the other hand, the influence of the oil sector's development on individual GCC state economies. In the last three decades, GCC states have seen tremendous social, economic, and political developments. At diverse ancient junctures, the oil quarter and the political economics of oil have performed a crucial component in such developments.

GCC states had 667 billion barrels of oil reserves by the end of 2005 (Hammad et al., 2019). The GCC oil-exporting states produced 25 million barrels of oil every day and 30 billion cubic ft according to the day of fuel line, or 303 billion cubic meters, in 2005, accounting for 32% and 12% of worldwide oil and fuel line production, respectively (Fatima et al., 2021). The contribution of oil to development has not been confined to the economies of GCC states oil exporters. Admittedly, it has spilled over to different GCC states' economies (Uyar et al., 2019). Furthermore, whereby during the different oil booms and among the distinct economies of this sub-group of GCC states, methods have differed. Oil's contribution to development has spread to other Arab economies, with transmission mechanisms varying throughout different oil booms and among different Arab non-oil-exporting countries. Contributions have been made through four channels: workers' remittances, tourism flows, bilateral and

multilateral aid, and investment flows, and fiscal and external positions (Khan & Fernandez-Carag, 2016).

Most of the world energy outlooks show that world oil consumption is projected to increase by an annual average of 1.5 mbd by 2025 (Mahmood & Furqan, 2021). Total cumulative investments in the oil and gas chains in Arab countries were anticipated to be \$183 billion by 2010—through national oil corporations, FDI, or both (Al-Naser & Hamdan, 2021). These investments are expected to be carried out in an environment of relatively higher oil prices, improved prospects for increased oil and gas exports, and a favorable business climate in the countries concerned.

29.3 Environmental Challenges in the Arabian Gulf Countries

GCC states like Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, and the UAE are encountering different environmental challenges, such as:

29.3.1 *Climate Change*

This is the changing of temperature and weather patterns in a place, and is the result of the cumulative activities of human beings. It also presents a new and genuine danger of extreme ecological, financial, political, and security impacts in the GCC states (Awartani & Maghyereh, 2013). Climate change and its potential physical and social repercussions are anticipated to worsen this susceptibility, leading to large-scale instability in an area that is already vulnerable to several non-climate stresses (Salahuddin & Gow, 2014). Climate change is anticipated to exacerbate water scarcity by acting as a risk multiplier (Al-Faris, 2002). The food security in the region is under threat due to water scarcity. This problem may reduce agricultural productivity and could present problems for human health and economic development.

Extreme temperatures are likely to worsen health hazards as a result of climate change (Bhutto et al., 2014). High and low ambient temperatures have been linked to an elevated risk of short-term mortality in numerous studies, but little is known about these dangers in Kuwait and the Gulf region. Therefore, it is evident that climate change has already become a major global challenge for the twenty-first century (Mabry et al., 2010). According to data from the IPCC (2007), between 1970 and 2004, the Arab region witnessed an unequal increase in surface air temperature ranging from 0.2 degrees to 2.0 degrees (Al Shidi et al., 2016). Also, most Arab nations, especially those arranged in the Middle East, are likely to face water-related issues and the knock-on effects of environmental change.

The region's emissions of Greenhouse Gases (GHG) are generally small in absolute terms (less than 5% of the world's total), and in per capita terms (Alharbi &

Csala, 2021). However, the amount of these emissions and, as a result, the region's contribution to climate change differs by country, particularly among oil-producing countries shouldering the biggest share (74% of the region's total) (Darwish, 2020). Moreover, at + 88%, the growth of CO₂ emissions in the Middle East and North Africa was the third largest in the world in 1990–2004 and more than 3 times faster than the world's average; most of that growth came from fuel combustion (Elasha, 2010).

Environmental change is likewise expected to expand the frequency and force of severe climatic conditions and related risks presenting more individuals to hazardous circumstances and prompting more serious occurrences, such as droughts, floods, hurricanes, and dust storms, all examples of natural disasters (IPCC, 2007). The present circumstance might disturb the GCC states' weakness to cataclysmic events, which incorporate dry season and food deficiency, floods, dusty weather, and pests' attacks (Al-Maamary et al., 2017). Moreover, due to climate change, most of the region is expected to remain very hot under climate change scenarios (Al Shidi et al., 2016). Furthermore, climate change may put stress on those areas, which are more hospitable, such as the Mediterranean basin (Reiche, 2010). As for the grasslands of the Sahel, a band of semiarid land running across the continent south of the Sahara Desert, they are already shrinking (Hassen & El Bilali, 2019). The climate models can cause hotter temperatures and less precipitation for this locale under a dangerous atmospheric deviation, land debasement, desertification, and biodiversity are relied upon to speed up (Elasha, 2010).

Agricultural production and food security are closely linked to the availability of water. Climate change is expected to affect food security through its impact on agriculture and food production systems. At the global level, aggregate agricultural output potential will be little affected by climate change, with significant variations between regions (Waheed et al., 2021). The majority of GCC states are considered among the world's most water-scarce, and in many places demand for water already exceeds supply (Al Shidi et al., 2016). Higher temperatures and less rainfall will lower river and streamflow, slow the pace of aquifer recharge, and make the region more desert (Okedu et al., 2019). These changes will have a variety of consequences, including impacts on agriculture, energy, and food security.

In Kuwait, the impact of environmental change was examined by high goal (36, 12, and 4 km lattice separating) dynamic downscaling from the Community Climate System Model CCSM4 utilizing the WRF (Weather Research and Forecasting) model (Omidvarborna et al., 2018). The downscaling results were first verified by comparing NCEP model outputs to observational data from the National Centers for Environmental Prediction (Atalay et al., 2016). The worldwide environmental change dynamic downscaling model was run utilizing WRF provincial environment model reenactments (2000–2010) and future projections (2050–2060). By mid-century, regional model estimates of the average maximum surface temperature in midsummer in Kuwait forecast an increase from 1 °C to 3 °C (Al-Saidi & Saliba, 2019).

Drought will become more frequent and have a greater impact in the region as temperatures rise, putting water resources and fertile land at risk. Drought frequency

has already increased in Algeria, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia, according to this report (Krupa et al., 2019). Droughts in Jordan and Syria have been among the worst in decades (Abulibdeh et al., 2019). In addition, increased precipitation variability and water resource availability directly related to climate change affects a number of countries in the region (Ahmed et al., 2015). A warmer climate brings with it increased climate variability, a higher risk of both floods and droughts, and exacerbates the already precarious situation created by chronic water scarcity faced by most Arab countries (Michaelowa & Michaelowa, 2015).

29.3.2 *Oil Spills*

In simple words, an oil spill is the leakage or mixing up of oil in seas or other water bodies, an occurrence that causes severe risks to marine life. An oil spill is an environmental disaster that occurs due to the release of liquid petroleum into the environment (Awartani & Maghyreh, 2013). This might happen by mistake, on purpose, or as a result of regular human actions. Oil spills can have a variety of origins and sources. The natural seeps of oil are found to regularly occur in the Gulf countries (Almazroui, 2020), mostly at production sites (drilling and refineries), storage sites (owing to container leakage), and transportation sites (pipelines, trucks, and so on) (Michaelowa & Michaelowa, 2015). Minor spills, medium spills, major spills, and disasters are the four primary categories of oil spills. These are categorized based on discharge quantity of oil on land, coastal or offshore waters. The damaging impact and distortion of the environment due to oil spills is a major concern of discussion.

Marine, land, and groundwater are being affected by the oil spills, resulting in land and seawater pollution. Oil spills have the potential to have a significant economic impact on coastal operations and those who exploit the sea's resources (Aleisa & Al-Zubari, 2017). Damages to the marine environment are caused primarily by the chemical and physical properties of oil creating a nuisance and hazardous conditions (Taleb & Pitts, 2009). The environmental impacts of an oil spill may differ due to factors that affect the distribution and hydrocarbons from petroleum, particularly their weathering and persistence and consequently, their bioavailability. In open bodies of water, currents and diffusion can decrease concentrations of contaminants rapidly. At shorelines, however, this is more difficult, especially in low-energy environments, e.g., some sandy beaches, estuaries, marshes, and protected coves (Indraganti & Boussaa, 2018).

The United Arab Emirates' water environment around the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman is being exposed to increasing amounts of oil, which may create human health problems (Mahmood & Furqan, 2021). Surfaces of water spread with oil, forming a smooth and slippery surface called slick. An oil spill has a toxic impact on aquatic animals and damages their food resources and habitats. Slick forms a thin coating on the bird's feathers which loses its insulating properties and results in freezing death (Lahn & Preston, 2013). By lowering oxygen levels in the water, the

amount of oxygen dissolving will also be reduced, which is an important factor for marine life.

After a collision between the 57,211 dwt tanker 'Baynunah' and the 293,238 dwt supertanker 'Seki', a quantity (16,000t) of Iranian crude oil escaped into the Gulf of Oman 9.5 miles outside the Al-Fujairah port entrance on March 31, 1994 (Hammad et al., 2019). Clean-up efforts, which began within one hour and forty minutes of the incident, were only able to remove 2000 tons of oil from the sea and failed to contain the spill (Dawoud, 2017). After four days, the drifting oil reached the United Arab Emirates' beach, contaminating nearly 20 km of coastline (Gerged et al., 2021). This brought about the disturbance of the fishing business and a decrease in scuba plunging for the travel industry (Marine Pollution Bulletin Report, 1994).

The main parts of the oil area unit are acyclic and aromatic hydrocarbons. Lower-molecular-weight aromatics such as benzol, toluene, and xylene—are volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and evaporate for hours once the oil reaches the surface (Siddiqi et al., 2021). Volatile organic compounds will cause metabolic process irritation and central system (CNS) depression. Benzol is thought to cause leukemia in humans, and dissolvent could be a recognized agent at high doses. Higher-molecular-weight chemicals like hydrocarbon evaporate a lot slower (Cochrane & Amery, 2017). Hydrocarbon is listed by the National Pharmacological Medicine Program as reasonably anticipated to cause cancer in humans supported modality neuroblastomas, nasal tumors, and respiratory organ cancers in animals (Alsamara et al., 2018; Solomon & Janssen, 2010).

29.3.3 Air Pollution

All man-created discharges into the air can be called air pollution since they adjust the substance arrangement of the regular environment. Air pollution can also be defined as an increase in worldwide concentrations of greenhouse gases CO₂, CH₄, and N₂O (Al-Mulali & Tang, 2013). As long as they are inert in the lowest region of the atmosphere, chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) emitted by humans were once considered safe.—However, once these chemicals enter the layer, ultraviolet will convert them into extremely reactive species that may have a devastating result on stratospheric gas (Salahuddin & Gow, 2014). Similarly, greenhouse gas emissions from combustion processes were thought of as being safe as they are not nephrotoxic, however, the long-term accumulation of greenhouse gas within the atmosphere could result in climate change, which could then be harmful to humans and the ecosystem (Reiche, 2010).

In the UAE, with the increase in the number of inhabitants, the number of vehicles in operation also increases, which is the main cause of air pollution (Hassine & Harrathi, 2017). Air pollution is an important risk factor for the global burden of a wide range of diseases, and can cause various respiratory and cardiovascular problems but, more recently, it has also been reported that air pollution may cause insulin resistance and diabetes mellitus (Mabry et al., 2010). People in urban areas are more

likely to be exposed to polluted air which is believed to be a factor in lung function impairment (Al-Mulali & Tang, 2013). For traffic-related pollutants, gases, nitrogen dioxide, cigarette smoke, and particulate matter, the link between air pollution and diabetes is stronger.

In 2016, Radaideh mentioned that air pollution in Saudi Arabia is now recognized as a significant environmental impact of intensive anthropogenic activities (Destek & Okumus, 2019). Urban areas that have heavy traffic generate more precursor emissions, which in turn increase O₃ emissions. Saudi Arabia makes up about 1.1% of the world's energy consumption (Amoatey, 2020). Saudi Arabia's carbon emissions from the transport sector have jumped in the past 40 years from 3.29 million metric tons in 1971 to 104.42 million metric tons in 2010. According to experts, long-term health effects from air pollution include heart disease, lung cancer, and respiratory diseases such as emphysema (Al-Maamary et al., 2017). Air pollution may also cause semi-permanent injury to people's nerves, brain, kidneys, liver, and alternative organs (Aleisa & Al-Zubari, 2017).

29.3.4 Marine and Coastal Environment

According to Tolba and Saab (2008), stretching from the Atlantic to the Indian ocean, and including the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, and the Gulf, Arab countries have over 30,000 km of coastal line, 18,000 km of which are populated areas. The delicate marine and beachfront climate of the Arab district is undermined by contamination, overfishing, loss of biodiversity, environmental change, and different issues (Naser, 2013). However, such areas are of vital importance to Arab countries, providing benefits to public health, food security, leisure, and other economic and social benefits. Within the Arab region, 3 major marine regions are identified: the Mediterranean, Red Sea, and Gulf of port (RSGA), and also the ROPME (Gulf) (Burt, 2014).

The semi-enclosed Mediterranean lies off the coasts of North African and Japanese Mediterranean Arab countries. The large-scale industrial activity has threatened coastal livelihood. It is evinced, more than 200 petrochemical and chlorine-based plants are situated along it. Eutrophication—a process whereby water is enriched with nutrients that stimulate primary aquatic production and cause excessive protist blooms—may be a chronic downside in bound areas of the Mediterranean, wherever residues from agricultural, chiefly chemical plant food, and non-treated industrial and concrete waste product discharges enter the marine atmosphere. In addition, there is heavy tanker traffic in the Mediterranean, connecting major consumption centers in Europe with the oil production centers of the Middle East.

The most important oil traffic pathway is the Suez Canal. It is a lane for 90% of total oil tanker traffic transportation. The RSGA, one of the world's most original coastal and marine environments, is vulnerable to a spread of human activities, like dredging and filling operations, the disposal of domestic and industrial effluents, and also the growth of the tourist trade (Al-Yamani et al., 2007). Most of these

environmental threats are comparatively recent in origin and may partly be attributed to unsustainable development. The RSA (ROPME Sea Area) is considered a high-risk pollution area, due in particular to a large number of offshore oil and gas installations, tanker loading terminals, and the high volume and density of the marine transportation of oil. It is estimated that roughly 2 million barrels of oil are spilled annually from routine discharges of ballast, tanker slops, and 800 oil and gas platforms (Nadim et al., 2008).

Overfishing, the unsustainable exploitation of fish stocks, may be a major downside within the Mediterranean and the RSGA regions (Bailey & Munawar, 2015). The primary issue is the shortage of knowledge on transboundary stocks, inadequate cooperation within the management of shared stocks, and an absence of police work and social control of existing fishing rules. Additionally, the coral reefs within the RSA and also the RSGA, in the neighborhood where abundant fishing occurs, is an area unit vulnerable by a diversity of environmental stresses (Al-Yamani et al., 2020). Uncontrolled tourism and extensive urban development are the main contributors to the environmental degradation of coastal and marine environments, and this finding applies to all three regions (Almahasheer, 2018). Several current or projected marine protected areas (MPAs), particularly within the RSGA, face overfishing and tourism (Hartig et al., 2019). Finally, in terms of legislation, not enough selected MPAs exist, and also the ones that do exist do not seem to be altogether cases adequately and expeditiously managed (Clarke et al., 2020). Existing laws and rules do not seem to be sufficiently enforced, compliance is not properly monitored, and regional/transboundary cooperation remains inadequate (Uddin et al., 2017). It is unlikely that the state of marine environment in the GCC states is better today compared to three decades ago when these countries first started to join the international and regional seas conventions and programs.

29.4 Environmental Sustainability Initiatives

The GCC states are facing different environmental crises and trying to resolve them properly. Different countries have taken great initiatives to protect the environment. Being a member of GCC states countries and one of the biggest suppliers of oil in the world, the United Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is also dealing with environmental hazards (Al-Tit et al., 2019), to solve these issues and better the future of Saudi's. The Saudi government has started the Saudi Green Initiative. The Saudi Green Initiative is an ambitious national initiative for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to improve quality of life and protect future generations (Shaawat et al., 2018). Carbon emission is the main reason for all types of pollution, which is emitted due to the combustion of fossil fuels such as gas, oil, and coal, etc. (Salem, 2014). The main target of this initiative is to reduce carbon emissions by more than 4% of the global contribution (Ouda, 2016). The forest fires and cutting of trees enhance pollution. Trees serve as isolation toward the pollution as they clear the atmosphere and cause rain (Abubakar & Aina, 2018). Fresh air which is hard to come by in this era of pollution, owes itself to

trees (Rahman & Khondaker, 2012). Therefore, the Saudi Green initiative has aimed to plant 10 billion trees across Saudi Arabia (Alshuwaikhat et al., 2016). This will turn the deserts into green livable places, improve the quality of air and reduce the temperature. The 3rd main goal of this initiative is to protect about 30% of the land area that has been damaged or is being damaged.

According to Mazumder (2016), the UAE Vision 2021 National Agenda focuses on improving the quality of air, preserving water resources, increasing the contribution of clean energy, and implementing green growth plans (Petraatos, P. (2020)). The government looks for and implements collaborative and innovative ways to address their immediate basic demands while also meeting the country's long-term needs (Matz, 2018). The National Agenda also emphasizes the importance of infrastructure, with the UAE aiming to be among the world's best in terms of airports, ports, road infrastructure, and power. Furthermore, the UAE's excellent telecommunications infrastructure will enable it to be a trailblazer in the delivery of Smart services (Shareef & Altan, 2021; Tawfik, 2018). According to the statement released by Saeed Mohammed Al Tayer, MD & CEO of Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA), the UAE's wise leadership is pursuing a transformation, trying to build a vision that understands their importance in creating a balance between development and sustainability (Al-Qassab et al., 2019). This could protect the rights of future generations to dwell in a safe and healthy environment. The UAE continues to create massive renewable energy projects, led by programs such as Masdar City in Abu Dhabi and the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park in Dubai. These will help to protect the ecosystem and the country's natural resources in the long run (Martens & Reiser, 2019). Dubai has also revealed plans for more sustainable initiatives, like the Desert Rose, a 14,000-hectare smart city that will house 20,000 Emirati plots and cost 20 billion AED to construct (Noori et al., 2020). There is a pattern emerging from these developments—the United Arab Emirates is already emerging as a global leader in sustainability. This pattern became more obvious after Dubai recently declared its goals to become one of the most sustainable cities in the world. It is critical to create a succession of long-term objectives and goals. These targets will help to guide the design in the pursuit of sustainability goals.

Qatar's rapid growth necessitated the creation of comprehensive master plans and frameworks to meet the growing demands of sustainable development, which included both physical and non-physical pillars (such as the environment and economy) (Sigsgaard et al., 2020). As urban planning and strategies are adopting sustainable development, Qatar's planning authorities have worked tirelessly to generate sustainable urban development. The goal is to accomplish the necessary long-term development on both macro and micro levels without endangering Qatar's environment (Saidy, 2021). To accommodate sustainable urbanization, the Qatar National Vision 2030 and Qatar Development Framework 2032 were established, to implement best-practice methods of green building design and green urban development in Qatar (Saleh & Al-Swidi, 2019). One of the core pillars of sustainability is the green building concept, which is defined as a combination of methods and design standards that work together to improve the personal satisfaction of clients, at the same time, ensuring the climate of networks by diminishing the development pace

of normal asset utilization (Ferwati et al., 2019; Tablada et al., 2020). Sustainability requires a highly comprehensive plan that can mitigate particular physical and non-physical challenges. Green building grading systems have been developed in response to the pressing need for sustainable development, however, they lack urban scale application (Liu & Leng, 2021). Qatar recognized the importance of sustainability in 2001 and began to push the adoption of worldwide sustainable construction standards and green building ratings systems such as LEED and BREEAM (Tokbolat & Nazipov, 2021). Since then, Qatar has prepared the main exhaustive supportability structure by the Qatar National Vision (QNV) and Qatar Development Strategies. Also, the Qatari Diar Investment organization declared the principal green structure rating framework in 2004, the alleged Qatar Sustainability Assessment System (QSAS) (Cheshmehzangi et al., 2020). The QSAS has become one of the most significant green structure rating frameworks in the Gulf district (Ferwati et al., 2019).

Many oil leakage incidents happened in Bahrain during the 1980s and 1990s. In February 1993, Bahrain delivered the principal rendition of the NOSCP (Zainal et al., 2020). The plan involves all relevant ministries and businesses. The plan specified the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved. It was created to deal with oil spills in Tier 2 and Tier 3 categories. Due to the changes that occurred in the concerned parties in Bahrain, the plan was updated in 2010. In 2013, the cabinet in Bahrain approved the updated plan (Marzooq, 2021; Uddin et al., 2021). To protect human health and the marine and terrestrial environment, several measures have been put in place, such as: (1) Legislative Decree No 21 of 1996, Article 4 regulates the response to pollution in Bahrain, (2) United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), (3) Oil Pollution Preparedness Response and Co-operation Convention, (4) Regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan, (5) All authorities and industries, either likely to cause pollution or suffer from the consequences of pollution are responsible to draw up a Tier1 Contingency Plan, (6) All plans must be submitted to SCE for approval and the SCE should be invited to witness the exercises, (7) They are also responsible for the cleanup of their minor spills and the protection of their water intakes and sensitive installations (Aldulaimi & Abdeldayem, 2020; Honnur Vali et al., 2020).

The first purpose is to educate the people of Bahrain to understand their environment and how the various components of it depend on and react with each other. In this respect, the importance of the marine environment on their daily activities and for future generations is emphasized (Marzooq et al., 2019), as is the implication of oil pollution concerning marine resources, the economy, and public health. The strategy is for the management and reaction to an oil or HNS leak in Bahrain's coastal and offshore Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which could occur as a result of a spill on land or contaminating the shoreline (Pappworth & Caudle, 2016). This plan is currently controlling many oil spills in Bahrain's seas (Al-Khatlan et al., 2019).

29.5 Conclusion

Upon exploring the environmental problems, there are numerous challenges ahead for all GCC states. For the oil-exporting countries, sustaining the current economic performance, which has been fueled by oil market developments, is a major challenge. Moreover, environmental challenges have become common in GCC states. The spilling of oil is damaging marine lives and causing almost deaths of a large number of fish. After using these contaminated fish, the lives of people are also at risk. The countries need to use different technologies and methods to stop oil spills and save marine life. Bahrain has prepared a national plan to deal with oil spills on a very large scale. This plan is attempting to solve the oil spills issue and save the marine environment.

The second major challenge is climate change and there are many reasons for this, such as a rapidly increasing population. GCC states like Qatar and the UAE are the most developed countries in the world and their population is increasing day by day. A large number of green deserts are converted into Five stars hotels and many other occupied places. The saturation of people means more demand for vehicles and more vehicles means more air pollution. So, these factors are interlinked. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has taken the initiative of 'Green Saudi' to secure the environment and save future generations. This initiative is also coping with air pollution and desertification. To meet future challenges, Arab economies will need to use pollution-free cars like electric cars, which use solar energy.

Another aspect often deemed negligible but can equally support carbon transitioning initiatives is in relation to the development of the creative and innovative sector. While most oil and gas exploration and processing assets such as oil rigs complexes, oil and gas carriers are usually decommissioned or recycled for material salvaged, such infrastructure could also be refitted for repurposes. Oil rig complexes offshore could be transformed innovatively into new economic spaces for hospitality, educational and entertainment sector. The underwater side of oil rigs are usually home for diverse species of sea organisms, and this can become a place for ecological research and awareness, as a site of learning. With researcher, innovative and creative actors stationed in such repurpose infrastructures, multi-functional activities such as retail and recreation hence can be developed to accommodate these community as well as the general public. Educational tours as part of tourism initiatives can also be carried out. Installation of new technologies relating to the energy sector or the use of prototypes on such repurpose structures can also serve as a showcase of current development in the energy sector, further emphasizing the commitments of the Gulf countries toward development of a circular economy. This recommendation shall not be limited only to offshore complexes but also onshore facilities. Learning from the challenges of Europe in greening their energy sector and problems associated with repurposing, recycling and reusing current renewable energy tools materials such as the wind turbine blades as studied by Beauson et al (2022), this initiative provides an alternative to current environmental practices, allowing for multiplier effects that will benefit communities in general as well as adhering to current climate change

initiatives, with least environmental effects in contrast to current decommissioning or salvaging operations.

On the national level, GCC states must act through mechanisms of price, specific regulations, targeted taxation, industrial policies and promoting innovation, green investments, standards relating to products and processes, eco-labels, and communication campaigns. On the international level, the support should not impose any further burdens, technical or trade barriers, or conditionality on developing countries. Instead, developed countries should perform their environmental obligation by funding technological research in developing countries, collaborating in the development of appropriate technology, and increasing their capacity to achieve sustainable development.

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Chapter 30

Unemployment Challenge and Labor Market Participation of Arab Gulf Youth: A Case Study of the UAE



Anita Poplavskaya, Tatiana Karabchuk, and Aizhan Shomotova

Abstract The goal of the study is to explore the unemployment challenge for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) youth in comparison with other Gulf countries. The chapter uses multiple data sources to provide a complex analysis of recent dynamics and the current situation of school-to-work transition among Emirati youth. The empirical part of the analysis provides the rear information on actual career paths and challenges for youth to find their first job. Skills shortages and lack of professional qualities are among the frequently named reasons for not getting a job. For young women, such obstacles as family responsibilities and geographical restriction of job search are reported. Young men find jobs much faster than women. The main channels of job search for the Emiratis are personal liaisons and university contacts.

Keywords Youth · Unemployment · Job search · Public sector preferences · Lack of professional skills · The UAE

30.1 Introduction

The Gulf countries have one of the highest proportions of youth (people under 25 years old) in the population: one-fourth to one-half (Abdelgadir, 2020). Therefore, youth accounts for 25% of the population in Qatar, 34% in the UAE, 35% in Bahrain, 40% in Kuwait, 46% in Saudi Arabia, and 50% in Oman (Oxford Business Group, 2016). Such population structure creates challenges for national economies to accommodate all young people in the labor market. Economic growth and stability depend on youth employment. However, high records of youth unemployment have increased the risk of political instability and other social concerns in the Arab region (Farzanegan & Gholipour, 2021).

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Youth unemployment is one of the biggest issues for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as it has the world’s highest youth unemployment rate, standing at 27.2% in the Middle East and 29% in North Africa (Oxford Business Group, 2016). At the same time, youth unemployment rates in Gulf countries vary from the highest rate of 29% in Saudi Arabia to the lowest rate of 1.5% in Qatar (Abdelgadir, 2020).

This chapter contributes to the discussion of the youth unemployment challenge by shedding light on the situation in the UAE. Total youth unemployment increased from 6% in 2000 to 7.5% in 2019 (according to national statistics: FCSA, 2022). A closer look at the statistics by gender discovers that these are mainly young females who contribute to the unemployment rate in the country (see Fig. 30.1 below). According to the official statistics, the unemployment rate among females reached 12.8% in 2019, while the unemployment rate among males was only 5.7%. This pattern could be observed in other Gulf countries as well. For example, in Saudi Arabia, the female youth unemployment rate is twice higher for women (46.9%) compared to the male youth unemployment rate (18.4%) (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018). Figure 30.1 also demonstrates the importance of the unemployment challenge specifically for youth in the UAE since the unemployment rate among the population aged 25 and above is very low: 1.2 for males and 5.1 for females.

Interestingly, the gross enrollment rates in higher education increased tremendously during the last ten years from 15.6% in 2008 to 37.1% in 2017. The numbers are even higher for females, with an increase from 27.7% in 2008 to 45.3% in 2017 (UNESCO, 2020). It should be noted that education and training are free for nationals in the UAE. Does it mean that more and more graduates from higher education institutions will stay without jobs? What are the main challenges that graduates face recently while searching for their first jobs in the UAE? Why is the unemployment rate higher for females than for males? How much does it relate to traditional Muslim culture?

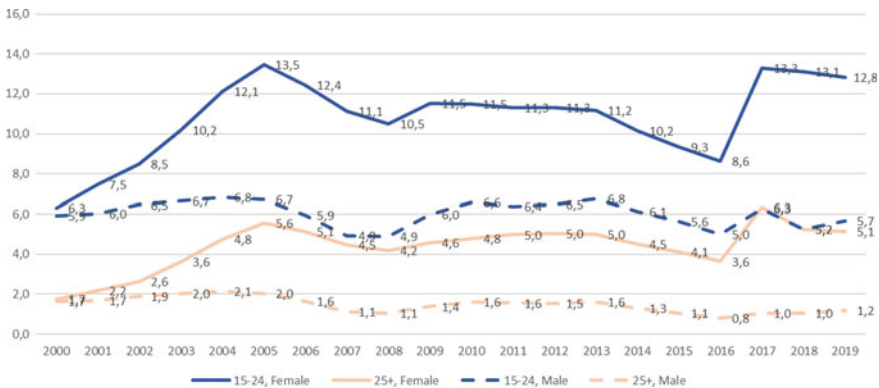


Fig. 30.1 Dynamics of the unemployment rates by age and sex in the UAE, 2000–2019 (Source FCSA data)

Can gender differences in job opportunities explain this gap in unemployment rates? These are the research questions that this chapter tries to answer below.

The chapter is organized as follows: first, it sheds light on the country's labor market background. Second, the chapter provides an analysis of the current challenges of university graduates in their first job search. This analysis is based on the alumni survey, conducted in 2019 at the UAE University. Third, the chapter investigates labor market participation of Emirati youth based on the empirical data of Monitoring of Emirati Youth, collected in 2017–2018.

30.2 Country Background and Labor Market of the UAE

Gulf countries have oil-rich developing economies that faced fast transformation from traditional societies to modern societies along with digitalization on most of the life spheres. The introduced policies and educational reforms since the beginning of the 2000s positively impacted human development in the country. Thus, Human Development Index (HDI) in Gulf countries significantly increased within the last 30 years, which put the countries in the very high human development category—Bahrain at 44th out of 189 countries, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are ranked 45th and 31st in HDI, Saudi Arabia at 40th, and Kuwait at 64th place in the world (Human Development Report, 2020).

According to the World Bank data, the rate of labor force participation rate for the whole population of the UAE grew from 74.5% in 1997 to 81% in 2016 (World Bank, Data Bank, 2022). Importantly, the employment to population ratio was also growing from 75% in 2001 to 78–79% in the latest years. Employment rates for males were picking even at 90–91% in 2016–2017 (see Fig. 30.2 below). The visible drop in all the employment rates in 2020 could be explained by the economic crisis generated by the COVID-19 lockdown.

The UAE labor market has few peculiarities and gender differences in employment/unemployment rates are one of them. The gap in employment rates between males and females is enormous since women are only half-active in comparison with men. At the same time, it is fair to note that the female employment rate went up from 34% in 2001 to 48% in 2017, according to the ILO estimations (World Bank, Data Bank, 2022). The female youth employment rate also increased within the last twenty years but not very much, from 23.6% in 2021 to 30.7% in 2016. The lower rates of youth employment could be explained by still continuing the education process at the age of 15–24.

Another UAE labor market peculiarity is a significant difference in labor participation rates of nationals and non-nationals. According to the latest studies, Emiratis comprise only 8–10% of the total workforce (De Bel-Air, 2018; Gonzalez et al., 2008; Poplavskaya & Karabchuk, 2018; Sönmez et al., 2011). This phenomenon is defined by the population structure in which the expatriates' share reaches 85% (FCSA, 2022).

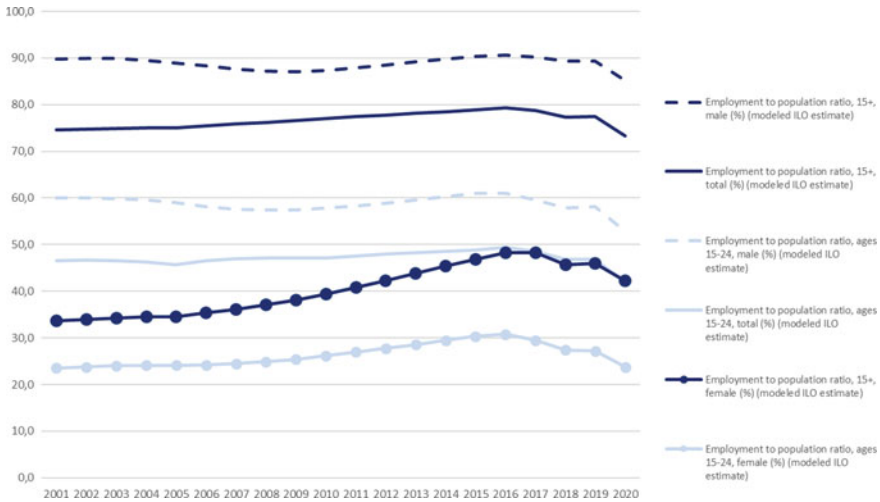


Fig. 30.2 Employment to population ratio for ages 15–24 and 15 + by gender, 2001–2019 (Source World Development Indicators. Data Bank. World Bank. ILOSTAT database, Data retrieved on February 8, 2022¹)

There are significant distinctions in the employment behavior of nationals and non-nationals. Most Emiratis tend to work in government organizations, and non-nationals used to hold working positions in private companies. At the end of the 2000s, local and federal government organizations employed nearly 90% of the working nationals and only 15% of foreign workers got positions in the public sector (NBS, 2009). The private sector was traditionally dominated by expatriates. Thus, in 2013, 73% of expatriate workers had a position in commercial companies and only 8% of all employed Emiratis worked for private firms (De Bel-Air, 2018). However, currently, the situation has been changing. The UAE government encouraged Emirati nationals to seek jobs in the private sector by introducing several initiatives, however, they did not prove to be much efficient (Dhakal et al., 2018). But by 2016, already 78% of all employed Emiratis were working at government organizations which are 12 percentage points less than in the 2000s. It means that more and more Emiratis work with private companies. It might be a sign of raising competitiveness between nationals and non-nationals and slow reorientation process toward private sector among national employees.

Importantly, these are exactly young males and females who are interested to open their own business and become entrepreneurs or being employed in the private sector. Since the job opportunities in the public sector became scarce, the fresh graduates are more often forced to enter the private sector doors.

¹ <https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SL.EMP.1524.SP.FE.ZS&country=ARE#>.

30.3 Youth challenges in the Labor Market of the UAE

In 2013, the UAE was rated as the best country to live and work in by young Arabs in the region (The National News, 2013). However, there are not many publications dedicated to the UAE youth, their challenges, school-to-work transition, their values, lifestyles, and working behavior.

Despite the increased share of the youth enrolled in tertiary education, young people from Arab countries often face difficulties with the transition from education to employment, and the UAE is not an exception (Gonzalez et al., 2008; Sfakianakis, 2005; Sultana, 2014; World Economic Forum, 2014). The previous research showed that the internship programs for the young Emiratis did not always result in actual work placement (Ahmed, 2003). The most significant reason for the increase of Arab unemployment rates is the continuous and extensive growth in the number of young Arab labor forces entering the labor markets annually, and Arab economies cannot provide sufficient job opportunities to face them (ILOSTAT, 2021; MOE Annual report, 2019). In other words, the labor market supply exceeds the labor market demand. If this growth and employment speed continue, youth unemployment will remain in the Arab region until 2040 (MOE Annual report, 2019).

Figure 30.3 demonstrates the ILO modeled estimations of unemployment rates among youth and total population separately for males and females (ILOSTAT, 2021). The female youth unemployment rate reached the highest level in 2020 after COVID-19 and equals to 16.6% while the unemployment rate among young males remains quite stable and fluctuates around 6%, even during the pandemic crisis years did not exceed 6.7%. Similar significant differences could be observed for the total unemployment rates between men and women in the UAE. However, the gender gap in youth unemployment rates (10 percentage points) is significantly higher than the gender gap in total unemployment rates (5.1 percentage points). It is important to highlight that the total unemployment rate in the UAE is extremely low at 2–3%, but it is quite feasible for the youth (9%). The low rates of total unemployment could be explained by the lower proportion of women in the total population, they comprise only one-third of the people residing in the UAE. The female/male ratio among youth is close to equal shares, the contribution of female unemployment is more significant in the total numbers.

A key factor that accounts for a high level of unemployment among young UAE citizens is the youth's preference for jobs in the public sector. Emiratis used to work exclusively in government organizations, and such a disposition prevents them from the search for decent jobs in private firms. These preferences for public sector jobs over private sector jobs are driven by better compensation packages and benefits in the UAE. The nature of public sector employment is less demanding (in terms of working hours and accountability), safer, and better paying than the private sector (Abdelgadir, 2020). But the government cannot keep hiring young graduates in the public sector at the same speed as the population growth, since the government resources are limited. Very often to obtain such a job, a person needs 'wasta' (intercession or influence)

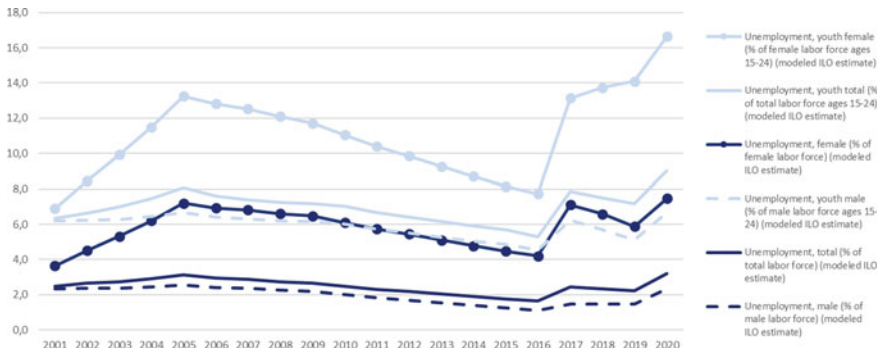


Fig. 30.3 Unemployment rates for ages 15–24 and 15 + by gender, 2001–2019 (*Source* World Development Indicators. Data Bank. World Bank. International Labour Organization. ILOSTAT database, Data retrieved on February 8, 2022²)

since the competition is very high for such positions (Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner, 2012; Aftadilian, 2017).

While the private sector needs more experienced specialists for less attractive packages, also employers expect them to have a high level of skills, including leadership and communication. And abilities, skills, and habits of the young Emiratis often do not fit into the rapidly evolving sectors of the UAE knowledge economy. This is another reason for rather high unemployment rates. The fresh graduates often do not have enough either technical skills (knowledge of information technology and services, industrial skills, research, and critical thinking skills) or soft skills (communication skills, interpersonal and customer relations, and work ethics), which is a sign for the employers that they are not ready to perform their jobs efficiently (Ahmed, 2003). That is why many employers do not believe that a young Emirati with a degree from a university in the Gulf has the exquisite skills for a job in private companies (Aftadilian, 2017).

Moreover, the level of work experience is rather low among the young Emiratis if compared with their expatriate counterparts. As the idea of joining jobs (especially low paid) at high school or college is not very popular among Emiratis as it is not much supported by the families. This problem of lack of any work experience, that is a common requirement from employers, was mentioned by the alumni of the universities (UAE University employability studies conducted in 2020–2021).

And despite all these facts, the Emirati youth often have unrealistic expectations related to working hours, job title, and compensation, as well as show a low level of loyalty to the companies (Ahmed, 2003; Gonzalez et al., 2008). Contrariwise, the organizations, either public or private ones, stay to be more interested to recruit foreigners on the working positions, as they cost less, have more experience, and are better equipped with practical skills (Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner, 2012; Burden-

² <https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=SL.EMP.1524.SP.FE.ZS&country=ARE#>.

Leahy, 2009; Gonzalez et al., 2008; Samier, 2015). The face-to-face interviews with the graduates showed the same results, the female graduates who have BA degrees do not want to work if the salary is below 15,000 AED (UAE University employability studies conducted in 2020–2021). Another study confirmed that national female youth are motivated by pay rewards and it was suggested that the GCC policymakers should consider the pay-productivity link and its implications for human resource management at the organization level (Mina, 2021).

The youth's ability to plan their livelihood, access information about vacancies, and choose between available occupations on the labor market also plays an important role (Sultana, 2014). Marked abilities help to manage important life transitions of youth from the educational to working stage, and cope with the complexity and uncertainty of the adult world. However, in some countries, the youth does not have such abilities and face more difficulties with the transition. In the United Arab Emirates, the situation with planning the future among the youth was acknowledged to be critical. Due to the results of the Arab Knowledge Report launched in 2010–2011, the average score on the future-planning scale for Emiratis reached only 4.72, when the required minimum was equal to 12.5. This was regarded as a sign of poor career drive motivation among the youth in the UAE (UNDP, 2012).

Career aspirations are very much linked with the cultural values and work values in society. On the one hand, the UAE used to be a collectivistic society, where the values of religion, family, traditional social norms, hierarchy, distinct power roles, dependence on the groups, and important others dominate (Lambert et al., 2015; Uchida & Ogihara, 2012). And a recent study of the UAE university students confirmed such a collectivistic orientation, whereby well-being was considered a state-generated not through the self, but through and with the extended family, siblings, and friends (Lambert & Pasha-Zaidi, 2014a, 2014b). On the other hand, at work Emirati youth have appeared to be more individualistic than earlier generations, scoring low on long-term commitment and loyalty to the social group from which individuals belong (Whiteoak et al., 2006).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that young Emiratis do not worry much about their future. The UAE is one of the countries with the highest levels of happiness, showing quite low levels of negative feelings among the citizen (Helliwell et al., 2017; Lambert et al., 2020; Poplavskaya & Karabchuk, 2018). The youth is not an exception as 94% of young Emiratis generally feel very or rather happy, and 84% of them enjoy their lives most or almost most of the time (Poplavskaya & Karabchuk, 2018). A recent study showed that in general, Emiratis are not worried about their future (Lambert et al., 2020). One of the key explanations for that is that the UAE government takes a lot of actions and develops policies to help their citizens to find good jobs.

30.3.1 Government Role and Social Policies for the Youth

In such an environment, where the flow of migrants is so intensive and the level of unemployed nationals is high, the government is trying to create special programs for promoting the employment of young nationals in the government and private sectors (Gonzalez et al., 2008). One of such programs is called Emiratization. The program is aimed at reducing the reliance on foreign labor (especially in high-skill fields and targeted sectors of the economy), training nationals in skills that are competitive both nationally and internationally, lessening unemployment of nationals, attracting youth on the labor market, making private sector more appealing for youth, and increasing the share of professional and skilled workers in growing sectors of the economy. The focus is on the development of two spheres of youth life: education and work, as well as on binding them. In the first sphere, the government suggests expanding the higher education facilities, connecting workforce demands and educational outcomes, concentrating on educational results.

To facilitate the successful transition from education to work the government implemented working training programs, internships in private and state organizations, career counseling and guidance, dialogue between private and public sectors, workforce and education institutions. In the sphere of work, the main actions were focused on implementing quotas, compliance mandates, employment policy levers (such as minimum wage requirements, taxes on businesses importing labor), taxes on salaries of imported labor, and higher visa and residency processing requirements, etc. (Al-Fakhri, 2004; United Arab Emirates Ministry of Information and Culture, 2006).

According to sustainable development goal 8 (SDG 8), it is significant to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all” (United Nations, 2021). Based on that, the UAE government highlighted the importance of the reduction of unemployment of youth through the “development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation...”, and aimed to provide “full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men including young people and persons with disabilities by 2030” (Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization, 2021). Moreover, to increase the number of Emirati youth working in the private sector, the UAE government recently announced to ensure 10% of the Emirati workforce on skilled roles in private companies within the next five years (Tolley, 2021).

To sum up, the scarcity of working positions in the public sector and rising competition in the private sector are becoming a more tangible hindrance for the young nationals to find an appropriate working position on the market. Moreover, the private sector continues to be the main recruiter of non-national workers, but the public sector is also changing toward hiring more foreigners. Under such conditions, it is crucial to explore the national youth labor market participation patterns.

30.4 Monitoring of Emirati Youth: Labor Market Participation Analysis

30.4.1 Data and Methodology

For the empirical analysis of employment patterns among Emirati youth, we use the data, collected within the project of Monitoring of Emirati Youth (MEY) in 2018. The survey investigated sociodemographic characteristics and labor market participation of Emirati youth as well as their attitudes to health, marriage, fertility, migration, politics, etc. The sample comprised 740 respondents aged 18–35 years old. The mode of survey data collection was face-to-face interviews administered with the help of a printed questionnaire.

Young women in the final sample outnumbered men, as 82% of the respondents were female. On the one hand, this sample bias is a limitation for the study as it affects for the results. On the other hand, the sample does represent the current Emirati youth as a huge proportion of Emirati men in this age group are missing from the country due to their education abroad.

More than half of respondents lived in Abu Dhabi (57%) (the largest emirate by the size of the national population), 11% in Fujairah, 10% in Ajman, and the rest live in other emirates. 54% of respondents live in cities or big cities, 29% live in towns, and only 17% in villages. As for the socioeconomic characteristics, 13% of respondents evaluated their family income as low, 56% as normal and 31% as high. Only 4% of Emirati youth live independently from their parental family, others live with their parents or parents-in-law. The distribution by education showed that 62% had higher educational attainment (Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral degree), and the rest had higher school certificates and were in the process of receiving their university or vocational education degrees. 23% of the respondents reported being married. 18% of married youth had children (two children on average).

In terms of employment status, 20% of the respondents had a paid job and 10% reported being unemployed. We follow the ILO definition of unemployment and identify those who are unemployed when a person does not have a job, is searching for a job, and is ready to start the job within the next two weeks. This number is pretty in line with the official statistics on youth unemployment for 2018. Among the employed Emirati youth, 78% were working in the government sector, 20% of youth work for a private company, and only 2% are involved in a family business. 44% of employed youth had a permanent work contract, 42% had a fix-term contract, 10% worked unofficially (by oral agreement) and 4% reported being self-employed.

30.4.2 Labor Market Participation of Emirati Youth

Five employment status groups of Emirati youth were identified from the data: students, employed students, employed non-students, unemployed youth, and non-active youth (who reported not studying, not working, and having no wish to get a job). Non-working students comprised 62% of the sample, 5% of the youth were working while studying, 14% of youth were employed Emiratis who had finished their education, 10% were unemployed youth, and the rest 9% were classified as non-active (Table 30.1).

The first group of Emirati youth is the most numerous and it represents students, who do not have a paid job. It is the youngest group in the sample, most of them are not married. The next group also represents students, but they are employed. The men comprise 1/3 of that group, which is three times more than among not employed students. This result is in line with the fact that the number of young Emirati females is exceeding the number of young Emirati males in higher education institutions (Abdulla & Ridge, 2010; Gonzales et al., 2018). Since 2008, over 70% of Emiratis pursuing undergraduate degrees have been women (Abdulla & Ridge, 2010; Fox, 2018; Samier, 2015). Thus, Emirati females account for 71% of students in the largest UAE University (Gonzales et al., 2018). Among the HCT Emirati graduates, 56% were females. And even among the Emirati graduates from the private institutions, 64% were females (Gonzales et al., 2018). Most Emiratis men study abroad or are engaged in the army or police academic institutions (Ahmed, 2003).

The third group, employed non-students, is the oldest group in the sample. Half of them are males. Half of the employed non-students are married and have children, 17% of the employed non-students are living independently from their older parents, which is the highest percentage among the employment status groups among the youth.

Unemployed and non-active youth comprise 1/5 of the sample. It is important to compare these two groups as they differ by the desire and readiness to be involved in the labor market. There are two times more married young people among the non-active than among the unemployed. These are mainly female homemakers who chose not to work outside the household since more of them have children to take care.

Table 30.1 Employment status groups of the Emirati youth, percent (N = 740)

Category	Percent
Students	62
Employed students	5
Employed non-students	14
Unemployed youth	10
Non-active youth	9

Source The Monitoring of Emirati Youth, 2018

Interestingly, these employment status groups do not differ significantly by geographical area and income. Despite the expectations of lower income for those who are unemployed or non-active, the analysis showed that income does not correlate with the employment status of Emirati youth. On average, the youth evaluated their income as of 6.5 on the 10-point scale (Table 30.2).

30.4.3 The Transition from School to Work and Employment Trajectories of Emirati Youth

What ways to find a job do Emirati youth use? The empirical MEY data of 2018 allows discussing how the current youth are looking for jobs in the UAE. The analysis of MEY data demonstrated that the most popular way for unemployed youth was to send CVs to the companies (42% of students and 51% of unemployed). However, most of the employed youth specified that they got their jobs with the help of personal liaisons such as family and friends (44% of employed non-students and 43% of employed students). Another way to obtain employment positions for students was via help from the university (31%). And the youth, who completed their studies, found their jobs with the help of the government job center and job placement (25%).

It seems that these channels of job search are more efficient than sending CVs to companies. It means that the official mechanisms of finding jobs through CV applications are not efficient for the Emirati youth. The possible explanations of that could be that (1) the CVs of the youth are not strong enough to compete with other candidates; (2) high wage expectations of the youth; (3) high costs for the companies and organizations to recruit nationals; (4) high competition for the jobs from inside and outside the country; (5) lack of professional and soft skills acquired by Emirati youth, etc. This result is in line with the previous research in this field, which showed that younger UAE nationals see the utility of ‘wasta’ as important (Whiteoak et al., 2006).

Another series of alumni studies, conducted by the UAE University, demonstrated that indeed the process of job search is more time-lengthy for women. On average, it takes 9–12 months for graduate females to find a job, while it is 3–6 months for males. Among those who are employed, 90% declared that they found their first job within two years after their graduation. And among the unemployed female graduates, about 50% have been looking for a job for more than six months.

If we look at the work trajectories of Emirati youth, we will find the following interesting information. 80% of employed young Emirati men and women work in the government sector. Importantly, only half of employed youth have permanent contracts. Compared to other developing countries in the MENA region, the share of youth working without written contracts is very low (10%), and they are mainly full-time students who combine their studies with work. The self-employed youth is the least numerous group: only 4% of youth in the sample have their own business. Entrepreneurship is one of the ways to engage unemployed graduates into the labor

Table 30.2 The characteristics of employment status groups of Emirati youth

	Age (average number of years)	Male, %	Married, %	Have children, %	Number of children (average number)	Live without parents, %
Students	21.4 (SD = 2.8)	7	13	8	1.7 (SD = 1.5)	1
Employed students	23.6 (SD = 3)	27	19	18	1.8 (SD = 0.8)	0
Employed non-students	28 (SD = 3.6)	51	53	46	2.5 (SD = 1.3)	18
Unemployed	25.9 (SD = 3.7)	27	26	23	2.5 (SD = 1)	3
Non-active	27.2 (SD = 4)	25	47	44	3 (SD = 1.6)	7

Source The Monitoring of Emirati Youth, 2018

market and Emirati youth both males and females have great opportunities for start-up funds from the government.

The time of the working day also differs depending on the employment status of the youth. More than half of the employed non-students work regular 8 h per day or even more. In accordance with the UAE legislation, standard working hours are 40 h per week (8 h per day). Such workday is also common for 44% of the employed students. The hours spent on work correlate with the salaries. On average in 2018, employed youth aged 18–34 (non-students) earned approximately 18,544 AED per month while those who combined studies and work earned about half of the sum—9977 AED per month.

About one-fourth of employed youth work as managers and highly qualified specialists (CEOs, top-managers) or professional and technical specialists (doctor, teacher, engineer, artist, accountant, nurse). As for the economic activity, 25% of employed youth are engaged in the education sector, 15% work in finance; 10% of employed youth work in.

The data shows that employed Emirati youth start their working career approximately at the age of 22, and the employed students find jobs at the age of 20. It is important to note here that the early start of the working life does not mean that the first job matches their education profiles. Thus, only 55% of working students confirmed that their current job does match their educational qualifications. Among those who finished their studies and are working full-time already 66% declared that their job matches their professional skills received at the university. There are no significant differences in job satisfaction and worries about losing their jobs between employed students and non-students. The average level of job satisfaction for all the employed Emirati Youth is 6.8 (out of 0 possible points). And the level of worry is low and equals 2.4 (on the 10-point scale) (Table 30.3).

30.5 Conclusions

This chapter is dedicated to the discussion of such important challenges like youth unemployment in the UAE as a case study of one of the GCC countries. The numbers of those young people who seek for jobs and are ready to start them are sharply increasing in all GCC countries reaching the highest number in Saudi Arabia at 29%, like in many MENA region countries. In the UAE, the growth was rather smooth: from 6% in 2000 to about 8–9% in recent years. The UAE peculiarity is that there is a significant gender gap in unemployment rates. Young females suffer from unemployment much more than males, the unemployment rates equal to 6% for males and 16% for females.

The reasons for this phenomenon include (a) better educations of the males (since most of them study abroad); (b) guaranteed placement for the young men who choose a career in the police and army; (c) inability to travel more than 50 km from the house for work among the females; (d) family restrictions to combine work and parental duties for women; (e) lack of work experience and necessary skills to pursue a job

Table 30.3 The characteristics of work for employed Emirati youth

	Working in government sector, %	Having permanent contract, %	Working 8 h and more per day, %	Job tenure (average number of years)	Average salary (AED per month)	Match between job and qualifications (average, 0–10 scale)	Job satisfaction (average, 0–10 scale)	Worry to lose a job (average, 1–10 scale)
Employed students	86	39	44	3.3 (SD = 4.1)	9977	5.5	6.6	2.5
Employed non-students	78	48	69	6.2 (SD = 5.1)	18,544	6.6	6.8	2.4
Employed youth in total	80	46	62	5.5 (SD = 5)	16,238	6.3	6.8	2.4

Source: The Monitoring of Emirati Youth, 2017

among fresh female graduates from the UAE higher education institutions; (f) wage miss-expectations and lack of work ethics among Emirati female graduates and more (outcomes are based on the series of Employability studies conducted by the UAE University in 2020–2021).

In general, college students may be prepared academically, but they may lack soft skills, such as analytical reasoning, interpersonal skills, self-discipline, time, money, resources, and communication and technology skills (Bouland-van-Dam et al., 2021). Indeed, half of the unemployed alumni mentioned the necessity of extra qualifications and skills as one of their unemployment factors (Employability studies conducted by the UAE University in 2020–2021). Narrowing this gap between the skills employers seek and the skills applicants possess remains a challenge for businesses, higher education, students, and the government.

Previous study of Emirati youth showed that having a job contributes to positive aspects of well-being (feeling happy and not feeling sad), while unemployment is connected with feelings of loneliness and depression (Poplavskaya & Karabchuk, 2018). However, combining work with university studies seems to have a twofold effect on young Emiratis as it leads to less life enjoyment and more loneliness, but decreases depressive symptoms among the youth.

The empirical study used in this chapter demonstrated the possible career paths and difficulties in the transition from school to work. If we look at the youth category of age 18–34, we will see that most of them are still students. Moreover, male students more often take their studies abroad compared with female students, who get their higher education in the UAE (mostly in public universities). After the age of 22, the Emirati youth find their first jobs. It is important to note that about 96% of the university degree holders do actively search for jobs after graduation (Employability studies conducted by the UAE University in 2020–2021). The main channels of job search for the employed Emiratis were personal liaisons and university contacts while most unemployed graduates were trying to find jobs via submitting their CVs or by registering at the national employment service.

The rate of employment is much higher among male youth than among female youth, which could be also explained by family and childcare duties that women traditionally fulfill in the Arab region. 80% of the employed youth work in the government sector, but less than a half of employed youth have a permanent contract.

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Chapter 31

Chinese Investments in the Special Economic Zones in the Gulf Region: New Structural Economics Perspective



Luyang Zhou

Abstract The Gulf countries have shifted to a new development paradigm, pursuing economic diversification by constructing special economic zones (SEZs). By investing overseas, China has been involved in the development of SEZs in the Gulf region, especially since China proposed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In this chapter, through the analytical framework of New Structural Economics (NSE), I examine three projects of Chinese investments in the SEZs in the Gulf region — China-Oman Industrial Park in Duqm, the petrochemical and chemical fibre integrated project in Saudi Arabia’s Jazan City for Primary and Downstream Industries, and China-UAE Industrial Capacity Cooperation Demonstration Zone. By analysing how the projects grow and how they affect the development of the investment recipient countries, I argue that the “hard” and “soft” infrastructure provided by the recipient countries and the comparative advantages of the recipient countries have motivated the projects to grow. The three projects demonstrate the potential to contribute to the development of infrastructure in the SEZs where the projects are located and have assisted the investment recipient countries in striving for economic diversification and sustainable development.

Keywords Gulf · China · economic development · SEZ

31.1 Introduction

With the pursuit of sustainable development, the Gulf countries are seeking an economic transformation and a diversification of industries. Developing diversified industries has been facilitated through specially designated economic zones within Gulf countries to cultivate new engines for economic growth. Since the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was proposed, China has been making increasing efforts to develop and strengthen its relations with the Gulf States and to invest in the special economic zones (SEZs) in the Gulf region. As an emerging economy, China

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has achieved economic growth by establishing and developing SEZs domestically. Economic development has led to China's pursuit of promoting industrial upgrading and transnational connectivity, incentivizing Chinese enterprises to invest in SEZs in the Gulf region. This chapter examines how Chinese-invested projects grow in the Gulf region and how these projects affect the sustainable development of the Gulf states.

The existing literature that studies China's cooperation with the Gulf states concentrates on understanding the forms of bilateral cooperation (see Armijo, 2013; Fulton, 2019a, 2019b) and the factors that affect either side to formulate policies regarding bilateral relations (see Fulton, 2020; Bin Huwaidin, 2022; Young, 2019). Instead of adopting a macro-level analysis of foreign policy and geopolitics, this chapter aims to contribute to existing literature by focusing on the development and implications of specific projects that China invested in the SEZs in the Gulf region. Building the analysis upon the framework of New Structural Economics (NSE), an approach to examining the strategies for economic growth (Lin, 2011), this chapter focuses on three cases of Chinese-invested projects — China-Oman Industrial Park in Duqm, the petrochemical and chemical fibre integrated project in Saudi Arabia's Jazan City for Primary and Downstream Industries (JCPDI), and China-UAE Industrial Capacity Cooperation Demonstration Zone (CUICCDZ) — that have been developed as major projects of China's investment in the Gulf region since the BRI was proposed. With the analysis of scholarly works, policy documents, media reports, and trade data, I argue that the projects that China invested in demonstrate the willingness of the Gulf States to utilize domestic comparative advantages for sustainable economic development. The Chinese-invested projects grow in the Gulf SEZs where "hard" infrastructure is offered with the policy support provided by China and the Gulf states, and contribute to the development of infrastructure and new industries in the recipient countries.

The following sections of this chapter are developed in the following order. The chapter begins by reviewing the existing literature on China's economic connectivity with the Gulf region. NSE is then elaborated upon as the framework of analysis. To analyse how China has been incentivized to invest in the SEZs in the Gulf region, I investigate how China proposed the BRI and how the Middle East, especially the Gulf region, has become an important node in the BRI. Based on this background of China investing in the Gulf region, the three cases of China's investment in the SEZs in Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are studied. Finally, I discuss the role of Chinese investments in economic development in the Gulf region through a comparative analysis of the three cases.

31.2 China's Economic Cooperation with the Gulf States

China has been developing economic relations with the Gulf region for decades. Since China decided to reform and open up at the end of the 1970s, the country has been focusing on economic development. In the 1990s, the end of the Cold

War witnessed the development of economic relations between China and the Gulf States. Energy cooperation started to become a central topic in China's relations with the Gulf States (Calabrese, 1998). Oil importation to China has been facilitated. In the 1990s, Oman was a crucial partner for China's oil imports, given that Oman's crude oil was suitable for China's emerging oil refining technology at that time (Bin Huwaidin, 2002, p. 210). As for China's economic cooperation with Saudi Arabia, in the 1990s, the trade volume between the two countries increased, yet oil was not the major product that contributed to bilateral trade, as the quality of Saudi oil was incompatible with China's oil refinery industries at that time (Bin Huwaidin, 2002, p. 234). Still, China viewed Saudi Arabia as a partner for oil imports in the long term and managed to attract Saudi investments to China's oil refinery industries (Bin Huwaidin, 2002, pp. 234–235). In terms of the economic relations between China and the UAE at the end of the 20th century, oil trade was also a pillar in bilateral relations, and the UAE was regarded as another long-term oil trade partner for China (Bin Huwaidin, 2002, p. 250).

The twenty-first century witnessed the development of China's economic cooperation with the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and the economic ties in trade and energy between China and Saudi Arabia have been strengthened (Liu, 2016). In addition to trade and energy, other forms of economic cooperation between China and the GCC member states have been developed, as investment and infrastructure construction projects have become components in the economic relations (Qian & Fulton, 2017). The BRI proposed in 2013 has facilitated China-GCC economic cooperation. Both China and the GCC member states have been incentivized to develop economic connectivity. The GCC member states benefit from the economic cooperation with China given the volume of oil exportation, and China not only acquires the resource for economic development but also develops the potential to leverage the BRI as an approach to facilitating reconciliation in the Gulf region amid the rise of regional geopolitical conflicts (Niblock, 2017). Additionally, the development of the China-GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA) helps China retain energy security (Qian & Fulton, 2017), and China's investment in the development of manufacturing industries in the Gulf region contributes to China's goal of transforming its industrial capacity to the Middle East (Kenderdine & Lan, 2019). Amid the development of economic cooperation between China and the GCC member states, inter-personal and cultural communication between the two sides also increased (Armijo, 2013).

When focusing on China's economic cooperation with Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE since 2010, economic connectivity involves various aspects, including trade, investments, and the construction of infrastructure. Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE are early participants in the BRI, while the three countries develop cooperation projects with China based on their different types of political, economic, cultural, and geographical characteristics and comparative advantages (Fulton, 2020). The protests against youth unemployment in Oman led to political instability. As China has been a crucial trading partner of Oman, developing economic relations between China and Oman contributes to mitigating the problem of unemployment in Oman and providing China with the energy supply that is essential for economic growth

(Fulton, 2019a, p. 120). As China's important partner in the Gulf region, Saudi Arabia has developed a plan — Vision 2030 — that aims to facilitate sustainable economic growth and demonstrates compatibility with China's BRI in the sense that the bilateral cooperation projects have not only strengthened China-Saudi relations but also served the domestic and international policy objectives of the two countries (Fulton, 2019a, p. 73). Regarding China's economic cooperation with the UAE, the bilateral trade has made the UAE a crucial economic partner for China, and the bilateral cooperation contributes to mitigating the pressure that the UAE encounters in the Middle East regarding security affairs (Fulton, 2019a, pp. 140–141). Furthermore, as the UAE pursues economic diversification, acting as the re-exporter of Chinese products has become a component of the UAE's economic industries in addition to oil exportation (Fulton, 2019a, p. 141). On the other hand, although both China and the Gulf states are motivated to facilitate economic cooperation, the economic relations between the two sides have encountered challenges, given that the Gulf States, having been embedded in the international order led by the United States and having benefited from the trade ties with China, are confronted with a predicament amid the tension between China and the United States (Fulton, 2018).

31.3 The Framework of Analysis: New Structural Economics (NSE)

When examining the strategies for development, the notion of NSE takes structural changes and industrial upgrading into consideration (Lin, 2011) and stresses the positive changes that emerging economies could bring to other developing countries (Lin & Wang, 2017: 19). Lin (2011: 194) argues that, according to NSE, different countries reveal different "factor endowments" at different stages of development. Hence, the most suitable industrial structure for a country changes at different development stages, and requires the support of "hard" and "soft" infrastructure (Lin, 2011: 195). According to Lin (2011), development is a process instead of a dichotomized classification of developing countries and developed countries. In this sense, the strategies that a country adopts for development demonstrate the uniqueness of the country and do not necessarily derive from the experience of developed countries. Lin articulates that, in the process of development and industrial upgrading, in addition to the fundamental role played by market mechanisms for resource distribution, the development of infrastructure is essential as well and is expected to be supported by the government given the high externalities of developing infrastructure.

This chapter adopts NSE as the framework of analysis given the potential of NSE to capture the unique characteristics and "factor endowments" in the process of economic growth in developing countries. Although the Gulf countries are mostly rich in oil resources, each country presents different characteristics in pursuing economic development and develops different patterns of cooperation with China.

By adopting NSE as the analytical framework, this chapter develops a perspective to examine the characteristics and comparative advantages that a certain Gulf state demonstrates when developing cooperation projects with China. Additionally, NSE attaches importance to industrial upgrading and structural optimization, encourages the state to provide infrastructure and a market setting to facilitate industrial upgrading (Lin & Wang, 2017: 26), and stresses the potential positive changes that China, a developing country with rapid economic growth, would be able to bring to other developing countries (Lin and Wang, 2017: 19). In this sense, NSE provides a framework for the analysis of China's investments in the SEZs in the Gulf region, as the economic cooperation between China and the Gulf states involves the development of infrastructure and presents the actions conducted by developing economies to facilitate economic growth (for the list of developing countries, see United Nations, 2022).

31.4 BRI: China Goes Global

The BRI consists of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. In 2013, when China's President Xi Jinping visited Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan, the idea of developing a framework that connects China with Central Asia, West Asia, and Europe based on the routes of the ancient Silk Road was addressed. In the same year, during the president's visit to Indonesia, another framework — the Maritime Silk Road — was proposed. The two frameworks were then merged and developed to become the BRI that China proposed. In the BRI, the Middle East is regarded as the nexus that connects the Silk Road Economic Belt with the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (Scobell, 2018, p. 11), and is therefore crucial to China's goal of promoting transborder and transregional connectivity.

The BRI is rooted in China's domestic development objectives and foreign policy goals. As the economy develops, China has been pursuing industrial transformation and upgrading. The twenty-first century has witnessed a series of Chinese national appeals for industrial transformation and structural adjustment. In 2001, China proposed the 10th Five-Year Plan, a comprehensive development plan for the period from 2001 to 2005, in which the structural imbalance in Chinese economic development was spotted as a major problem, and the Plan articulates the importance of industrial transformation and structural adjustment (State Council, 2001). In China's 12th Five-Year Plan proposed in 2011, structural adjustment is described as the main direction of accelerating industrial transformation (Xinhua, 2011). The increasingly ageing population has also incentivized China to transfer domestic industries to developing countries with lower labour costs (Johnston, 2019).

At the foreign policy level, China has gradually shifted its focus from striving for a favourable international environment for domestic economic development to an increasing willingness to get involved in global economic development and exert more influence internationally (Ohashi, 2018). The Middle East, as the nexus of the BRI (Scobell, 2018, p. 11), is essential to China's goal of exerting more influence on

the global stage. China's 13th Five-Year Plan uses an entire chapter to elaborate upon the BRI, and the Five-Year Plan articulates that China aims to shoulder more international responsibilities, including providing aid, consultancy, and training sessions for developing countries in the field of economic policies, development plans, and human resources (Xinhua, 2016), indicating China's willingness for more involvement in international affairs.

31.5 China-Oman Industrial Park in Duqm

The economy of Oman has been dominated by the oil sector and is far from being regarded as diversified (Al-Mawali et al., 2016). In the 1990s, Oman proposed Vision 2020 for economic diversification (Yoel, 2018, pp. 1–2). According to Vision 2020, Oman aims to cultivate a more diversified economy, encourage the development of private sectors, and facilitate effective competition (Oman Ministry of Economy, n.d.). Based on Vision 2020, the Special Economic Zone Authority at Duqm (SEZAD) was established in 2011 and contains an area of 2,000 square kilometres, which is considered to be the largest SEZ in the Middle East and North Africa (SEZAD, n.d.). SEZAD is designed to be a comprehensive economic zone that develops not only logistics given the great significance of the zone as a port, but also industries, tourism, and education (HSBC, 2019, p. 2). The establishment and development of SEZAD have marked Oman's efforts to pursue economic diversification and to the reliance on oil trade in the country's economic growth (Castelier & Müller, 2019).

In May 2016, a contract was signed between the administrative authority of SEZAD and Ningxia Province of China. Both sides agreed to build a China-Oman Industrial Park in SEZAD that covers an area of 12 square kilometres with an overall investment of approximately 10 billion USD (Xinhua, 2018). China-Oman Industrial Park is the largest industrial park invested in by a single country and contains 35 planned projects, including oil exploitation, construction, logistics, and solar power, as well as hospitals, schools, and other infrastructure (China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). China-Oman Industrial Park is expected to attract more Chinese enterprises and investments to cooperate with various sectors in SEZAD, such as heavy industries, light industries, and tourism (HSBC, 2019, p. 2).

SEZAD has offered favourable policies for Chinese investors, including a tax exemption for 30 years and the lifting of financial constraints (CCPIT Ningxia, 2017), demonstrating the willingness to cooperate with Chinese investors to facilitate economic development and diversification. China's participation in SEZAD has promoted the development of infrastructure. In 2017, one year after signing the contract, China constructed roads and coordinated the electricity and water supply for the industrial park (CCPIT Ningxia, 2017). In 2018, China and Oman agreed to construct a power plant and a water desalination plant to supply enterprises in the light industries (SEZAD, 2018: 38). In this sense, China-Oman Industrial Park contributes to Oman's economic growth by developing infrastructure.

Furthermore, China utilized its comparative advantages to facilitate the development of human resources in Oman. Given that China has the experience of training skilled labour that has facilitated manufacturing industries, China has provided educational programmes for young Omani people, sharing management experience and holding training sessions in new technologies and human resources. Additionally, China has agreed to train 1000 young Omani people in petrochemical engineering, construction materials, renewable energy, and computer software, in order to enhance the young people's skills for future jobs in various sectors at SEZAD (SEZAD, 2018, pp. 40–41).

However, concerns regarding China-Oman Industrial Park have occurred in some aspects. First, it is questioned whether China's immense investments in Oman would result in debt burdens on the investment recipient country. Similar situations of massive investments that occurred in some African and Asian countries have led to difficulties for the recipient countries to pay the debt (*The Economist*, 2019). Second, the effect of promoting the employment of young Omani people that the Chinese-invested project aims to bring needs further evaluation. Due to the lower labour costs when an enterprise employ non-Omani workers, some Chinese investors tended to employ more non-Omani workers once the investors met the requirement of offering 10% of the total job vacancies of the enterprise to Omani people (Liu, 2019). The reluctance of some Chinese investors to hire more Omani people may hinder the effect of Chinese investments on promoting local employment and sustainable economic growth.

31.6 The Petrochemical and Chemical Fibre Integrated Project in JCPDI

Saudi Arabia has been dependent on oil for economic growth. In 1979, oil rents accounted for nearly 90% of the country's GDP. From 2000 to 2014, oil rents took more than 30% of the GDP of Saudi Arabia (World Bank, n.d.). Although oil has been a significant resource that Saudi Arabia has been dependent on for economic growth, the high dependency on oil, however, has brought risks to sustainable economic development. The fluctuations in oil prices in the international market have imposed instability on oil rents, hindered Saudi Arabia's potential for long-term economic growth, and incentivized the country to promote structural transformation and economic diversification. In 2006, Saudi Arabia decided to build JCPDI with an area of 106 square kilometres (Royal Commission for Jubail and Yanbu, n.d.). The geographical location of JCPDI on the Red Sea coast demonstrates the zone's strategic significance in international shipping and the zone's advantages of being able to connect with other cities in Saudi Arabia by air and by road networks. JCPDI aims to develop heavy industries, mining industries, petrochemical industries, and downstream industries by utilizing local agricultural, mineral, and other resources (Royal Commission for Jubail and Yanbu, n.d.).²⁰²⁰

In 2016, the Chinese enterprise Pan-Asia began to build a petrochemical and chemical fibre project in JCPDI with a planned investment of 3.2 billion USD (Yuan, 2019). This project aims to extend the upstream and downstream polyethylene terephthalate (PET) industrial chain by providing the main products that the industrial chain needs, including purified terephthalic acid (PTA), PET, and chemical fibre products (Pan-Asia, n.d.-a). According to Pan-Asia Saudi (n.d.-a), the petrochemical and chemical fibre integrated project is planned to be undertaken in three phases. The first phase is from October 2018 to August 2020, in which PET and PTA plants and other supporting equipment were planned to be developed. The second phase started in June 2019 and is planned to be completed in June 2021 by building new PET and PTA plants. The third phase started in July 2021 and is expected to be completed in June 2024. With the PET and PTA production developed from the previous two phases, the goal of this phase centres around the development of the chemical fibre industry by utilizing the upstream raw materials.

The project receives support from not only Chinese investors but also the Saudi Arabian government. On the side of Chinese investors, to take charge of the project, in 2017, Pan-Asia Saudi was established with offices in both Jazan and Riyadh (Pan-Asia, n.d.-a). Pan-Asia Saudi is a subsidiary of Pan-Asia, an enterprise that concentrates on the production of bottle-grade PET chips (Pan-Asia, n.d.-b). Pan-Asia Saudi has taken this project as a significant approach within the framework of BRI that strengthens China's relations with Saudi Arabia and promotes bilateral connectivity. On the official site of the enterprise, Pan-Asia Saudi articulates that the project not only matches the objectives of China's BRI but also connects with the expectations for development that Saudi Arabia conveys through Vision 2020 (Pan-Asia Saudi, n.d.-b). Apart from the enthusiasm presented by Chinese investors, Saudi Arabia has provided support for the project. The project enjoys long-term low-interest loans from the Saudi Industrial Development Fund, and the imports of machinery, equipment, and raw materials are exempt from customs duties (Pan-Asia Saudi, n.d.-c).

In this Chinese-invested project, the objective of economic diversification and the comparative advantages of Saudi Arabia have been unveiled. In 2016, Saudi Arabia proposed Vision 2030 to promote economic diversification and public employment as well as to reduce the impact of international oil price fluctuations on Saudi Arabia's economic growth (Moshashai et al., 2020). Although Saudi Arabia aims to develop diversified industries, the country values its economic potential of oil resources and leverages the advantages of oil for economic growth. In the National Industrial Development and Logistics Program, a part of Vision 2030 that focuses on industrial plans, oil, and oil-related industries are categorized as having "great untapped potential" for economic growth (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2019, p. 36). Based on the comparative advantages of oil resources, the development of the petrochemical and plastic industries is included in Saudi Arabia's plan for the first wave of development (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2019, p. 28). With the emphasis of leveraging oil resources and developing new industries based on oil, the petrochemical and chemical fibre project invested by the Chinese enterprise connects with Saudi Arabia's objectives of utilizing comparative advantages to develop new industries for sustainable development. The project unfolds revolutionary significance in the

process of economic diversification of Saudi Arabia, given that PTA production had not been developed in the country before Chinese investments arrived (Chen & Han, 2019, p. 21).

31.7 China-UAE Industrial Capacity Cooperation Demonstration Zone (CUICCDZ)

In the past decades, the economic development of the UAE has largely been dependent on oil and the global oil market (Mosesov & Sahawneh, 2005). In 2010, the UAE proposed Vision, 2021 (UAE Vision, 2021, n.d.), in which the notion “non-oil real GDP growth” was put forward as the priority of the UAE’s economic prospect (UAE Government, n.d.). Within the framework of Vision 2021, the UAE planned intends to develop a knowledge-based economy (Parcerro & Ryan, 2017), and to take advantage of the country’s geographical location to facilitate international finance, trade, and communication. To fulfil the objectives for development, the construction of Khalifa Industrial Zone Abu Dhabi (KIZAD) was unveiled to attract foreign investments. KIZAD aims to develop industries in multiple sectors, such as steel, packaging, and health care, by providing infrastructure, electricity, and water (KIZAD, n.d.). Furthermore, KIZAD enjoys the UAE’s geographical advantage as a node in international transportation and thereby unfolds the potential to facilitate international trade and communication.

As China’s largest export market and the second-largest trading partner in the Arab world, the UAE is one of China’s most important partners in the Middle East (China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). In 2017, China and the UAE signed an agreement to build CUICCDZ with an area of 12.2 square kilometres in KIZAD (Jiangsu Belt and Road Portal, n.d.). The project received a total amount of investment of approximately 6 billion RMB (China Daily, 2019). CUICCDZ aims to attract investments and enterprises in environmental-friendly and technology-intensive manufacturing industries and third industries, including building materials, food, finance, and packaging (All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, 2020).

The advancement of “hard” and “soft” infrastructure is a fundamental step in the development of CUICCDZ. Since 2018, “hard” infrastructure has been constructed by Chinese investors, including the building of the service centre of CUICCDZ, factory buildings, staff apartments, facilities for water and electricity supply, and an urban road network with a total length of approximately 8.5 kilometres and a total investment of 250 million RMB (SASAC, 2019). Apart from the development of “hard” infrastructure, a service platform was established, providing financial guidance, consultancy, and evaluation services to investors (China International Contractors Association, 2019). In 2022, as infrastructure has been developed (NDRC, 2022), CUICCDZ became available for enterprises to start to operate (Su & Yang, 2022). In addition to the efforts of Chinese enterprises to construct infrastructure, the UAE has

also contributed to the growth of CUICCDZ by providing favourable policies. Enterprises and individuals who invest in CUICCDZ are exempted from value-added tax, income tax, and consumption tax (All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, 2020).

The efforts of both China and the UAE to develop CUICCDZ are connected with the enhancement of bilateral relations between the two countries. In 2018, China's President Xi paid a visit to the UAE, and the two countries agreed to upgrade bilateral relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership, the highest level of partnerships in China's diplomatic relations (Fulton, 2019c). In July 2019, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi at that time, visited China, during which the two countries officially declared a series of measures to enhance the comprehensive strategic partnership and CUICCDZ was regarded as a significant project in bilateral cooperation in infrastructure, energy, and industrial capacity (Xinhua, 2019).

Economic complementarity between the UAE and China benefits not only Chinese investors, but also the development of the UAE. The comparative advantages of the UAE in transportation, international communication, and oil resources help Chinese investors save the costs of production and international shipping and thereby enhance the competitiveness of products in the global market. In addition, given the UAE has scarce rainfall and faces a shortage of water resources to develop agriculture, Sino-Science Fujian Photobiotech, a Chinese enterprise specializing in smart agriculture, signed an agreement to invest in the UAE (Ding, 2020), contributing to local agricultural development.

31.8 Discussion

The NSE framework concentrates on the role of comparative advantages, market, and governmental support of "hard" and "soft" infrastructure in structural transformation and economic upgrading. The analysis of the three cases contains an elaboration on the background of the SEZs receiving Chinese investments, the economic development pattern and industrial structure of each recipient country, the construction of "hard" and "soft" infrastructure, the comparative advantages of each recipient country, bilateral relations between China and the recipient countries, and bilateral economic complementarity. The Chinese investments and the settling of industries in the investment recipient countries follow the flow of structural transformation for both sides. The geographical advantages of the Gulf region and the rich oil resources have also incentivized China to build increasing connections with the Gulf states. By considering economic complementarity and the comparative advantages of the recipient countries, China's investments in the three cases centre around the industries that have already been developed in China domestically. These industries, on the other hand, meet the needs of the recipient countries regarding economic diversification and reduce the recipients' reliance on oil trade in the conventional pattern of economic growth.

The three cases also indicate how "hard" and "soft" infrastructure contribute to the development of the three projects in the Gulf region. As is shown in the three cases, the Chinese-invested projects in the SEZs in Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE have been reliant upon existing SEZs that provide roads, water, and electricity as "hard" infrastructure. Favourable tax policies, land rents, and other services attract various industries, sectors, and enterprises to the recipient countries. The "hard" and "soft" infrastructure helps to build a "local enabling environment" (Lin & Wang, 2017, p. 5) and makes the Chinese-invested projects more appealing to Chinese investors intending to establish enterprises in the Gulf region. In addition, since China invested in SEZs in the Gulf region, Chinese investors have built infrastructure for the projects they invested in. Taking the responsibility of attracting more Chinese investments from enterprises working in manufacturing and third industries, the Chinese investors that previously constructed and now operate the projects in the Gulf SEZs are motivated to develop the infrastructure in a short period and negotiate for more favourable terms with the recipient country for the Chinese-invested projects within the Gulf SEZs.

On the other hand, the three cases present different levels of cooperation between China and each recipient country. CUICCDZ enjoys the highest level of bilateral cooperation by being recognized as a project of governmental cooperation between China and the UAE, and thereby develops with the enhancement of political, economic, and cultural relations between the UAE and China. China-Oman Industrial Park in Duqm is another significant BRI project, but its evolution has not demonstrated the capability to be connected with a peak in Oman-China bilateral relations. The petrochemical and chemical fibre integrated project in Jazan City, with the smallest scale given that the project is not an industrial zone, obtains comparatively less attention diplomatically and politically.

The three projects demonstrate that industries from the emerging economy — China — have been transferred to Gulf countries with comparative advantages and enabling institutional environments. Yet, different local factors reshape the prospects of the Chinese-invested projects in the SEZs in the Gulf region. Although the three investment recipient countries — Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE — are experiencing the transformation from an oil-dominated economic growth pattern to economic diversification, the approaches adopted by the three countries vary and result in the differences between industries developed in the Chinese-invested projects in each country. While Oman has been trying to achieve economic transition by developing logistics and solar power, Saudi Arabia has adopted a comparatively different approach by developing heavy industries and petrochemical industries. The UAE's plan for economic transition presents another pattern of striving for sustainable development by facilitating the making of a knowledge economy, a digital economy, and a global financial centre.

31.9 Conclusion

Through the analytical framework of NSE, this chapter studies three cases—China-Oman Industrial Park in Duqm, the Petrochemical and Chemical Fibre Integrated Project in JCPDI, and CUICCDZ— as the indications of Chinese investments in the Gulf region. The chapter argues that the Gulf states have built an enabling environment for Chinese investors and the invested projects by providing “hard” and “soft” infrastructure. However, the three projects obtain different levels of favourable policies given that the levels of cooperation between China and each investment recipient country vary. Additionally, the approaches adopted by each investment recipient country to achieving economic diversification vary, and this leads to different sectors and industries that each investment recipient country encourages Chinese investors to develop. The three Chinese-invested projects have contributed to the economic development of the investment recipient countries. The projects utilize local comparative advantages to facilitate economic diversification. China-Oman Industrial Park in Duqm and the Petrochemical and Chemical Fibre Integrated Project in JCPDI develop manufacturing industries by utilizing comparative advantages of rich oil resources, and CUICCDZ facilitates the development of third industries by taking advantage of the UAE’s strategic geographical location. Furthermore, the three projects facilitate the economic growth of the Gulf recipient countries by constructing “hard” infrastructure, offering consultancy services, and sharing staff management experience. The arrival of Chinese investments in the Gulf SEZs has also contributed to the development of manufacturing industries that are new to the recipient countries but have been specialized in by Chinese enterprises..

This chapter aims to provide a new perspective on analysing China’s investments in the SEZs in the Gulf region, a topic that merits future research. The three Chinese-invested projects are still at the preliminary stage of constructing infrastructure and attracting investments. Given that the three projects are the recent development outcomes of China’s investments in the Gulf region, how the projects continue to grow and the long-term effect of the projects on the economic diversification and development of Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE needs future studies.

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Chapter 32

China in the Middle East: Foreign Direct Investment, Economic Transformation, and Regional Development



Guanie Lim and Mustafa Yağcı

Abstract This paper unpacks the uneven manners Chinese investment has taken shape in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). It takes 2013 as the watershed as it is the year when the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China's foremost diplomatic and economic strategy in engaging with the international community, was announced. The paper forwards three inter-related arguments. Firstly, Chinese firms have not usurped the traditional investors of the MENA (i.e. the US and key European states). Secondly, Chinese investment primarily favours MENA economies with large, young population and high endowment of natural resources. However, there seems to be a shift away to the other MENA economies in the post-BRI era. Thirdly, a significant portion of Chinese investment has financed energy-related activities during the pre-BRI era. The preference for energy-related investment has dropped somewhat after 2013 as Chinese TNCs participate in other activities such as tourism and real estate development.

Keywords Foreign direct investment · Economic development · South-South cooperation · The Middle East · China

32.1 Introduction

Following its 1978 'Reform and Opening-up' policies, China has experienced rapid and sustained economic growth. It has also recently become the second-largest economic entity in the world, trailing only the United States. China's burgeoning economic influence means that it is bound to play a more important role in the international economy (Yağcı, 2016). For example, it has become the largest trading partner of many countries, both in the Global North and Global South. The Chinese have also gained prominence in the realms of development finance and outward

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investment. According to some estimates, Chinese overseas development finance is at similar levels to that offered by the World Bank (Gallagher & Ray, 2020). Furthermore, China is the world's largest official creditor, lending at record levels to the low- and middle-income countries especially since the early 2000s (Gelpert et al., 2021).

Notwithstanding the above developments, China's rise has been largely interpreted in either a wholly positive or negative manner, often without in-depth, objective investigation. Such absolutist portrayals are observed across the globe, including the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).¹ For instance, several reports underline that China is advancing long-term economic, political, and security related strategic goals in the MENA region, with repercussions for both the US and Europe (Fulton, 2019; Lons et al., 2019). In contrast, Karen Young (2020) suggests that Chinese investment in MENA is far less compared to that of their US and European counterparts. She also argues that, when compared with US and European efforts, China spends less and creates fewer jobs in most of the region. Similarly, in some circles alleged China-Iran trade and military partnership negotiation is portrayed as a game changer for the MENA, highlighting Chinese ambitions to leap from a regional to a world hegemon (Cohen, 2020). Yet, others have interpreted these assertions as hype, suggesting instead that China has similar agreements with many MENA countries and the alleged figures in the reports are exaggerated (Stone, 2020).

More recently, there is a tendency to portray Chinese investment and development finance activities as part of a 'debt-trap diplomacy'. This claim became popular after the announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013. According to this argument, Chinese authorities support massive infrastructure projects by offering loans in strategically located developing countries. Subsequently, when these countries face difficulty paying back their debt to China, they become entangled in a 'debt-trap' (Chellaney, 2017). For China, it is even better if massive infrastructure projects are not financially viable and/or recipient countries struggle in paying back their debt since this would allow China to advance its goals across the world. However, debt-trap diplomacy-related allegations are also refuted by several scholars. Jones and Hameiri (2020) posit that economic factors rather than political or strategic objectives are the main driving force behind BRI projects, China's fragmented and poorly coordinated development finance system cannot pursue strategic objectives, and BRI projects are mostly pursued by recipient countries because of the latter's own political economy imperatives.

The point here is that it is easy to find extreme, partial views to either support or denounce Chinese capital exports (including but not limited to outward investment). The onus is on scholars to bring an evidence-based, objective analysis of Chinese economic activities to the table, offering a better understanding of China's role in a rapidly changing global economy. In this paper, we aim to achieve this objective by analysing Chinese investment activities in the MENA region. We will focus exclusively on foreign direct investment (FDI) rather than other forms of capital exports

¹ Insights on different regions of the world can be found in, for example, Southeast Asia (Camba, 2020; Lim et al., 2021), Pacific Islands (Hameiri, 2015), and Central Asia (Hofman, 2016).

(e.g. loans, grants, and portfolio investment).² The emphasis on FDI is twofold. First, it represents a long-term commitment by the capital exporting countries. Second, it involves a long-term change in ownership, granting investors effective control or at least substantial influence over decision-making. This means that investors are less likely to sell the acquired assets in the short run. To the extent that data is available, the paper will make a distinction between the pre-BRI and post-BRI periods. This viewpoint offers us a long-term perspective on Chinese investment into the MENA, covering change and continuity over a period of almost two decades. More specifically, the paper shall compare and contrast the volume, country destination, and sectorial distribution of FDI inflows from China vis-à-vis the region's traditional investors and financial powerhouses.

The main argument here is that Chinese FDI in the MENA is considerably 'smaller' and 'more multifaceted' than what popular rhetoric suggests. Although the BRI has occasionally been seen as a 'gamechanger' in the region, its impact—while still noticeable—is perhaps more modest than expected. Firstly, Chinese transnational corporations (TNCs) have not usurped the traditional investors of the MENA (i.e. the US and key European states), whether in the pre-BRI or post-BRI phases. In addition, Chinese TNCs have to compete with wealthy regional investors, especially those from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Secondly, Chinese FDI primarily favours the MENA economies with large, young population and high endowment of natural resources such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq. However, there seems to be a shift away to the other MENA economies in the post-BRI era as Chinese TNCs gain more market knowledge and technological competence as well as respond to the shifting political economic dynamic (e.g. slumping oil price and civil strife) within the MENA. Thirdly, a significant portion of Chinese FDI has financed energy-related activities during the pre-BRI era. The preference for energy-related investment has dropped somewhat after the BRI was announced in 2013 as Chinese TNCs participate in other activities such as tourism and real estate development. To some extent, this diversification is driven by the Chinese economy's transformation such as its growing middle class who favour more consumption-related services.

Data on the *flow* and *stock* of FDI was obtained from the statistical database of the Arab Investment and Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhaman), a key regional organization. In addition, this paper retrieved the *flow* of Chinese FDI from the American Enterprise Institute, a public policy think tank based in Washington, DC. To the best of our knowledge, these two organizations keep some of the most updated statistics on Chinese FDI entering the region.³ Whenever possible, the paper takes

² There is, of course, some enterprising work conducted on China's overseas lending activities. For example, a recent study is carried out by Gelpern et al. (2021). They examine 100 debt contracts between Chinese state-owned entities and 24 foreign governments, totalling USD 36.6 billion of commitments. Although these 100 debt contracts are only a tiny portion of the more than 2000 loan agreements signed since 2000 between Chinese state-owned lenders and foreign countries, this systematic analysis provides an evidence-based analysis, going beyond one-sided popular narratives.

³ Dhaman's members are Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, UAE, and Yemen. The American Enterprise Institute defines MENA as Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait,

2013 (the year the BRI was formally announced) as the separation line, unpacking the differences and similarities between the pre-BRI and post-BRI stages. The use of these sources of information allowed for data verification and triangulation, resulting in a clearer reading of the situation from multiple perspectives.

The paper begins by critiquing some of the common narratives surrounding China's 'going out' dynamic. It sheds light on the gap between on-the-ground happenings and popular writings. It also calls for a more context-rich perspective on the MENA, not least to prevent a homogenization of the region's political economy. In the next section, the paper analyses the quantitative dimension of Chinese FDI, comparing it to FDI from other investors entering the MENA. The flow of FDI—representing the short-term dynamics—will be examined. Thereafter, the stock of FDI—representing the long-term evolution of the regional business landscape—shall be unpacked. The paper then shows us where Chinese FDI has flown towards, unpacking it on a country-by-country basis. The subsequent section provides an industry-by-industry breakdown of Chinese FDI inflow. The paper concludes with a summary of the main findings and suggests avenues for future research.

32.2 Conceptual Background: The Popular Narratives

As mentioned previously, the rise of China has been largely interpreted in an almost absolutist manner. While an in-depth discussion of these issues falls outside of the paper's remit, it is important to highlight several popular views, not least to facilitate an understanding of the topic at hand. Firstly, there is a perception that China, through its FDI, is attempting to forward its economic, political, and security related strategic goals in the MENA region (Fulton, 2019; Lons et al., 2019). One of the major assumptions behind this school of thought is that political and strategic influence begets economic prowess and vice versa. This implies that Beijing has full autonomy over the internationalization of its state-owned enterprises (SOEs). However, empirical observations pour cold water on it. For Liou (2009), her research on Chinese FDI in the oilfields of Sudan suggests that bureaucratic control over the SOEs is tenuous. This in turn led to a fierce bidding war between two of its state-owned enterprises (SOEs)—China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation (Sinopec) and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC). As a result, their ventures outside of China has not yielded as much influence as what is commonly believed. More importantly, although China has managed to groom multiple wealthy SOEs in key industries, many of them still lack overseas exposure (Liu & Tsai, 2020).

Relatedly, Chinese economic activities abroad (including outward FDI) have been said to constitute a 'debt-trap diplomacy'. This 'merchant of Venice' portrayal means that financially unfeasible projects are offered to developing country governments

Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, UAE, and Yemen. The authors acknowledge both organizations' slightly different classifications, but do not expect a vastly different outcome from what is presented here.

so that the latter will be forced to auction off key national assets to Beijing when repayment is no longer possible. However, in-depth research shows that political elites in relatively weak and small states are relatively adept in engaging with Chinese firms to advance key projects, possessing ample autonomy to hold and even bolster their positions (Camba, 2020; Liu & Lim, 2019).

Within the context of the MENA, the above narratives also oversimplify what is a very fluid dynamic. For one, these narratives uncritically homogenize the region (and more broadly, the rest of the developing world). For anyone who has substantial exposure and experience in the political economy of the MENA, it is not an exaggeration to claim that each country is rather different from the other.

Take hydrocarbon deposits, often the desired assets of TNCs, for example. There is substantial variation across the MENA, with Saudi Arabia possessing one of the deepest reserves in the world while Yemen having relatively small amounts. Additionally, the type of hydrocarbon varies from one country to the other, with crude oil and natural gas the two largest sources. Although TNCs have generally been welcomed to extract and process these hydrocarbon deposits, the management style of each MENA economy displays substantial heterogeneity. Notwithstanding its hydrocarbon deposits, the MENA's strategic location between East–West trade routes, has also long attracted the attention of other international players such as the US and various European states. Even if the Chinese TNCs wanted to ‘buy up’ the region, they will face substantial resistance from both the Western powers and the local, regional powers.

Another popular narrative is about the notion that state capitalism is emerging as a viable economic development model in the Global South, thanks to a large extent the economic development experience and the global ascendance of China (Bremmer, 2008; Kurlantzick, 2016; Kutlay, 2020). Relatedly, it is suggested that a new global development paradigm, the ‘Beijing Consensus’, is emerging (Ramo, 2004). The growing weight of China-led initiatives such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, New Development Bank, BRI might alter the development trajectory of other nations, not least those in the Global South (Yağcı, 2016). Nevertheless, China's *very* unique historical, social, political, economic, and demographic conditions means that it is extremely unlikely that other countries can replicate its development pathway (Kennedy, 2010; Naughton, 2010). While there are certainly claims that China aims to export its economic model (Economy, 2019), the contradictory and evolving nature of Chinese development experience render replication of the Northeast Asian nation's development model in other countries very unlikely (McNally, 2012).

Another aspect of the Chinese influence in other countries is through economic and cultural diplomacy activities. The main objectives behind Chinese soft-power oriented economic diplomacy activities can be cited as creating a positive image in the global arena, a perception of opportunity rather than a threat especially in the eyes of developing countries, and a global system conducive to China's economic and political rise (Yağcı, 2018). Recently, some Chinese economic, cultural, and political activities in foreign countries have been framed as an example of sharp power. More to the point, certain analysts claim that China aims to distort the political environment to

its advantage by censorship, manipulation, impairing free expression, compromising and neutralizing independent institutions (Walker, 2018; Walker et al., 2020). It is argued that China utilizes sharp power to export its authoritarian capitalism to other countries and political activities for this purpose are framed as purely economic to avoid scrutiny.

These debates on Chinese influence in other countries is likely to persist due to the growing role China plays in international politics and global economy. Rather than choosing a for or against camp in these controversies, scholars should strive to bring empirical evidence for their claims and try to contextualize Chinese influence in different regions and countries. Only with reliable evidence, we can have a more complete understanding of China's place in global affairs and how other countries are affected by these transformations. In the next section, we specifically focus on Chinese FDI activities in the MENA region to serve this purpose.

32.3 Chinese FDI in MENA: Analysis and Results

1) Is China Outcompeting the Traditional Investors in the Middle East and North Africa?

According to Table 32.1, between 2001 and 2012, the list of the biggest investment countries in the region are (in descending order): France, Kuwait, the US, the UAE, the UK, Saudi Arabia, Japan, the Netherlands, China, and Germany. These countries collectively invested USD 211.5 billion (70.5% of total FDI flow amounting to USD 300 billion) into the MENA during this period. For China, it was ranked ninth in the pecking order, contributing 4.1% of inward FDI flows.

Table 32.1 10 Largest Investors in the Middle East and North Africa by Flow of FDI, 2001–2012 (Percentage)

Country	Market Share (%)
France	12.7
Kuwait	11.8
US	10.2
United Arab Emirates	8.4
UK	6.0
Saudi Arabia	4.7
Japan	4.7
Netherlands	4.3
China	4.1
Germany	3.6
Total	70.5

Source Dhaman Investment Attractiveness Index (2014) Report

Table 32.2 illustrates the year-by-year ranking of the three biggest investors in the Arab countries from 2010 to 2019. Because of data limitation, the scenario is unclear for some of the years. Surprisingly, China does not appear in any of the years under survey. What can be gleaned, however, is that the US and France are significant players as they appear four and three times, respectively, in the list during the period observed. Table 32.2 also shows the clout of the regional investors (i.e. Saudi Arabia and the UAE) from 2017 to 2019. Perhaps because of their petrodollar surplus, they have accumulated enough capital to invest into their MENA neighbours.

Overall, there seems to be some continuity between the pre-BRI (pre-2013) and post-BRI (2013 onwards) periods when it came to the *flow* of FDI. Firstly, France, the US, the UK, the UAE, Saudi Arabia have maintained their position as traditional investors between these two periods. Secondly, there does not seem to be solid evidence to suggest that China (a non-traditional investor) has moved up the pecking order after the BRI's 2013 announcement. In other words, Chinese investors are not prominent players in both the pre- and post-BRI period.

What about the *stock* of FDI? Table 32.3 shows that Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries (OECD) investors constitute a dominant bloc, occupying the top five slots in 2012 and 2014. In particular, US investors have topped the charts for the entirety of the period observed. It has even entrenched its stock of FDI from 27 to 31% between 2012 and 2014, if one accounts only for the OECD's contribution. France and the UK are the other prominent investing countries, but they seem to be challenged by Italy, the Netherlands, and Switzerland.

2) Which Middle East and North Africa Countries are the Chinese Investing their Money Into?

Figure 32.1 provides a country-by-country analysis of the inward flow of Chinese FDI entering the region during the pre-BRI period (2005–2012). The four largest recipients are Iraq (46%; USD 9.3 billion), Saudi Arabia (24%; USD 4.9 billion), Syria (18%; USD 3.8 billion), and Egypt (8%; USD 1.6 billion). These four economies garnered 96% (close to USD 20.0 billion) of Chinese FDI during the period observed. While the underlying rationale for Chinese investors entering these four markets will vary on a case-by-case basis, it must be pointed out that they share some commonalities, i.e. a fairly large, young population and some natural resources (extremely high on a per capita basis for Saudi Arabia and Iraq).

Compared to the pre-BRI era, Chinese FDI inflow into the region has undergone some changes from 2013 to 2019 (see Fig. 32.2). Firstly, the major recipient states have increased from seven to eight. New entrants include the UAE, Jordan, Oman, Kuwait, and Morocco. They usurp Syria, Yemen, Sudan, and Qatar. This suggests that Chinese TNCs have begun to target MENA economies that are outside of their 'comfort zone' (i.e. Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Egypt).

Secondly, the UAE has emerged as the largest FDI destination for Chinese TNCs, garnering a 40.3% market share (USD 7.8 billion). Compared to the pre-BRI era, Iraq and Saudi Arabia saw their market share slip while Egypt (20.6%; USD 4.0 billion) became the second-most popular Chinese inward FDI destination. Meanwhile, Syria

Table 32.2 Top Three Investors in the Middle East and North Africa by Flow of FDI, 2010–2019 (Percentage)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
N/A		US (14%)	France (20%)	N/A	Holland (25%)	N/A	N/A	Russia (46%)	UAE (24%)	UAE (14%)
		France (10%)	US (14%)		US (18%)			Saudi Arabia (7%)	France (19%)	US (14%)
		Germany (9%)	UK (12%)		Italy (15%)			UAE (6%)	Hong Kong (8%)	Saudi Arabia (11%)

Source Dhaman multiyear reports and statistical database

Table 32.3 Top Five Investors in the Arab Countries by Stock of FDI, 2012 and 2014 (Percentage)

2012	2012*	2014*
US (20%)	US (27%)	US (31%)
France (11%)	France (21%)	Netherlands (24%)
Italy (7%)	UK (16%)	Italy (17%)
Switzerland (6%)	Italy (16%)	France (12%)
UK (5%)	Switzerland (8%)	UK (9%)

*: Data does not include investors from non-Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries. *Source* Dhaman (2014, 2015, 2016) Investment Attractiveness Index Reports

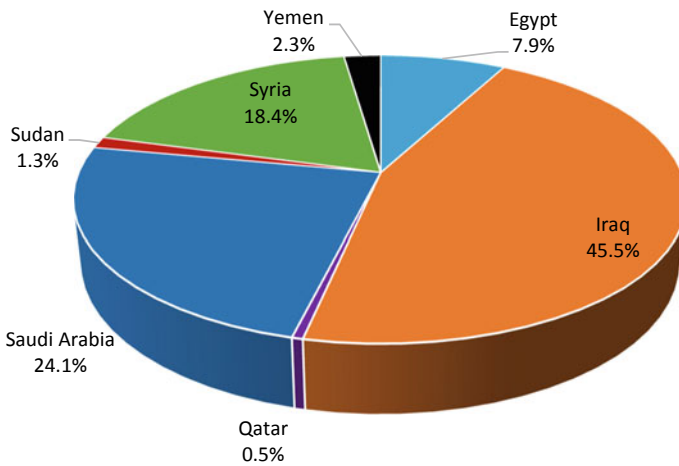


Fig. 32.1 Chinese Investment Flow in the Middle East and North Africa, 2005–2012 (Percentage) (*Source* American Enterprise Institute, China Global Investment Tracker)

(third-largest recipient of Chinese FDI in the pre-BRI period) dropped out of the list entirely.

This reshuffling is likely a result of both push and pull factors. For example, the political dynamics in the MENA have changed between the pre-BRI and post-BRI era. One of the most notable cases is the Syrian civil war, which erupted in 2011 and has shown little signs of abating. The conflict has not only reduced Syria’s appeal to prospective investors, but also fostered unrest in parts of the region (e.g. neighbouring Iraq). For China, its firms have grown more sophisticated, learning better marketing methods and managerial skills as they familiarize themselves with conducting business abroad. As such, they have learnt to explore alternative markets (such as UAE and Jordan), moving away from large recipient states with high endowment of natural resources. Nevertheless, this diversification still appears to be partially

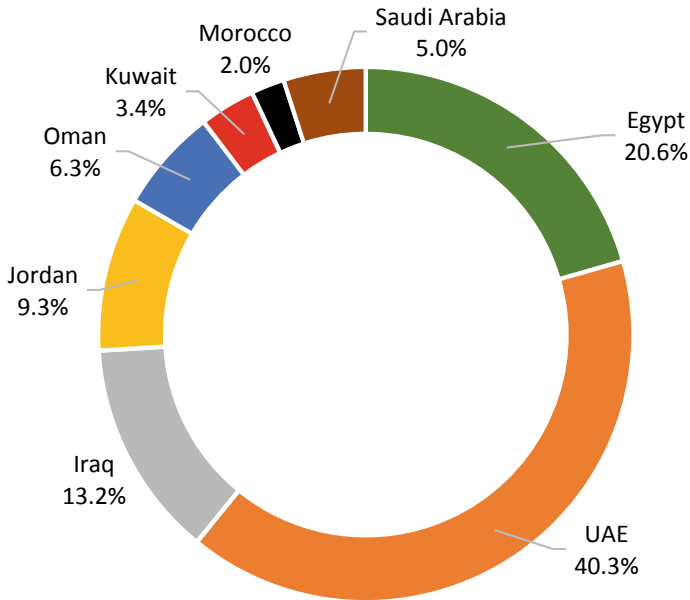


Fig. 32.2 Chinese Investment Flow in the Middle East and North Africa, 2013–2019 (Percentage)*
 *: Data for 2014 not available (Source American Enterprise Institute, China Global Investment Tracker)

motivated by natural resources as many of the recipient economies in Fig. 32.2 are hydrocarbon-rich (especially on a per capita basis).

3) Which Industries are the Chinese Investing their Money Into?

Figure 32.3 shows the industry-by-industry breakdown of Chinese investment in the MENA from 2005 to 2012 (i.e. pre-BRI phase). A significant portion of Chinese FDI has financed energy-related activities. The second-largest sector industry that Chinese TNCs entered into is metals (10.5%; USD 2.1 billion). Real estate (1.4%; USD 280 million), other (1.1%; USD 230 million), and logistics (0.7%; USD 150 million) made up the rest of the portfolio.

Figure 32.4 highlights the industrial distribution of Chinese investment in the region after the BRI was announced. The energy industry still drew the largest share, amounting to 77.3% of Chinese FDI inflows (USD 14.9 billion). The second-largest sector is labelled ‘other’, without further detailed breakdowns. Nevertheless, it is followed by transport (5.2%; USD 1 billion), logistics (3.5%; USD 670 million), real estate (2.6%; USD 500 million), chemicals (2.6%; USD 500 million), and tourism (2.3%; USD 450 million). Compared to the pre-BRI era, it appears that Chinese FDI has become more diversified. This is especially so if one considers the reduced importance of energy FDI (dropping from 86.3% to 77.3%) and the rise of other industries such as chemicals and transport.

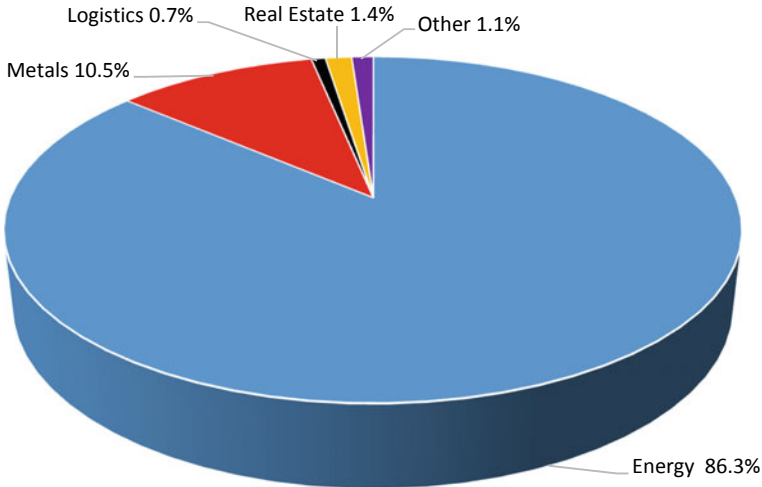


Fig. 32.3 Industrial Distribution of Chinese Investment Flow in the Middle East and North Africa, 2005–2012 (Percentage) (Source American Enterprise Institute, China Global Investment Tracker)

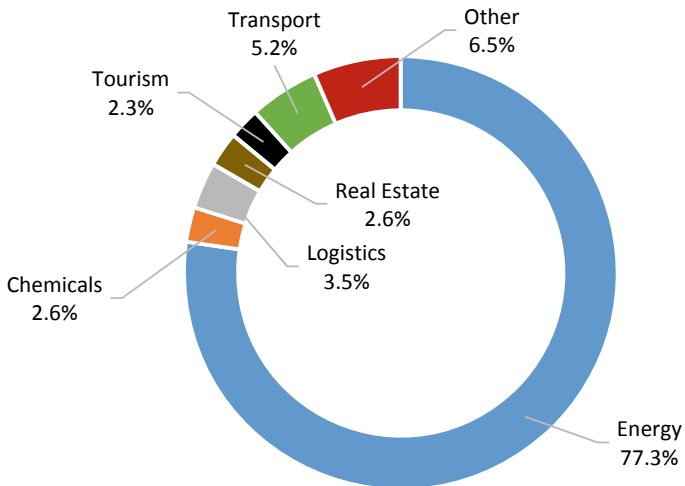


Fig. 32.4 Industrial Distribution of Chinese Investment Flow in the Middle East and North Africa, 2013–2019 (Percentage) *: Data for 2014 not available. (Source American Enterprise Institute, China Global Investment Tracker)

As discussed in the previous section, this diversification is likely a result of both push and pull factors. For the host economies, they have not remained static. Apart from the turbulence of the Syrian conflict, other factors include the drastic reduction of oil price, which are pushing some of the major MENA states to reorient their economies away from natural resources. For the Chinese, their TNCs are growing

aware of the need to better understand the regional market, targeting sectors outside of energy. In addition, China's increasingly wealthy middle class has also started to demand more consumption-related services such as tourism and overseas real estate purchases. Nevertheless, the reality is that the region's major economies will find it challenging to move away from the energy sector, at least in the near term. Therefore, the importance of the energy industry to Chinese TNCs might not decrease drastically as we move into the 2020s.

32.4 Conclusion

This paper has unravelled the uneven manners Chinese investment has taken shape in the MENA, covering change and continuity over a period of almost two decades. Three inter-related positions are forwarded. Firstly, there is no evidence (both during the pre- and post-BRI era) to show that Chinese TNCs have outinvested the traditional investors of the MENA (i.e. the US and major European states). What is more, Chinese TNCs have to contend with wealthy regional investors, not least those originating from Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Secondly, Chinese FDI has largely gone towards MENA economies that are large (in population size and economic output), host a young population, and possess high endowment of natural resources. Nevertheless, the data also suggests that, in the post-BRI era, Chinese investors have targeted other non-traditional MENA states. A possible rationale is that Chinese firms have acquired technical competence and gained more knowledge about the region, in addition to responding to the MENA's shifting political economic context. Lastly, a large proportion of Chinese FDI has gone towards energy-related activities during the pre-BRI era. In the post-BRI period, energy-related investment has dropped somewhat. The reduction in energy-related investment is supplanted by growing Chinese involvement in previously unheralded activities (e.g. tourism and real estate development).

The overall assessment is that Chinese FDI poses perhaps less of an impact than what is often talked about. In addition, Chinese FDI has to be measured over a longer horizon, if only to redress the tendency (in popular writings) to focus almost exclusively on the short term. Another advantage of adopting a longer horizon is that it reduces the statistical distortion caused by one-off, chance events. Relatedly, it allows researchers to see Chinese FDI through a dynamic perspective. As illustrated above, Chinese investment has undergone some changes over time. For one, Chinese FDI has definitively shifted from a preponderance of energy-related activities to a more balanced set of economic activities. This diversification is observed just as much in the MENA countries hosting Chinese investors. To some extent, such a change is driven by structural transformation and evolving demands within China itself.

More importantly, the attraction of FDI and even trans-border economic competition does not take place in a vacuum. With its rich and varied history, demography,

and physical geography, the MENA is no exception. This awareness not only underlines the region's heterogeneity, but also demonstrates that only certain types of FDI (from China or otherwise) are suitable to the development pathways of the respective MENA countries. Likewise, TNCs will only gravitate towards destinations that dovetail with their own commercial objectives. There is also a need to understand that, despite the accolades and naysaying in the popular press, China is fundamentally a latecomer to the global economy. Within the context of contemporary economics, the country only meaningfully joined the international production networks in the late 1970s. This 'lateness' implies that many of China's national firms are laggards when it comes to international ventures, although they have certainly gained much overseas experience in recent years. By the same token, Chinese TNCs are latecomers to the MENA, meaning that they have to overcome the 'incumbency effect' of the more established investors, both from within (e.g. the US and France) and without the region (e.g. Qatar and Saudi Arabia). The 'incumbency effect' in turn pushes the Chinese TNCs to less explored, popular markets as they make sense of a socio-political environment significantly different from their homeland, an observation seen in other developing regions (Lim, 2019).

Notwithstanding the findings here, this paper can still benefit from future research. An in-depth analysis of several MENA economies can yield potentially useful insights on how Chinese capital is transforming the economic development trajectory and state-business relations of the host economies. Recent research in Turkey—a close cousin of the MENA—shows that warmer ties with both China and Russia have seemingly pushed Turkey gradually away from its vaunted Western-oriented liberal economic model towards one of 'state capitalism' (Kutlay, 2020). This trend is in-line with the increasingly globalized business activities of Chinese TNCs, which furthers the appeal of state intervention in an international economy recovering only partially from the ravages of the deep financial crisis of 2008 (and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic) (Bremmer, 2008; Kurlantzick, 2016; Liu & Lim, 2019). Yet, this also arguably promotes state ascendancy, eroding orthodox belief in free markets and its associated ideals (e.g. democratic institutions, and limitations on state involvement in the economy).

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Chapter 33

Japan and the Gulf States: Friendship Prospects Under the FOIP Initiative



Habib AlBadawi

Abstract Japan’s strategy of “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy—FOIP” stands as a keystone approach in its relationship with the international community and Gulf countries, in particular, in the twenty-first century. The past two decades have shown growing and extensive friendly ties between the Arab Gulf states and Japan. Those ties have been mainly economic which includes significant bilateral trade. More recently, there are emerging signs of security cooperation, cultural exchange, and educational cooperation. In this chapter, I attempt to reveal the idea of FOIP, exploring the future possibilities of cooperation, partnership, and the alliance between Japan and the Arab world.

Keywords Japan · Gulf · Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy—FOIP · International Affairs · Middle East

Japan is an active and influential state in the international arena. Japan’s foreign policy is marked by two conflicting needs; developing good relations with the Arab states and Iran¹ on the one hand, states which are oil producers and are engaged in conflict with Israel, and maintaining Japan’s close alliance with the United States, on the other. This gives rise to the notion that Japan is balancing its dual dependencies on the two sides.²

The experience of the “Arab oil embargo” during the 1973 war³ by King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz⁴ continues to cast a shadow over the decision-makers in Japan (and the world) till today.⁵ It is worth mentioning that King Faisal had clearly warned

¹ Takenaka & Sheldrick (2019).

² Miyagi (2008).

³ Mihut & Daniel (2012, pp. 1042–1048).

⁴ **King Faisal bin Abdelaziz Al Saud** (1906–1975), king of Saudi Arabia from 1964 to 1975, was an influential figure of the Arab world known for his statecraft at home and his assertiveness abroad. *King Faisal Foundation (KFF)* (n.d.).

⁵ Shwadran (2019).

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Japan during the 1972 visit⁶ that Japan's continued support to US policies in the Middle East would have serious consequences. Yet, the 1973 oil shock came as a complete surprise to Tokyo's policymakers.⁷

Japan's desire to avoid conflict and maintain neutrality on various contentious Middle East issues have shaped its policy toward the Middle East region. It has tried to bridge the gap between United States and Arab states.⁸ The Japanese economy largely relies on oil supplies from the Arab region.⁹ Japan's priorities in the Arab world include:

1. Enhancing shared prosperity through fair, reciprocal trade, and private sector investment in the Indo-Pacific.
2. Cooperating with regional partners in areas such as energy, infrastructure, and the digital economy.
3. Promoting governance and civil society in areas that include preventing corruption; securing nations' autonomy from foreign coercion; promoting transparency, the rule of law, protecting human rights, and fundamental freedoms.
4. Ensuring a peaceful and secure regional order that safeguards navigational rights and freedom in the Arab countries, confronts common threats, protects shared resources, and upholds sovereignty.

Qatar and Japan have been major trade partners since the establishment of their diplomatic relations in 1972. Their relationship is founded primarily on the energy trade, as Japan imports a significant amount of its Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) requirements from Qatar.

However, over the past 40 years, their relationship has developed beyond the energy into education, technology, culture, and humanitarian sector. In the wake of the March 2011 earthquake and subsequent tsunami, Qatar pledged 4 million tons of LNG export to Japan to meet the surge in energy demand in the disaster struck country.¹⁰

The Japanese "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" FIOP¹¹ strategy recognized the pivotal role played by the Gulf Cooperation Council¹² in the global economy. Japan's

⁶ (2017). (شاهد قبل 46 عامًا.. زيارة الملك فيصل لليابان). Translation: *46 Years Ago ... The Visit of King Faisal to Japan*.

⁷ Nester & Ampiah (1989, pp. 72–88).

⁸ Miyagi (2008).

⁹ Japan still reliant on Middle Eastern oil (2020)

¹⁰ *Qatar friendship fund* (n.d.).

¹¹ **FOIP** is the most important feature of Japan's foreign policy under the Abe Administration. One of the most important questions is whether this vision aims to contain a rapidly rising China. Along with the amelioration of the relationship between Japan and China, this diplomatic strategy has been evolved from the quadrilateral security cooperation among leading democracies in this region, namely the United States, Japan, Australia, and India, to a more comprehensive regional cooperation. *SPF* (2021).

¹² **Gulf Cooperation Council** is a regional intergovernmental political and economic union consisting of all Arab states of the Arabian Gulf except Iraq, namely: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The Charter of the GCC was signed on 25 May 1981, formally establishing the institution.

“الأمانة العامة لمجلس التعاون لدول الخليج العربية.” Accessed January 18, 2021. <https://www.gcc-sg.org/en-us/Pages/default.aspx>.

Africa, are rapidly developing. Their potential strength and the dynamism that is born from the confluence of the “two oceans,” the Pacific and Indian Oceans are the cornerstone of stability and prosperity. The Japanese prime minister expressed the intention of Japan to assist in the realization of prosperity in Asia and Africa (See Special Feature “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy”).¹⁸

Abe introduced the FOIP strategy during his first tenure as a prime minister. While delivering the speech, “The Confluence of the Two Seas”¹⁹ to the Indian parliament in August 2007, he emphasized that Japan and India—are like-minded maritime democracies, and they should promote freedom and prosperity in the “broader Asia.”²⁰ This strategy grew alongside the United States, Australia, and other Pacific nations into an immense network which assure the free flow of people, goods, capital, and knowledge.

Japan’s vision integrated more with India’s perspective.²¹ Abe introduced Japan’s vision of a region based on common values of democracy, freedom, and respect for human rights. The prime minister pointed to a “large network spanning the entirety of the Pacific Ocean, incorporating the U.S. and Australia, where transparency and openness are advantages allows the free flow of people, goods, capital, and information.”

Japanese diplomats and experts have built on Abe’s speech that asserts the four main powers: Japan, India, Australia, and the United States.²² It demanded concerted efforts to uphold the rules-based regional order, particularly the resolution of maritime disputes, securing the autonomy of trade, and navigation. The new Japanese strategy will pro-actively build peace based on “diplomacy that takes a panoramic view of the world map.”

In parallel, Abe pushed for an “arc of freedom and prosperity on the Eurasian Continent”²³ to support economic development and democracy and counter the China-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)²⁴ in Central Asia. In addition, Tokyo promoted the establishment of an “East Asian Community”²⁵ (Fig. 33.2).

To realize this strategy, there were further strategic cooperation plans with several countries. India enjoys a strong relationship with East Africa and the United States, in addition to its alliance with Australia. Cooperation with India is essential to Japan’s strategy and the relation between both the country was discussed during a visit to Japan by the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi in November

¹⁸ *Diplomatic Bluebook* (n.d.).

¹⁹ MOFA: Speech by H.E. Mr. Shinzo ABE, prime minister of Japan, at the Parliament of the Republic of India “Confluence of the two seas” (August 22, 2007) (n.d.).

²⁰ *The importance of Shinzo ABE* (n.d.).

²¹ *Japan-India Joint Statement* (n.d.).

²² The Quad.

²³ *A New Pillar for Japanese Diplomacy: Creating an Arc of Freedom and Prosperity* (n.d.).

²⁴ (2021). Shanghai Cooperation Organization. <https://eng.sectsco.org/>.

²⁵ *Towards an East Asian Community* (n.d.).



Fig. 33.2 FOIP²⁶

2016.^{27,28} Both Prime ministers shared views on developing an initiative toward a stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific region. Tokyo’s vision of “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy” and India’s “Act East Policy”²⁹ have the potential for a constructive synergy between both the countries.^{30,31}

33.1 What is the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy”?

The special advisor of the Japan’s Prime Minister, Kentaro Sonoura,³² stated during an interview:

²⁶ *A New Foreign Policy Strategy: “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy”* (n.d.).

²⁷ *Prime minister of India* (n.d.).

²⁸ (n.d.). <https://www.narendramodi.in/>.

²⁹ *Act East Policy of India* (n.d.).

³⁰ *Diplomatic Bluebook* (n.d.).

³¹ *The New Great Game* (2018).

³² *Profile of state minister for foreign affairs Kentaro SONOURA* (n.d.).

A free and open maritime order based on the rule of law is a cornerstone for stability and prosperity of the international community. In particular, the Indo-Pacific region is the core of the vitality of the world with its vast population and economic dynamism.

Japan has been promoting peace and stability in the region by developing the Indo-Pacific region as free and open “international public goods.

Japan is fostering core strategic objectives that include:

- Advocating and establishing free navigation and the rule of law;
- Pursuing economic prosperity by improving connectivity with quality infrastructure development under “international standards;” and;
- Securing peace and stability through capacity-building assistance in the areas of maritime law enforcement and disaster risk reduction.

While Japan targets its FOIP strategy the region encompasses ASEAN,³³ Bangladesh, India, the Middle East, and finally includes Africa. This region is inhabited by two-third of the world’s population. Economic growth in the twenty-first century is driven by countries in this region; FOIP strategy has the potential to boost economic prosperity of this region in the future.

According to the Australia’s Foreign Policy White Paper, Australia relies heavily on stability in the Indian and Pacific oceans, although Australia’s alliance with the United States remains the keystone in its national security. Canberra is expanding its security partnerships with other partners in the region, especially Tokyo. The security partnership between Australia and Japan is tied by a mutual interest in maintaining the rules-based regional order in the Indo-Pacific.

The Australian Foreign Policy White Paper³⁴ adopted the Indo-Pacific strategy, however it was neither tested nor defined except by a footnote definition that describes this strategy as a geographic region that encompasses every continent but Europe. It is a maritime security construct that is considered a part of the military dialogue for some time. It is considered a primary element in response to the challenges the Indo-Pacific region faces.

The new alliance the Quad³⁵ which includes Japan, India, Australia, and the United States of America—promotes Japan’s Indo-Pacific strategy approach that is centered around the Quad. Moreover, it provides Tokyo with a wider framework for a coherent coalition of democracies in the Indo-Pacific. Japan development relies on enhanced connectivity, prosperity, and security between Asia and Africa. In addition, Japan emphasizes peacebuilding, refugee assistance, and counter-extremism.

As a major partner of the Quad, Australia has a vital role in providing expertise in the field of infrastructure services. For example, Australia worked on construction and operation. It also enjoys the experience in “soft infrastructure,” such

³³ *History* (n.d.).

³⁴ *Foreign Policy in Action* (n.d.).

³⁵ The four “Democratic security diamond.”

as training and institution-building. Tokyo is undertaking this step to mobilize the major financial resources.

Abe's strategy rests on Quad, Japan, India, Australia, and the United States, or in other terms "democratic security diamond." Efforts are focused on the Indo-Pacific region to create a new geographic and geopolitical paradigm. The Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy is a concept imbued with the values, principles, and norms of the United States and other members of the Quad. It is underpinning the informal regional order.

This strategic alliance is based on³⁶:

1. Freedom of navigation and overflight.
2. The rule of law.
3. Freedom from coercion.
4. Respect for sovereignty.
5. Private enterprise and open markets.
6. Freedom and independence of all nations.

The United States supported³⁷ the commitment of Japan and the EU to reach an agreement on a comprehensive, high-level, and balanced Japan-EU EPA.³⁸ The Mr. Alex N. Wong,³⁹ Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, explained United States⁴⁰ perspective of the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy"⁴¹:

- **Free:**

a- The international plan and the liberation of the Indo-Pacific countries from coercion is exhibited by pursuing the paths that are chosen in the region in a sovereign manner.

b- On a national level, progressive shift of various societies in the Indo-Pacific countries toward openness while promoting good governance in fields that include fundamental rights and prevention of corruption.

³⁶ *McMaster previews Trump's Asia trip* [Video] (n.d.).

³⁷ *G7 ise-shima leaders' declaration* [Video] (2016).

³⁸ *EU-Japan economic partnership agreement* (n.d.).

³⁹ Wong (2020).

⁴⁰ In May 2016, President Obama made the first visit as a sitting US President to Hiroshima and in December Prime Minister Abe paid a visit to Hawaii. These reciprocal visits symbolized the strength of the Japan-US Alliance and served as an opportunity to demonstrate the power of tolerance and peace between countries that had previously been at war. At the summit meeting held in Hawaii in December, both leaders shared their view on the importance of advancing the Japan-US Alliance to an even higher level, and shared recognition of the importance of expanding the network of alliances such as the Japan-US-Australia and Japan-US-India alliances to preserve stability and prosperity in the region, with a free and open Indo-Pacific. *Diplomatic Bluebook* (n.d.).

⁴¹ Press releases (2020).

- **Open:**

a- Open Sea lanes and open airways: open sea lanes of communication are the life-blood of the Indo-Pacific region through which 50 percent of the world trade flow. Particularly, through the South China Sea, open sea lanes, and open airways in the Indo-Pacific, are vital to world trade.

b- Open logistics—infrastructure; there is a lack of infrastructure throughout the Indo-Pacific.

The main points are supporting the infrastructure development in the region. This allows the infrastructure to drive the integration effectively and raises the GDPs⁴² of the constituent economies, not the contrary.

c- Open investment: The United States increased its support to open investment environments and promoted transparent regulatory structures. This openness is not restricted to the United States alone. It also allows local people, innovators, and entrepreneurs to take the advantage of the investment environments.

d- Open trade, fair, and reciprocal trade: These are policies that the United States has backed for decades. The Trump administration also supports these policies.

The Free and Open Indo-Pacific represents a particular vision for rules-based order that governs one of the world's most dynamic regions: the Indo-Pacific. The region is a hallmark of diverse ethnic, religious, cultural, linguistic, and political groups. It also encompasses a rich history and advancing development.

The Indo-Pacific stresses the increasing importance of the Indian Ocean. Together both oceans shape the channel for global trade and an emerging arena of competition. Bookended by two of the world's most critical trade chokepoints; the Straits of Hormuz and Malacca, the Indian Ocean's Sea lines of communication connects Asian energy consumers to their suppliers in the Middle East.

As a historian, the resemblance that I found the "East Asian Community" constituted the origin of Abe's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy theory. It is reminiscent of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere,⁴³ this concept flourished during the imperial period in Japan in the 1930s, and during peacetime.⁴⁴

The doubt created around this concept is accompanied by Tokyo's ambiguity toward human rights in Southeast Asia and the limitations of this normative framework. Regardless of that, other regional stakeholders, such as South Korea and ASEAN countries, cautiously welcomed this strategy, as the consensus tends toward avoiding antagonizing China.

⁴² Gross Domestic Product.

⁴³ *Greater East Asia Co-prosperty Sphere* (n.d.).

⁴⁴ My book "**The Political History of Japan between the Two World Wars** "الحريين بين السياسي اليابان تاريخ العالميتين" (ISBN 978-614-402-555-0) covered in detail that historical era. In Arabic it was published till now in two editions, the English version has been edited to be released soon.

ASEAN countries are willing to remain neutral between US-Japan and China, who are considered major trade partners and donors in the Southeast Asia region. While Japan is content with recent endorsements of its Indo-Pacific strategy, even is still a long before being recognized by the Quad becomes a coherent driving force.

In its new millennium strategy, Japan invests in three types of support: loans, grants, and technical assistance. Japan also contributes to multilateral aid agencies like the World Bank, United Nations agencies, and the regional development banks. Bilateral aid has always taken the larger part of the aid budget. It is estimated between two-thirds and three-quarters of total annual aid. Also, Japan, through Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF), is in a partnership with the Government of Japan (JapanGov). It provides grants in support of community-driven development and poverty reduction projects that empower the poorest and most vulnerable groups not accessed by other programs and improve their lives through direct benefits.^{45,46}

33.2 What are the major obstacles facing Japan's strategy?⁴⁷

(1) Wide-area connectivity policy.

Enhancing the link between infrastructures in regional countries is an essential goal to expand the social and economic development of the vast Indo-Pacific region. The development of port facilities are required to connect countries by maritime and corridors (roads and railways) that link seas to inland areas.⁴⁸ In Southeast Asia, Japan has contributed to developing traffic infrastructures that stretch between east and west. It is important to connect this with South Asia, while in Africa development is particularly important for the corridor infrastructures that connect inland countries with seas. The rising demand for regional infrastructure has given the actual situation of the development of economies and societies in Indo-Pacific countries. This region also contains countless vital important infrastructures in areas where companies from Japan are neither competitive nor interested to invest or develop in.

⁴⁵ *Japan social development fund* (n.d.). World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/japan-social-development-fund>.

⁴⁶ Staff Writer (2017).

⁴⁷ TANAKA, Akihiko | *GRIPS faculty directory* (n.d.). This part of the study is adopted after an official recommendation due to the amazing scholarly work of 政策研究大学院大学 National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, GRIPS.

⁴⁸ *Towards region-wide seamless connectivity in Asia and the Pacific* (n.d.).

(2) Nurturing human resources.

Japan's focus in international cooperation has always been on human resources development through the nurturing of human resources from developing countries through long-term training programs in Japan. This has resulted due to the development of the economies of Southeast Asia and China. It is essential to continue welcoming talented individuals from Indo-Pacific countries to Japan could invest in the future leaders. High-level human resources are needed for both public and private sectors in developing countries to avoid falling into the "middle-income trap" and to maintain sustainable growth. Japan's contribution in this field is valuable.

Japan needs to prepare qualified human resources to for a sound understanding of the Indo-Pacific region. It is essential to encourage enrollment in new fields of education related to the Indo-Pacific region studies various educational institutions. Japanese volunteers in Overseas Cooperation programs and other JICA volunteers are popular programs and highly rated in the Indo-Pacific countries. Furthermore, these actions should be maintaining their activeness.

(3) Human security and support fragile states.

The Indo-Pacific region has the highest growth numbers. However, this region is home to various political conflicts. For instance, ethnic cleansing of Rohingyas in Myanmar, conflicts in India's eastern states, Pakistan-Indian border crisis, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, and South Sudan. The "human security" of the those who inhabit these areas is vulnerable to massive influx of refugees.

To achieve stable prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region, peace must be re-established in fragile neighboring countries and areas, where human security must be improved. Cooperation in Peacekeeping Operations (PKO)⁴⁹ and assistance for peacebuilding by Official Development Assistance (ODA) programs should continue, along with the assistance to conflict-affected countries that are burdened by the influx of refugees, and humanitarian assistance to refugee camps. It is necessary to ensure Japan's refugee application procedures are appropriate and create a structure that drives Japan to become a host country to refugees.

(4) The management of power politics.

An efficient implementation of a free and open Indo-Pacific strategy requires proper management of the relationships among "great powers" in this region. Japan should engage in a classical balance of power policy against China. With such policies, Japan can reduce the possibility of armed conflicts, and it must be implemented even if it is against China's desire.

Countries in the region must secure and develop moderate defense and maritime law-enforcement capabilities. Japan should provide the needed support for

⁴⁹ *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (PKO)* (n.d.).

these capabilities and proceed in the security cooperation development with the United States, Australia, and India. This should be done to emphasize close dialogues with China for future management of power politics.

(5) Seeking wider and multilateral diplomacy.

In the Indo-Pacific region, an umbrella that includes all the concerned regional countries does not exist. It is not constructive to establish international rules. The priority of Japan's diplomacy at this stage is to launching the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)⁵⁰ 11 immediately. Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)⁵¹ must be agreed to strengthen the free trade from the Pacific side.

Yet Japan's relationships with ASEAN countries that geographically fall in the heart of the Indo-Pacific region are extremely important and should further utilize top-level diplomatic frameworks with the related countries, such as TICAD and the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM).⁵² The 2018⁵³ meetings were attended by 17 countries—Japan, Australia, New Zealand, with other 14 island nations, including the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

(6) Create integrated policies with a steady implementation system.

The implementation of a free and open Indo-Pacific strategy is linked to all the departments under Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, the Middle Eastern and African Affairs Bureau, the North American Affairs Bureau, and the Latin American and Caribbean Affairs Bureau. It also works in tandem with government's ministries and agencies including the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism. Furthermore, it is essential to collaborate with partners organizations to implement projects through JICA and Japan Bank for International Cooperation as well as private companies and NGOs.⁵⁴ It is fundamental to create a system to facilitate collaboration among these diverse stakeholders to implement Japanese policies.

Currently, Japan's "infrastructure systems" exports are deliberated by the "Economic Cooperation Infrastructure Strategy Conference"⁵⁵ under the Prime Minister. However, the present Economic Cooperation Infrastructure Strategy Conference is not an arena to promote the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy,

⁵⁰ *What is the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)?* (2018).

⁵¹ *Regional comprehensive economic partnership (RCEP)* (n.d.).

⁵² *Pacific islands leaders meeting (PALM)* (n.d.).

⁵³ *The 8th Pacific islands leaders meeting (PALM8)* (n.d.).

⁵⁴ Non-governmental Organizations.

⁵⁵ *Meeting of the management council for infrastructure strategy (the Prime Minister in action)* (n.d.).

and it cannot only be an advertisement for infrastructure development. Yet, it remains important (let alone exports of infrastructure systems). This strategy has a wider perspective related to world order, and it is not limited to a narrow-minded promotion of Japan's exports. The whole must be reviewed by the National Security Council (NSC).⁵⁶

In this case, it is essential to create a system that enables the National Security Secretariat of the Cabinet Secretariat and the International Cooperation Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to collaborate. An organized structure is necessary to deal with this vast region. It is necessary to further increase the number of embassies staff throughout the region. As suggested recently by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kono Taro,⁵⁷ it would be a desirable option to provide an official airplane to the foreign minister or establish a mechanism that allows the ministers and the President of JICA to frequently visit foreign countries. Island countries in the Pacific, which are part of the Indo-Pacific region, have never been visited by the foreign minister of Japan. Also, the current network of commercial flights among these countries is inconvenient for a busy foreign minister to set aside sufficient time to visit them.⁵⁸

Finally, the report presents a positive aspect about the Official Development Assistance (ODA)⁵⁹ that was approved by the Japanese Cabinet. Tokyo wanted the vast region to serve the "international public good." In this regard, Japan will support developing countries in reinforcing maritime law enforcement.

While Prime Minister Abe said Japan will contribute around \$2.9 billion to programs providing universal health coverage. This program provide free primary health services to all people and communities around the globe. Universal health coverage is one of the sustainable development goals that U.N. members are trying to achieve by 2030.⁶⁰

Japan has allocated \$16.8 billion in ODA, placing it fourth among members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development after the United States, Germany, and Britain. Japan's robust developmental assistance plays a major complementary role in this region. Tokyo has expertise in designing, planning, and delivering hardware infrastructure. It enjoys a leading edge in research and development areas.

Japan's "Partnership for Quality Infrastructure" initiative⁶¹ involves infrastructure spending, over five years, of around US\$110 billion in Asia. In 2016, the initiative was expanded to \$200 billion globally (including in Africa and the South Pacific).

⁵⁶ *National Security Council (NSC)* (n.d.).

⁵⁷ *Taro KONO (The cabinet)* (n.d.).

⁵⁸ *Diplomatic Bluebook* (n.d.).

⁵⁹ *Official development assistance (ODA)* (n.d.).

⁶⁰ *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development: Sustainable development knowledge platform* (n.d.).

⁶¹ *Partnership for Quality Infrastructure* (n.d.).

Japan will fully mobilize public and private resources, in collaboration with other countries and international organizations in order to address the immense demand for infrastructure development in Asia.

- Japan and the strengthened Asian Development Bank (ADB)⁶² will provide approximately USD 110 billion (more than USD 50 billion from Japan and more than USD 50 billion from the ADB) for quality infrastructure investment in Asia over the next five years.
- This initiative will play a catalytic role in further mobilizing private funding and know-how to realize sufficient infrastructure investment in terms of both quality and quantity.
- Japan will further promote quality infrastructure investment globally in collaboration with other countries and international organizations.

Below is the recent list of the Japanese-sponsored port projects (with approximate Japanese funding in US dollars) that indicates how active Tokyo has been in the Indian Ocean within the past decade:

1. Nacala, Mozambique—port (\$320 million)
2. Mombasa, Kenya—port and related infrastructure (\$300 million)
3. Toamasina, Madagascar—port (\$400 million)
4. Mumbai, India—trans-harbor link (\$2.2 billion)
5. Matarbari, Bangladesh—port and power station (\$3.7 billion)
6. Yangon, Myanmar—container terminal (\$200 million)
7. Dawei, Myanmar—port and special economic zone (\$800 million)

33.3 Conclusion

Although Japan may present itself as a non-militarist and politically neutral country, it has still extended its support to US-initiated military operations as well as security plans within the region. These paradox instances were bound to become a predicament at some point.⁶³

While Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was visiting the Middle East, he delivered speeches in Saudi Arabia that clearly unveiled the new scheme that was reliant on industrial collaboration and integration. This economic industrial cooperation will allow the merging of the riches of the Gulf States and the competent Arab labor force with the highly advanced Japanese technology and technical know-how. Collaborations as such would delve into new services solar energy, agriculture, and medical care.

⁶² ADB (2021).

⁶³ *How ABE used the IS hostage crisis to push security reform* (2015).

Prime Minister Abe allocated around 507 million yen (equivalent to 4.6\$ million dollars) in 2020 budget reserves to finance its forces in the Arab region.⁶⁴ A one-year mission in the Middle East, that involves rotating destroyers in rounds over three to four months, could be extended even longer with approval from the Japanese cabinet under the auspice of national security.

Cooperation with the international allies is envisioned through Japanese support and implementation of all UN resolutions. However, this would in no way entail the use of military force in the Gulf, ban on the export of arms and military technology except for the United States, hosting of US troops, that include the Seventh fleet, and not less than 20,000 marines whose presence since Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait is strategic to both Tokyo and Washington.⁶⁵

Japan has continually adopted a policy in the Middle East in which it balances its US interests with its own energy needs. It imports almost 90% of its crude oil from the region⁶⁶ with a trade balance of around \$ 24.3 billion in exports and 94.9 billion from imports with the Middle East.⁶⁷ It is important to note that the major trading partners of Japan in the region are the Arab Gulf states along with Iran.^{68,69}

Former Prime Minister Abe, after resigning for health reasons,⁷⁰ was succeeded by like-minded Yoshihide Suga,⁷¹ after which the defense budget rose for the ninth year in a row.⁷² One can only interpret this as an intention to further strengthen Japan's military performance and capacity.

The evident presence of the Japanese military within the Middle East, which was original till January 26, 2021, is expected to continue with the new US administration and in coordination with the Arab Gulf states. Proactive contribution to peace strategy is today a pressing necessity for the Arab world, Japan, and humanity at large. As such, one can only anticipate how the Japanese peaceful military presence as part of the "proactive peace strategy" will further develop.

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⁶⁴ Staff (2020).

⁶⁵ *Japan and the Persian Gulf* (n.d.).

⁶⁶ "Japan: Oil imports by country (2020).

⁶⁷ *Japan trade balance, exports, imports by region 2018 | WITS data* (n.d.).

⁶⁸ Iran was the No.4 oil supplier for Japan until 2011 sharing 9.8% of Japan's total oil import in 2010 and 7.8% in 2011, and No.5 with a 5.2% share as of 2012. Agency for Natural Resources and Energy 2011, 2012; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iran Basic Data. *Japan and the Middle East After the Arab Spring* (n.d.).

⁶⁹ *Gulf-Japan Ties, Beyond the Energy Sector* (n.d.).

⁷⁰ *On the resignation of prime minister of Japan Shinzo ABE* (2020).

⁷¹ **Suga Yoshihide** (1948), a Japanese politician who became the leader of the Liberal-Democratic Party of Japan (LDP) and prime minister of Japan in 2020. *Yoshihide SUGA (The cabinet)* (n.d.).

⁷² *Defense budget* (n.d.).

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan to enrich my research. Upon their patronage, this study is based on original sources provided by Tokyo.

In alphabetical order, I am honored to reveal the extraordinary embracement of these Leading Japanese diplomats in the Middle East to achieve “Japan and the Gulf States: Friendship Prospects under the FOIP Initiative,” hoping for a better understanding between Japan and the Gulf States:

I. H.E. Fumio Iwai, the Japanese ambassador to KSA (discussing the original proposal of revealing FOIP to the Arab public, academic society, and decision-makers on 29-7-2021, with approval to use his personal approach in the research).

II. H.E. Matahiro Yamaguchi (Former Japanese ambassador to Lebanon), Japan—MOFA. (Providing documents through National Diet Library *Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan*)

III. H.E. Seiichi Otsuka (Former Japanese ambassador to Qatar), Japan—MOFA. (First recommendation for my study, especially that His Excellency was based in both Beirut and Doha, while he is now in Tokyo).

IV. H.E. Takeshi Okubo, the Japanese ambassador to Lebanon. (Following up my study on a routine basis).

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Part IV
Political Sphere

Chapter 34

Khaleeji Modernities: Private Spaces, British Imperialism, and the Centralization of the Qatari Peninsula



Javier Guirado Alonso

Abstract The *majlis* was a key political and social mechanism that defined the social and political structure of Qatar during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an epoch of transformation in the Indian Ocean world. The new policy of the British empire throughout the Indian Ocean during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries led to an increased centralization of the forms of authority that were present on its shores. This centralization shaped the institutional blueprint of Qatar, and not the discovery and exploitation of oil in the mid-twentieth century, which instead, took place successfully thanks to these institutional innovations. The *majlis* is a space and informal institution present in many Arab countries, and particularly relevant in the Gulf, in which members of a family and other notables gather and discuss a wide range of topics on a regular basis. Many studies have highlighted the importance of the *majlis* in the Gulf, yet its relation to the British colonial system remains largely underexplored.

Keywords Qatar · Majlis · British empire · Indian Ocean · Centralization

34.1 Introduction

In 1651, Thomas Hobbes used the metaphor of the Leviathan, a giant sea snake of overwhelming power, to refer to the state. The frontispiece that serves as cover of the treaty, designed by Abraham Bosse following guidance of Hobbes himself, depicts the figure of Sovereignty as a gigantic man with a sword and a scepter guarding a peaceful city, Fig. 34.1. The body of this figure is formed by an uncountable number of individuals, showing that the Hobbesian idea of Sovereignty was that of voluntary transfer of power to the sovereign. One of the central elements of Hobbes's theory is, in this fashion, the social contract between the people and the sovereign, which he described as the founding element of the Leviathan:

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I Authorise and give up my Right of Governing my selfe, to this Man, or to this Assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy Right to him, and Authorise all his Action in like manner. This done, the Multitude so united in one Person, is called a Common-wealth, in latine Civitas. This is the Generation of the great Leviathan. (Hobbes 1968[1651], p. 227)

In the Gulf, the social contract between rulers and ruled is largely defined in tribal terms. Previous works acknowledge the importance of tribal institutions. Fromherz (2012) shows the importance of persistent informal tribal networks in Qatar, Al Qassemi (2012) presents the importance of tribalism in a contemporary setup, Herb (1999) explains the stability of the Gulf monarchies because of their dynastic system, based on tribal affiliation, and cooke (2014) examines the cultural manifestations of traditional tribal forms of expression in a capitalist and technological context. This particularity might as well provide some insight to the question posed by Anderson (1991), which has led to a great deal of research on the Khaleeji political system: why are the Arab monarchies, and specifically, the Khaleeji monarchies, so resilient? (Fig. 34.1).

The institution of the *majlis* is a central constituent of the Qatari form of power, a central element of a *Khaleeji Leviathan*, because of its relation to the tribal social fabric of the Gulf, the way it provides legitimacy to the ruler, and ultimately, its relation to the British colonial system. The *majlis* evolved from being an institution that was part of a segmentary society to be incorporated into a central bureaucratic state, and the role it played in the political transformation of the Indian Ocean world during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was largely a consequence of colonial policy.



Fig. 34.1 Cover illustration of the original edition of the *Leviathan* (1651), by Abraham Bosse. It shows the allegory of Sovereignty, whose clothing is formed by all the individuals agreeing to give their power to a common entity. British Library

The Qatari peninsula has maintained a longstanding peripheral status in a number of trade and cultural networks. It has been on the periphery of the British Raj, the Indian Ocean world, the dynamics of the Arabian Peninsula, the Ottoman empire, and the wider Middle East. It constitutes, therefore, a premier example of “border thinking” (Mignolo, 1999), questioning the epistemologies behind the geographies of power in which it has been placed, potentially providing valuable information about the political systems in the whole region.

This region, the Indian Ocean and the Gulf as part of it, was experiencing a crucial transformation that started around the last third of the nineteenth century and that had a profound impact on the concepts of sovereignty and identity of its dwellers. Sovereignty became increasingly centralized while identity started to be identified with territory, in a gradual and colonial mimesis of the nation state, an innovation that has been described “as colonialism’s most poisoned legacy” (Bose, 2009, p. 25). Similarly, a new configuration of identities resulted in a performance increasingly in line with these central authorities, where the rather fluid and cosmopolitan nature of the Indian Ocean met an alien form of central sovereignty. Increasingly during the nineteenth century, identities started to be bound by land, and notions of diaspora and belonging were transformed in a region in which every port city counted with important contingents of Arabs, Persians, Baluchis, Banyans, or Zanzibaris, among others. This cosmopolitanism also relied on a concept of identity fundamentally defined by mobility and genealogy, often transcending the limits of land (Ho, 2006).

Throughout the Indian Ocean, centralization was achieved with indigenous institutions and performances of power. In this sense, Cohn highlights how in Victorian India Mughal rituals were reframed under British rule to shift from a performance of incorporation to become a performance of subordination (Cohn, 1992). The Gulf was part of this transformation, too. While the British had been present in the region through a series of mostly maritime treaties during the central years of the nineteenth century, their new ways of policing the Indian Ocean transformed their relationship with the Gulf. From the British side, this new paradigm toward the region gained momentum with the visit of George Curzon to the Gulf in 1903 (Bose, 2009, pp. 39–41). Since then, the process of centralization sped up, and using mechanisms that were largely a transformation of indigenous mechanisms.

In Qatar, the network of consultation procedures that were well embedded in the tribal society of the Gulf served as a vehicle that prompted the Al Thani to the full control of the Qatari peninsula and a new relationship with the rest of the tribes in the area. This process followed a similar pattern in other parts of the Gulf, with the Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi, the Al Qassemi in Sharjah and Ras al-Khaima, or the Al Khalifa in Bahrain. But if the *majlis* and assorted consultation practices were already in place before the British grip on power intensified, what was the change that made it become a vehicle for centralization?

34.2 What is the *Majlis* System? Semi-Private Spaces and Politics in Qatar

Studying the origins of the Dhofar revolution in Oman during the 1960s and 1970s, Abdel Razzaq Takriti argues that British officials were pushing the Sultan to lighten up his absolutist form of government and incorporate elements of the “so-called traditional Arab leadership” in order to contain the revolts in the south of the country:

Advantageously for Britain and the rulers connected to it, the *majlis* was not an abstracted space of collective inclusion (such as parliament for example): it was a grounded physical space, constrained by actual and symbolic walls. It was a place of rigid particularity - action and discourse took place on behalf of delineated units (such as the tribes and the merchants), precluding the potential rise of universal notions that could dangerously encompass the entirety of a population in a given territory (especially ‘the people’). It was a system held together by a chain of leadership, linking tribes, tribal coalitions, ruling families, rulers, Political Agents, Political Residents, and ultimately Whitehall. (Takriti, 2013: 46)

What Takriti calls the *majlis* system is a network of consultations that serve as a link between society and the sovereign. *Majlis* meetings serve as a place for information exchange along tribal lines and as a performance of the social contract. But this system, albeit described as Arab and traditional, was in fact a version tailored following British necessities. According to Takriti, the British officials thought that the *majlis* system mentioned above could be an effective method to appease insurgencies and hinder the formation of any identity or group that could possibly question the legitimacy of the Sultan.

The *majlis*, as an institution common across the Arab countries and history, is referred to as a “tribal council or council of tribes (...), a gathering of a select group of people in the presence of a leading notable, a religious dignitary, or a well-known poet,” and as “an institution set up to deal with matters pertaining to the public interest or domain” (Choueiri, 2009, p. 462). Focusing on the Gulf countries, Herb describes the *majlis* as “an informal social gathering of men, often held weekly in a special room built for the purpose; in Kuwait this is known as *diwaniyya*” (Herb, 1999, p. 41). According to Herb (1999), it is also an informal institution. In this sense, North (1991, p. 97) distinguishes between “informal constraints (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct), and formal rules (constitutions, laws, property rights)” that define informal and formal institutions, respectively. Informal institutions, then, are those whose ways of functioning are not recorded, but widely known.

The word *majlis*, nevertheless, refers to two realities. First, it names a room of the house, usually close to the main entrance and somewhat separated from the family area, where guests are received and social gatherings happen (Jaidah, 2009, p. 22). And second, it refers to these gatherings themselves. As Lefebvre puts it, “[social relations] project themselves into space, becoming inscribed there, and in the process producing that space itself” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 130) The relation of the *majlis-space* and the *majlis-institution* is, then, metonymic, and a clear example of this claim.

The spatial features of the *majlis* make it a crucial institution to understand the social contract in the Gulf. As Lefebvre (1991) states, space is defined and produced

by social relations. Dealing with capitalism and space, he points that social life is presented through different forms of spatial organization. In a similar way, Bourdieu (1989) talks about social space as a set of relationships between people which usually have a physical and spatial representation. Bachelard (2014[1958]) and De Certeau (1984) treat space as a language, and the latter states that “a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities (...) and interdictions” (De Certeau, 1984, p. 98).

Institutionally, the modern concept of the state and its associated political vocabulary has been developed from the assumption that politics is a public matter and has to be carried out in the public space. The Romans called the *res publica* not only the Republic itself, but also politics as a whole. In fifth century BCE in Athens, the sacrosanct space for politics was the *agora*. Originally a marketplace, it became the main space where citizens—male, free, and owners—would exert their political rights by using their voices, literal, and metaphorically speaking. As a public space, it made politics something that was carried out in public, where citizens could be updated about what was going on with Athens (Osborne, 1999, p. 129). Referring to more recent times, Habermas (1989) has coined the term “public sphere,” which he defines as the “sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor” (Habermas, 1989, p. 27). He also argues that liberal democracies need a strong civil society to be functional. When referring to other arenas, he distinguished a public and a private realm, the latter including the space for “commodity exchange and social labor” and the “conjugal family’s internal space,” as opposed to the public realm, the authority, as incarnated by the police and the court. Then, the idea of this bourgeois public sphere has evolved from the notion that private agents gather together in public to control authority. And, since Habermas opposes the Court as the place for authority to the town as the “life center of civil society,” (Habermas, 1989, p. 30) it is relevant to emphasize how the *agora* of Athens, the birthplace of politics in the Western tradition, was a public space, particularly when acknowledging how the *agora* influenced subsequent city planning from its origins in the north side of the Mediterranean to the modern United States and beyond (Sassen, 1991).

Conversely, traditional architecture and urban design in the Gulf does not favor public and open spaces. Instead, most of the social life happens in the *beit*, the house, which usually has a courtyard in the center of the building as the closest image of an open, public space, but most frequently enclosed in the domain of the private house (Jaidah, 2009, p. 11). It is, then, reasonable to infer that political institutions in the Gulf might have taken a different shape that the Western political vocabulary might not take into account. The house also serves as a place for exchange with other people, and many degrees of privacy can be defined within its domain. As opposed to a strict distinction between public and private spaces, Eddisford and Roberts (2015, p. 11) find four different possibilities: public (including shops, souqs, mosques or public squares), semi-public (places linking public spaces with the house), semi-private (places within the house where the interaction with other people happens), and private (the most restricted space, usually linked to the presence of women).

Where in Athens most social interactions regarding politics happened in the agora, a public space, in the Gulf it is this semi-private space where that happens. Particularly, there is one specific room, called the *majlis*, where most of this interaction takes place and therefore, it becomes a privileged space to analyze the way politics are carried out in the Gulf. The *majlis*, then, is a private space, as opposed to the *agora*. Sometimes, the *majlis* can take place outside the house, in an open space covered by tents of fabrics, or at the benches in the outer walls of the house. In that case, it is called *dikka*, yet it does not necessarily challenge the idea of private or semi-private space that the *majlis* bears. On the one hand, the surrounding areas of the house are still part of it. Also, the tents or the use of outer walls to partially cover the space are a form of temporary built place that encloses it from the wider, open and public space.

If space is socially produced, and the place for interactions in the Gulf are private or semi-private spaces, then the study of the *majlis* can shed light on the origins and causes of a political institutional system in the Gulf countries, different to that of the countries that are part of a political tradition which claims to have its origins in classical Athens. If space, politics, and social relations are all three related, a different spatial allocation of the political institutions might have resulted in an institutional trajectory that can be illuminating to understand the development of the Khaleeji Leviathan.

34.3 Birth and Development of the Khaleeji Leviathan. The *Majlis* as Seen by the British Empire

The relevance of the *majlis* has been acknowledged by some travelers, colonial agents or researchers since the sixteenth century, and particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Lorimer's *Gazetteer*, as an example of that, and published in secret between 1908 and 1915 represents the aim of creating a handbook for British agents and diplomats about geography, history, and customs in the Gulf so they can easily pursue the interests of the empire. Fuccaro (2015, pp. 17–34) highlights its importance in influencing the policymakers in London when dealing with the region.

Lorimer mentions the institution of the *majlis* a few times in the *Gazetteer*. They are basically defined as arbitration tribunals when certain demands or requirements imposed by the British officials are disputed in certain circumstances. These are usually disputes about sea security, taxation, or commercial matters (Lorimer, 1915a, p. 726, 1427, 2243). He even describes a specific type of *majlis* for mercantile cases with foreigners, called *majlis al-'urfi* or *majlis at-tijarah*, where some of its participants have to be nominated in consultation with the British Political Agent (Lorimer, 1915b, p. 250). The fact that the British had the power of intervening in what they defined as an indigenous institution shows, on the one hand, the degree of colonial dominance over the local population and leaders, and also the interest of the officials in preserving local institutional framework, at least nominally, while holding

a tight control over the matters that affected the metropolis. The colonial power, then, relies on the *majlis* for internal disputes but keeps high rank individuals as their real interlocutors. Similarly, the *Persian Gulf Précis* accounts a case in which the British political power recommended holding a *majlis* to resolve a dispute between the sheikhs of Sharjah and Fujairah (Saldanha, 1989).

Lorimer, as Fuccaro (2014) points out, and also Saldanha, have a biased vision due to the nature of their documents. British interests are the central element of the publications, and the use of the *majlis* only partially reflects its relevance. The fact that it is used to resolve disputes between subjects and not between subjects and the metropole—even when dealing with rules imposed by an external power, namely the British, the Ottomans, or another sheikh—reveals that the British agents acknowledged at least to a certain extent the importance of the *majlis* in Khaleeji societies to solve problems and maintain stability.

In the second volume, which describes tribes and regions in the Gulf, Lorimer is a bit more generous with the *majlis*. When describing the “Anaizah tribe, he says that “they possessed arbitrary powers, but wielded them in a constitutional manner, deferring to some extent to their Majlis or council,” allowing them to a certain degree of power sharing thanks to this institution” (Lorimer, 1915b, p. 76). Conversely, when he analyzes the effectiveness of the *majlis* resolving problems that have to do with an external power—the Ottomans, in the following case—he finds that “the Councils, while they afforded little protection against the misdeeds of evil officials, were apt to obstruct the action of those of the better sort; and it was alleged that their existence even increased the area of active bribery and corruption,” and continues: “They required in fact, to render them really useful institutions, more public spirit and a higher civic morality than were to be found in the people” (Lorimer, 1915a, p. 1489). In a way, the malleability of the *majlis* by external powers, which had benefited the British power in the previous examples, becomes a source of criticism when it is an issue with an external power.

The colonial vision that Lorimer provides in his *Gazetteer* is one specifically targeted for policymakers in London. His account was a guide for politicians in the metropolis to help them arrange their relations with the Gulf in a more effective way. In this sense, all the references that Lorimer makes were framed from this perspective, and that is why his focus and treatment of the *majlis*, and the sociopolitical system of the Gulf is defined by its context and its functionality. In this regard, Lorimer does not have a particularly good opinion about the *majlis*, but he understands that it keeps a social status quo, in the sense that Takriti mentions in his study of the Sultanate in Oman alluded above. More in detail, the *Gazetteer* does not question the position of the institution as a part of the Khaleeji structure of power as long as it does not interfere with the interests of the British empire. This is reflected in his references to the *majlis* as an arbitration tribunal between tribes and groups of interest affected by British decisions in terms of sea navigation, taxation, or commercial issues (Jaidah, 2009, p. 11). Lorimer provides a partial vision, then, although a very important one. As early as 1908, he reflected the importance of the *majlis* as an institution that the British, as a colonial power, wanted to maintain to deal with the Khaleeji societies.

He also suggests that these *majalis* were important in maintaining social stability as a basic mechanism for problem solving in a tribal setting.

This can also be informed by other cases in the Gulf. Al-Nakib (2016, p. 30) shows how, in nineteenth century Kuwait, “[t]his political arrangement [the majlis system] and balance of power between the rulers and the merchants maintained a high level of sociopolitical stability in Kuwait until that remained relatively undisrupted until the rise of Mubarak I.” Similarly, she also states that the urban arrangement of the city provided an informal setup that fostered the tribal component of the political, social, and economic life of Kuwait.

In this sense, and in parallel to archival sources, buildings provide a similar account regarding the importance of the *majlis* and its relation to the Khaleeji Leviathan that appeared in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The case of the Old Amiri Palace, as a foremost space of power in the Qatar of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, is revealing. Although not a purely domestic building, most of its architectural features are the same as those of traditional houses. The biggest difference might be the size; the Old Amiri Palace is a compound with different edifications under the same ownership. Today, the Old Amiri Palace has been restored and is part of the recently (2019) inaugurated National Museum of Qatar. Before that, from 1975 to the 2000s, it served as the venue for the Qatar National Museum. The building had been in a state of abandonment since Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani moved its residence to the Amiri Diwan in 1923, but after its restoration during the 1970s, it won the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1980.

The Old Amiri Palace served as Sheikh Abdullah’s residence from the late nineteenth century to 1923. During this period, the complex grew and some additions were made, a frequent characteristic of Khaleeji architecture (Jaidah, 2009, p. 22). Also, during this period, the Ottoman empire went furtherly east to dominate the Al Hasa province of Saudi Arabia, and Qatar became a frontier or a subject at various times until 1916. That year, Sheikh Abdullah, then emir of Qatar, signed a treaty with Sir Percy Cox, the British Resident in the Gulf, in which the British empire agreed to give protection to Qatar (Cox, 1916). The treaty deepened the agreement in which Qataris were free to rule their country as long as their coast remained safe for British ships. As the residence of the then emir of Qatar, the Old Amiri Palace seems to be particularly well suited for studying the relation between politics and space in the Gulf.

The complex, as described by Jaidah included the following apartments: *beit* of Sheikh Abdullah, *beit* of Sheikh Hamed and *beit* of Sheikh Ali (the sons of Sheikh Abdullah), watchman’s quarters, quarters of the mosque janitor, public apartments of East Gate-house and North Gate-house, public apartments of the little *majlis*, and public apartments of the inner *majlis*. Sheikh Abdullah’s *beit* was the starting point of the development. As stated above, the complex grew by addition and adaptation according to new needs and demands. The dependencies of Sheikh Abdullah’s sons within the family complex reveal the importance of the extended family in the Gulf, also in the ruling family. The number of associated people, like the watchman and the janitor, indicate the need of services for the emir and their associates. But most importantly, part of the complex is formed by a number of public apartments and

dependencies for guests. The construction of these dependencies points out that there was a respectable number of people visiting the palace that needed accommodation, creating the necessity for these spaces. In a particularly hectic moment for Qatar, as said before, political meetings created new demands for space most notably when politics is carried out in private spaces and not in the public sphere (Jaidah, 2009, p. 67, 71).

Also, not just accommodation pushed for the development of these spaces. The *majlis*, as a privileged space to understand politics in the Gulf due to its primordial function to welcome guests and have meetings, is a particularly relevant space to observe. At Sheikh Abdullah's complex, both the little *majlis* and the inner *majlis* show how gatherings and meetings were common and varied, and thus required spaces that fulfilled different needs for a growing number of people who visited the venue. The Old Amiri Palace, in fact, echoes in a spatial language what was happening politically to Qatar at the time—the state was being centralized around the figure of the Al Thani family thanks to the intervention of the British empire. Therefore, due to the interest of the British officials in keeping a controlled version of the indigenous forms of governance and not imposing an imported system of government, politics and political institutions experienced some transformations. That is what the Old Amiri Palace shows, a growing importance of the ruling family, and an increased politicization of the spaces in which these matters were handled, here the architectural attention given to the *majalis*.

Different to the Old Amiri Palace, the Radwani House is a traditional high status Qatari house in the central district of Al Jasra. It was first built in the 1920s or 1930s and, as the Old Amiri complex and many of the edifications in Qatar has also been part of numerous adaptations and reforms to this day. Today, it is part of the Msheireb Museums, along with the Ben Jelmoed House, the Company House and the Mohammad bin Jassim's House. The Radwani House shows customs and life in Qatar through the space of a traditional house.

The importance that the government has given the Radwani House, its content, and most importantly, the huge research and excavations that have been done recently make it an exceptional place to look at to understand the role of private spaces in Qatari and Khaleeji politics. Also, if the Old Amiri Palace provided an example from a politically involved segment such as the ruling family itself, the Radwani House was dwelled by high class Qataris, not too involved in politics in principle (Eddisford & Roberts, 2015, p. 47).

Contrary to the Old Amiri Palace, the Radwani House does not stand alone. It is part of a historical district of Doha that was redeveloped between 2006 and 2009, and it was surrounded by other edifices, and the house itself shared walls with those properties. Its façade is largely undecorated and the entrance leads to the *majlis*, the only room with windows, and a staircase that leads to a second *majlis* in the second floor. They are also the most decorated rooms of the house. The rest of the rooms, other than the *hammam*, may have different purposes and do not feature anything that can make a distinction between them (Eddisford & Roberts, 2015, p. 52).

The *majlis*, as stated before, is part of the semi-private part of the traditional Qatari house and it may be accessed without entering the private parts of the house,

reserved for the family. This, as the rest of the characteristics of the Radwani House are the same as those of the Qatari vernacular architecture. In fact, during the boom of construction that took place in Qatar during the 1940s and 1950s after the discovery of oil (Jaidah, 2009, p. 28), the model of the domestic house was very similar to the Radwani House. This economic growth also granted the opportunity to build high rise houses.

Sometimes referred to as “architecture of the veil,” for its largely undecorated façades but richer interiors, Qatari traditional architecture is also an example of Islamic architecture (Jaidah, 2009, p. 11). As described above, spaces are related to social habits in a way that one creates or reinforces the other. This architecture of the veil, then, reveals a pattern of social interaction largely centered in the private spaces. The decoration of the *majlis*, as opposed to other parts of the house, also supports this claim. But the *majlis-institution* can also take place outside the house. Eddisford and Carter (2017, p. 90) indicate that the *dikka* was present in the Old Amiri complex, and in many other villages outside Doha. The lack of remains of this type of *majlis* in Doha might suggest that the centralization of the state did not promote the development of *majalis* in semi-public spaces and, instead, fostered more private, inside the house, *majalis*.

Doha did not become the capital of the Al Thani state until 1847 (Crystal, 1990, p. 27). The Old Amiri Palace dates back from the late nineteenth century, and the Radwani House was most likely built around 1930. Three dates might be important here: 1847, as the moment when Doha became the central segment of Qatar; 1868, when the British recognized Mohammed bin Thani as representative of the tribes of the Qatari peninsula; and 1916, when Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani signed a treaty with Percy Cox to guarantee the safeness of Qatari waters (see above). These three moments represent further centralization of the authority in Qatar, and its consequences could be felt in tax collecting and in the way other tribes related to the Al Thani, even where they were geographically (Crystal, 1990, p. 112). This centralization created the incentives for the private space to become the place where politics had to be done. Whereas the classical model of state formation argues that tax collecting led to more centralized states where the public sphere became a space of accountability (Tilly, 1975), in Qatar it was external pressure what led to further centralization and the private, or semi-private spaces evolved to become increasingly political and a main vehicle of the new institutional apparatus, largely reliant on tribal affiliation.

An explanation for this phenomenon could be the more ego-centered transformation that the networks around the figure of the emir experimented, meaning that the tribes were progressively less connected to each other and more through the figure of the emir and his trustees. From a tribal system based on arbitrations where many of the tribes were taking part with a more equal share, the newly recognized central authority of the emir would have become a more important node of the network. This would have also been reflected in the development of more and bigger *majalis* over the years in the Old Amiri Palace in detriment of other properties and even more when Sheikh Abdullah finally moved to the Amiri Diwan in the second quarter of the twentieth century.

34.4 Conclusion

Space matters in politics. British colonial policies toward the Indian Ocean transformed concepts of sovereignty and identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where the *majlis* as a space and as an institution proved to have a fundamental role in the performance of authority in Qatar during these years. A “Khaleeji Leviathan” emerged as a consequence of this, and a social contract along tribal lines between ruler and ruled was established as a result (Heard-Bey, 1982, p. 19). As seen, the remains of domestic houses and palaces provide a relevant source to study how social structure in the Gulf is defined by indigenous, informal institutions more than formal ones. The ways in which the *majlis*, as a room for guests, is present but different according to the affluence of the family that owns certain types of houses or the moment when these houses were built reveal how the institution also changed over time. The *majlis* had a bigger presence in more affluent tribes, particularly in the ruling family, and that these rooms were more and more important in politically involved houses the more centralized the state of Qatar became. The evolution of the Old Amiri Palace, which incorporated a number of edifications as Qatar became an increasingly centralized entity, and other examples like the Radwani House serve as an example of this pattern.

From the point of view of the colonial power, Lorimer’s *Gazetteer*, composed between 1908 and 1915, and the *Persian Gulf Précis* (1903–1908) written by Jerome A. Saldanha show how the British empire used the *majlis* as an institution to solve certain problems with the requirements they imposed, usually related to taxation or commerce. The British, therefore, realized that the *majlis* (1) provided an institutional framework for a stable British suzerainty in the Gulf and (2) it could easily be depicted as an indigenous, traditional institution that conferred legitimacy to the emerging model of central sovereignty.

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Chapter 35

Kuwait's Mediation in the Gulf Crisis: Dynamics of Kuwait's Foreign Policy Approaches



Huzeyfe Altıok

Abstract This study examines Kuwaiti mediation in the 2017 Gulf crisis from the perspective of the disputants—mainly Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar—and the mediator—Kuwait. While using qualitative research method such as interviews with the scholars, and discourse analyses, this chapter provides an overview of the Kuwaiti mediation in the Gulf crisis and deconstructs the role of small states in international relations.

35.1 Introduction

GCC states have diverged significantly in their policies in the last two decades, particularly since the Arab Spring. The policies of KSA, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were different from the Qatar's vision (Coates-Ulrichsen, 2014). During the post-Arab Spring disagreements, Oman and Kuwait remained neutral states, while the aftermath deepened the intra-GCC differences (Zweiri & Doğan-Akkaş, 2021). In 2014, three GCC member states and Egypt recalled their ambassadors from Doha. However, after Kuwait's mediation, Qatar and KSA signed the Riyadh Agreement with the assistance of Sheikh Sabah of Kuwait. Despite the conflicting parties came to an agreement as a result of Kuwait's efforts, the disagreements were not resolved (Coates-Ulrichsen, 2020). The GCC crises deepened and, in 2017, three members of the GCC (and Egypt) declared an embargo on Qatar. Mehran Kamrava (2018) analyzes the impact of the 2016 U.S. elections on the Gulf and highlights the timing of the embargo. He argued that the blockade was a sign of the failure of U.S. security arrangements in the

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Gulf region. Since Kuwait was concerned about the security and the unity of GCC, Sheikh Sabah and Kuwaiti officials made diplomatic trips to both the sides. Even though other countries offered mediation, the acceptance of Kuwait as a mediator by both sides gave Kuwait a critical position in the dispute.

Ibrahim Fraihat (2020) examines the mediation of Kuwait and the United States in the 2017 Gulf crisis, Fraihat (2020) mentions four main features of the mediations: timing, power, legitimacy, and the interests of the mediators. Concerning the interests of mediators, he claims that Kuwait mediated the crisis because it wanted to keep the GCC secure (Fraihat, 2020). A proper mediation of the crisis would provide an impetus to the functioning of GCC (Fraihat, 2020). Fraihat (2020) claims that informal mediation by Kuwait started even earlier than the crisis itself, which began on June 5, 2017, when the Emirs of Qatar and Kuwait met on May 31 to discuss the issues among the Gulf States and the ways to diffuse the growing tension between member states (Fraihat, 2020).

Abdulhadi Alajmi (2018) explains that Kuwait's primary objective in mediating the Gulf crisis of 2017 was to keep the GCC secure because of Kuwait's own fragile situation. Kuwaiti Emir, Sheikh Sabah, stressed on Kuwait's reluctance to allow other countries to intervene in the issue, albeit Egypt was formally, and Turkey and Iran indirectly, a part of the crisis. Kuwait's attitude can be considered as a desire to protect the unity of the GCC, which had become a *raison d'être* for the Kuwaiti state after the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces in 1990. Hence, it could be said that Kuwait's mediation efforts were led by its security concerns (Alajmi, 2018).

Kuwait's impartial position and historical ties made Kuwait an acceptable choice for a mediator to the conflicting parties. Despite, Oman was also a neutral Gulf state in the conflict, its issues with the UAE and KSA left Kuwait the prime choice to act as a mediator. In the conflict and mediation process, one of the aims of the Kuwaitis was to prevent the entry of external powers, even though the latter offered help in the mediation. Kuwait's view was that the internationalization of the dispute could cause unresolvable, even more radical, situations, like those seen in Syria, Iraq, and Libya (Alajmi, 2018). The timing was also crucial for Kuwaitis; they knew that the longer the crisis endured, the more unsolvable it would become (Alajmi, 2018).

While Kuwait resorted to shuttle diplomacy to prevent the escalation of the crisis, the lack of power and the involvement of multiple external factors, effected mediation efforts negatively (Kabalan, 2018b). As Fraihat (2020) emphasizes, legitimacy without power cannot solve problems in an international crisis.

The relationship between the small-state foreign policy of Kuwait and that of other Gulf States during mediation in the 2017–2021 Gulf crisis will be examined in this study. The contribution of this study to the literature will be the theoretical examination of Kuwaiti mediation in the case of the 2017–2021 Gulf crisis.

The first section provides the overview of the Gulf crisis and presents the theoretical background of the study. The theories used are Small State Theory and neo-realist conceptualization of small states' external attitudes, band wagoning, power balance, and threats. The soft power concept also provided a broad perspective to the researcher. The second section introduces the qualitative interview-based

method used in the research. The third section examines the reasons disputants accepted Kuwait as the mediator. In the section, the researcher addresses the small-state foreign policy strategies of disputants and Kuwait. The fourth section of the study clarifies our view on the logic behind Kuwait's mediation.

35.2 The 2017 Gulf Crisis and Theoretical Issues

The Gulf region has played a crucial role in contemporary world politics. The historical importance of the sheikhdoms, emirates, and states are derived from their geostrategic position and natural resources (Barnes & Jaffe, 2006). The withdrawal of the British from the region in the 1970s paved the way for the small Gulf monarchies to achieve statehood. State formation created space for development and progress in the region. The Gulf states' strategies gave them opportunities to develop and exert their influence regionally and globally. To exert their political importance, small states adopted the policy of mediation. Small Gulf states, such as Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait, often play the role of mediator in international disputes.

The geopolitical location of Oman (which shares the Strait of Hormuz with Iran) and its impartiality in the Sunni–Shia power struggle in the region have allowed the country to follow a more distinct foreign policy in the region (Windecker & Sendrowicz, 2015). As a GCC member, strong economic and political relations with Iran characterizes Oman's balance of power strategy. Moreover, Oman is the most ardent supporter of keeping the GCC a cooperative body rather than transforming it into a union (Cafiero & Yefet, 2016). Oman builds its foreign policy on diplomatic partnerships and negotiations, and mediation is one critical element of this policy. Oman attempted to mediate between Qatar and Bahrain in 1992, which helped it to maintain strong economic and political partnerships with both the countries (Allen & Rigsbee, 2002). Muscat has been the negotiation platform for Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), initiating diplomatic relations in 1988 after the Islamic Revolution (Al-Khalili, 2009). Moreover, Oman's most crucial mediation attempt was its mediation between the European Union (EU), United States (US) and Iran on the nuclear deal, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) of 2015. Even though the mediation did not move further than facilitation, Oman mediated the nuclear deal to maintain its balance of power strategy as a small state (Al Zubair, 2017).

Qatar has followed somewhat the same diplomatic strategies to gain the international community's support since the late 1990s. Since Qatar is a small state, mediation is seen as one of its efficient tools for diplomatic success (Kamrava, 2011). Qatar has been trying to solidify its place as a reliable mediator in the region. The first significant example of Qatari mediation was the talks between Hamas and Fateh of Palestine in 2006 (Barakat, 2012) followed by the talks in Yemen between the Houthis and the Yemeni government in 2008, and the mediation efforts in Lebanon in 2008 (Coates-Ulrichsen, 2013). Furthermore, Qatar's hosting of the Afghan talks in 2020 was critical for the regional security (England,

2021). Qatar also used its economic power, media, as well as the personal skills of its diplomats to mediate the crises (Barakat, 2014).

Regional dynamics have led Qatar to follow a more independent path than other Gulf states. Mohamed Tirab (2014) identifies the main reasons for this divergence as Qatar's geopolitical location, its resistance to the Saudi hegemony in the region, the ideological dimensions of the Middle East, security concerns, and the threat perception of the state after the Arab Spring. However, these differences have also created disagreements between Qatar and the other Gulf states. Rory Miller (2018) explains the foreign policies Qatar adopted to survive the siege by KSA, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt from 2017 to January 2021. He underlines that a solid national identity, a popular leader, and the robust financial policies of Qatar ensured the country survived the blockade despite its small size. He further argues that an extended crisis could have increased its vulnerability (Miller, 2018). Tirab (2014) also mentions Qatar as a mediator, although specifying, that at times, Kuwait stepped up to mediate disputes between other GCC members.

Kuwait's geographical location between the Middle East's three most significant powers (Iran, Iraq, and the KSA) has led it to follow a more pragmatic and tolerant foreign policy as a small state. Kuwait has been acting as problem-solver in the Middle East. For instance, Kuwait offered Baghdad mediation after the Iraq–Iran War, emphasizing its neutrality. It also participated in mediations in other conflicts, such as between Egypt and KSA in North Yemen in 1968, the dispute between factions in the Lebanese civil war 1975–1991, and the dispute between Turkey and Bulgaria over the Muslim population in Bulgaria in 1989. This shows a legacy of mediation in Kuwaiti history and the use of mediation as soft power by Kuwaiti politicians (Al Saleh, 2000; Kostiner, 2009).

Small states began to appear on the international scene after the First World War, and their emergence accelerated after Second World War. Various small states were established in the former lands of empires that had been divided into smaller parts. However, these countries were generally seen as satellites of greater during the Cold War. Several small states came into existence after the dissolution of Soviet Russia in 1991 (Galal, 2020).

Some social scientists describe small states by numbers, usually referring to population, territory, and economic size (Crowards, 2002; Jalan, 1982; Kuznets, 1960). However, this paper shares Galal's (2020) view that quantities do not explain small states' effectiveness in international relations. Small states make alliances with powerful countries to avoid threats from other powers. Joining regional and international organizations are examples of these alliances (Vaicekauskaitė, 2017). Creating unique places or features in the sphere of global public opinion is also essential for small states' foreign policies (Roberts, 2012). Small countries cannot compete with the greater powers in terms of military power or hard power. Thus, small states apply soft powers to exert their influence in international arena (Chong, 2010). Small states use a variety of methods to survive and gain regional and global influence, some of which overlap with those used by medium powers. The strategies that this chapter explores are band wagoning, balancing power, being a hallmark, and soft power policies.

Some small states' lack of power and economic sources leads them to align with greater powers. If these states imitate the policies of the great powers in return for their protection, it is called as band wagoning. Walt (1987) argues that small powers are probably band wagoning with aggressive great powers for their security.

Unlike band wagoning, balancing power is based on the diversification of alignments. This policy leads small states to join coalitions against aggressive forces. Balancing powers provides small states room to maneuver diplomatically (Bar-Siman-Tov, 1980).

A hallmark can be described as the uniqueness of a country. Small states use this strategy to increase their importance in international society. Services, commodities, or some other features of a state can be considered its hallmark. For example, Kadioğlu and Bezci claim that New Zealand created its hallmark to prevent dependence on any greater power (Kadioğlu & Bezci, 2020). An act of mediation is also count as hallmark strategy (Abu Laila, 2017).

In the late twentieth century, after technological developments military intervention has become more expensive and ineffective than the previous times. Nye gives the example of U.S. involvement in Iranian politics to exemplify this development. The United States managed to restore the Shah's authority in the 1950s; however, after the 1979 Revolution, they considered and discarded the idea of military intervention to keep Shah in power (Nye, 1990). Hence, a new type of power, referred to as "soft power" became necessary. According to soft power theory, states can influence other countries or international societies with cultural, technological, ideological, and strategic tools. Unlike hard power, soft power can also be used by smaller states because it bypasses small states' limitations and makes them influential in politics. The tools of soft power can be listed as media, education, investments, and mediation (Amirbek & Ydyrys, 2014; Eliküçük Yıldırım & Aslan, 2020; Flew, 2016; Vukovic, 2015).

35.3 Research Methods

The research objective is to give an accurate depiction of Kuwait's mediation efforts in international relations. The case has been assessed through expert interpretations of international relations, especially those found in Gulf studies. Those interviewed for the purpose of this research are scholars and experts of the Gulf region. The primary motivation for selecting this pool of interviewees was to interview those who have both theoretical knowledge and field experience. Besides, interviews with experts provided practical answers to the questions. The researcher followed an inductive method in the interviews to formulate a comprehensive analysis of the topic. Interviews were conducted with academics from diverse backgrounds, including Western scholars working in Europe and the United States, Kuwaiti scholars, Khaleeji scholars, and non-Khaleeji Arab experts. Abdulhadi Alajmi, Abdullah Baabood, Ali Bakir, Christian Koch, Courtney Freer,

Hamdullah Baycar, Kristin Diwan, and Zafer Alajmi participated and allowed the researcher to use their names, while some of the interviewees asked to remain anonymous. Semi-structured questions were asked with some specific themes, for example, what Kuwait's role (if any) was in the resolution of the crisis; why Kuwait initiated such an undertaking; why the other parties accepted its mediation; and whether Kuwait was a good candidate for the mediation. The meetings were held both in-person and virtually, according to the availability of the participants. The author recorded face-to-face meetings on his mobile phone, while the virtual meetings were held via Zoom software and recorded for transcription.

35.4 Why Did the Disputants Accept Kuwait as a Mediator in 2017?

The nomination of the mediator is one of the most challenging parts of dispute resolution. The first step in the process is that both sides agree on the mediator. If one of the sides is not satisfied with the mediator, intermediary action will be of no avail. The 2017 Gulf crisis serves as an example of the mediator being apparently chosen even before the problem emerged. The crisis started officially on 5 June 2017, but the issues that led to the embargo had been in place since the Arab Spring when Kuwait was already a mediator between the disputants. This section explains why the disputants accepted Kuwait as the mediator of the crisis.

35.4.1 Qatar

Due to the years-long disagreement between Qatar and the blockading countries, KSA, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt, the blockade was not unexpected for experts, especially after the UAE and KSA withdrew their ambassadors from Doha in 2014. Indeed, growing tension indicated the possibility of such an action. The Saudi-led group had some "unfinished business," although the ambassador recall crisis was solved in 2014 (Kabalan, 2018a). Qatar's initial reactions to the blockade show that it also expected that growing disagreement could possibly turn into an embargo. In the aftermath of the embargo, the first reaction of the Qatari administration was to make a statement about the crisis, which was expected to be made by the Qatari Emir, Sheikh Tamim. However, when Kuwait's Emir telephoned and advised him not to make any statement that day, Sheikh Tamim agreed, and the Foreign Minister of Qatar made the statement instead (Al Jazeera, 2017a). It indicates that the primary partner Qatar relied on was Kuwait. Qatar's early commitment to the Kuwait's Emir was a strong reason for it to accept Kuwait as a mediator. The current research argues that (1) the personality of Kuwait's Emir, Sheikh Sabah, (2) the country's neutral stance, and (3) its political

maturity, which ran parallel to the Qataris' vision, are the three principal reasons Qatar accepted, and even welcomed, Kuwaiti mediation.

During the interviews, the personality of Sheikh Sabah was one of the most important factors, if not the single most important factor, mentioned by participants to explain why Kuwait's mediation was legitimate and effective. Abdullah Baabood, a famous Omani professor of International Relations, mentioned: Sheikh Sabah's U.N. award in 2014 for his humanitarian efforts in aiding Syrians and Iraqis demonstrate that the respect Sheikh earned extended beyond the Gulf. Sheikh Sabah first served as Kuwait's Foreign Minister for 38 years (1965–2003) then the Prime Minister for three years (2003–2006), and then as the Emir of Kuwait for more than a decade. These various positions solidified the Sheikh Sabah's respect in the Gulf and among its people. Participant A, a well-known Khaleeji scholar, said:

The tribal dimension played a role in Kuwaiti mediation because of the age of the Emir at that time. Sheikh Sabah was one of the elderly leaders in the region. Besides, he was the one who was looking at the crisis as damage in his home, the Gulf region. He felt that he was responsible because he was one of the eldest of the leaders. Thus, his personality played a key role in acceptance because they knew where Sheikh Sabah was coming from.

The observations made by the author of this research on the day Sheikh passed away clearly exemplify the sentiment expressed by Participant A. The national mourning for Sheikh Sabah was evident from the attitudes of Qataris. Indeed, in one of his statements, the Foreign Minister of Qatar professed that the Sheikh was not just a political leader respected by Qataris but more like a “father” of the nation (KUNA, 2017). Christian Koch, a well-known European scholar of Gulf politics, mentioned:

There is a transition going on in the GCC monarchies to a new generation of leadership. At the time when the crisis broke out, it was basically Sheikh Sabah of Kuwait, one of the old guard in the GCC, who always represented the benefits of the Gulf beyond the ideology. He was a member of the crew when the GCC was created. He has always played a role to bridge differences to bring about reconciliations. And these were all important for gaining trust for the role he played.

Abdulhadi Alajmi, a famous Kuwaiti historian who is an expert on the contemporary history of Kuwait and the Gulf, said:

This (mediation) was a part of Sheikh Sabah's character. He gave great attention through his long experience. Being a member of organizations, and by protecting these organizations and the role of Kuwait in these organizations, he created a way of thinking that affected the state's foreign policies. For example, the Arab League summit in Mauritania. Most of the leaders were absent from that meeting. Still, Sheikh Sabah attended and gave money to the Kuwaiti embassy in Mauritania for the summit to make sure this organization would not lose its function and importance. Again, with the GCC, he tried to make it work. It was a very harsh moment for intra-GCC relations. But he kept on going and kept supporting the organization [GCC].

In this regard, the Qatari Emir and other officials saw Sheikh Sabah as a critical consultative authority for regional issues beyond the Gulf crisis.

Kuwait chose to be neutral in the GCC despite the growing partnership of three member states, Bahrain, KSA, and the UAE. The mediation efforts of Kuwait in the 2013 and 2014 diplomatic crises of the GCC proved Kuwait's willingness to be impartial and enthusiastic for the stability of the Gulf (Kabalan, 2018b). The attendance of Qatar's Emir at the first summit of the GCC after the blockade, which was held in Kuwait in December 2017, was a sign of that trust. Professor Ali Bakir, a well-known scholar in Middle East politics and security from Qatar University, said that "despite the pressure that the blockading side imposed to join them, Kuwait's neutral standing in the crisis led Qatar to trust the mediation of Kuwait." Participant A stated:

One of the reasons that this crisis happened was the support of Qatar for the Muslim Brotherhood movements. But if you look at the Kuwait Muslim Brotherhood, it has played a role in Kuwaiti politics for a long time; they have been in the political system. However, Kuwait has never particularly supported these movements, though it has accepted them as part of the political system in Kuwait.

Kristin Diwan, a well-known scholar of Gulf politics, said:

Oman always stands a bit apart from the GCC, so they were not really in a position to play the role of mediator, and I think Kuwait was eager for that role. Qataris trusted Kuwait, and Qatar saw it as very important to keep Kuwait on the side. I think Qatar appreciated Kuwait playing the mediation role because of that.

Considering the Qatari position of being under a blockade, their support for a third party that did not take issue with their ideological view would be crystal clear.

Among the demands that the blockading countries made to Qatar were to close media corporations, including Al-Jazeera. In an interview, the spokesperson of the Qatari Foreign Ministry claimed that this was an attack on the diversity of thought in Qatar (Al-Khater, 2019). The vision of creating a sphere for freedom of speech in the Gulf was not only the vision of Qatar but for the region itself. An effective parliament and robust political activities, in contrast to their Khaleeji counterparts, place Kuwait at the apex of democratic levels in the Gulf (Herb, 2016). The vision itself could be interpreted as adopted from Kuwaiti political developments. Professor Courtney Freer, a well-known U.S. scholar of Gulf politics, especially Kuwait's, said:

The pluralism in Kuwait was seen as an important element for Qataris as an insurance of their standing against the blockade. Because the similar dynamics, or even further ones, count for Kuwait

Participant B, a famous expert in Gulf politics, said:

Some of the internal groups in Kuwait were accused of being supporters of Qatar's popular movements in the region. However, being a mediator, being in the middle, was very popular and supported in Kuwait, even among the opponents of the Emir.

Even though the parameters that define each country's domestic politics are different, Kuwait's tolerance is seen as primary reason Qatar accepted of its mediation.

Kuwait's political maturity, intra-GCC impartial policies, and the personality of the Kuwaiti Emir were central pillars of Qatar's acceptance of and trust on Kuwait as the mediator. Sheikh Sabah had occupied an important place among Khaleeji people since the foundation of the GCC in 1981. Qatari diplomats and even nationals also respected the Sheikh. The political choices which Kuwait has made are seen as an important sign of confidence in Qatar. Moreover, the domestic political maturity of Kuwait is seen as indirect support for the Qatari vision of promoting diversity of thought.

To conclude this section, Qatar accepted Kuwait as the mediator because of the personality of Sheikh Sabah, the impartiality of Kuwait, and the diversity of thought. The Qatari Emir and high-level officials often stated their commitment to the mediation of Sheikh Sabah. For example, not making a statement at the beginning of the crisis demonstrates the Emir of Qatar's respect for him. Attending the 38th GCC summit, the first summit after the blockade, at the invitation of the Kuwaiti Emir also indicates that the personality of Sheikh Sabah was important to the Qatari Emir. Hence, the personality of Sheikh Sabah could be interpreted as a soft power exercised by Kuwait toward Qatar. The second reason is seen as the impartiality of Kuwait, which could be construed as one of the results of Qatari foreign policies. Qatar had declined to join the KSA bandwagon, which could be one of the justifications for the blockade. Due to this, Qatar needed a third party that followed impartial policies. The third reason that counted is the multiplicity of thought. One of the demands made by the Saudi-led bloc on Qatar was to shut down certain Qatar-based media corporations, including Al Jazeera, which had helped Qatar exert its soft power in the Arab world. Therefore, the soft power strategy of Qatar was also an essential element in Qatar's resources. Qatar supported mediation from Kuwait to keep its soft power safe.

35.4.2 *The Blockading Countries*

Qatar's position in regional politics had been questioned by Bahrain, KSA, and UAE since the beginning of the Arab Spring. The Qataris expected the Gulf crisis, as mentioned above, while the embargoing countries had been preparing themselves to impose such restrictions for many years (Hearst, 2014; Naylor, 2014). However, in the first days, there was an assumption that the crisis would be solved quickly. A senior KSA official visited the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah, on the day of the blockade with a "message" that immediately made the Kuwaiti Emir call Sheikh Tamim of Qatar (Gambrell, 2017). The day after the embargo was announced, Sheikh Sabah visited KSA and UAE. The first statements by the embargoing countries about mediation were that Kuwait was the only possible mediator for the crisis. KSA and UAE had some critical reasons for nominating Kuwait as the mediator, namely (1) to keep trouble within the Gulf, (2) to prevent Kuwait from becoming a partner of Qatar against them, (3) the international

support that Kuwait received for mediation, and (4) Kuwait's limited power to manipulate the situation. All four reasons are addressed in more detail below.

The blockading party's main reason for sending an official to Kuwait on the first day of the crisis was to keep the problem within the Gulf. Two impartial GCC states were seen as possible mediators: Kuwait and Oman. However, one of the reasons that the blockading countries did not accept or ask for Omani mediation was Oman's relation with Iran. In the demands—made two weeks after the blockade—of the embargoing countries, severe aspersions were cast on the relationship between Qatar and Iran. It was obvious this crisis would not be solved by a party that had apparent relations with Iran. Moreover, Oman was not supportive of changing the GCC from a council into a union (Kholaf, 2013). These two points made Kuwait the only choice for KSA, Bahrain, and UAE. Keeping the crisis within the Gulf was also emphasized by the embargoing countries. Baabood stated:

The blockading side aimed to keep the crisis inside the Gulf in two aspects. First, the mediator should not gain interest from the crisis. The candidates that could be a mediator in this regard were Oman and Kuwait, and neither aimed to gain from the crisis beyond the unity of the Gulf. But if an outside party offered mediation, the Saudi-led side could not be so confident about the mediator. Second, traditional and historical links with the Gulf States led them to keep the crisis inside the Gulf. The health of Sultan Qaboos of Oman at that time and Oman's foreign policy approach made Kuwait the only option for them.

The blockading countries' aim to keep the crisis within the Gulf derived from the desire to control the blockade as they wished. This was further confirmed when the Emirati Minister of State for Foreign Affairs posted a tweet one year after the embargo which mentioned that "any non-Gulf mediation would not be accepted. Qatar should go back to its roots for the solution of the crisis" (Gargash, 2018). His statement showed that non-Gulf mediation could be seen—or they wanted it to be seen—as disrespect of the Khaleeji identity by the blockading side, even as they embraced U.S. efforts to find a solution. Bakir said:

They (the blockading countries) had no chance to reject Kuwait's offer to mediate because if they did so, they would reflect an aggressive image, an image of a side that does not want to resolve the crisis. Plus, they also blocked officially and publicly accepted a Kuwaiti offer to stop any other mediation offer outside the Gulf.

The commitment of Kuwait to the GCC was crystal clear. The most successful operation in the region by the GCC since the foundation was the United States-led operation for the liberation of Kuwait in 1991. Koch mentioned the efforts of Kuwaitis in the early 1980s in the establishment of the GCC and added, "the GCC is somewhere in Kuwait's DNA." Thus, if there is one state that most strongly supports the GCC entity, it would be Kuwait.

The second reason for the acceptance of Kuwaiti mediation was to keep Kuwait away from any potential partnership with Qatar. Kuwait and Qatar had a more similar approach to each other's foreign relations policy than to that of the Saudi-led bloc. Kuwait had not intended to support the growing aggression in the region. Even though Kuwait initially supported the Saudi operation in Yemen against the Houthis, it later withdrew its support and offered mediation to both sides. Kuwait's foreign policy has been constructed on the necessity of stability since the

foundation of the country, which was contrary to the Saudi-led group's regional foreign policies, especially after the Arab Spring. In the early part of the blockade, the KSA-based Al-Arabiya website posted an article that contained Kuwaiti activists' call for the Kuwaiti government to join the blockade against Qatar (Jarrah, 2017). Participant C, an expert in Gulf security, mentioned the pressure of the blockading quartet on Kuwait to join them in the early days of the blockade, which he described as "if you are not with us then you are against us," adding "however, that was unrealistic, so it can be said that they pushed Kuwait to at least keep its distance from Qatar." Even though Kuwaiti support of the siege was almost unimaginable, one of the motivations for accepting or promoting Kuwaiti mediation was to keep the country an impartial third party.

The third reason the Arab quartet wanted Kuwait mediation was Kuwait's lack of hard power. Even though the personality of Sheikh Sabah and Kuwaiti officials' positive reputation in the Gulf could be counted as soft power, Kuwait could not use any hard power to force the disputants to start negotiations. Also, while the commitment of Kuwait to the GCC gave the state legitimacy to intervene in the crisis, Kuwait's lack of power resulted in a limited range of mediation (Fraihat, 2020). Zafer Alajmi, a famous Kuwaiti scholar who is an expert in Kuwait's foreign policy and Gulf security, said:

They preferred to see Kuwait instead of any foreign country intervening in this matter, especially those with their own interest. Because the Americans might jump, the British might jump, even some Arab countries might see this as a chance to play the good guy to solve this problem but gain their own interests.

Thus, any solution which excluded the blockading countries' demands would not happen in a crisis mediated by the Kuwaitis, which gave the blockading side room to maneuver.

The fourth reason argued by this research that Kuwaiti mediation was accepted by the embargoing countries was international powers' support of it. After his statements about the crisis, the U.N. secretary-general mentioned the organization's support of Kuwait. The U.N. also released a report about the situation in which the importance of Kuwaiti mediation was underscored (see appx. C). The then U.K. Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, stated the disputants would help Kuwait in mediation after a meeting with the Emir of Qatar with the stated goal of "assisting Kuwait's important efforts" (Al Jazeera, 2017b). The then Vice President of the EU, Federica Mogherini (2014–2019), in a press release issued after she visited Kuwait on July 23, 2017, emphasized the support of the E.U. for Kuwait's efforts and called on the sides to negotiate for the resolution of the crisis (EEAS, 2017). The support of U.S. officials was solid from the beginning of the blockade, despite President Trump's inconsistent attitudes (Lee, 2017).

Furthermore, Kuwait always discouraged foreign leaders from visiting either side of the crisis. The leaders of China, Russia, Turkey, Italy, and many other countries publicly stated their support for the mediation efforts of Sheikh Sabah and Kuwait. One news article from the Kuwait National News Agency bore the stunning title "Kuwait turns into political Mecca," further emphasized how regional and international actors paid attention to Kuwait's mediation (Mahmoud,

2017). It can be said that widespread support of Kuwait's mediation pushed the blockading countries to accept it. Participant A said:

Kuwait used smart diplomacy to get international support, which led the quartet to accept Kuwait as the mediator to not give the image of being bullies in the eyes of the international community.

However, some of the interviewees mentioned that the quartet accepted Kuwait as a mediator but made things difficult for mediation. For example, Kristin Diwan used the phrase "limited strategic acceptance," Participant C said, "they were not happy about Kuwaiti mediation," Participant B said, "their acceptance was cosmetic." Participant A used the word "formality" to describe their acceptance.

Thus, the current research found that the primary reasons for Kuwait's mediation from quartet's perspective were keeping the crisis inside the GCC, preventing Kuwait from partnering with Qatar against the blockading countries, Kuwait's limited power to push them to agree, and international support. The blockading countries aimed to be free from the pressure of any external power, to keep the crisis inside the GCC, to leave Qatar alone, to manage the problem without any forceful intervention from the mediator, and to decrease international pressure in negotiations with Qatar for the solution.

The blockading side of the crisis consisted of three GCC member states, Bahrain, the UAE, and KSA, plus Egypt, each of which had played considerable role in the blockade. However, this research focuses on the mediation process of the crisis. To summarize the discussion above, the reasons that the Saudi-led bloc accepted Kuwaiti mediation are varied: keeping Kuwait impartial, the lack of Kuwait's hard power, and international pressure, as well as to keep disputes inside the Gulf, despite the fact that Egypt was not a member of the GCC. The GCC was formed as an organization of six countries: five small states plus KSA. As the only non-small state, KSA was the dominant figure in the group. Thus, the Saudi-led bloc saw a dispute inside the Gulf as easily manageable. Even though the other states were small states, keeping them separated, if not under Saudi hegemony, was also crucial for the dominant power. As to the concerns Kuwait's lack of hard power, the blockading countries were satisfied to have the crisis mediated by a party that could not force them to make any concessions. Moreover, international society fully supported the Kuwaiti mediation. Kuwait's acceptance as mediator was the result of its soft power strategy, which is expanded on below. Overall, Kuwait as a small state was a perfect candidate for the mediation from the blockading side's perspective.

35.5 Why Did Kuwait Become the Mediator?

The late Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah al Ahmad, did not hesitate to initiate mediation between the disputants from the very beginning of the crisis. The mediation process is described later in this study, yet this early reaction by the Sheikh and

the country shows the enthusiasm of Kuwait to be the mediator. The impartial foreign policy of Kuwait in the GCC motivated the Kuwaitis to mediate. In addition, Sheikh Sabah believed that an extended crisis would damage the Gulf's security and economy. Indeed, the political sphere of Kuwait was threatened by the growing aggression in the region. The reasons for Kuwaiti willingness to mediate in this research are thus clearly delineated: (1) the foreign policy of the state, (2) economic concerns, (3) security concerns due to the extension of aggression on the region, and (4) the domestic sphere.

35.5.1 The Foreign Policy of Kuwait

The first reason for Kuwait's willingness to be the mediator was its foreign policy approach. The crisis highlighted the foreign policy differences of Qatar on one side and Bahrain, the UAE, and KSA, on the other. However, as mentioned in the literature review, the third wing of the GCC regarding foreign policy was comprised of impartial states, namely Oman and Kuwait. Kuwait's foreign policy had been built on that approach since the foundation of the country. Despite the threat of the expansion of Iranian influence after the Islamic Revolution, Kuwait recognized the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the Iran–Iraq war, despite its initial support for the Iraqis, Kuwait became more neutral as a means to offer mediation. Diwan said:

To some degree, the mediation was Kuwait's way of balancing. I don't think they could openly confront the UAE and Saudi Arabia as more powerful parties. But on some level, Kuwait felt that if things went badly for Qatar, at some point, Kuwait's own sovereignty—or at least room for sovereign action—would be limited. So, Kuwait used mediation to balance against that.

Saudi domination of the GCC led other countries to follow the foreign policy of KSA. However, partnership with the United States and the provision of military facilities to the Americans led the country to operate more independently of the GCC. Christian Koch said:

Kuwait was the one who offered an initiative to contain the Gulf States before the GCC. The first establishment of the Gulf, the Gulf Postal Service, was in Kuwait. The first Secretary-General of the GCC was a Kuwaiti, Abdullah Bishara. Kuwait was one of the most active countries during the foundation of the GCC. The invasion of Kuwait by the Iraqis deepened the relation of Kuwait with the GCC. After the invasion, the need for the GCC was positioned at the heart of Kuwaiti foreign policy.

Participant C mentioned that the 2017 crisis was a threat to Kuwaiti foreign policy and said:

Kuwait was the founder of the GCC in the first place. Kuwait was one of the early supporters of the organization. For Kuwait, having an organization apart from Western allies, which sometimes seem hesitant or late to take actions in regional incidents, was crucial. The question is, are all GCC members on the same level in the organization? Of course not. The Kuwaitis think that Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, smaller states should be influential in

the organization so as not to face Saudi hegemony. So, this organization was built on the idea that we are all equal, although we are different in some ways.

Even though the Kuwaiti government did not wholly support Qatari foreign policy, the domination of one group, and demand that another should change its foreign policy led Kuwait to act as a third party to set a barrier. Moreover, Hamdullah Baycar, an expert in Gulf politics at the University of Exeter, said that:

My Kuwaiti sources told me the Kuwaitis are now building their foreign policy on being a known mediator beyond the Gulf. This is very embedded in the Kuwaitis' foreign policy approach. We can compare the mediation of Kuwaitis to the foreign direct investment of Doha and Abu Dhabi in Europe. Mediation is a strong tool for diplomacy nowadays for Kuwaitis.

Kuwait has been impartial inside the Gulf and even in the Middle East since the Iraqi invasion in 1990. This impartiality in the region is based on the country's partnership with external forces. However, being a member of the GCC gives the government a feasible area of focus for the construction of foreign policy. Kuwait follows the balance of power strategy inside the Gulf as a small state. Although the crisis has been interpreted as the beginning of the end of the corporation, the balance of power-based methods, and impartiality of Kuwait, have created space for an effective GCC. The high importance of the GCC summit was apparent in the research. It can be said that Kuwait's foreign policy is based on the balance of power inside the Gulf, and the GCC, as an establishment, is a power that has solidified the country's soft power. In addition to this, being an internationally recognized mediator gives Kuwait a hallmark in regional issues.

35.5.2 Economic Concerns

The second reason Kuwait wanted to be the mediator in the crisis was the country's economic concerns. The GCC countries' wealth primarily derives from their natural sources. Regarding this wealth, the states maintain governance over the income share to nationals. The fluctuation in the price of natural sources has led countries to find new solutions for sustainability. Like the other GCC states, Kuwait is trying to develop a new economic strategy. Since the mid-2010s, this has included adjusting the policy of government-provided subsidies for citizens (Krane & Hung, 2016). In this context, the economic importance of the GCC for Kuwait is undoubtedly a fact. Even though the GCC was established as a means of security cooperation, it has turned into a means to cooperate economically rather than over security. Baabood described the situation further:

The crisis did not damage the Kuwaiti economy. However, the lack of integration in regional trade seemed to be a problem in the long term for Kuwaiti officials. They could not transport their product as they did before. The multilateral economic agreements of the GCC were suspended, and redistribution—which is highly important for the region—was not effectively done because of the sanctions. So, Sheikh Sabah's statement that the crisis wounded our economy should be interpreted in that way.

As a member of the GCC, Kuwait is one of the countries that most benefit from the economic cooperation of the Gulf. Diwan said:

There were dual boycotts against companies: If you do business with Qatar, then you cannot do business with us. There were, definitely, some demands like that early in the blockade. I think the United States pushed back against this very strongly. But these actions make it more difficult for foreign investors in the region as they effectively have to choose between two sides.

Since the oil and gas exports of the GCC countries depend on political stability, any disagreement in the GCC could cause fiscal problems in the Council. This was considerable concern in the 2017 crisis.

As mentioned above, the Kuwaiti economy is based on natural resources, as in other GCC member states. The fluctuations in prices led the countries to take a variety of measures, including reforms, new strategies, and economic cooperation. However, low oil prices, political instability, and the COVID-19 restrictions have had negative impacts on that economic transition strategy. Considering that the economic power of Kuwait, like that of the other GCC countries, has been a soft power since the discovery of oil, keeping that power stable is also critical for the state to achieve its future aims, both domestically and internationally.

35.5.3 *Security*

The third reason Kuwait made endless efforts to mediate the crisis from the beginning of the situation until a solution was found was the fear of growing aggression in the region. After the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Arab countries in the Gulf were furious. Even though Iraq, as a powerful Arab country, stood against the expansion of Iran, Saddam Hussain's vision of becoming an influential leader in the region and the anti-monarchical and populist ideology of his Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party made Iraq another unreliable source for the Sheikhs (Al-Kayssi, 1998). After the Iran–Iraq war, six Arab monarchies declared the establishment of the GCC. The Iran–Iraq war prevented both countries involved from intervening in the GCC countries. However, after the end of the war, Saddam Hussein marched into Kuwait. The invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces was the first incident to shake a GCC country since the establishment of the GCC. The members of GCC called on Western powers to expel the Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Providing military bases to the troops that carried out the operations and building diplomatic relations with other Arab countries against Iraqi aggression were among the indirect benefits Kuwait received from the GCC during the invasion. Moreover, some GCC states took part in the direct military intervention (Hellyer, 2001). After the rescue, the GCC was crucial for Kuwait. Participant A said:

One of the main interests of Kuwait was security; Kuwait does not want to see a weak GCC. Of course, they (Kuwaitis) were genuine to help the brothers, but the security dimension of the Kuwaitis' approach was very important within the umbrella of the GCC.

So, we can say the main aim of Kuwait in that mediation was to maintain the structure of this regional organization; if it collapses, I think Kuwait would be very much in trouble

However, at the same time, being invaded led Kuwait to follow a fairer foreign policy to avoid any repeat of the experience. One way or another, most of the participants in the interviews conducted by the researcher mentioned Kuwait's fear of being "the next target" of growing regional aggression. For example, Freer said:

I think Kuwait is very cautious that it can be and has been invaded. It does need to have strong partners in the region, and being a mediator, a neutral party, is a really good way to maintain relationships with neighbors. So, if anything happens in the future, it would be protected. I am always surprised how fresh the memories of invasion and occupation are, and that makes Kuwait very hesitant to take a side or lean too much to one side or another, so Kuwaiti mediation is the way to maintain its position.

Participant C said, "if the blockade had resulted in the Qataris stepping down, the new targets would have been Kuwait and Oman." Participant A said:

After the invasion [in 1990], all the calculations of Kuwaitis [were] based on the security of the region in order to not face similar things. And what happened in the crisis reminded them of their experiences, and they became the mediator to not be on any side in such a dispute.

The progressive policies of Kuwait turned into a more stable policies after the invasion by Iraq. Any security threat to the country or region reminded Kuwait's government and citizens of the trauma of that invasion (Alterman, 2007); hence, its leaders and people were rendered uncomfortable by the crisis. Participant B said:

Kuwait and Qatar are similar vis-à-vis financial capacity, not needing anyone else. However, they are in the same position of need or weakness vis-à-vis the Saudis, who are the backbone of the GCC. So, for the Kuwaitis, protection of the Qataris is the protection of any unequal relations in the GCC.

Considering some of the thirteen demands which the blockading countries made on Qatar, it can be said the crisis also threatened Kuwait because some also related to Kuwaiti policies (Barakat, 2018). Besides this, the Yemen operation of KSA, intervention in Bahraini uprisings, and support of autocratic leaders could be seen as being in the interests of the leaders of the blockading countries (Darwich, 2018). Thus, the people and administration of Kuwait noticed that a resolution to the crisis was crucial for their national security. The previous sections have presented the most traumatic incident in Kuwait's history as the invasion of the state by the Iraqi forces. Even though the state made international partnerships to overcome its fragility, instability in the region threatens it. The growing aggression in the region has been seen as a threat by some regional powers to jump on the bandwagon. Kuwait's fair balance of power strategy has stood strong against increased aggression. Also, the state offered to solve the crisis for de-escalation and intra-GCC instability. Thus, the security concerns of Kuwait have led the country to follow more tolerant foreign policies based on the balance of power strategies. As a small country, Kuwait does not want to be on the bandwagon of

any regional actors. Its mediation in the crisis allowed the state to reduce the risk of security threats.

35.5.4 Domestic Sphere of Kuwait

The fourth reason that Kuwait agreed to be a mediator was to maintain domestic safety. Kuwait was the first Arab monarchy to adopt a written constitution. Besides this, the political activity in the country is unique among the GCC countries. Political parties, the National Assembly, and the political maturity of Kuwait all date back to Sheikh Abdullah al Salim al Sabah (Herb, 2016). Even though it has fluctuated in the decades since the Iraqi invasion, the relation between state and society is more stable than in the other Gulf monarchies. Participant A claimed that the Kuwaiti society supported Qatar in the crisis, and this support reflected the pressure on the government to play an active role in the solution. Also, Kuwait has a considerable Shia population, which makes the state concerned about any sect-based conflict. In 2015, a terrorist attack targeted the Shia Imam al-Sadeq Mosque in Kuwait. Immediately afterward, Sheikh Sabah visited the place, spoke with the injured, and stated that this security attack did not target only the Shia population but the whole population, as well as Kuwait's tolerance (Hafidh & Fibiger, 2019). The sectarian attitude of the blockading countries and their disturbance of the Kuwaiti political sphere led Kuwait to play a role in preventing the dominance of either side. Baabood said:

The foreign policy itself is the mirror of the states' domestic policies. Kuwait has different societal groups. Shia, for example, although they are not very large, they are not very small either, or they seem pretty close to the ruling elites. And they have got the merchants, they have the Bedouins, and they have the Palestinians... So, any conflict inside the region between countries can have implications for Kuwait's domestic policies. Trying to maintain domestic peace is very important, and that has a reflection on the foreign policies of the country.

Kuwait's security concern was one of the reasons that the state mediated the crisis. Any aggression and instability in the Gulf would have been the greatest threat to the Kuwaitis since the Iraqi invasion. The tolerant political sphere and demography of the country were other motivations for mediating. The fiscal situation of the country and the region made the crisis intolerable. Moreover, Kuwait's foreign policy pushed the country to be an intermediary power in the Gulf.

Kuwait's domestic sphere has been examined in two dimensions. The first dimension is the political development of the country, and the second is tolerance of the sectarian identity of the nationals. The country's political development indicates that Kuwait has built a more accountable system than the other Gulf states. The establishment of an effective parliament, recognition of a written constitution, and tolerance of political diversity could be seen as among the sources of Kuwait's soft power. Although its level of influence is not pervasive, it can be said that Kuwait is unique in the GCC. The tolerance of sectarian differences affected

the country's decision to be a mediator. The growing anti-Shia campaign in the Gulf pushed Kuwait to alleviate the dispute for the sustainability of their impartial policies. Thus, being a mediator gave the country a soft power to keep its domestic sphere free of regional conflicts.

35.6 Conclusion

Thus, this research argues that Kuwait found diplomatic means to carry out its policies, which are mostly related or due to the size of the country. Kuwait desired to make the Gulf free of insecurity for reasons of economy, domestic issues, and national security. The economic and domestic sphere of Kuwait has been seen as the soft power of the state; the national security is sustained by diplomacy, which could be interpreted as a balance of power strategy as a small state. Moreover, the research indicated that Kuwait uses its mediation power and experience as a soft power tool.

The research indicates that Qatar accepted Kuwait as the mediator due to the personality of Sheikh Sabah, which was seen as a soft power of Kuwait. The impartiality of Kuwait and diversity of thought were other reasons for Qatari acceptance, as they were considered helpful for the Qataris in maintaining their balancing power and soft power. From the perspective of the embargoing countries, Kuwait was a prominent contender for the role of mediator due to its commitment to the Gulf and impartiality. These two features were seen as necessary by the Saudi-led bloc for navigating the conflict and the politics inside the Gulf. The research also concludes that the blockading countries aimed to maintain the balance of power inside the Gulf, if not to leave Qatar alone. In addition, Kuwait's lack of hard power encouraged the blockading side to accept a mediator that could not force them to make a deal. Moreover, international support for Kuwait was perceived as being among Kuwait's soft power sources, which made the blockading side accept Kuwaiti mediation. The Kuwaitis agreed and even wanted to be the mediator to keep the country from being a part of the disagreement, which could be seen as a balance of power strategy. The economic power of the state was threatened by regional instability. The government aimed to solve the crisis to maintain the primary source of Kuwait's soft power. The research claims that the trauma of being invaded has shaped the foreign policy of Kuwait since the Iraqi invasion. Consequently, the political sphere of the country required any aggression in the region to be decreased. Kuwait uses mediation as a soft power to maintain security and keep its domestic sphere untouched by external actors.

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Chapter 36

Political Power and Material Identity: Saudi Women in Real and Virtual Societies



Reem Ali Al Derham

Abstract Real “material” societies differ from one society to another; and therefore, the impact of the globalized virtual society on them varies according to whether they are conservative, and subject to political authority, or open and liberal. This chapter attempts to link the economic factor in Saudi society and its positive impact on the economic and social rights granted to Saudi women in the Saudi Vision 2030, as well as on the Saudi leadership’s decisions related to Saudi women. The analysis focuses on the reduction of restrictions on their material identity, the “Black Abaya”. It then examines how these decisions were reflected in changing the colour and shape of the Saudi Abaya in material society first, before changing appearances in virtual society, and not the other way around.

Keywords Material identity · Saudi Arabia · Virtual society

36.1 Introduction

Academic articles often deal with the impact of virtual societies represented by the Internet and social media, on facilitating certain changes in real societies (physical societies) (Turkle, 1997). This theme is especially evident in developing societies, covering the impact of the globalized virtual world on their languages, fashions, traditions and other areas. While I agree with this to some extent, real societies are vastly different from one another. Some of them are conservative, whereas others are liberal and open. While the impact of virtual society may be directly and easily appreciated in a liberal society, in a conservative society, the influence or change may not appear without the facilitation of political authorities.

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Moreover, in some societies, even if there is communication with the virtual world, the change must first take place in real society before being reflected in virtual society. For example, Saudi women have been using the Internet and social media since 2001. Although the Saudi woman has been acquainted with other cultures and international fashions for more than 15 years, it is worth noting that she has committed herself to appearing in the Black Abaya that she has worn in public life for several decades. Then, even if she were to make any changes to the Abaya, it would have to be in compliance with the restrictions imposed on it. Changes in the colour and design of the Abaya only appeared clearly after obtaining the rights included in the Saudi Vision 2030, and with the set of Saudi political leadership decisions regarding the rights of Saudi women with an economic and social dimension. This included reducing restrictions related to the black Saudi Abaya, which had a direct impact on the colour and design of Saudi women's clothing in the real community, and this change was then transmitted in the virtual community.

Clothing is an aspect of material culture that provides visual cues to the changes taking place within the environment (Rabolt & Forney, 1989). Therefore, the political changes that gave Saudi women a wide range of rights, including easing restrictions related to the Black Abaya, were a result of economic changes related to the drop in oil prices. Given that Saudi Arabia is a rentier state, the drop in oil prices had an impact on the Saudi leadership's decisions regarding the rights of Saudi women, which contributed greatly to the material identity of women. One of their newly acquired rights was the ability to choose the colour and shape of their clothes in their practical life. This effect was consequently reflected on social media.

This chapter attempts to present the economic factor in Saudi society that positively affected the economic and social rights granted to Saudi women in the Saudi Vision 2030 and the Saudi leadership's decisions related to Saudi women. Then it considers how these decisions were reflected in the nature of Saudi women's clothing in traditional society first, before such changes emerged in virtual society. The aim is to shed light on the fact that in conservative Saudi society, changes related to material identity began first in traditional society and then extended to virtual society, not the other way around. When rights were granted to Saudi women and the restrictions on the Black Abaya eased in traditional society, this occurred first in her daily life and then spread to the virtual world of the Internet and social media.

Interaction of Saudi women in real and virtual society, simultaneously with use of the Internet and interactions on social media, reflects their commitment to the restrictions imposed on them by Saudi society for decades, especially after benefiting from generous oil revenues from 1938 onwards. Oil prices started fluctuating a few years before King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud took the throne on 23 January 2015 and these fluctuations continued during his reign. The decline in oil prices and the lack of international demand for oil led the Saudi political decision-makers to turn to economic diversification to reduce dependency on oil as an essential resource. This change was positive and in the interest of the Saudi

women, who entered as primary actors and participants in the process of economic diversification and were given a number of economic and social rights, including the right to choose their clothes in accordance with the nature of their occupation and new daily working lives. This change was then reflected in the way Saudi women presented themselves in virtual communities.

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part deals with Saudi women before 2016 and explains that their material identity in terms of the Black Abaya did not change significantly for many years, despite their use of the Internet and social media. In the second part, we examine the relationship of the fluctuation and decline of oil prices with the nature of the decisions of the political authority in favour of the economic and social rights of Saudi women. The third part explains the contribution of these decisions to easing the restrictions on the Saudi Abaya in real society. The final part then shows the decrease in the influence of the Saudi authorities on the minds of Saudi women and how the wearing of the Abaya was adapted to different colours and designs, with the extension of its presentation on social media sites. I follow these parts with the conclusion.

36.2 Saudi Women Before 2016: The Presence of the Internet and the Absence of Its Influence

Some scholars argue that women should be analysed in the context of the political projects of contemporary countries and their historical transformations, such as the discovery and exploitation of oil (Meijer et al., 2012). Indeed, oil is the moving factor behind any political, economic and social change that occurs in Saudi Arabia (Al-Khateeb, 1998). The rise or fall of oil revenues in rentier countries greatly affects all aspects of the State. Generous oil revenues over the past decades enabled the House of Saud to develop various fields, such as education, health, construction, port construction and more. Since the establishment of the Third Saudi State in 1932, the legitimacy of the rule of the House of Saud was closely linked to its religious and Wahhabi message (Buchan, 2015). Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy (there are no political parties) linked to the Sharia, which in turn was formed by Wahhabism. Since Sharia is complemented by a wide range of customs, the demands for social change take on a political, and in some cases, an anti-religious, aspect (Buchan, 2015). At the same time, gender segregation is a significant characteristic of public and social life in Saudi Arabia (Al-Saggaf, 2004). This rule applies to all aspects of social life, such as hospitals, schools, shopping malls, libraries and restaurants (Al-Saggaf, 2004).

Saudi society considers the hijab an indisputable religious duty and a symbol of the depth of religious conviction and solidarity with other Muslim women (Pharaon, 2004). Without it, women are considered to move away from the basic commitment to their own identity, while the veil is seen as a way to bridge the gap between men and women (Pharaon, 2004). In public, women in Saudi Arabia

are legally required to wear an Abaya with a shayla or a rectangular head scarf (Lindholm, 2010). Women in Saudi Arabia thus adhere to the norms of religion and tradition with reinforcement from the visual symbol provided by traditional Saudi dress, the Abaya and the veil (Rabolt & Forney, 1989). With strict moral penalties imposed on women who do not dress appropriately in public places by the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention, women can only be seen dressed differently from the traditional norm on special occasions and situations where no men are present (Rabolt & Forney, 1989).

Meanwhile, access to the Internet has also been historically restricted in Saudi Arabia. Despite the existence of the Internet in Saudi Arabia since 1999, the Saudi authorities did not allow its use to either men or women until 2001 (Human Rights Watch, 2006). Saudi authorities have blocked more than 200,000 websites, and Saudi Arabia is considered the most aggressive country in the region regarding the policies followed in blocking network sites—be it pornographic sites, sites related to gambling or drugs, or sites with political themes, such as the Amnesty International website, which includes criticism of the human rights violations in Saudi Arabia (Human Rights Watch, 2006). Flickr, a photo-sharing site, has also been blocked (Human Rights Watch, 2006). Article 6 of the Kingdom's Anti-Cyber Crime Law also stipulates imprisonment for the "production, preparation, transmission, or storage of material impinging on public order, religious values, public morals, and privacy, through the information network or computers" (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2007).

However, access to social media is now possible, which is known to bring changes to the way people interact (Ellison et al., 2007). It opens opportunities for identity formation and interaction, which differ from those available to individuals in offline environments (Alsaggaf, 2019). Additionally, the rapid development of communication technologies brings different cultures closer (Karacor, 2009). It is worth noting that identities established via technology are often cross-border (Bostrom & Sandberg, 2011). Despite these opportunities, the influence of Saudi women was still limited when it came to making a change to her Black Abaya, due to their compliance with the restrictions imposed on them in Saudi society.

Before 2016, Saudi society exercised power according to Foucault's theory of disciplinary power, concerning the correction of the spirit of the criminal, to give the power of mind over mind (Foucault, 1978). Foucault argues that Bentham's Panopticon works to make prisoners take responsibility for regulating their behaviour (Foucault, 1978). Thus, the prisoners will behave in the manner prescribed by the institution at all times (Foucault, 1978). Therefore, even after their release from prison, the prisoners will act as if they are still under surveillance (Foucault, 1978). The prisoners (community members) are thus themselves the holders of power and exercise self-control in line with the requirements of the authorities. This interaction exists at all levels of society and is evident in Saudi Arabia. When Saudi women interact, whether in traditional society or on social media (virtual society), their minds monitor their interactions according to the controls of the Saudi authorities in particular and Saudi society in general. Thus, when Saudi women use social media, the Panopticon effect continues to influence them,

creating a state of conscious and permanent monitoring, ensuring the automatic operation of power (Foucault, 1978).

According to Goffman's interpretation (Goffman, 1978) of the presentation of the self in everyday life, the Saudi woman, even if she interacts as an actor, uses metaphors borrowed from drama in front of the virtual audience (Goffman, 1978). The interaction of Saudi women through their individual behaviour in virtual society is characterized by a display of a desirable image in both the front and back theatre that Goffman refers to (Goffman, 1978). When the actor is in the foreground, she is aware that she is being observed by the audience and will consequently observe certain rules and social traditions (Goffman, 1978). Consequently, Saudi women display the behaviour they are accustomed to in prison, or in general under strict rule, which satisfies the public (other users), and this audience is mostly members of Saudi society. Although there are neither guards nor prisoners in the clearly virtual Panopticon, there are guards and prisoners alike, watching each other and implicitly judging each other while sharing content. It is noticeable through two dominant features of Saudi women's interaction on social media: firstly, they use a pseudonym highly distinct from their first and last name (Guta & Karolak, 2015), and secondly they deal with different social media platforms according to the different levels of their interaction with men in real society, which are restricted by customs and traditions (Guta & Karolak, 2015). Meanwhile, if topics related to the headscarf or the Abaya are discussed online, such discussions are limited to the virtual world (Guta & Karolak, 2015), without any effect on real society, and are bound by the controls imposed by Saudi society.

36.3 The Impact of the Economic Factor on the Saudi Decision-Makers' Attitudes Towards Women

The Saudi Vision 2030 and the decisions of King Salman and his son, His Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman, related to women emerged as the result of negative changes in the Saudi economy that coincided with the ambitions of the Prince. Saudi Arabia is a classic rentier entity whose life cycle has been linked to the extraction (at low cost) of its natural resources (oil and natural gas) and their sale (at a high price) abroad (Ehteshami, 2013). Since the discovery of oil in 1938, the rule of the House of Saud depended on providing generous revenues to their people in exchange for loyalty without accountability for their internal and external policies.

Since the second half of 2014, oil-rich countries in the Middle East and North Africa, including Saudi Arabia, have seen their expected revenues diminish by billions of dollars as oil prices declined. They enjoyed high oil prices for a long period from 2010 to 2014, averaging nearly \$100 per barrel of crude oil. In contrast, global average prices were roughly \$50 a barrel from 2015 through early 2018 (Moshashai et al., 2020). The impact on the Saudi government's

public finances, and thus the economy, was profound (Grand & Wolff, 2020). Government revenue fell sharply to about \$133 billion in 2016, less than half of the nearly \$320 billion revenue in 2013 (Grand & Wolff, 2020). Economic growth decreased from 6% in the first quarter of 2014 to 2% in the third quarter of the same year; it recovered somewhat in 2015, then dulled in 2016, and eventually took a negative turn in 2017 (Grand & Wolff, 2020). Between mid-2014 and 2016, the nation’s stock market value fell by half (Grand & Wolff, 2020). With declining oil revenues, the government budget fell into a deficit, reaching 14.8% of GDP in 2015 (Grand & Wolff, 2020). Oil prices are not expected to record a significant increase, as overall demand is less than before (CNBC, 2020) (Fig. 36.1).

In December 2015, the McKinsey Global Institute released a report analysing the Saudi economy in the wake of the oil recession (McKinsey Global Institute, 2015). The report provided terrible predictions for the economic future of Saudi Arabia (McKinsey Global Institute, 2015). The institute predicted a rapid rise in unemployment, a decline in household income, and a deterioration of the financial position of the national government (McKinsey Global Institute, 2015). The report identified a crucial need to implement diversification, moving away from a rentier economy to accelerate the transition to a more market-based approach, facilitated by substantial government investment (McKinsey Global Institute, 2015). Eight different sectors were identified in the report as potential areas of competitive advantage: mining, minerals, petrochemicals, manufacturing, retail and wholesale trade, tourism, hospitality, healthcare, finance and construction (McKinsey Global Institute, 2015).

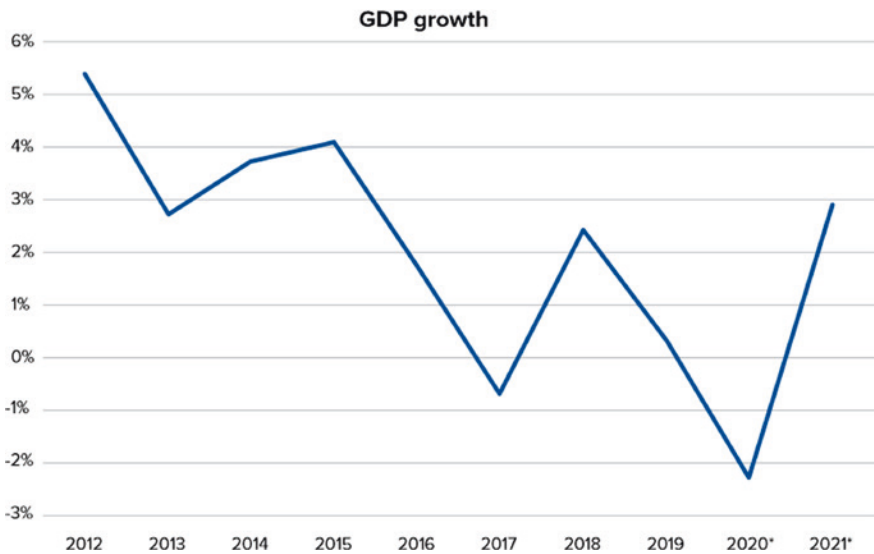


Fig. 36.1 Fluctuation of Saudi GDP during the last five years (IMF, 2020)

The changes in oil prices and its economic impact also coincided with political changes, with the accession of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on 23 January 2015 (SPA, 2021). He simplified the formulation of government policy and decision-making and abolished 14 royal councils, which were replaced with the Council for Political and Security Affairs and the Council for Economic and Security Affairs (Sasapost, 2015). On 21 June 2017, the King issued several royal orders, including the appointment of his son, Prince Muhammad bin Salman, as the Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense (Media Gov Sa, 2015). Shortly after taking office, Mohammed bin Salman ordered the arrest of a group of personalities, including clerics, dissidents and journalists (Human Rights Watch, 2017). In November 2017, he arrested a further 49 prominent personalities, including current and former princes and ministers, on charges of corruption (BBC News, 2017). The official local media outlets framed the corruption campaign as historic, and it was supported by the Council of Senior Scholars in Saudi Arabia, who described it as a historic reform matter (2017). (المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات، 2017).

The Saudi leadership, including King Salman and the Crown Prince, were intent on changing the Kingdom's international image and were fully aware of the need for economic diversification (Grand & Wolff, 2020). They viewed the economic challenges not as a crisis but as an opportunity to initiate a structural transformation of the Saudi economy, which was already underway (Moshashai et al., 2020). In April 2016, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced an ambitious list of reforms under Vision 2030 (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016). The reforms aimed to bring about major changes within Saudi society and its economy by enabling Saudi citizens to form a larger part of the productive workforce in the Kingdom, while diversifying revenues (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016). The economic goals within the framework of the vision aimed to increase the share of non-oil exports to 50% of government revenues and to increase the share of the private sector in the local economy from 40 to 65%, all by 2030 (Moshashai et al., 2020).

Vision 2030 was an ambitious reform plan established at a national level, despite declining oil revenues impeding the implementation of its projects. One pioneering idea of the Saudi leadership was to give women their rights in the same vision, which was undoubtedly reflected by their increasing involvement in the Saudi labour market. Women constitute almost half of the population of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where the percentage of females was 42.56% in 2016 and 42.52% in 2017 (2018). (الهيئة العامة للإحصاء، 2018). In addition, Saudi women make up more than 50% of university graduates (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016). However, they represent only 14% of the workforce (Courington & Zuabi, 2011). The vision pledged to continue developing the talents of Saudi women, investing their energies and enabling them to obtain appropriate opportunities to build their future and contribute to the development of Saudi society and its economy (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016). In addition, a goal was established of raising the participation rate of Saudi women in the Saudi labour market from 22 to 30% and providing job opportunities for nearly one million Saudi women by 2030 (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016). In contrast to the isolation and exclusion they were subjected to

earlier, these policies appear to be in the interest of the participation of Saudi women in building a new Saudi society (Eum, 2019). Youth and women are seen as winners in Saudi Vision 2030. Among other goals, the vision aims to harness the economic power of women (Reed, n.d.). Consequently, women were given the right to engage in the Saudi labour market according to moderate controls, which will impact the Saudi economy and help achieve Saudi Vision 2030.

Saudi Vision 2030, which was launched from a country whose economy relied mainly on oil revenues, was subject to challenges because Saudi Arabia was already far from the peak of oil (Goldthau, 2013) but close to the curse of resources. According to Ross (Ross, 2001), oil hinders democracy, especially in countries rich in natural resources, such as Saudi Arabia, which relied on oil as its main source of income for several decades. This created an implicit social contract with the people, and the House of Saud did not consider the difficulties of relying on oil as a primary resource for generations.

I argue that the drop in oil prices and the reduction of the Saudi economy's dependence on it benefited Saudi women. It facilitated greater involvement in the labour market, with the issuance of social decisions that reduced the social restrictions imposed for many decades. This involvement in the labour market will pave the way for women's political participation in any future democratic transition process.

Although economic diversification has been a priority in Saudi economic policy since the 1970s, the implementation of a series of five-year development plans to establish six new economic cities, first presented in 1970, did not achieve the required objectives (Kinninmont, 2017). This is because policies aimed at easing the structural fiscal burden and reducing reliance on government spending can be seen as undermining the implicit social contract (Kinninmont, 2017). Therefore, such efforts are often weakened or delayed when oil prices rise (Kinninmont, 2017). Thus, the same relationship that the House of Saud pursued with their people, providing subsidies and imposing restrictions on women, continued because there was no need to effectively include women in the Saudi economy. Conversely, Vision 2030 and the concurrent lack of demand for oil, alongside the prediction of decreased international demand, indicated the growing presence of Saudi women as key players in the Saudi economic development process. It cannot be overlooked that Mohammed bin Salman's decisions regarding Saudi women creates a positive image of him, especially in Western countries, to convince them of the openness of Saudi Arabia and change the stereotype in the West regarding Saudi women's rights, including the right to choose their own clothes.

36.4 Changing the “Black Abaya” Material Identity in Real Society

The inclusion of Saudi women in Saudi Vision 2030 was followed by a set of decisions by King Salman and his son Muhammad which greatly facilitated the involvement of Saudi women in work, diversifying the available job opportunities.

It also gave them the right to choose the clothes they wore in accordance with Islamic regulations and lifted the limits of the black colour of the Abaya. These accompanying decisions brought about a great change for Saudi women in their daily lives in real society.

The launch of Saudi Vision 2030 was followed by a set of socially-focused decisions in favour of Saudi women, from the Saudi political leadership, which women had been demanding for many years. For example, King Salman issued a statement on 26 September 2017, allowing Saudi women to drive according to the rules of Islamic law (Okaz, 2017). The decree came into force on 24 June 2018 (CNN Arabic, 2018). Between the issuance of the decree and its implementation, in March 2018, Mohammed bin Salman stated that Islamic Sharia did not obligate women to wear the Black Abaya and that Saudi women may choose their clothes, provided that they are respectful and decent (Al Arabiya, 2018). Importantly, this statement came within the framework of bin Salman's return to moderate Islam. He had previously said that "We will revive our true moderate and tolerant Islam" (SPAENG, 2017b) and "We will not waste another 30 years in dealing with extremist thoughts" (SPAENG, 2017a). The statement about the Abaya appeared clearly in terms of its colour and design. Other colours began to be introduced and its design changed. It should be noted that before Mohammed bin Salman's statement regarding the Black Abaya, some simple colours had already been introduced. However, the women who wore these colours were denounced by the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice for their violations. As a result of Mohammed bin Salman's statement, women are no longer subjected to the campaigns of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, due to a reduction in the authority's powers.

In addition to other social decisions related to the rights of Saudi women, in August, 2019, women over the age of 21 were allowed to obtain their passports and travel the same way as a male, without the need for the consent of her guardian (Aawsat, 2019). As with the shift in the attitudes towards the Black Abaya, these decisions were preceded by a reduction in the powers of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (BBC, 2016).

The easing of restrictions on the Saudi Abaya and otherwise would not have had any real effect if issued unilaterally, without a set of supporting decisions to ease its implementation. The accompanying set of decisions are all factors that enabled the implementation of the decision to reduce restrictions on the material identity of Saudi women and change it in real society. Thus, the change is based on its initiation in Saudi society through its political leadership. There is no doubt that this internal change in Saudi society, facilitated by the political leadership, helped Saudi women obtain the rights they had been demanding for many years. The decision to ease restrictions on the Saudi Black Abaya and to give women the right to drive a car (BBC News, 2018), among others, have helped introduce more women to the labour market, making it possible that a diversified economy, comprising both men and women, can emerge. In turn, these real societal shifts have facilitated changes in attitudes generally.

36.5 Saudi Women and the Reduced Effect of the Panopticon

Within the framework of the abovementioned decisions, the Saudi Ministry of Commerce took a number of measures and introduced programmes to empower women and encourage their participation in various aspects of economic life. The aim was to increase their presence in economic and developmental activities, in order to promote sustainable development and to achieve the Kingdom's Vision 2030, encouraging women's participation in the national economy (Gov.SA, n.d.). Among the most prominent of these programmes and procedures was the establishment of business centres for women characterized by the application of the comprehensive employee concept within a new and advanced work environment that relies on modern technologies that facilitate procedures and save time for businesswomen (Gov.SA, n.d.). Women can also easily start a business after the cancellation of a guardian's approval requirement and the implementation of equal procedures for both men and women. They can open commercial records, apply for trademark registration, reserve business names, engage in self-employment, and register business agencies, and are also allowed to engage in all activities that men engage in (Gov.SA, n.d.).

The decisions issued by the political authority had a great impact on the mind and perception of Saudi women, as these rights originated from the authority itself and not from any another source. It ensures that men do not dominate them or hold them accountable to the authorities like before. Consequently, after the issuance of the series of decisions in favour of Saudi women mentioned above, a significant change was observed in the "Black Abaya" material identity in real society. Changes in the daily life of women in Saudi society are evident through the change in the colours of the Abaya and the way it is designed. It indicates a decrease in the influence of the Panopticon on the mind of Saudi women compared to the years before 2016. The Abaya has evolved in line with the rights given to women by the political authority in real Saudi society, though many Saudi women still wear the traditional black Abaya by choice.

By 2021, Vision 2030 had removed many legislative barriers, which gradually reduced cultural and societal barriers, making Saudi women visible, present, and engageable in airports, ministries, security services, companies, shops and the media (2021, الخليل). The nature of these jobs, on the one hand, and the reduction in restrictions on the Abaya in terms of colour, on the other, contributed to shifts in the colour and design of Saudi women's clothing in their real society, and their use of social media reflected these economic, political and social changes.

After the decisions of the Saudi leadership, the changes in the design and colour of Abayas by Saudi women were met without any reservations or raids by any party. This is in contrast to previous years, when Abaya shops were raided by the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice to ensure their adherence to the black colour code and a wide, simplified design (Alsudairy, 2020).

The vision and accompanying legislation reflected positively on the reality of Saudi women, according to international reports, official statistics, and local indicators (الخليج، 2021). Globally, Saudi Arabia jumped up 56 ranks in the “Women, Business Activities, and Law” report issued by the World Bank in 2020, and rose a further 37 ranks in 2021 (الخليج، 2021). Officially, labour market statistics from the General Authority for Statistics showed an increase in the participation of Saudi women in the labour force, from 25.9% in the first quarter of 2020 to 33.2% in the fourth quarter of the same year. It also showed a decrease in the unemployment rate for Saudi women to 24.4% during the fourth quarter of 2020, compared to 30.2% in the previous quarter (الخليج، 2021). Locally, according to the “Indicator of Women’s Participation in Development” issued by the National Observatory for the Participation of Women in Development in 2019, the results showed that Saudi women’s participation in economic development increased by 54% (الخليج، 2021).

36.6 Conclusion

The economic factors represented by fluctuating oil prices was the main influence on the Saudi political leadership’s decisions regarding Saudi women’s rights, realized through their inclusion in Saudi Vision 2030 and their contribution to economic diversification policies. The set of decisions accompanying the decision not to abide by the Black Abaya facilitated the implementation of the emergence of a new material identity for Saudi women, commensurate with the nature of their work in the new economic fields made available to them by Saudi Vision 2030. The easing of restrictions on Saudi women towards their material identity in real society, allowing them the freedom to choose their own clothes, was in turn reflected in their appearance in virtual society.

Foucault’s theory helps us attain an understanding of Saudi society and the decades-long domination of the Saudi elite in shaping Saudi minds, especially Saudi women’s minds. Furthermore, Goffman’s theory explains that the Saudi woman, when interacting in virtual society, presents herself according to the limits imposed on her in real society (as per the Panopticon) and does not play other roles outside the boundaries set by this society. The rights given to Saudi women by the Saudi authorities and their increased access to public spaces in real society were then reflected in virtual society.

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Chapter 37

Saudi Women Activism through Media



Priyanka Mittal

Abstract The article argues that despite the conservative nature of Saudi society, women in Saudi Arabia have been able to use media platforms for their rights-based activism. Women in these restricted and limited spaces have been articulating their self-expression within the limits and confines of the state. This article traces the changing position of women in Saudi society after the 9/11 attacks and Arab uprising. Further, it critically analyzes how Vision 2030 contributes to women's relaxing laws and position inside the country. The chapter cites various instances to support the argument that Saudi women use media platforms to promote activism for rights, greater social freedom, and more inclusion.

Keywords Vision 2030 · Saudi women · Media · Activism · Saudi Arabia

37.1 Introduction

Saudi Arabia is an authoritarian state situated on the twin pillars of religion and the Al-Saud tribe. This division of power between the Al-Saud and Wahhabi religious establishment has been central to contesting gender and woman rights. Based on this division, religious establishment conservatively defines the women's roles and position in Saudi society according to Islamic *sharia* laws and *Hadiths* (Al-Munajjed, 1997, p. 9). Thus, women's position in Saudi Arabia is contingent upon two factors: position of religion and position of government with religion. Women's inequality is traditionally structured in the social and governmental institutions, which comes from the state supporting Islam and derived from a literal reading of the Qur'an and *Sunna*. The Saudi state supports the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam, which dominantly undermines women's position in the social sphere and considers women inferior to and dependent upon men. It states that it is the prerogative of men to protect women's honor. This understanding comes from literary reading of Islamic text, largely Hanbali School of jurisprudence (Lichter, 2009; Niblock, 2006).

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Oil-led development, modernization, and urbanization in Saudi Arabia created isolation for women (Menoret, 2020, p. 58 and 67). State behavior was intertwined with controlling women's behavior, separating moral and immoral women; hence, 'this fear shaped state policy' (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p. 49). Due to Saudi state-imposed nationalism on lines of Wahhabism, women's position inside the Kingdom was articulated as 'Religious Nationalism' by Madawi Al-Rasheed. She writes (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p. 23) that the oil boom created a 'double exclusion' for women: from the general economy and the domestic sphere. Structurally, this 'double exclusion' deprived women of control over their own lives and issues of gender equality. Thus, women resorted to less controversial means of engaging themselves in certain professions like teaching, publishing, art, poetry, literature, philanthropy, education, and designing. As Madawi Al-Rasheed (2013, p. 2) cites Pierre Bourdieu (2001, p. 92), who says that 'women were drawn into the 'the domains of production and circulation of symbolic goods' like publishing, journalism, the media, teaching, etc., when they were excluded from economic and political activity.' These professions though not mainstream contributed passively toward state-building. Women's expression and empowerment were soft enough not to get caught in state-led religious conservatism through these complacent means.

Women's employment is closely related to women becoming independent and empowered. In Saudi Arabia, women's empowerment is seen as a structural constraint. Saudi women's presence in employment and public should be seen in the context of state polity and religion. The empowerment process closely relates to the process of change (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437 as quoted in Mellor 2010), having three dimensions of resources, agency,¹ and achievements. The women empowerment debate further gets complex when Muddassir Quamar (2016) states that "debate on women empowerment brings fore the question about role and place of women in society, but remains confined to not challenging the status quo." Women's activism and empowerment in authoritarian Saudi Arabia closely resonates with the idea of 'state-led' feminism, as stated by Joseph Kechichian.

Women's demand for social and political rights has been evident since the 1990s in writing petitions to the monarchy (Kechichian, 2013). Women and various civil society groups have been protesting for women's rights, jobs, equal pay, gender-segregation laws, driving bans, etc. Their ideas though common issues to women, but their understanding has been defined differently and addressed by Saudi women themselves. After the September, 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States and a series of domestic bombings in 2003, Saudi Arabia was forced to revisit its policy regarding women and religion (Al-Rasheed, 2008). There were a series of reforms and changes that were ushered by the state for women in education and employment. Women were seen as 'agents of change' who could modify public opinion, growing anti-Saudi Arabia.

¹ Noha Mellor (2010) elaborates on the discussion of resources and agency. Where resources include social relationships, allocation and expectations, and access to resources depends on rules of society that regulate the distribution of power. Agency is the ability to define and pursue goals, negotiations, bargaining.

State-led Public Relations initiatives in Transnational media networks were used to present a favorable Saudi image to audiences abroad (Al-Rasheed, 2013). However, the changes in society became irreversible since women now can articulate themselves in those limited spaces. Women activists now could organize themselves as per their ideologies and interests. While Saudi women's movements are engaged in a material struggle about equal rights and opportunities for women, it also becomes a symbol of the definition of femininity (Kurdi, 2014). Saudi women's rights are diverse and divided along with class, ethnicity, social positions, religious affiliation, personal identities, geographical regions, and tribal lines (Al-Rasheed, 2013; Yamani, 2004).

May Al-Dabbagh (2015, pp. 235–236) has categorized Saudi female political orientations into four categories as liberal,² right-based,³ Islamist,⁴ and conservative⁵ with their common denominator being social change agendas. Along with these political orientations that seep through agenda and demands, there are other categories of Saudi women rights activists who can be identified as political dissents and youth (Al-Rasheed, 2011; Le Renard, 2013); Quran interpreters (Al-Mahasheer, 2018); religious conservatives, non-practitioners, writers (Al-Fassi, 2016; Al-Ghadeer, 2009; Arebi, 1994); artists; filmmakers, singers (Foley, 2019). Saudi women rights activists like Rowdha Yousef (Zoepf, 2010), Manal Al-Sharif (Humaidi, 2018), Maha Akeel (Quamar, 2016), Muna Abu Sulayman (Yale University, 2009) underline the objective of their movements and activism that accords with rights given to women in the Quran, and specifically based on Sharia principals. For feminists to have audiences in Saudi Arabia, their ideas must be compatible and sensitive to religion. Therefore, multiple Muslim feminism exists against a singular form of feminism, in the Kingdom and within women's scholarship.

37.2 Changing Position of Women

Oil-led modernization and urbanization in Saudi Arabia have isolated women (Menoret, 2020, p. 58 and 67). Increasing surplus capital accumulation and power consolidation have changed the nature of conversations and discussions inside the country (Menoret, 2014, p. 8). The discussion of human rights has given birth to the practices of urban activism, which are now seen as a newer form of engaged

² They want a more significant role for women in public life.

³ They are working to improve the rights of prisoners.

⁴ These women offer revisionist readings of Islamic text and seek to transform Islamic teaching on women's issues within the family. In the context of the Saudi state, talk about gaining more rights remaining faithful to religion. They demand strict enforcement of Sharia, religious segregation of workforce, and elimination of 'free media,' 'westernization,' and 'corruption.' They even condemn the lifting of women's driving ban considering that it will leave men free from domestic responsibility sharing.

⁵ They are critical of the United Nations and other transnational governance bodies, which impinge upon state sovereignty.

citizenship. Pascal Menoret (2014) uses Jurgen Habermas's concept of the 'plebeian public sphere' to understand the everyday attitudes of Saudi citizens. In his work, *Joyriding in Riyadh*, he explores how thriving sub-cultures in Saudi Arabia is a way of confronting the state toward managing the public sphere, protecting private property enforcing the law (2014, pp. 10–11). As Sean Foley quoted in his book *Changing Saudi Arabia* using Antonio Gramsci's concept of Organic Individuals, he says youth 'through the language of their culture articulate feelings and experiences that the masses cannot easily express' (Foley, 2019, p. 5). After the Arab Spring of 2011, urban activism by youth and women groups changed the nature and method of resistance and protest, about how it was traditionally understood. As Bayly Philip Christopher Winder (2014) says, "the Saudi youth, in particular, look to Twitter for conversations that range from apolitical and mundane to partisan and provocative. Calls for reform and jabs at princes exist alongside zealous defenses of Saudi tradition."

After Arab Spring 2011, the political climate in the gulf region became volatile since the basis of unrest were issues of unemployment, poverty, and human rights issues. Educated youth with high unemployment rates started to protest on the streets. In order to control the social unrest in 2011, King Abdullah announced a series of benefits for Saudis worth \$10.7 billion, which addressed inflation, housing, education, and unemployment concerns of youth (Murphy, 2011). Along with the reforms packages, the Saudi monarch also made subtle changes in judiciary and cabinet position, appointing the first female deputy in the education ministry, Dr. Norah Al-Faiz. Women were also appointed to the Shura council in 2013, and the percentage has gone up to 20% of 150 total strength. This politically motivated empowerment of Saudi women in the media hemisphere changed their position. Various other structural changes introduced were like opening up of workspaces for women, relaxation of clerical positions and administrative, judicial, and political reforms, and commercial dealing and business development opportunities were developed for women.

Since the change of government in 2015, under King Salman, the inclusion of women in governance has been made an important step. In 2016, under Crown prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS), *Vision 2030* focused on integrating female youth into the economy. Various laws regarding women have been eased down. These include driving laws, guardianship laws, voting rights, travel rights, and ownership rights. Though no women find a position in King Salman's cabinet; still, women have been employed at various strategic positions both inside and outside Kingdom. This is in line with *Vision 2030*. The Saudi government is committed to appointing women in favorable diplomatic positions and vigorously doing it. For example, Princess Reema bint Bandar Al-Saud has been appointed as Saudi Arabia's first female ambassador to the United States.

Similarly, Manal Radwan was appointed as First Secretary for Saudi Arabia's UN mission (Arabnews, 2017). In addition, Afnan Al-Shuaiby was appointed Secretary-General and Chief Executive of the Arab British Chamber of Commerce in London (Archimandriti, 2018). For the last two decades, the Saudi ruling establishment has been focusing on harnessing the energy of its women's youth bulge.

In the past four years, there has been a significant rise in the number of women workforces. Statistically, in the age group of 15–37 years, which is roughly 37%, women in Saudi Arabia are about 49%, which points toward the significant contribution the women workforce can make to the economy of Saudi Arabia. However, only about 31% of women belonging to this age group are employed in the workforce (General Authority for Statistics, Saudi Arabia 2020). The Saudi female labor force participation rate (LFPR) rose from 17.7% in Q2 2016 to 33.2% in Q4 2020. Moreover, the unemployment rate among female nationals declined to its lowest level in four years at 24.4% in Q4 in 2020 (Al-Khudair, 2021). Thus, in a nutshell, women's presence in the Saudi workforce increased both in share and numbers (Al-Khowaiter, 2021). Often this rise in the women workforce is credited to the *Vision 2030* goal of increasing the female participation rates by creating more working opportunities in the job market for females. However, the young Saudi women participation rate is less than half of young Saudi males (General Authority for Statistics, Saudi Arabia, 2020).

Due to religious and social restrictions, Saudi women and activists understand their shortcoming about free public mobility and limited freedom of speech and expression. As an outcome, they are now tactically using online platforms and social media to organize and express their ideas resulting in newer forms of networking and urban activism. Amelie Le Renard (2014) writes that women's movements inside the Kingdom should be understood in a 'loose sense' and not coordinated efforts since organized or unorganized protests and political movements are banned. This urban activism is increasingly seen as a new form of engaged citizenship that works at the intersection of formal decision-making and informal urban spaces (Van Hoose & Savini, 2017). Activists and citizens employ informal tactics to test the borders of the legality of the state (Pagano, 2013). However, this practice is considered incompatible with institutionalized planning and is seen as a means of disruption to formal policymaking (Lerner, 2012).

Patricia Wilson (1997) says that individuals tend to aggregate and develop resistance capacities or propose alternative policymaking ways, as it happened in the case of various online resistance and petition movements. For example, in 2011, the hashtag '#Tal3mrak' movement was used as a sarcastic remark for rich and Royal Saudis. Demographically speaking, the two most prominent groups tweeting in Saudi Arabia were the age brackets of 25–34 and 18–24. Moreover, whereas roughly 22% of Saudi Facebook members were female, women made up 37% of the market for Saudi Instagram accounts, and 29% on Twitter platforms in 2019 (Lama, 2019). The debate over the ban on women drivers took on new life in September 2013, when Sheikh Saleh Al-Loheidan, a well-established cleric, warned that driving a car could damage a woman's ovaries and pelvis. In response, the hashtag *#WomensDrivingAffectsOvariesAndPelvises* was created to deride his curious theory. Several weeks later, during a rare protest against the ban, hashtags such as #Saudi, #Oct26driving, and #Women2Drive were used to rally support (Chappell, 2013). Saudi women, bloggers, and activists have been using the hashtags #TogetherToEndMaleGuardianship and #StopEnslavingSaudiWomen—to mark their protest against the practice of male guardian laws (Perez, 2016). Women and youth activists are producers of strategic

communication for social change, suggestive of communication for development and social change.

37.3 Women Activism Through Media

In Saudi Arabia, any form of protest against the government is labeled as un-Islamic⁶ by religious authorities (Reuters, 2011), women groups and activists have resorted to cultural mediums to present their opinions and expressions. Young women in Saudi Arabia are emerging as filmmakers, artists, sculptors, painters, chefs, musicians, theater people, sports celebrities, writers, journalists, and TV presenters, which were once fields dominated by men. Sean Foley (2019, p. 5) quotes Sidney Tarrow's expression for Saudi artists and activists calling them to be 'Rooted Cosmopolitans,' who are distinguished based on their global linkages with the local ideas. These activists define themselves in nationalistic terms while advancing their political vision to what Kwame Anthony Appiah calls 'Cosmopolitan Patriotism' (as quoted in Foley, 2019, p. 6). Through these professions, women can actively bargain their position against patriarchy and religion, but within the confines of the state.

Before 9/11, discourses on women's presence in media were nearly absent. Women's appearance on television shows and soft new items was limited. After 9/11, this image began to change. Al-Saud monarchy mitigated foreign criticism against them by using the 'Charm Offensive' strategy in media networks (Al-Rasheed, 2013, p. 151). Royal family women who were never seen before in media were used in this strategy to do the bidding for the government. For example, Loulwa Al-Faisal, Princess Noura bint Faisal Al-Saud, the then Princess Ameera Al-Taweel, Princess Adila bint Abdullah were few emerging faces of women belonging to the royal family. Even before them, women from the royal family have been making a significant contribution to the cause of women, as in the case of Queen Iffat Al-Thunayan, wife of King Faisal. She helped spread women's education in Saudi Arabia and opened many girls' schools and universities (Bowen, 2014, p. 16). Royal women of various generations have contributed to women's causes, rights, education, disabilities, domestic abuses, and health awareness programs. Even today, Princess Lamia bint Majid Saud Al-Saud, grand-daughter of earlier King Saud, works as Secretary-General of Al-Waleed Philanthropy. Another Princess Basma bint Majid bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud works as President of the Art of Heritage, an affiliate of Al-Nahda

⁶ Protesting through state demonstrations is considered illegal and un-Islamic because it may promote *fitna* or social division. Thus, any challenge to ruling authorities, including religious institutions in Saudi Arabia, was considered a criminal offence. Several human rights activities have been condemned and put behind bars for voicing their opinion, for example, Raif Badawi, Loujain Al-Hathloul, etc. Back in 1990, women resorted to driving cars in Riyadh to mark their protest against the driving ban. These women were implicated for the same. So from 2004 onward, activists and protesters resorted to the traditional form of expressing their opinion through petition writing. The culture of petition writing to the king has been active in Saudi Arabia, but now it has changed its character to *hashtag* movements.

Philanthropic Society for Women. The charitable organization takes care of women with disabilities (Minthe, 2019).

Due to social reforms in society, women were seen in heightened visibility inside the transnational media of Saudi Arabia. The newsrooms, presenters, talk shows were the command areas where women's presence was noticed. At the workplace sites, gender identities are appropriated and negotiated since it is an arena for the exhibition of power and resources (Ben Lupton, 2000, p. 34). In 2018, Saudi television anchorwoman Weam Al-Dekheil became the first female news presenter in a state-owned Saudi television channel to deliver an evening news bulletin. Earlier, Jumanah Al-Shami was the first woman to present morning newscasts in 2016 (Day, 2018). Women's presence in media-generated images generated wider 'awareness and consciousnesses about women's issues and rights' (Alyedreessy et al., 2017, p. 112; Fantasy, 2013; Sakr, 2008, p. 403).

Saudi women TV media personalities like Muna Abu Sulayman, Badariya Al-Bishr, and Lojain Omran have influenced women folk in Saudi Arabia. Muna Abu Sulayman is a TV show host on the women's talk show *Kalam Nawaem*, a popular show on MBC is now running for a decade. She has been an open advocate of the Saudi strand of Islamic feminism and believes that women can work alongside men to contribute to society. In her interviews and TV shows, she is reported to have said that there is nothing in Islam that can stop women from working and contributing toward national growth. While Badariya Al-Bishr⁷ is a Saudi writer and novelist (Dreyer, 2011), her talk show 'Badria' on MBC has been popular for tackling controversial social issues in Saudi society (Jiffry n.d.). Badariya is also an avid blogger and novelist. Lojain Omran is a Saudi television presenter and social media influencer. Her TV programs include *Good Morning Arabs*, *Ya Hala*, *World of Eve*, etc. She is reported to have about 5.4 million followers on social media (Azaiz, 2019). These women have been actively molding people's opinions and taste inside and outside Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has emerged as a media hegemon in the Arab world (Zayani, 2012). Major newspaper publications like Al-Hayat, Arab News, Saudi Gazette, Asharq Al-Awsat, and popular television networks like Rotana and MBC are owned and managed by Saudi ruling families. Thus, the media's opinion-making creeps into every aspect of decision-making and conveys a favorable Saudi image abroad. These media material practices involve forming everyday values, especially in countries with high social media penetration.

Although for about 35 years, cinema has been banned in Saudi Arabia; however, Saudi elites and women from influential families have been contributing to film production in their capacities. For example, the first Saudi women filmmaker is Haifaa Al-Mansour. She is well known for making films on women's issues in Saudi Arabia well within the prism of Saudi society and tradition. Her film *Wajdja* and *Perfect Candidate* have been widely acclaimed on international platforms. The first film is about the aspirations of a young girl to ride a bicycle which is banned for women in Saudi Arabia, while her mother struggles to keep her marriage. The second film

⁷ She is the wife of Nasser Al-Qasabi, a famous Arab TV show comedian for shows like *Tash Ma Tash* and *Selfie*.

is about a young doctor working in a municipal hospital, her struggle to file her nomination for municipal elections, and society's response toward her endeavor. In 2018, she was elected as Saudi Arabia's General Culture Authority member due to her work. Another significant mention is Ahd Kamel, an actress, and filmmaker from Saudi Arabia who worked in films like *Hurma* and *Al-Gondorji*. Her film deals with women's position in Saudi society. She also worked as an actress in Haifaa's film *Wadjda* as a school teacher.

Saudi women historically have been involved in writing narratives, essays, columns stories, novels, poetry, and biographical accounts. These accounts are now considered useful for understanding women's social position (Arebi, 1994). Madawi Al-Rasheed (2013, p. 176), women "are seeking recognition and a voice in writing," reflecting a more complex, diverse, cosmopolitan, and global image of the Saudi woman. Noha Mellor (2008, pp. 472–473) writes in the context of Arab Journalists that they work as active Cultural Intermediaries who can impact the events in the region. Saudi women are emerging as journalists who can now influence the discourse about women inside the country. For example, Maha Akeel, who has worked as Journalist with *Arab News*, has been an active contributor to media writing about Saudi Women and their issues. Similarly is the contribution of Somayya Jabarti, who can be credited as the first woman to be appointed as editor in chief, in 2014, of a Saudi Arabian Arabic language newspaper (Flanagan, 2014).

Another profession from which women were debarred entry was singing. Women singing among the public is not considered respectable since many Islamic suras interpreters objected to women singing in public. They claim that women singing in public among men can cause *fitna* and chaos. Thus any form of music and singing was banned on Saudi soil for years. Especially after 1979, the reverse—Islamization took place in Saudi Arabia.

Nevertheless, this could not deter women from pursuing their choice. If not in Saudi Arabia, women were practicing, learning, and teaching music as a profession outside Saudi Arabia. For example, Sawsan Al-Bahiti became the voice of Saudi Opera Singing. She is also a qualified coach at the New York Coaching Center and has been singing opera since 2008. She was also actively involved in the hospitality and catering industry in Jeddah (Singh, 2021). After Vision 2030 was launched and the General Entertainment Authority was created to support talents and artists, Al-Bahiti launched herself professionally in Saudi Arabia (Nadeem, 2019).

Manal Al-Dowayan, a contemporary Saudi Artist, is famous for her installation pieces, which primarily examine personal and political issues related to women's rights in ultra-conservative Saudi Arabian laws. She mentions in her interview that, in Saudi Arabia, painting and arts as a profession were not considered revered professions, and there was not much infrastructure available (Siegal, 2019). Her powerful art installation, 'Suspended Together' produced in 2011, gives an insight into the impression of movement and freedom of women inside Saudi Arabia.

37.4 Conclusion

Women's activism in Saudi Arabia is contingent upon factors of religiosity and Al-Saud governance. Though this division of power has been detrimental to women's growth, it has also provided women spaces for empowerment. Through these years, women activists in various capacities and professions have articulated their self-expression through those fractured lines of patriarchy and state conservatism. Thus pushing the state reformist discourse on culture and society toward comparatively liberal and cosmopolitan extremes.

Saudi Arabia is a regionally segregated and diverse nation in geography, tribal factions, and populations hailing from different cultures and traditions. As a result, women's rights activism in Saudi Arabia is multi-faceted. Homogenizing the whole Saudi population under the garb of the 'Being Saudi,' a singular identity would be confusing. Saudi women have been practicing various forms of women activism, sometimes within the rubric of Islam, Hijazi, Najdi, or largely Saudi-tradition. Their ideas and identity diversify into various advocacy practices for women's causes. However, they have assimilated into a powerful bloc that holds the capacity to influence the public and governmental discourse on state, society, and culture. They try to skip government censorship and prohibitions by not engaging politically, but at the same time, they express their patriotic opinions in the most colorful ways. Women activists in media, art, journalism, music, and sports are trying to create a new symbolic and cultural discourse through their creative work. This creative discourse forms a particular part of Saudi economic and historical narrative, thus becoming political in its appeal, often directing what Asef Bayat calls 'Social non-movements referring to the collective actions of non-collective actors.' Through their activism, women have been able to demand more rights, greater freedom, and more openness. Although upon looking at the larger picture, these changes might not create any impact, upon closer look, Saudi Arabia is gradually progressing with incremental changes.

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Chapter 38

Yemen, the Wound that Still Bleeds in the Gulf and Beyond



Joel Foyth

Abstract This chapter addresses the causes and reasons for continuation of Yemeni civil war. In 2011, Yemenis mobilized to demand the departure of President Abdullah Saleh and the establishment of a better society. After thirty years in power, Saleh signed his resignation and began a political transition that was initially promising. This chapter argues that the absence of real change and the complexity of Yemeni society undermined the process, leading to civil conflict. In addition, the turbulent Yemeni reality was intertwined with dark regional geopolitics, marked by sectarianism and competition between Saudi Arabia, Iran, and United Arab Emirates. This chapter suggests that the war eventually turned into a brutal fight, which has been qualified as *The century's worst humanitarian crisis*.

38.1 Introduction

The United Nations (UN) has qualified Yemen's conflict, which started in 2015, as *The century's worst humanitarian crisis*. However, paradoxically, in 2011–2012, after the Arab Spring, the Yemeni Republic was going through a relatively peaceful and democratic process of political transition and was considered an “example to follow” for other Arab countries. So, why did this initially “successful” process have such a tragic ending? How did series of peaceful demonstrations by university students end in a regional war?

As a hypothetical answer to these questions, we consider that in Yemen, an “*internal dynamic*,” in which different Yemeni actors fight for the control of the State apparatus, has been intertwined with a “*regional dynamic*,” in which external actors fight for the hegemony in the region, intervening in different ways in the conflict and forging pragmatic and conflictive alliances with local actors.

At the same time, Yemen has not been exempt of the COVID-19 Pandemic. In this regard, we consider that the Pandemic has had a catastrophic impact in the field

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of health care, but it has also affected the level of engagement of the external actors, who were constrained by the effects of the virus in their own territories.

Temporally speaking, our work will be circumscribed mainly to the 2011–2020 period. Firstly, we will develop the characteristics of the *internal dynamic*, analyzing some historical interaction patterns that formed the singular Yemeni identity, and the dramatic changes and power disputes that started in 2011 as a result of the ex-President Ali Abdullah Saleh's resignation.

In second place, we will see how in 2015 this conflictive dynamic became intertwined and fed back with the *regional dynamic*, becoming an international war where Saudi Arabia (SA), Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and other regional powers intervened based on their own interests. Finally, we will analyze the Pandemic's impact in the healthcare field and also in the conflict's dynamic.

Every event of international impact must be explained by a conjunction of material and immaterial factors. This means that the geopolitical and economic aspects play an important role, but they must be combined with ideological and identitarian aspects. The latter will occupy a central place in our work, because they are fundamental in the region of Middle East and North Africa (MENA), where multiple identities coexist, determining the behavior of actors.

From the perspective of constructivism, Alexander Wendt (1992) affirms that identities are socially built, and are "inherently relational" (Wendt, 1992, p. 397), that is to say that the actors intersubjectively build their identities and perceive themselves and others through reciprocal interactions. Although the identity structure can be changed by changing the bonding pattern, change can be very difficult when these have been consolidated and institutionalized.

These identities are the "basis of interests," since "actors do not have a "portfolio" of interests they carry around independently of the social context" (Wendt, 1992, p. 398), and "people act toward objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them" (Wendt, 1992, pp. 396–397).

By applying these concepts to international politics, Wendt (1992) criticizes Waltz's neorealism, showing that neither the anarchy of the international system,¹ nor the different distributions of material resources between the actors explain their actions. To Wendt (1992), these are determined by "the intersubjectivity constituted structure of identities and interest in the system" (Wendt, 1992, p. 401).²

Anarchy and the distribution of power are insufficient to tell us which is which. US military power has different significance for Canada than for Cuba, despite their similar "structural positions", just as British missiles have a different significance for the United States than do Soviet missiles. (Wendt, 1992, p. 397)

¹ "Anarchy" meaning the non-existence of a supranational power that acts homogeneously to that of national states within their territory.

² Waltz affirms that international structure is the one that determines the actions of the units, which has three dimensions: the constitutive principles (anarchy), the interacting units (states), and the distribution of material capacities. Wendt (1992) must add a "fourth dimension" which is "the intersubjectively constituted structure of identities and interest in the system" (Wendt, 1992, p. 401).

At the same time, in order to refer to the alliances that occur in the conflict, we will use Soler I Lecha's (2017) concepts of "liquid alliances" and "solid alliances." The author explains that in the MENA region:

There are no solid blocks and when an alliance is forged it is not based on a common identity or project, but in fear. The perception of what or who represents a threat changes depending on specific events and this is how single subject alliances proliferate which usually have an expiration date. They are liquid alliances that adapt to circumstances. (Soler I lecha, 2017, p. 148)

This implies that many rivalries are liquid too, so that "actors traditionally estranged make common front in a specific issue without thereby recognizing themselves as allies" (Soler I Lecha, 2017, p. 148). However, "the liquid has been winning over the solid without fully replacing it," so there are actors who maintain constant rivalries and also seek to form solid alliances. Rather, "in the alliance and in the rivalry the solid coexists with the liquid" (Soler I Lecha, 2017, p. 155).

38.2 The Internal Dynamic

38.2.1 *Yemeni Identity*

Below, we will briefly develop some historical processes and interaction patterns that shaped the Yemeni identity and that will allow us to elucidate how the interests and objectives of each one of the actors have been built.

Constant foreign interference: Its geographical position, close to one of the most important trade routes, was a strategic point for different global powers. The Ottoman Empire, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, in different moments and intensities, had a strong influence in the formation of modern Yemen (Ferreira Bermúdez, 2017). However, Saudi Arabia's interference deserves a special section. For the Saudi Monarchy, Yemen is a potentially threatening nation, one that must remain weak and under their sphere of influence (Clausen, 2015). This view resides in various factors: Demographically, it is the only country in the Peninsula to numerically match it; its people are fierce; it is the only republic in the Peninsula; and it has been a wedge through which Republicanism and Marxism have entered the Gulf.

North-south division: This is one of the most conflictive cleavages in Yemen, which has divided the country politically, economically, and religiously. While the north obtained its formal independence with the Ottomans Empire's fall, the south emancipated itself from the British in 1967 and became part of the socialist block. The 1990's unification was pragmatic and disorderly, motivated among other things, by the discovery of oil fields in the common border areas. The north, in a stronger position, co-opted the majority of the economic resources and the most important political positions, which motivated a short secessionist war in 1994. Still today, the southern groups, like al-Hirak, claim to have been colonized by the north.

Tribalism vs. Nation State: Yemeni civilization is one of oldest in the world, and since forever it has been a tribal one (Ferreira Bermúdez, 2017). Although the relationship between the central power and the tribes has been tense, Manea (1996) affirms that in different periods, the imamates and the central government managed to cooperate effectively with tribes, providing governance; and Bawazir et al. (2017) affirm that current chaos would be worse without the contribution of tribal legal systems in those places where the sovereignty of the State is almost absent. Even so, the concept of Nation State has not been integrated into the Yemeni identity.

(..) Yemenis find it difficult, especially in tribal and remote areas, to accept the concept of a Sovereign State. For them, there is no connection between their national identity and a state that claims to represent that identity. These are two separate issues. As far as they are concerned, the state is a mere synonym of the political elite who holds the power in Yemen to the detriment of the country. (Manea, 1996, p. 7)

Religious sectarianism: In Yemen, the different interpretations of the Quran have lived together harmoniously (Brehony, 2015). Even though the majority belong to the Sunni Shafi'i branch, in the north there is an important attachment to Zaidism, belonging to Shiism,³ in approximately 30% of the population.

It was not until the 1990s that Islamist parties appeared, with the creation of al-Islah party, which included sectors of the Muslim Brotherhood and salafists (Brehony, 2015), and the Ansar Allah—or Houthis, in honor to its fundator, Al-Haouti—movement, principally zaidi from the northern province Saada, who reacted to the rise of Saudi's Wahhabism, the economic and social marginalization, corruption, and the alignment with US foreign policy (Brehony, 2015; Dip, 2020a, 2020b). In 2004, the Al-Haouti headed an uprising against the central government, starting what was known as “Saada wars,” a succession of six armed conflicts between 2004 and 2010.

Finally, Al Qaeda also emerged in the Arab Peninsula (AQAP). In fact, the organization's first attack against the USA was in October 2000 in Yemen, against the US Navy destroyer USS Cole, which was anchored in Aden (Osman, 2015).

38.2.2 *The Yemeni Spring: Alí Abdullah Saleh Fall*

Another characteristic of Yemen's political identity has been the elitism of its leadership. Comins (2013) defines the Yemeni political system before 2011 as a “political-tribal-military based on patronage order” (p. 4). The ex-president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, was the leading figure, who was in power for over thirty years. Coming from the influential northern tribal Confederacy Hashid, he received part of his legitimacy from it, while placing his close relatives and friends in key places of the administration and the Army. With wide pragmatism, he co-opted political support of other leaders and influential sectors, while the General People's Congress (GPC) Party was the basis for his personal projection in power (Brehony, 2015).

³ However, Zaydism is a different version of Twelfth Shiism practiced in Iran.

However, in January 2011, inspired by the Jasmine's Revolution, started a series of demonstrations led by young professional and university students—who were not affiliated with the traditional political elites. Although in the beginning, there were isolated demonstrations, after Hosni Mubark's fall in Egypt, demonstrators took the streets massively with a clear objective: the undisputed removal of Saleh and his family from power.

The roots of this process are in the Yemeni economic and political systems (Clausen, 2015). Historically, the State was unable to provide the minimum social services, becoming the poorest country of the Arab world. Although Yemen had a multiparty system, elections, and relative press freedom, Saleh managed a sophisticated network of nepotism and corruption, by which he controlled the opposition parties and the tribal elites (Comins, 2013). But, the catalyst factor was when the GPC stated that it was willing to move forward on a bill that would not only allow Saleh's re-election in 2013, but also would allow him to be in charge for life.

While the young took the streets peacefully, the traditional opposition maintained a cautious attitude. The Join Meeting Parties (JMP), formed in 2005 by al-Islah and other smaller parties, put their bet on negotiating a progressive transition. But March 18 was a key day, when the government attacked the demonstrators in the squares, resulting in 52 deceased. Just a few days later, the main General Ali Mohsen, the most important leaders of the Hashid Confederation, and al-Islah party, declared their support to the demonstrators.

Ironically, the most powerful supporters of the democracy movement are veteran regime insiders. Defections did not result from a democratic enlightenment within the elite, but are emblematic of Saleh's failed alliance policy. The increasing concentration of power around his immediate family breached unwritten power-sharing agreements within the regime's inner circle. (Thiel, 2012, p. 45)

At the same time, the Houthis and al-Hirak secessionists joined the protests. It was from this point that the young claimed that their revolution had been *kidnapped* by old personalities who had nothing to do with their demands (Comins, 2013; Zahonero, 2013).

As expected, the unleashed instability set off alarms in Riyadh and the other Gulf capitals. Then, the Gulf Council Cooperation (GCC), through the Gulf Initiative, started to negotiate with Saleh and the JMP. The monarchies were worried about the vacuum of power in his neighboring country, but especially feared the Houthis' empowerment. Due to their political-religious similarity with Iran, they feared that they were used as a wedge through which Teheran could establish its influence in the Arabian Peninsula. We must not forget that in the Saada wars, Riyadh supported Saleh against the Houthis, alleging that the northern rebels were supported by the Islamic Republic.

Finally, after long months and strong international pressure, Saleh agreed to leave the presidency in exchange for immunity. From there on, a two-year process of transition will finalize in the final holding of elections. The one chosen by consensus to occupy the executive position in that period was his vice president, Abd Rabbuh

Mansur Hadi. However, this transition was destined to failure because it was negotiated only between the CPG and the JMP. The young, Houthis and Southerners, were not included. Clausen (2015) synthesizes it very well:

The Yemeni transition was triggered by the youth-led protests and a strong demand for real political change. Yet, it ended up as an elite-led political bargain, better described as a reshuffling of elites than as fundamental change. It is important to highlight that this was facilitated by the UN and the Gulf states, which prioritized short term stability and dealt with established political actors. (p. 20)

38.2.3 Failed Transition: From the National Dialogue Conference to the Armed Conflict

Part of the transition process consisted of a broad call to all the social forces to elaborate a new constitution. Thus, President Hadi announced the holding of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) which would become the “foundation stone” of a new Yemen (Lackner, 2016, p. 42).

However, once again the dynamics that shaped Yemeni identity were reflected. While the NDC was taking place in a luxury hotel in Sana, the people were starving in other parts of the country, and crime, murders and terrorist attacks multiplied. At the same time, Saleh was responsible for hindering and obstructing the negotiations; the Southerners threatened to leave the conference if they were denied secessionism; and the Houthis claimed that the small number of representatives they had been given reproduced a historical discriminatory dynamic. Inevitably, the NDC didn’t reach any consensus on the key issues.

In April 2014, Hadi formed the National Authority for the Implementation of the Outcomes of the NDC. However, by then, the tension between the Houthis and Hadi’s government was high, and while Houthis’ representatives were negotiating in the NDC, they continued fighting in the Northern provinces to consolidate their presence (Lackner, 2016).

In that context, something unexpected happened: the alliance between the Houthis and Saleh. Clearly, this was a liquid alliance, highly pragmatic, based only in the rejection of Hadi, and Saleh’s desire of keeping his power. With the support of the armed forces loyal to Saleh, the Houthis began to descend toward the south, and in September, they reached Sana. After a few days of fighting, they managed to obtain the prime minister’s resignation and made a new government agreement.

However, instability continued, and in January 2015, the Houthis took control of the Government Palace and Hadi was forced to resign. Nevertheless, the president could escape and take refuge in Aden, from where he denounced the Houthis’ coup d’État. More and more militarily entrenched, the Houthis descended further south, encircling the new capital. Back then, Hadi made the decision to fly to Saudi Arabia and ask the GCC to take steps to reinstate him in government.

38.3 The Regional Dynamic

38.3.1 *Internationalization of the Conflict*

The CCG's request for intervention marked the definitive intertwining of the conflict with regional dynamics. In March 2015, Saudi Arabia decided to lead a military coalition of mainly Sunni-Arab countries and intervene in Yemen in order to reinstate President Hadi. According to Riyadh's official version, Iran was behind the Houthis, and wanted to undermine regional stability and expand its influence. Therefore, they were acting in "legitimate defense" against Iranian aggression.

On March 26, Saudi Arabia with the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Morocco, Bahrain, Kuwait, Sudan, Egypt, Jordan, and Senegal launched the operation *Decisive Storm*. According to what was planned, it would be brief and its objective was to clear the rebels from the capital, destroy their heavy weaponry, and redirect the Initiative process (Dip, 2019). This was an unprecedented decision in Saudis' foreign policy, traditionally reactive and slow. This is part of a new, more personal, active, and aggressive orientation of Crown Prince Mohamed Bin Salman (MBS), with the perception that the *status quo* was no longer favorable and that doing nothing implied greater losses (Kinnimont, 2017; Serr, 2018; Soler I Lecha, 2018).

38.3.2 *Hegemonic Dispute*

Once again, we must see the *regional identities structure* to understand this new stage of the conflict. Between the Gulf monarchies, there is a shared vision of two greater threats: the Iranian presence and the political Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood and its branches. However, each one has its own interest, and they differ in the perception of which of these two threats is most pressing.

However, the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia occupies a prominent place. Intersubjectively, antagonistic and conflicting identities have been formed between Riyadh and Tehran, based on a series of factors: "religious (Wahhabi-Shiite), ethnic (Arab-Persian), political (monarchy-theocratic republic), and economic (around the oil policy)." In turn, "both countries perceive themselves as regional powers that seek to expand and consolidate their influence" and took advantage of the fronts opened by the Arab Spring for that (Dip, 2019, p. 3).

As Wilf (2017) and Serr (2018) say, Yemen, similar to Syria, Iraq, and Libya, has been transformed in a battlefield, where geopolitical regional interests are being settled, and the regional powers instrumentalize the "loyalty to religion, sect, ethnicity, tribe and nation as well as the ability to forge ever-shifting alliances in the service of specific goals" (Wilf 2017, p. 12). But Sana is "the geographical, social and political Achilles' heel of the Arabian Peninsula" (Wilf, 2017, p. 11), so that for Riyadh, it takes on a much greater importance.

38.3.3 Iranian Proxy War and Saudi Coalition Breakdown

In the internationalization of the conflict, two antagonistic factions were conformed that could be qualified as two *liquid alliance groups*: On the one hand, Hadi's internationally recognized government, along with al-Islah, the southerner separatists and the Arab coalition led by Riyadh, on the other hand, the Houthis with Saleh and Teheran.

Although the Persians denied their engagement in the conflict, evidence proves that they intervened in favor of the Houthis in at least three ways: funding, training, and providing weapons (Akin, 2019; Dip, 2019; Serr, 2018; Sharp, 2019).⁴ This coincides with what Munford (2013) defines as *proxy war*:

Proxy wars are the product of a relationship between a benefactor, who is a state or non-state actor external to the dynamic of an existing conflict, and the chosen proxies who are the conduit for the benefactor's weapons, training and funding. In short, proxy wars are the logical replacement for states seeking to further their own strategic goals yet at the same time avoid engaging in direct, costly and bloody warfare. (p. 40)

However, Teheran has avoided getting involved directly, since it has more urgent geopolitical interests that demand its forces, for instance, the Syrian conflict (Zahonero, 2018a, 2018b). At the same time, it is conscious of the importance that Yemen has for the Saudis and the probable rise of violence and tension that a direct intervention could have generated. Being the main referent of Shiism, a great part of its regional projection has been based on the "defense" of Islamic Shiite minorities (Hernández López, 2018; Serr, 2018:5; Wilf, 2017). However, the relationship between the Houthis and Iran has a great dose of liquidity, since rebel leaders have not followed all Iranian guidelines, and they have their own interests (Dip, 2019).

Unlike its rival, Saudi Arabia decided to intervene decisively in its neighboring country for two reasons: the strategic weight for its national security and its intentions of regional leadership. KSA deployed more than 150.000 troops, 100 war-planes and mobilized its Navy. Its allies made smaller contributions, but they supported Riyadh: Egypt mobilized Navy units; UAE provided 30 jets along with Bahrain and Kuwait 15, Qatar 10, Jordan 6, Morocco 6, and Sudan 3 (Dip, 2019). After blocking the rebels by air and sea, the coalition actions were based mainly on air airstrikes, and financing the Yemeni troops. Riyadh and Abu Dhabi also deployed soldiers, but then opted to hire mercenaries. It is estimated that the Saud monarchy spent approximately between 5 and 6 billion dollars per month on the conflict (Hernández López, 2018).

Like Teheran, Riyadh appealed to a sectarian speech to unite positions (Zahonero, 2018a, 2018b). According to Wilf (2017) and Soler I Lecha (2017), the Saud family wants to unite the Sunni world under their leadership, and seek to create a "Sunni block" with the objective of counteracting Iran, softening their position against the

⁴ This help support assistance was granted through unofficial channels, which makes it hard to keep a reliable record of its dimension. However, Dip (2019) and Serr (2018) propose as evidence of this help the interception of Iranian ships with weapons and the use of sophisticated weapons by the Houthis, such as drones.

Muslin Brotherhood⁵ (Soler I Lecha, 2017). In turn, Hadi himself assumed a sectarian discourse, since in this way he obtained some legitimacy and managed to homogenize positions within the fragile alliance (Hernández López, 2018).

However, the results of the intervention were not as expected (Hernández López, 2018). Prince Salman trusted his Army excessively and downplayed the Houthis' fighting ability. Little by little, the conflict transformed into a close fight, and due to the Saudis' lack of experience, the mistaken bombing over civilian positions, such as schools and hospitals, multiplied (Serr, 2018).

38.3.4 *Yemen in Flames: Dissolution of Liquid Alliances, Extremism, and Humanitarian Crisis*

Throughout 2016–2017, the coalition handled in a disorderly way the disputes between its own members and continued with the fight with the Houthi rebels, who demonstrated great resilience, thanks to their alliance with Saleh and indirect Iranian support (Hernández López, 2018).

After a failed peace dialog meeting promoted by the UN in Kuwait, the rebels launched a missile attack into Saudi Arabia. As an answer, Riyadh decided to tighten the air and maritime blockades. This worsened people's condition, since it made the entrance of humanitarian aid extremely difficult (Hernández López, 2018; Sharp, 2019).

On the rebels' side, in 2017 the *liquid alliance* between the Houthis and Saleh was dissolved. This “marriage of convenience” (Serr, 2018) ended when Saleh, once again, changed his position and announced that he was ready to negotiate with the Saudis the cessation of fighting. The Houthis saw this as treason and in an unclear episode decided to kill him (Hernández López, 2018). With this decision, they obtained a wider room for maneuver, but they further pushed the possibilities for a peaceful solution away and gained a new enemy: Saleh's loyal troops (Akin, 2019; Hernández López, 2018).

On the official side, *liquid alliances* also entered into contradiction, reflecting the role of identities and how the internal and regional dynamics are intertwined. This time, the break was in the coalition between Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and it was related to the al-Islah party, main support for Hadi, and the southerners separatist.

In 2017, arguing to be excluded from Hadi's government, al-Hirak, and other southern secessionist groups formed the Southern Transitional Council (STC). While Riyadh, fearing Hadi's weakening, showed its rejection, Abu Dhabi expressed its support for the southerners, whom it had already been supporting and financing (Akin, 2019). This fracture reached such a point that during 2018–2019, both factions, supposedly “allied”, fought each other repeatedly (Akins, 2019; Hernández López, 2018).

⁵ This could be seen reflected in the attempted dialogue with Hamas and with the support of al-Islah.

There are many reasons that explain Abu Dhabi's behavior. We must not lose sight of the fact that, despite its low profile, it has become an increasingly important power. *Little Sparta*, as former US Defense Secretary James Mattis described the UAE, is the second largest economy of the Arab world and has invested more than 5% of its GDP in defense (Soler I Lecha, 2018). It has acquired military experience in UN peacekeeping missions and the fight against the Jihadist in Syria (Akin, 2019; Serr, 2018). Geopolitically, the Bab al Mandab strait and Africa's Horn are strategic because of the important trade routes. Having an independent South Yemen close to its interests becomes functional (Zahonero, 2018a, 2018b). Clearly, the UAE has its own strategic objectives and wants to act autonomously from Riyadh (Fabbani, 2020; Hernández López, 2018; Soler I Lecha, 2017).

However, we should not underestimate the close ties of al-Islah with the Muslim Brotherhood. The "Brothers" have been a source of conflicts between the Gulf monarchies, and Qatar's support to this movement caused a relationship breakdown with its neighbors and the blockade since 2017. Although Doha retired itself from the coalition, and al-Islah renounced formally to the Brotherhood, to the UAE, it is still a threat (Espinosa, 2020; Soler I Lecha, 2018; Zahonero, 2018a, 2018b).

The clashes within the anti-Houthi coalition clearly reflect how the *liquid alliances* work and its contradictory coexistence with the *solid alliances*. The relationship Riyadh-Abu Dhabi is perhaps one of the most stable in the region, and both have worked together at different moments.⁶ Nevertheless, in spite of recognizing themselves as allies, they are at the same time funding and supporting conflicting factions in Yemeni territory. Furthermore, the Emirati behavior significantly affects its Saudi ally, weakening and undermining its international projection (Hernández López, 2018).

AQAP took advantage of the power vacuum. The prevailing chaos was extremely functional for them and allowed them to increase their influence in main areas of the Yemeni territory, to the point of forming a mini-caliphate in the port city of Mukalla. From there they took control of part of the Yemeni Central Bank reserves and exported oil illegally (Hernández López, 2018). Again, the Saudis' and Emiratis' acts were controversial at that point. On the one hand, AQAP presence legitimized their intervention and allowed maintaining USA' support. While, on the other hand, the Sunni jihadists have fought the Houthis for belonging to Shiism, many voices denounced a certain degree of tolerance of the coalition troops (Zahonero, 2018a, 2018b).

This is why Akin (2019) talks about three wars inside Yemen: the Houthis against the official alliance; Hadi against the STC southerners; and the war against extremism. But the most harmed have been Yemeni civilians. The international blockade, the destruction of the infrastructure, and the violation of Human Rights committed by every faction involved have caused hunger, lack of water, and disease became

⁶ Both monarchies share goals and threats, and the personal relationship between MBS and Mohamed Bin Zayed (MBZ) is excellent, to the point that the Emirati leader is regarded as a mentor for his young Saudi neighbor (Soler I Lecha, 2018).

common currency, affecting principally the most vulnerable, women and children (Hernández López, 2018).

38.3.5 2020: COVID-19 Pandemic, Geopolitical Readjustment, and Deepening of Humanitarian Crisis

The 2020 started with a series of events that caused upheaval in the region, such as the advance of the Syrian government over Idlib, and the murder of General Soleimani. But few minds imagined that 2020 would be the scenario of one of the most important Pandemics in history, whose impact and effects cannot still be dimensioned. However, as Zaccara (IREMAI-GEMO, 2020) says, Middle East geographical position, between China and Europe, inevitably made it a region strongly affected by COVID-19 Pandemic, and “despite the fact that no region in the world has remained immune, the detection of the first cases of the virus (...) was the prelude for a great sandstorm that approached covering everything” (Paredes Rodríguez, 2020, p. 129).

Paredes Rodríguez (2020), following Rosenau (1997), stated that the Coronavirus produced a “fragemegration” situation, which means the conjunction of integrating forces with fragmenting forces. In this way, little by little, all the states of the region were affected by the spread of the virus and were integrated under a common threat, for which they had to cooperate and introduce similar measures. But at the same time, the conflictive and convulsive dynamics underlying the region provided a strong complexity, fragmenting, and re-editing conflicts.

Although it was one of the latest countries to register cases, “worrying but inevitably” COVID-19 arrived in Yemen. Even though on April 10 “0 case” was detected, specialists believe that probably the virus was already in the country, but that it could not be reported because of the scarce testing capability of the Yemeni healthcare system (Doctors without Borders, 2020).

38.3.6 Reorientation of actor’s Positions

The main foreign actors involved in the conflict were quickly affected by the effects of the virus. The most affected was the Islamic Republic of Iran, which on February 19 detected its “0 case” in the city of Qom. But a few days later, the first cases in the Gulf monarchies slowly started to be reported. In this context, fearing what could happen with de COVID-19 Pandemic in the conflict areas, UN’s General Secretary, Antonio Guterres demanded the international community a great ceasefire that allowed refocusing on the fight against the virus: “that is why today, I am calling for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world. It’s time to put armed conflicts in lockdown and focus together on the true fight for our lives” (United Nations, 2020a, 2020b).

The answer of the Gulf States was initially positive. Qatar and UAE cooperated in the healthcare field, and Saudi Arabia, echoing Guterres's request, unilaterally declared a two-week ceasefire in Yemen, which was extended for another thirty days, with the aim of fostering negotiations for a definitive ceasefire (Niño, 2020). However, we must consider the situation that the Saudis were facing. After more than five years, the war in Yemen was a complete failure. The areas controlled by the rebels were almost in the same situation as before the intervention and the coalition was involved in strong internal disputes. Besides, the multimillion-dollar cost of maintaining daily operations was draining the coffers of the Monarchy, while its international image was getting worse due to the terrible reports of Human Rights violations and war crimes.

In addition, the international oil demand fell drastically due to the Pandemic to the point that on April 20, in an historical fact for capitalism, crude futures prices were negative (Dip, 2020a, 2020b). In a context in which Riyadh dealt simultaneously with the economic crisis, the rivalry with Iran, the blockade to Qatar, and the war in Yemen, it was necessary to "close the tap" and stop the economic drain (Zaccara in IREMAI-GEMO, 2020). The COVID-19 Pandemic became an excellent opportunity to withdraw itself from its neighbor, without signifying a formal defeat.

But the Houthis saw that Saudis were using the Pandemic to "save the face" of its military failure (Espinosa, 2020) and declared that they did not accept the unilateral ceasefire. They presented a very high series of demands as a condition to leave the fighting and continued with their expansion to the Marib province, which is rich in oil resources and that has maintained itself relatively away from the war. In addition, after a brief truce by the end of April, the STC declared the self-government of their controlled southerner areas. It was one step away from declaring its effective independence and reviving the fights within the coalition.

In the following months, there were no substantial changes in the situation. While the STC left for the moment the self-government, and the Saudis tried to revitalize the agreement achieved with them at the end of 2019, in September the southerners withdrew from the talks because of the "irresponsible behavior of the parties" (Al Jazeera, 2020). On their part, the Houthis are strongly consolidated in the northwest of the country and have obtained International Community recognition as legitimate actors.

Aware of MBS's desire to withdraw from the conflict, they have approached him with ceasefire proposals, which have been described as "positive" by the Saudis (Barrington et al., 2020). However, mistrust is still great, and the end of the conflict still seems far away.

38.3.7 Deepening of the Humanitarian Crisis

Although the impact of the Pandemic on the positions of the actors is not still clear, its effects on the healthcare and humanitarian aspects were catastrophically evident from the beginning. To fully understand the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic, we

must bear in mind that at the moment when the Virus was detected, the country was on the brink of total collapse after five years of war.

After years of bombing, all kind of infrastructure is demolished. Without flights, and with communication channels destroyed, mobility and humanitarian aid distribution find serious obstacles. Only half of the health infrastructure is working, two out of three Yemenis do not have access to basic medical care, and half the population has serious difficulties in accessing drinking water. According to the World Bank, there are three doctors and seven beds for every 10,000 people (Lootsma, 2020).

According to the United Nations High Committee for Refugees (UNHCR, 2020), 80% of the population needs humanitarian aid to survive, 4 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes and there has been an increase in child marriage as a method of survival for girls. In addition, 12 million people face serious risk of starvation, signifying “the worst famine in 100 years in the region.” For its part, due to the destruction of infrastructure, Yemen had the biggest cholera outbreak of the last times, with more than 1 million cases and 2300 deaths since 2017. At the same time, because of the low vaccination level, poliomyelitis has reappeared (Naranjo, 2020; UNHCR, 2020).

In this context, the COVID-19 Pandemic became the *coup de grace* for thousands of Yemenis’ lives. Although about 2000 cases were officially reported, due to the low testing capacity, the UN’s General Secretary stated the true number could be more than 1 million, and the mortality rate could come to 30%, far exceeding the world average (United Nations, 2020a, 2020b).

But the economical crisis also seriously affected the humanitarian crisis. Most countries have cut their budgets, and resources destined for humanitarian aid were one of the first to be adjusted. In a country like Yemen, where more than 80% of the population needs international aid, this has meant a severe blow. Much of the UN-sponsored programs have been severely curtailed, and many hospitals had to be closed due to lack of funds.

38.4 Conclusion

Throughout this work, we could verify the importance of analyzing the Yemen conflict through a doubled optic, conjoining the domestic aspects with the international ones. Every analysis that excludes any of these dynamics will fall on simplifying an extremely complex phenomenon. Even though its roots are clearly in the political and economic system, its following evolution and its aggravation must be understood by also considering the regional geopolitical interests.

A conflictive internal dynamic, charged of political and tribal rivalries, elitism, nepotism, and corruption, has been intertwined and fed back with a regional dynamic marked by the hegemonic dispute between rival powers, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, but also by other actors that play a low profile role, but have great impact capability, and accept an unstable order to protect their interests. In the last group, we can find the United Arab Emirates and a non-state transnational actor as AQAP.

In turn, we have proved the importance of identities as the base of the actor's interests and actions. Without this perspective, it would be impossible to understand how each part involved perceives itself, its vision of others, and what each one considers the most serious threat. This allows us to understand the depth of Saudi-Iranian rivalry, in which the slightest concession is seen as lost ground in an existential fight. But it also helps us to see the fracture within the anti-Houthi coalition, in which both the different perceptions about al-Islah and the Muslim Brotherhood come into play, as well as the historical claim of the southern sectors.

The COVID-19 Pandemic generated changes, especially on the external intervening actors. Mired in a costly and exhausting war, the Pandemic was the necessary incentive and excuse for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to withdraw, even though without much conviction. However, the changes have been driven by need and have not been so deep that could direct the process toward a clear solution.

Finally, the impact on the humanitarian dimension has been terrible. Being one of the poorest countries before the Arab Spring, the peoples' living conditions have come into open decline. With a destroyed healthcare system and high malnutrition rates, the Coronavirus has spread without limitations. If the numbers exposed by the UN are true, we are talking about the country with the greatest amount of COVID-19 deaths in the world, with approximately 300.000 deceased.

With little certainty about the future, the only thing that will surely remain constant in Yemen will be the suffering of its population. Even if the war ended today, it would take years to rebuild the country. Wrapped up in two convulsive and infamous dynamics, there is a high possibility that *the century's worst humanitarian crisis* will end up becoming *History's worst humanitarian crisis*.

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Chapter 39

China's COVID-19 Vaccine Diplomacy in the Gulf and Beyond: Efforts and Challenges



Wang Jin

Abstract This chapter argues that the COVID-19 vaccine has become an important diplomatic tool to expand China's influence and set up a positive Chinese image in the Middle East. The study reports three important trends in China's COVID-19 vaccine diplomacy. It states that China's vaccine diplomacy toward the Middle East still faces challenges. On the one hand, the effectiveness of China's vaccine is not widely recognized. Some European and American experts still doubt the effect of China's vaccine made by Sinovac and Sinopharm. On the other hand, China's mechanism to constrain COVID-19 by national lockdown and universal vaccination might not be copied in the Middle East.

Keywords China · Middle East · COVID-19 · Vaccine

COVID-19 vaccine diplomacy has become apparent in international politics. Many states highlight the use of vaccine supplies as a tool of soft power projection and facilitation of positive ties with the other states. In a world where COVID-19 has been taking a terrifying human and financial toll, vaccine supplies promise relief and interact with pre-existing politics and foreign policy priorities (Woertz & Yellinek, 2021). China is using the COVID-19 vaccines as an important diplomatic tool to enhance its cooperation and understanding with the rest of the world. About 2.7 billion Chinese vaccines have been administered in China, while around 1 billion Chinese vaccine doses have been distributed to 110 other countries.

Although China was the first state where COVID-19 originated, the country successfully constrains the spread of the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has swept the world in the past two years and caused over 250 million infections and five million deaths. China is the only state that successfully understood and contained the new pathogen. China had only 0.05% of the total number of global cases despite making up 19% of the whole world's population. China defines the success of limiting and preventing the COVID-19 as the success of the "China Model" and the "progressiveness of the Chinese political system" (Yao, 2021). By mobilizing public

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mask wearing, hand washings, social distancing, and restriction of public gatherings and traveling, China believes that its responses to the COVID-19 successfully show the “political structural advantages,” which could be the major expression of the “Chinese Model” that for the rest of the world to learn from.

On the one hand, China attributes the success of preventing the COVID-19 to its political structure led by the Chinese Communist Party. As a coherent communist party, the Chinese Communist Party is the center of the political system and enjoys the highest authority for the decision-making process in China. According to Chinese Communists, the fundamental advantage is “mobilizing all national sectors, pooling all national resources, and coordinating all national efforts to complete a key task.”

After the COVID-19 was found in Wuhan in late 2019, China mobilized the whole state to contain the pandemic. More than 42,000 healthcare workers were mobilized toward Wuhan within three months, and dozens of healthcare centers were established. Therefore, the Chinese Communist Party’s strong leadership was interpreted as the key to preventing the COVID-19.

On the other hand, China believes that other states, primarily developing states, can learn its successful example of preventing the COVID-19. A nucleic acid testing system, personal data collection system, and vaccine research and production capabilities help China contain COVID-19. By organizing massive rapid nucleic acid testing, it is possible to diagnose patients as early as possible, detect asymptomatic infections, and assess the potential risk to the entire population. By tracing the personal data, especially the traveling records, it is possible for the health establishments to find the potential patients and to cut the COVID-19 transmission channels. Vaccination is a determinant of success, and China organizes major medical companies such as Sinovac and Sinopharm to research and produce many vaccines for the public.

39.1 China’s COVID-19 Vaccines Assistance to the Middle East

China believes it is necessary to help the Middle Eastern states prevent the COVID-19 epidemic. After the COVID-19 was successfully prevented in mid-2020, China gradually noticed the expansion of COVID-19 in the rest of the world. The spread of COVID-19 in the Middle East could threaten China’s epidemic prevention. Every year tens of thousands of Chinese Muslims visit the Middle East, especially to Mecca and Medina of Saudi Arabia, for Ramadan. In June 2020 and 2021, the Chinese Islamic Association suspended the annual organized pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina due to the rapidly growing COVID-19 cases in Saudi Arabia. From late 2020, China suspends airline flights from Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Hangzhou, and Guangzhou to Middle Eastern destinations, including Istanbul, from Abu Dubai and Muscat, to prevent importing COVID-19 cases from the Middle East.

Given that Istanbul, Doha, Abu Dubai, Bagdad, Tehran, Cario, and Muscat are all important transferring airports from China to the Middle East, Europe, and Africa,

the suspension of flights made international trips very difficult. The COVID-19 also negatively affected China's goods imported to Middle East markets. Few foreigners were permitted to visit China due to the strict COVID-19 procedure. For example, the major Chinese miscellaneous goods exporting city, Yiwu, became empty and quiet, while the exporting data to the Middle East significantly declined.¹

In March 2020, China organized an online medical experts conference to share its experience of preventing COVID-19 with Middle Eastern states, including medical experts from Egypt, Algeria, Palestine, Lebanon, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Tunisia, and Morocco. In April 2020, China also organized an online medical conference with experts from member states of the League of Arab States to discuss the expansion of COVID-19 in the Middle East. Meanwhile, China also organized an online bilateral conference between Chinese experts and Middle Eastern states to discuss the prevention of COVID-19.

China hopes to encourage direct cooperation with Middle Eastern states through COVID-19 prevention and vaccine donation. When the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, several Middle Eastern states expressed condolence and sent donations to China. As the state cherishes the spirit of "repaying an obligation" (bao en), just as Chinese President Xi Jinping stresses: "the friendship and assistance provided by the international society at the difficult moment would be always be remembered by China, and China would do our best to help other states."²

China sent several medical teams to Middle Eastern states to share expertise and experience with local medical ministries and establishments. In March and April of 2020, China sent medical teams to Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, to direct the COVID-19 prevention. The medical team from China to Iran shared the Chinese prevention experience to Iran and transferred tons of medical goods to Iran medical ministry. The Chinese medical team to Iraq visited Bagdad, Basra, Kirkuk, and Erbil with medical facilities and established a nucleic acid testing lab for Iraq. Under the advice of the Chinese medical team, the Iraqi government imposed a curfew to suspend the COVID-19 expansion. A medical team visited Saudi Arabia at the invitation from Saudi Arabia, shared China's COVID-19 prevention experience with local hospitals, and constructed a cooperative mechanism with Saudi Arabia medical institutions.

China also assisted the COVID-19 prevention of Middle Eastern states by providing medical goods and materials waves. China sent several medical supplies to Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia with the visits of Chinese medical teams in March and April of 2020. Chinese medical facilities and supplies were also sent to Algeria, Afghanistan, Syria, Tunisia, Lebanon, and Egypt in April and May 2020. Chinese local governments, companies, and social groups also donated to Middle Eastern states. Shanghai donated medical gloves and masks to Rabat of Morocco and Istanbul of Turkey. At the same time, China Railway Construction Corp, China State Construction Engineering Corporation, and Jack Ma Foundation bought several

¹ "Overseas COVID-19 epidemic and its Influence to Yiwu," *the Paper*, September 14, 2021, https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_14425337.

² Xi Jinping, "Unity and Cooperation is the Key to Combatting COVID-19" (tuanjie hezuo shi guoji shehui zhansheng yiqing zui youli wuqi), *Qiushi*, No. 8, 2020, pp. 1–8.

tons of medical facilities and goods to Sudan, Jordan, Algeria, Kuwait, and other Middle Eastern states. Chinese Association in Algeria bought a Nucleic acid detection reagent in China and transferred it to Algerian Red Crescent via flight.

Finally, China hopes to depict a blueprint of new international order by sharing fairly of the vaccines. After the spread of COVID-19, distribution of vaccine doses becomes a sensitive issue. On the one hand, very few states in the world have the capabilities to research and produce vaccines, while most states, especially most developing states, have to import vaccines from other states. On the other hand, most developing states have neither enough financial capabilities nor proper channels to import highly needed vaccines and other medical supplies to prevent COVID-19. In the Middle East, many states cannot contain the COVID-19 due to the rapid population increase rate and the poor medical treatment conditions. Just as Amnesty international criticizes the “wealthy countries” do not bear their “international obligations by waiving intellectual property rules for vaccines, tests, and treatments, and sharing lifesaving technology, G-7 leaders have opted for more of the same paltry half-measures.”³

China maintains that the vaccines should be distributed fairly globally regardless of poor states or rich states, developed or developing states. Chinese leader Xi Jinping stresses that China would take measures to make vaccines accessible to both developing and developed states, and “will honor our commitment of giving assistance and support to other developing countries, and work to make vaccines a global public good accessible and affordable to people around the world.”⁴

China has donated more than 100 million doses of vaccines to Pakistan, 1.7 million doses to Afghanistan, 114 million doses to Iran, 31.4 million doses to Turkey, 2.3 million doses to Iraq, 0.8 million doses to Syria, 0.3 million to Palestine, 0.7 million doses to Lebanon, 0.8 million doses to Jordan, 3 million doses to the UAE, and 0.1 million doses to Oman. These donating vaccine doses come from two major Chinese medical companies, Sinovac and Sinopharm. Donation of vaccine doses become an important component of China’s soft power, a tool used to deepen friendships abroad and vie for recognition over its archrival, the US, despite festering disputes, could help boost China’s image in vaccine-recipient countries that cannot easily source doses from other channels.

In order to help Middle Eastern states to produce more vaccines and upgrade their medical structures, China encouraged overseas manufacturers of Chinese vaccines together with Chinese medical firms. In the Global Health Summit of 2021, Chinese President Xi Jinping reiterated that China supported its vaccine companies and researching establishments to share vaccine technologies to other developing states and to carry out joint production in the developing states.⁵ Currently, most joint

³ “China’s COVID-19 Vaccine Diplomacy Reaches 100-Plus Countries,” *VOA News*, September 18, 2021, <https://www.voanews.com/a/china-s-covid-19-vaccine-diplomacy-reaches-100-plus-countries/6233766.html>.

⁴ “China Pledges Global Vaccine Cooperation amid Unequal Distribution Fears,” *Global Times*, November 23, 2020, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1207802.shtml>.

⁵ “Full Text: Remarks by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Global Health Summit,” *Xinhua Net*, May 21, 2021, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-05/21/c_139961512.htm.

productions undertake only the “fill-and-finish” processes of manufacturing the vaccines, though further discussions on technology transfer have been discussed. Chinese CanSinoBio works with the Pakistani National Health Institution to produce 36 million Chinese vaccines per year in Pakistan. In the UAE, Chinese Sinopharm works together with Gulf Pharmaceutical Industries and Group to produce more than 200 million vaccines per year. In Turkey, Chinese Sinovac establishes a producing center. China's Sinovac works with Egyptian Vacsera to produce 200 million vaccines per year in Egypt. In Algeria, China's Sinovac works with Algerian Sidal to produce 96 million vaccines per year, while in Morocco, China's Sinopharm works with Sothema to produce 60 million vaccines per year.

39.2 China's Motivations of Vaccines Diplomacy

China's COVID-19 vaccine diplomacy can be understood against China's internal social circumstances and China-US competition. The rise of China became the priority concern of the US and the Western world. The competition between China and the US is becoming increasingly more serious during uncertainty and instability. By China's understanding, the US rejects the Chinese Communist Party's legitimacy and aims to isolate China from the world. Therefore, it is necessary for China to take measures to defeat US offensives over COVID-19 issues, both at home and abroad.

The COVID-19 prevention is a major turning point for the Chinese Communist Party's political legitimacy. When the COVID-19 broke out in Wuhan in November 2019, the Chinese government's slow response, poor management, and bureaucratism were strongly criticized by the Chinese public. Thanks to the 7th Military World Games were held in Wuhan, whose opening ceremony was attended by Chinese President Xi Jinping and was described as an exercise for the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games. Wuhan city government ignored the early alarming from local hospitals over “an unknown virus” and delayed the timely prevention of COVID-19 in Wuhan. Even after the order of “city-lockdown” was declared in early 2021, the order was leaked. Several hundreds of thousands of residents in Wuhan fled to other provinces and cities with possibilities of further spreading COVID-19. Even during the lockdown period of Wuhan, the local government's poor management system was criticized for lack of food, ill coordination, and failures of duties. Many Chinese in Wuhan held the memorial ceremony to Dr. Li Wenliang, the first doctor in Wuhan to publish the “unknown virus.” They passed away due to the COVID-19 in February of 2021.⁶

From China's perspective, the US utilized the COVID-19 as a tool to challenge the Chinese Communist Party's political legitimacy. China is always alert to the possible political transition from communism to “western democracy” mobilized and encouraged by the US, just as what happened in Arab Spring of 2011. It was

⁶ When the news of Dr. Li Wenliang passing away was published on the internet, many Wuhan residents blew whistles by praising Dr. Li Wenliang as the “Whistleblower.”

only after the COVID-19 prevention took effectiveness in March and April of 2020, and especially after the COVID-19 swept the rest of the world, that the opinions inside China toward the government fundamentally shifted. The poor management of COVID-19 prevention destroyed the image of the “paradise” of US and western states in the minds of the Chinese and further enhanced the Chinese Communist Party’s legitimacy.

By China’s understanding, the relations between China and the US have entered the period of “competition of all directions and all levels” (Chen, 2020; Wang, 2020), and Trump’s requirements of China’s accountability for human and economic costs due to the slow response of Chinese local government toward the outbreak of COVID-19 are rejected as baseless and rude. From China’s perspective, the US is trying to stigmatize China’s image through COVID-19 and isolate China from the international industrial chain through sanctions and compensations toward China. Therefore, China needs to show the world its efforts over COVID-19 prevention and enthusiasms of assistance toward other states by providing vaccines to deal with the pressure from Washington.

After China’s largely successful prevention of COVID-19, Washington’s call for international sanctions against China further consolidates Beijing’s competitive attitudes. China believes that the relations with the US have fundamentally changed since the administration of Donald Trump and maintains that US hostilities toward China are increasing irreversibly. Given that Joe Biden administration is calling for a “democratic alliance” against China and calls for international sanctions against China by Beijing’s polity in Xinjiang and Hongkong, China must get support from the “non-western world,” especially from the Middle Eastern states that suffer the US interventions and occupations.

China’s COVID-19 vaccine diplomacy should not be understood as China’s willingness to intervene in Middle Eastern regional affairs. China has neither enough knowledge nor willingness to intervene in the Middle Eastern regional affairs deeply, and China defines the Middle East as “graveyard of global powers” (daguo fenchang), given the histories of the Soviet Union’s lesson in Afghanistan and the US’ lesson in Afghanistan and Iraq (Wang, 2016).

From Beijing’s view, China’s image in Middle Eastern states has been long fabricated. It is an important opportunity for China to construct a positive image in the Middle East by sharing its successful experience of COVID-19 prevention and providing assistance to Middle Eastern states. China’s image is defined as “Muslim oppressor” and “religion oppressor” by some media, and many maintain that China is implementing “ethnic cleaning” in Xinjiang against Uyghur ethnic groups. China rejects the accusation and maintains that it eliminates “Islamic extremism” and terrorism in Xinjiang. Therefore, China must offer assistance and help to Middle Eastern states to improve the ties and image in the region.

Meanwhile, China is criticized by the US as a “free rider” without bearing enough international responsibilities. The descriptions of China’s development by the US and China are different. The US defines China as a developed state with the second strongest economy globally. In contrast, China defines itself as a developing state with very low GDP per capita and low gross national income per capita. Therefore,

for the US and other western states, China should uphold more international duties by assisting the rest of the world, especially in arms control, energy development, fighting terrorism, and environment protection (Johnston, 1996; Richardson, 2011). With the advocacy of the Belt and Road initiative in 2013, China realizes the importance of setting up the new image as a “global responsible power.” Therefore, providing medical assistance to the Middle Eastern states is an opportunity for China to improve its image in the Middle East and set up a new image of a responsible power.

China's COVID-19 vaccine diplomacy in the Middle East aims at cultivating friendship with regional states to get their support over China's internal policies, especially over the Taiwan issue, Xinjiang issue, and the cooperation under the Belt and Road initiative. Many Middle Eastern countries provided help to China by sending medical aid or messages of solidarity in early 2020 at the pandemic's outbreak. China returned the favor by offering medical aid and dispatching medical experts to help these countries fight against the contagious disease. The anti-pandemic cooperation continued mainly in the form of China's donating the much-needed COVID-19 vaccines for the Middle Eastern countries. By vaccines donations to the Middle East and joint research and producing vaccines with Middle Eastern states, China successfully improves ties with the Middle Eastern states, especially those Muslim-majority states. Despite the pressure from Washington, most Middle Eastern states do not recognize the statehood of Taiwan, do not criticize China's policies in Xinjiang in public, and are still active to facilitate the cooperations with China under the Belt and Road initiative.

39.3 Challenges of China's Vaccines Diplomacy

China donated and exported a large quantity of COVID-19 vaccines to Middle Eastern countries in dire need of them, at a time when Western countries largely stockpiled vaccines for their good. The vaccine cooperation between China and Middle Eastern countries, which helped stabilize the epidemic situation in the region, has sublimated their friendship, deepened mutual trust, and opened up new areas of cooperation. However, the challenges of China's vaccines diplomacy are apparent.

First, the effectiveness of the Chinese vaccine is not widely recognized by western states. Different from US-made vaccines, Chinese vaccines are inactivated vaccines. The effectiveness of the Chinese vaccine is always a debatable topic. As the leading Chinese vaccine makers, Sinovac and Sinopharm have been approved by the World Health Organization for the use against COVID-19. Both Sinopharm and Sinovac are inactivated vaccines, and they are safer theoretically than adenovirus vaccines. The Sinovac and Sinopharm vaccines have a major advantage over other COVID vaccines. They are easy to store and only need normal refrigeration.

However, the effectiveness of inactivated vaccines is doubted widely. The inactivated vaccines use killed virus to inject into people; the vaccines may not be as effective as Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines that use adenovirus technology. Even after China's vaccination rate reaches 80% (nearly 2.7 billion doses) in December of 2021, new

waves of the COVID-19 epidemic can penetrate China. Researches show that the immunity and protection capabilities wane within a half year after Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines are injected, while Sinopharm and Sinovac are tested inadequately against Omicron.⁷

There are also discussions inside China about whether Chinese vaccines are effective, although the World Health Organization reports that Sinopharm's effectiveness reaches 79%.⁸ In 2021, waves of variants of the COVID-19, including the Delta variant and Omicron variant, swept several provinces in China, including Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Guangdong, Guizhou, Yunnan, Shaanxi, Inner Mongolia, and Henan. Due to the principle of "zero tolerance of local transmission," Chinese local governments launched rounds of provincial nucleic acid tests, while local transportation, business, and travel were forbidden. Some opinions maintained that "we should stop nucleic acid tests" and start "COVID-19 resistance tests" nationally to test the effectiveness of the vaccines. Some opinions even doubt whether it is necessary to inject vaccines nationwide.

Middle Eastern states realize that Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines might not effectively prevent the variants of COVID-19. Israel chooses US Pfizer-BioNTech rather than Sinopharm and Sinovac in its vaccination campaign. The United Arab Emirates and Bahrain choose Pfizer-BioNTech as the booster shot for those initially immunized with vaccines developed by China's Sinopharm and Sinovac. As a new variant of the coronavirus ravaged the UK, India, South Africa, and other parts of the world, more Middle Eastern countries seem likely to follow Bahrain and the UAE's example.

Second, the experience of China's COVID-19 prevention could not be learned directly by Middle Eastern states. China's political system could not be copied directly into the Middle East. China concludes its successful experience of preventing the COVID-19 as the "leadership of Chinese Communists." At the same time, the Chinese Communist Party stresses that the success of COVID-19 prevention "proves the progressiveness of Chinese political system." Although Chinese assertive COVID-19 prevention measures prove successful, it is very costly and leads to more social and economic problems. For example, when the COVID-19 Omicron variant swept Xi'an, the capital city of Shaanxi of Northwestern China, in December of 2021, the local government declared a lockdown. More than 10 million residents were forbidden to leave their communities, and several rounds of nucleic acid tests were organized every 48 h for all of these 10 million residents. The lockdown led to economic suffering and social disputes. Only under the strong leadership of the Communist structure that the assertive lockdown and significant economic losses could be tolerated.

⁷ "Hong Kong Researchers Find that Two Doses of China's Sinovac Vaccine is Inadequate against Omicron," *The New York Times*, December 15, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/15/world/asia/omicron-hong-kong-study.html>.

⁸ "WHO Approval of Chinese Corona Vac COVID Vaccine Will is Crucial to Curbing Pandemic," *Nature*, June 4, 2021, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-01497-8>.

Meanwhile, China's success in preventing COVID-19 depends largely upon the strict measures of local governments. China's COVID-19 control systems are more localized rather than centralized. Although top officials set priorities and norms, especially the "zero-tolerance principle" to the COVID-19 cases, local cities organize their own separate rules and regulations over COVID-19 prevention, use different versions of the health apps and date selection systems that display their testing and vaccination status, and often have problems sharing individual data with other provinces and cities. Someone traveling or even moving between cities may experience difficulties transferring their information that take days or weeks to fix.

Economically, China's measures of COVID-19 prevention and works to be fully vaccinated are unaffordable for many Middle Eastern states. The "zero-tolerance of local transmission" policy becomes very costly for China, especially local governments. The successful containment has also left China's population almost entirely vulnerable, and thus the country needs to persist with strong public health measures until population immunity is established through vaccination. China from early 2020 upholds the principle of "preventions of both COVID-19's external penetration and internal spread" (*wai fang shuru, nei fang kuosan*). The prevention measures isolate China from the rest of the world. Chinese visitors are difficult to visit foreign states due to the complicating prevention measures, while imports are difficult to reach China due to the strict testing procedures. China's economic growth has been significantly slowed down due to the COVID-19 epidemic and the strict prevention measures. For Middle Eastern states, China's "zero-tolerance" toward COVID-19 seems difficult or impossible to achieve, and China's experience over COVID-19 prevention, especially collecting personal data and traces, might lead to a political crisis.

Finally, China's image is still negative in some Middle Eastern societies due to the COVID-19 origin discussion. There are many cases that Chinese visitors in the Middle East are called as "virus," including Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. Some videos uploaded by Chinese travelers to the TikTok show that Middle Eastern people have negatively labeled China's image in the Middle East. The callings of Chinese as "virus" anger many Chinese, and many discussions on the internet question whether China should continue to help these Middle Eastern states.

China's images in Middle Eastern societies are under criticism. China's policy in Xinjiang is defined and described by many media in Middle Eastern states as "anti-Islam" or "ethnic cleanings." According to some accusations, China organizes harsh population-control measures to "require Muslims to renounce Islam and pledge loyalty to the Communist Party."⁹ China has always rejected the accusations in Xinjiang and defines the accusations as baseless and fake, and several Middle Eastern states support China's policies in Xinjiang. Saudi Arabia Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman visited China in 2019 and praised China's "counter-terrorism and de-extremism efforts," while the statement made by the Organization

⁹ "Why Do Some Muslim-Majority Countries Support China's Crackdown on Muslims," *The Washington Post*, May 4, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/05/04/why-do-some-muslim-majority-countries-support-chinas-crackdown-muslims/>.

of Islamic Cooperation also praised China for “providing care to its Muslim citizens.” Egypt, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia expelled and arrested the Uyghur activities and deported them back to China. Iran, Qatar, and Turkey are also express support to China’s “counter-terrorism” efforts.

However, different from their governments’ official attitudes, many people across the Middle Eastern states choose to believe these accusations and strongly criticize China. Many Chinese travelers to Middle Eastern states asked by residents, especially in Iran and Turkey, about the fates of Uyghurs and Chinese Muslims and the “concentration camps in Xinjiang.” Middle Eastern societies’ misunderstandings toward Xinjiang lead to worries from Beijing. Therefore, China hopes to change the attitudes of Middle Eastern societies through COVID-19 assistance, especially the vaccines donations and joint producing efforts the construct a positive image in the Middle East.

39.4 Conclusion

China takes the COVID-19 vaccine as an important tool to expand cooperation with Middle Eastern states. First, China hopes to construct close connections with Middle Eastern states, especially Qatar, the UAE, and Egypt, by setting up R&D branches and sharing medical technologies to resist the COVID-19. Second, China hopes to show the success of the “China Model” that successfully constrain the COVID-19 to the Middle East. By describing itself as the successful example of limiting the COVID-19 and the US and Europe as the failed examples, China hopes to show the “progressiveness” of its political system. Third, China hopes to show its “international responsibilities” by providing vaccines to the Middle East, especially Palestine, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt.

The influence of China’s COVID-19 vaccine diplomacy toward the Middle East should not be overestimated. Due to the financial difficulties, China cannot meet all the demands of Middle Eastern states’ needs for vaccines. China is under serious financial and economic problems at home, although China’s GDP is still growing. Due to both the “trade-war” from Washington and the COVID-19, China’s economic growth rate significantly declined, while the unemployment rate increased rapidly in 2021. Although China produced the inactivated vaccines by Sinopharm and Sinovac, Chinese medical technologies are still far from independent. Most of the medicines and medical facilities in Chinese hospitals are imported from the US, Japan, and Europe. China’s medical assistance to the Middle Eastern states could be limited to vaccines, nucleic acid testing facilities, and China’s “experience of COVID-19 prevention.”

China’s vaccine diplomacy treats the Middle East as a whole region without consideration of regional divisions and might lead to distrust of regional states toward China. Chinese donations of vaccines toward the Middle East could further lead to regional geopolitical divisions against China’s interests in the Middle East. In Beijing’s view, China is competing with the US to gain support from Middle Eastern

states' sympathies toward Beijing's "One China Principle." Therefore, China has to offer support to any Middle Eastern state, which requires the demands over vaccines from China. Against the backdrop of geopolitical complexities between Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Israel, Turkey, and Iran, China's assistance to certain Middle Eastern states might lead to distrust from another Middle Eastern state. For example, China's donations of COVID-19 to the Syrian government and Iran could be defined by Israel as "allies with enemies." At the same time, Qatar could describe China's joint production of vaccines with the UAE with suspicion.

The Middle Eastern states realize China's growing role in the region, while China also expresses great interest in developing ties with regional states. Through COVID-19 vaccine diplomacy, China successfully maintained and upgraded positive ties with regional states. However, most Middle Eastern states are still keen to see the US and the EU play a more active part in international vaccine distribution and administration. At the same time, China's image, ideology, culture, and claims are still unfamiliar to these regional states.

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