



The Enigma of Political Stability in the Persian Gulf Monarchies

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The stability of Gulf Arab monarchies has been remarkable given the high level of regional conflict and the unsteadiness of other countries in the region. The authors first analyze all the reasons why those states might be expected to face major internal unsteadiness, then discuss the policies governments have followed which have allowed them to survive.

This essay explores strategies governments use to keep societies at peace. Stability is more difficult to understand than conflict. Scholars have offered many conceptual explanations of why and how people rebel, the causes of war, and the dynamics of revolution. (1) The sources of societies at peace, however, have received far less scrutiny.

Often, stability is explained as merely the absence of conflict. Yet this explanation is valid only for wealthy, ethnically-homogenous democracies that face few challenges from neighbors. More perceptive scholars have gone one step further, explaining peace by delving into the nature of the societies in question and exploring how their culture or popular expectations defuse conflict. These explanations, while encouraging, have proven themselves insufficient. Stability does not simply occur, it is often fostered, imposed, encouraged, bolstered, or maintained. Governments of all sorts have actively and successfully prevented conflict through adroit management of potential disputes.

Explaining societal peace remains an important question. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, civil conflict has supplanted war as the most common form of violence. Although the spread of democracy promises greater social harmony, democratization can lead to strife, both civil and international. (2) Modernization, nation-building, and economic growth - all solutions to conflict proposed by social scientists in the past -

have proven mixed blessings to many countries. Thus, it is important to understand the measures governments can take to keep the peace under difficult circumstances.

Here with, an examination of several countries that suffer from economic dislocations, hard-to-control social change, corruption, political exclusion, and meddlesome foreign powers yet remain stable: the Arab monarchies of the Persian Gulf. The ruling families in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (3) have held power, largely unchallenged, for decades if not centuries. The Al Saud family consolidated its power from 1902-1934; the Al Khalifa took power in Bahrain in 1783; the Al Thani consolidated power in Qatar in 1878; the Al Said took power in Oman in the mid-18th century; the Al Sabah became hereditary rulers of Kuwait in the 18th century; and the emirate members of the UAE consolidated power at various times in the mid-19th century. (4) The stability of these countries is hardly perfect. Terrorism, often directed at the United States, has at times led to dozens of deaths in the 1980s and 1990s. Coup attempts occurred in Saudi Arabia in the 1960s and in Bahrain in 1981. In 1994-1996, Bahrain suffered a series of protests and riots that led to dozens of deaths and hundreds of arrests. Nevertheless, these governments have held firmly onto power and, in general, maintained social peace.

The stability of this region is baffling. The Gulf states have modernized at a breathtaking pace since World War II. At

the same time, their progress has been uneven with their wealth rising and falling with the price of oil, soaring in the 1970s and plummeting in the 1980s and 1990s. (5) Education levels have risen steadily, and expectations of and demands on national government have grown. Discrimination against Shi'a Muslims has been rampant in several countries, and anti-government religious militancy has grown. Even more mysteriously, the Gulf political systems appear an anachronism. All the Gulf states have traditional monarchies, the last holdout of this system in a modern world.

The region itself is in turmoil, with revolution and war threatening to swallow the Gulf states. Commentators in the 1950s and 1960s wondered how long the Gulf states could survive the assault of Arab nationalism, which toppled monarchs in Egypt, Libya, and Iraq and brought new governments to Syria and Algeria. After the late 1970s, this concern switched to a fear of Islamic extremism: Iran and the Sudan succumbed, and Islamic radicalism helped fuel civil wars in Algeria, Afghanistan, and Lebanon and instability in countless other states ranging from Turkey to Afghanistan. After the fall of the Soviet Union and the annus mirabilis of 1989, analysts began to question whether the next wave of democratization might sweep the region. Yet despite these pressures, the monarchies remain strong. Although Egypt, Iran, and sub-state actors such as the Lebanese Hezbollah have tried to promote revolution and unrest in the Gulf, their efforts have failed.

This essay argues that social peace in the Gulf, and perhaps more generally, is maintained by the clever, and consistent, use of a variety of government strategies to promote social order. Gulf governments use a combination of six strategies: strong security services; the co-optation of potential dissidents; divide-and-rule measures; ideological flexibility; token participation; and accommodative diplomacy. Taken together, these strategies preserve islands of social peace in an area of turbulence.

These strategies keep the peace through a variety of means. First, they defuse potentially explosive social issues, preventing them from leading to violence. Second, they broadly inhibit social organization. Even when individuals or groups seek to mobilize and use violence, the Gulf governments prevent them from organizing. Third, government strategies reduce, though hardly eliminate, incentives for foreign powers to meddle. The remainder of this paper tries to answer four related questions. Why does conflict appear likely in Gulf societies? What strategies do Gulf regimes use to keep the peace? How do these strategies work in practice? What are the limits of these strategies? Although definitive answers to these questions are impossible, this essay attempts to assess the likelihood of continued stability for the countries in question in the coming decade.

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF CONFLICT

The Gulf states are best defined by what they lack. In an era when democracy is the world's dominant political system, the Gulf regimes are traditional autocracies. Gulf governments are not accountable, and political alienation and corruption are widespread. Contrary to popular stereotypes of wealthy Gulf sheikhs, economic progress has been mixed and uneven. Demographic pressures squeeze the Gulf states. Traditional ways of life are under siege, as nomadic, largely illiterate societies have rapidly sedentarized, urbanized, and become educated. The region's zeitgeist also favors violence, where guerrillas are lauded and peacemakers ridiculed. Discrimination is rampant against Shi'a Muslims, who form a large segment of several Gulf states' populations. Religious militancy is widespread, threatening to undermine the area regimes' legitimacy. As if these problems were not enough, the neighbors of the Gulf states have regularly tried to foment war and revolution. Alone, any one of these problems could lead to unrest. Together, they seem to signal disaster. (6)

POLITICAL EXCLUSION AND A LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

One of the most potent grievances Gulf citizens make against their government is the lack of government accountability, which in turn promotes abuse of power and rampant corruption. Decision-making is dominated by a few individuals privileged by birth, not by merit. The Gulf states, with the partial exception of Kuwait, lack the means to mediate citizen grievances or to ensure accountability. Institutions for organizing political opposition are limited or non-existent. All important positions--those that control spending, internal security, and the military--are dominated by family members or those close to them. Traditional checks on government authority--a free press, an independent judiciary, and a strong "civil society" -- are either lacking or kept intentionally weak in the Gulf states. (7) Although several states have advisory bodies appointed by the regime, these at best reflect only elite opinion, and they seldom have an impact on decision making or satisfy popular desires for a true voice in government.

Because the ruling families dominate politics, many Gulf citizens correctly perceive their political systems as exclusive. Bahraini opposition groups have called their country a "tribal dictatorship," directly attacking the Al Khalifa family's domination of the state. (8) Even in comparatively democratic Kuwait, opposition newspapers criticize the preferential treatment accorded the ruling family. The Saudi Shi'a, a relatively small minority, also suffer extreme political exclusion. Not surprisingly, interviews indicate that many Gulf citizens believe that peaceful political activity cannot influence their country's leadership. This opposition could have dangerous repercussions: throughout the world, rather moderate political groups have often become violent after years of repeated failures in proposing compromise. (9)

The alienation of social and economic elites is particularly dangerous. As

oil wealth has empowered the ruling families that control the state, traditional tribal and family elites have lost influence. (10) Newly-educated technocrats often are angered by the rampant corruption and inefficiency in the Gulf and question why their countries are controlled by poorly-educated family members who have few qualifications for office. Similarly, religious scholars resent the state-sponsored, and often intellectually inferior, religious leaders who dominate their countries' religious establishments. (11)

Corruption and unaccounted for government spending levels are quite high. Money derived from the sale of oil noted in balance of payment statements often fails to appear in oil revenues reported in the state budget. In recent years, from 18 to 30 percent of the revenue from petroleum exports was not reported in budgets in the northern Gulf states. (12) This missing money -- billions of dollars a year -- enriches the royal families. Opposition groups frequently criticize the regime for allowing ruling family members to mismanage the country and charge that the traditional monarchies are simply kleptocracies with scepters. A Bahraini opposition group, for example, accused the ruling family of "squandering the wealth of the nation." (13) Similarly, in a 14 July 1998 communique, the Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia blamed Al Saud family members for corruption and contributing to the country's economic woes. (14)

ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS

The Gulf states, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia in particular, suffer from a combination of high expectations, rapid population growth and falling oil revenues: a potentially-explosive combination. In the 1970s, the rapid inflow of oil wealth led all the Gulf states to create extensive welfare systems. Governments provided health care, education, and other services for free to all citizens, and any citizen with an advanced degree was entitled to a lucrative

government subsidies decline and high-paying jobs evaporate. In 1994, for example, only a third of the graduates from Saudi universities could find jobs in the public sector. (17)

At the same time, rapid population growth--some Gulf states averaged almost 4 percent annual growth in the last two decades--has created a large and restive youth population. (18) Rapid population growth is destabilizing for several reasons. First, such growth generates tremendous economic pressure. Simply to retain the same levels of wealth on an individual basis,

Country	Total Population (July 19)	Non-nationals (July 19)	Percent of population 14 or under (July 1997)	GDP \$bln 1996
Bahrain	603,318	221,182	31	7.7
Kuwait	1,834,269	1,381,063	33	32.5
Oman	2,264,590	400,000	46	20.8
Qatar	670,27	516,508	28	11.7
Saudi Arabia	20,087,965	5,164,790	43	205.6
UAE	2,262,309	1,546,547	32	72.9

Source: CIA Factbook 1997, <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook>; accessed 30 October, 1998. The non-national figure for Oman is drawn from Gause, Oil Monarchies, p. 6. Gause's figures are from 1992; however, the number of expatriates in Oman have stayed roughly constant in the period between 1992 and 1997.

government job. Since the early 1980s, however, the price of oil has fallen dramatically - with disastrous results for the budgets of regional governments. (15)

The Gulf states today lack the wherewithal to satisfy their burgeoning populations. The per capita incomes of many Gulf residents have plummeted since the 1970s after the price of oil began falling in the early 1980s. From 1984 to 1994, real per capita GDP fell from \$12,740 to \$7,140 in Bahrain; \$22,480 to \$16,600 in Kuwait; \$6,892 to 4,915 in Oman; \$31,100 to \$15,070 in Qatar, \$11,450 to \$6,725 in Saudi Arabia, and \$27,620 to \$14,100 in the UAE. (16) Although all figures are skewed by poor census-taking procedures and large numbers of expatriates often included in Gulf population figures, in a general sense this figure reflects the decline of individual wealth in the Gulf states. As the price of oil fell in the 1980s, Gulf citizens saw

Gulf economies must grow at rates in excess of 10 percent a year. Second, rapid growth exerts pressure on governments to expand education, medical care, and social services at breakneck speed. Even when governments have considerable wealth, this rapid pace can lead to bottlenecks and inefficiencies. When government revenues are stagnant or declining -- as they are in the Gulf today -- rapid population growth creates pressures that regimes are not able to satisfy.

A rise in expectations accompanied this decline in wealth. Gulf youths today expect more from government than did their parents, even though they are receiving less. Most Gulf residents under the age of 30 -- easily more than two-thirds of the population -- grew up accustomed to a high standard of living. They continue to expect high-quality health care, housing, and other services that their parents never knew as children. Furthermore, many received higher

degrees, increasing their ostensible qualifications for high-status, high-paying jobs. As a result, many Gulf residents consider jobs involving physical labor unacceptable and believe it is their right to have an undemanding, high-paying, government job.

The profligate royal spending found in the Gulf compounds the resentment created by disappointed expectations. In Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, residents resent the conspicuous consumption of many royal family members. Saudi Arabia has perhaps 20,000 princes and princesses, all of whom receive stipends from the Saudi state that range from thousands to millions of dollars a month. (19) Although they may be exaggerated, these income figures are widely accepted by Saudis throughout the Kingdom. Even more troubling, Saudi royal family members encroach increasingly on the private sector. In the 1970s, when skyrocketing oil prices seemed to promise enough wealth for everyone, royal interference was lower and more tolerable. Today, there is less money but there are more princes. Thus, the royal family interferes with business more and more to maintain its standard of living, while businessmen complain there is less money to go around. The Saudi government has shown little inclination to cut down on stipends for princes, on building lavish palaces, or curtailing the size of the welfare state. (20) Bahrain's Al Khalifa, while fewer in number, also maintain an extravagant lifestyle and are perceived to interfere regularly in business for their own enrichment. (21)

Economic stagnation has made resentment over corruption and wealth disparities more acute. Although the Gulf states are hardly poor (and some -- such as the UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait -- remain extremely wealthy), the prospects for an ever-rising standard of living are dim. In Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Bahrain, the number of well-paying, high-status jobs has fallen as the populations have grown. Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE have large enough reserves to satisfy the wants of their

populations for decades to come, but only the UAE (and in fact only the Emirate of Dubai) has a significant non-oil economy. Although the decline in the price of oil is largely to blame, opposition groups rightly note that the regimes squander the available resources. (22)

The economic situation in Bahrain is particularly grim. Unlike its oil-rich neighbors, Bahrain has almost no appreciable gas and oil reserves. In recent years, sporadic violence and government corruption have led it to lose its role as the financial center of the Gulf to Dubai, which is seen by many investors as more stable and less corrupt. The result is a steadily declining economy, with younger Bahrainis becoming increasingly disenchanted with the regime. Bahrain's large Shi'a Muslim community, which is at least 70 percent of the overall population, bears the heaviest load. (23) Unfortunately, the economic outlook for Bahrain is bleak, and resentment is likely to grow. Bahrain has done little to address the core of its problems: corruption, untrained workers, and an over-regulated economy. Violence in Bahrain is worsening an already tenuous economic situation.

TRADITIONS UNDER ASSAULT

The traditional way of life in the Gulf is under assault from modernization and Westernization. The Gulf has changed dramatically in recent decades, going from a poor, nomadic society to a wealthy settled one. Similarly, technology and international trade have connected the Gulf states to the world at large. Not surprisingly, many establishment voices decry the transformation of their societies. In addition, members of traditional merchant and tribal elite families are often shunted aside and resent the upstart royals who were equals, or at times even inferiors, several generations ago.

Gulf residents are experiencing a complete transformation of their traditional way of life. Thirty years ago, many citizens of the UAE, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia lived in the desert and had little contact with

the outside world. Beginning in the 1970s, these populations settled, began living in modern homes, and came to depend on the state for their livelihoods. Foreign television shows and movies exposed them to jarring new ideas and ways of life, particularly with regard to gender roles, sexuality, and family relationships. The spread of new ideas, new forms of communication, urbanization, literacy, and other sources of change disrupted the rhythms of daily life and social hierarchies. Inevitably, some traditional leaders lose their influence and almost all individuals face the need to change their lifestyles. (24) Not surprisingly, resentment is common. Even in relatively calm Kuwait, Islamist youths have pressed the government to remove satellite dishes and VCRs to fight spiritual pollution. (25)

GLORIFYING FIGHTERS AND WRITERS

The presence and glorification of individuals who use violence, particularly Islamic radicals, also has the potential to lead to unrest in the Gulf. For years, stories of brave Palestinian fedayeen, willing to risk their lives to recover Arab and Muslim lands from the Zionist invaders, nurtured much of the Arab and Muslim world. The successes of anti-Soviet Mujahedin, the Lebanese Hezbollah, and Bosnian Muslim fighters also became the stuff of legend, and the Arab media lionized many fighters.

The intellectual environment of the Gulf is favorable to radical causes. The Arab nationalism of the 1960s and 1970s at times called for the masses to turn against their regimes and the Western powers. Seizing power through violence (ie, a military coup or a bloody revolution) was the model proffered. While Arab nationalism has faded in recent years, radical Islamic sentiments have grown stronger. And, political Islam also endorses violence in politics. Although the particular doctrines of many radicals vary, some influential theologians have in essence declared certain regimes heretical, implying that the faithful should overthrow them by any means possible. Often

theologians play a direct role in the formation and direction of radical groups. (26)

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE SHI'A

In Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, discrimination against Shi'a citizens abounds. The Saudis are particularly brutal, restricting the religious practice of the Shi'a minority (approximately 10 percent of the total population) and banning the import of Shi'a religious literature. (27) Moreover, Shi'a are taught the ultra-conservative Saudi religious doctrine, which brands their school of Islam heretical. The Shi'a face rampant employment discrimination and lack political power. Saudi Shi'a are regularly arrested and harassed by the security services. Perhaps most importantly, the Shi'a are stigmatized socially; both the government and much of the Sunni majority sees them as tantamount to apostates. (28)

In Bahrain, the Shi'a face less encompassing discrimination, but because they are a majority community, their exclusion from political power rankles more. Bahraini Shi'a are poor while the Al Khalifa, and many leading Sunni families, consume conspicuously. Unemployment exceeds 30 percent among the Shi'a, and is possibly significantly higher for young Shi'a males. (29)

RELIGIOUS MILITANCY

Religious militancy is growing in several Gulf states. Perhaps the most dangerous threat to stability in Saudi Arabia comes from Sunni religious militants. (30) Sunni radicals have also threatened the peace in Oman. (31) Although information about these groups is difficult to obtain, some include veterans of the war in Afghanistan. On 13 November 1995, Sunni radicals bombed the U.S. Army Materiel Command's Office of the Program Manager for the Saudi National Guard, killing seven people. Militants may also have been involved in the 1996 Khobar Towers attack.

These radicals are presumed to have a significant following at a local level. (32)

Sunni radicals regularly criticize the Saudi regime as un-Islamic. (33) These radicals oppose the very concept of secular authority and are zealous in their condemnation of any deviation from their view of the true faith. Charges that the regime is corrupt, that it is a puppet of the United States, and that the royal family is not providing for its citizens are common. (34)

The Sunni radical challenge is not new, and the regime is well aware of its serious dimensions. Even before the founding of the Saudi state, ultra-conservative Saudis found fault with the Al Saud. Periodic criticism occurred as the Al Saud consolidated power. Clashes at times turned violent, with the regime using the army against radicals. In November 1979, Sunni radicals seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca during the hajj, claiming that the Al Sa'ud was illegitimate because it transgressed against the puritanical Wahhabi credo of Islam. Saudi security forces stormed the facility, leaving dozens dead. (35)

Past attempts at divide-and-rule have sown the seeds for the latest challenge. In the 1960s and 1970s, the regime encouraged religious radicals to organize, correctly anticipating that this would reduce the influence of the then-dominant school of Arab nationalism, which was often anti-monarchist. In so doing, however, the regime strengthened groups that would later challenge it. The mosques and organizations supported by the regime in the 1960s and 1970s created a network among Sunni radicals - the most radical of whom have additional contacts due to their support for, or participation in, fighting in Afghanistan.

FOREIGN MEDDLING

In addition to instability generated at home, the Gulf states have faced active meddling by a number of foreign powers and movements. Iran has repeatedly supported militants in the Gulf, and radical

groups such as the Lebanese Hezbollah also have ties to Gulf militants.

Iran tried to create and organize a Bahraini Hezbollah organization before and during the recent spate of violence. To this end, the Revolutionary Guard's Al-Qods Force trained several Bahrainis studying in Iran as a local leadership cadre and provided the group with limited financial support. Bahraini Hezbollah actively spread propaganda against the Al Khalifa, but it was not linked to any actual acts of violence or to the larger demonstrations that occurred. (36) In 1996, Bahrain arrested 44 citizens accused of acting on Iran's behest. Today Bahrain Hezbollah probably retains limited organizational capabilities in Bahrain itself, and it almost certainly has some organizational capacity in Iran. (37)

Iran's effort to foment unrest was particularly strong in the 1980s. Iranian-backed radicals tried to initiate a coup in Bahrain in 1981. The Iranian-supported Da'wa group, which originated in Iraq but became affiliated with what later became Lebanese Hezbollah, carried out six bombing attacks in Kuwait in 1983 with personnel, weapons, and explosives smuggled from Iran. Throughout the mid-1980s, Iranian-backed groups attacked U.S., French, Kuwaiti, Jordanian, and other targets associated with perceived backers of Iraq in order to dissuade these governments from supporting Baghdad. (38) Iran has also used political violence to discredit the Saudi regime. Throughout the 1980s, Iran orchestrated demonstrations at the hajj that spilled over into violence; in 1987, hundreds of Iranian pilgrims died in riots in Mecca. In 1989, a bomb planted by a Hezbollah offshoot killed one person in Mecca. (39) During this time, the Iranian government repeatedly called for Gulf residents to overthrow their governments.

Egyptian-inspired Arab nationalism posed a similar threat to the Gulf regimes in the 1950s and 1960s. Egyptian President Nasser, lionized throughout the Arab world, made powerful radio broadcasts promoting Arab unity and at times attacking the Gulf regimes, particularly Saudi Arabia. Nasser

also sponsored Saudi exiles, including members of the royal family, in their attempts to overthrow the monarchy. Arab nationalism helped topple regimes in Syria, Iraq, and Libya - but the Gulf states weathered the storm. (40)

Organizations calling themselves "Hezbollah" have appeared in Kuwait and Bahrain. (41) It is likely that thousands of loosely-organized Arabs, trained in Afghanistan, also are active in the Gulf seeking to eliminate the U.S. presence from the region and to promote more Islamic political orders. (42)

STRATEGIES OF CONTROL

Given this grim picture, why is the Gulf so stable? The answer lies in the strategies Gulf governments have used to maintain peace. Ruling families have proven skilled at anticipating, and preventing, political violence before it explodes. The regimes employ mixtures of carrots and sticks, using aggressive security services to monitor, and at times suppress, opposition, while co-opting potential opposition leaders with wealth, jobs, and high-status positions. In addition, regime leaders are cunning political chameleons, changing their outside appearance to match the issues of the day, while maintaining their hold on power.

To control unrest, the Gulf states use a combination of six tools, described below, to counter political violence. Together, these strategies hinder anti-government organization, lessen popular hostility toward the regime, satisfy would-be aggressors abroad and otherwise reduce the immediate potential for political violence.

STRONG SECURITY SERVICES

Gulf security forces, often staffed by foreigners, do not hesitate to suppress dissent. (43) This is particularly evident in the two countries where unrest has proven most common: Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. The Saudi services closely monitor all organizations, political and otherwise, in the Kingdom, including the activities of

religious groups. Bahrain's police force and the Bahrain Security and Intelligence Service (BSIS) have arrested and jailed participants in anti-regime demonstrations, and they suppress any gathering of protesters almost immediately. Bahraini opposition members claim that more than 10,000 people have been detained since 1994 and that the security services have injured more than 500 citizens and ransacked mosques and other religious gatherings. (44) The security services in Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, and the UAE are less active given the low level of domestic opposition the regimes there face, but they vigilantly monitor the large expatriate worker populations in their countries and guard against foreign-backed political violence. (45) Nor do they hesitate to crack down whenever they perceive a threat. The Omani security forces arrested more than 200 individuals in 1994, only later deciding that not all of them were involved in a suspected anti-government plot. (46) The security services both deter unrest by threatening to punish political activists, and deny groups the ability to function effectively even if they are willing to risk the threat of punishment.

Coercion also shapes the Gulf's intellectual environment and offsets the corrosive influence of outside powers. Security services in several Gulf states monitor intellectuals and spiritual leaders, leading both to avoid strong anti-government statements. Thus, these potential critics, through self-censorship, have become voices of restraint.

All Gulf regimes pay particular attention to foreign-inspired political activity in their countries. Individuals who study or travel abroad, particularly those who travel to Iran or Lebanon, often are monitored by security services. After the Khobar bombing, the Saudi government began scrutinizing the activities of Saudis who had fought in Afghanistan. Thus, foreign government agents -- as well as many innocent citizens -- are often quickly rounded up if they encourage political activity. (47)

In general, repression is limited to anti-regime political activities. If citizens play by the rules, the regimes do not restrict their activities (though this rule is often broken with regard to the Saudi Arabia's Shi'a population). Economically, individuals have tremendous. Gulf governments carefully monitor potential dissidents, but they seldom beat or imprison them, preferring to bribe them or their families or otherwise press them to conform. (48)

So far, the Gulf states have avoided the indiscriminate use of security forces. The regimes arrest and harass dozens or hundreds, not tens of thousands. Indiscriminate use of security services can backfire and lead peaceful reformers to support violence. When peaceful tactics fail to move the government, and any sort of opposition is prohibited, reformers are apt to lose hope in the political system. As a result, political alienation increases. Indeed, when an opposition organization is destroyed, its members, particularly its leaders, are often forced underground to avoid arrest, imprisonment, or worse. Once underground, they become more dependent on clandestine techniques to survive and may have to seek foreign assistance. This dependence may lead them to turn violent, to extort money from hesitant supporters, to intimidate potential informants, or to keep the goodwill of a foreign sponsor.

CO-OPT POTENTIAL DISSIDENTS

Gulf regimes are experts at using largesse to silence critical voices. Critics of all sorts, both secular and religious, are often given jobs or government contracts in exchange for their acquiescence. It is not uncommon for a once-hostile religious leader to receive a lucrative position in exchange for his support, or for an academic critic to become the head of a government-sponsored institute. (49) Continued dissent, however, jeopardizes government patronage. For example, after opposition to the Al Khalifa grew in 1994 and 1995, the government dismissed several important

professors and government employees from their jobs. (50)

All Gulf governments are remarkably skilled at using economic control to ensure their hold on power. Oil wealth allows the state to dominate the economy. In Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, perhaps 90 percent of citizens work for the government. In Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE, large numbers of people hold government positions, often also working in family businesses simultaneously. The Al Sabah work closely with wealthy Shi'a families, using their largesse to gain their support, or at least avoid their opposition. Even the Saudi Shi'a are not completely excluded. Despite rampant discrimination, the Al Saud provided the Shi'a community with additional funding after demonstrations in 1979. The ruling families also exercise more subtle forms of financial control. Housing, health care, and other important benefits are often provided by the state, giving the regimes even more leverage over their citizens. (51)

To control the media, Gulf governments rely more on subsidies and the threat of suspending publication than on formal censorship. Governments often pay editors and reporters directly and provide funding for publication - all conditional on laudatory coverage of government activities and little coverage of opposition. As a result, papers censor themselves. Moreover, most journalists in the Gulf are expatriates from other Arab countries. Thus, they have little status and are completely dependent on the goodwill of the state to remain in the country. (52)

By co-opting critics, Gulf governments alleviate much of the immediate social tension. Potential critics' aspirations, for example, often are fulfilled on an individual level, with many disaffected leaders receiving a subsidy, official position, or other tokens of wealth and esteem. The regimes build religious centers, medical facilities, and other services to placate disaffected areas, using the promise of assistance to buy off anger. (53)

DIVIDE-AND-RULE

Gulf governments also are adept at creating divisions within communities and fragmenting any political opposition. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have long worked with Islamic forces against leftist Kuwaitis. In the 1970s, for example, the Al Sabah supported the Social Reform Society, then a non-political Islamic group, against Arab nationalist groups. (54) The Al Khalifa in Bahrain are proven masters at exploiting Sunni suspicion of the Shi'a. Even many Sunnis who are appalled by the Al Khalifa and favor a return of the National Assembly have gradually withdrawn their support from the reform movement, fearing that the Shi'a will dominate it. The Al Khalifa play up this division. For example, in 1995 they arrested Shi'a activists but let Sunni activists remain free. The Al Khalifa also successfully divided the Shi'a community, co-opting wealthier Shi'a while cracking down on poorer ones. Thus, Bahrain's opposition is rent by both sectarian and class divisions. (55)

IDEOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY

Despite their traditional nature, Gulf ruling families are cunning politicians. During the 1950s and 1960s, they often claimed to champion Arab nationalism, sending token support in the fight against Israel and funding revolutionary Palestinian groups. After the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Gulf leaders portrayed themselves as pious Muslims, fervent in their support for traditional religion. In the 1990s, the Gulf states have played the civil society game, pretending to increase popular input into decision-making.

Such ideological and practical measures offset a tremendous amount of immediate hostility on the part of Gulf residents. On a practical level, government measures in the name of the cause of the moment exceed any incentives offered by opposition groups. A government-run "Islamic" clinic, after all, will be more lavish than a private Islamic clinic.

Ideological flexibility offsets outside meddling. After the Iranian revolution, for example, Khomeini and other Iranian clerics lambasted the Gulf monarchs as un-Islamic and corrupt. In response, the Gulf royal families made public shows of piety. The Al Saud, for example, emphasized the title "Custodian of the Two Holy Places" (the sacred sites of Mecca and Medina, both of which are in Saudi territory) to bolster its credentials.

PSEUDO-PARTICIPATION

To varying degrees, the Gulf states also use appointed and representative institutions to provide for discussion and input into decision-making. Where these institutions are relatively strong, such as in Kuwait, they demonstrate the accessibility of the regime to the people and reduce the sense of political alienation created by the ruling family's domination of politics. Even where they are weak, they suggest that the ruling families are willing to go outside their own ranks when weighing decisions. (56)

Kuwaitis have more political freedom and a more accountable government than do the citizens of other Gulf states. In recent years, Kuwait's National Assembly has served as a safety valve for social pressure. Parliamentarians investigate corruption and oversee some government spending, thus reducing charges of a lack of accountability so common elsewhere in the Gulf. When individuals seek to change society or to oppose a government policy, they now have a legitimate forum in which to express themselves. This has undercut popular support for both Shi'a and Sunni radicals by providing groups with a voice in and some influence over decision making. (57)

Unlike the other Gulf states, Kuwait is home to legal political associations and a vibrant civil society. (58) Informally, there are large numbers of gathering places (diwaniyyas) where Kuwaitis regularly come together to discuss politics. Kuwait also retains associations and organizations that play a role in the political debate, and

Kuwaiti labor unions claim thousands of members and are an important base for secular forces in Kuwait. (59)

In Bahrain, Amir Isa gradually extended the role of an appointed council in response to continued unrest on the island. In the fall of 1992, the Amir appointed a 30-member Consultative Council in response to post-Desert Storm calls for a greater popular voice in decision-making. Initially, the Council was evenly split between Shi'as and Sunnis. It had no legislative power, and its initial meetings were not reported in the media. In 1996, after two years of anti-regime protests, the Amir expanded the size of the Council, appointing more Shi'a members. He also increased media coverage of Council events. (60)

In Oman, the Sultan created a popular assembly in 1991, and expanded the assembly in 1994. Although the assembly is a forum for debate and can question government ministers, it has no formal powers. All security and foreign policy decisions remain in the Sultan's hands. (61)

Pseudo-legislative fora are particularly weak in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE. After calls for reform became increasingly loud following the Gulf War, Saudi King Fahd announced in March 1992 that he would appoint a consultative council and, in August 1993, he chose 60 members to serve on it. Council members represent a cross-section of the Saudi elite, including religious officials, merchants, university professors, and technocrats. The UAE has a Federal National Council, whose members are appointed by the regime. The Council engages in some debate over government policy, such as over the division of services to various emirates. (62) Shaykh Hamad al-Thani of Qatar has announced that he will hold municipal elections and eventually create an elected national assembly (63) -- promises that, even if implemented, will probably allow at best token input into decision-making.

The small size of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE offsets these weak institutions. To varying degrees, all the Gulf ruling families and elites provide some

access to their citizens by holding regular, but informal, meetings where citizens can air complaints, petition for redress of grievances, or otherwise try to influence decision-making. As one Bahraini interlocutor noted, "I don't worry too much about whether I have a vote or not -- after all, I can talk to someone who talks to the ruling family simply by picking up the phone." (64)

This inclusion undermines violence generated by political alienation. The local gatherings, informal talks, and weak legislatures bolster the regimes' claims that they respect, and listen to, the voices of the citizenry. Indeed, the one-to-one contact with the ruling families generates a sense of common identity between the rulers and the ruled. Elites in general have more access to the ruling families and are often chosen to sit on local or national councils. Thus, their resentment of the upstart ruling families is lessened somewhat by the higher status accorded to them.

ACCOMMODATIVE DIPLOMACY

The Gulf states try to placate potential foreign adversaries with non-controversial foreign policies and generous aid. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Gulf states lavishly funded radical Palestinian groups and "front-line" states -- Syria, Egypt, and Jordan -- in their fight against Israel in order to insulate themselves from criticisms they did little to advance the Arab nation's cause. Indeed, they initiated the oil embargoes of 1967 and 1973 to offset criticism that they were not on the side of Arab nationalism. Similarly, Kuwait in the 1970s bought Soviet arms in an effort to appease Iraq, (65) and all the Gulf leaders have at times made token gestures related to Iran's importance in regional security, even as they have carefully avoided any substantial Iranian role. (66)

Similarly, when political Islam rose, the Gulf states aided some radical Islamist groups and burnished their international Islamic credentials to preempt any criticism. Saudi Arabia founded the Islamic

Conference in the mid-1960s and has kept it strong as a way of demonstrating its commitment to international Islamic causes. In response to the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by Islamic radicals in 1979, Riyadh tried to become the champion of Islamic opposition to the Soviet Union, which had just invaded Afghanistan. (67) In the 1990s, the Gulf regimes have publicly pressed the West on the peace process and on Bosnia to demonstrate their Islamic solidarity.

IMPACT ON STABILITY

Although the above six strategies are short-term palliatives, they have helped keep the peace for many years. In and of themselves, the strategies do not stop social modernization, revive stagnant Gulf economies, ease demographic pressure, or reduce corruption. They have, however, raised the popularity of governments and diluted anger about foreign aggression. Perhaps most importantly, regime tools hinder an organized opposition and mitigate the politicizing events that often lead disaffected individuals to become violent.

CLOUDS ON THE HORIZON

Despite the considerable stability of the Gulf, several problems may arise in the future. Gulf regimes have at best a limited recognition of the need for political and economic reform. Some Gulf leaders often deliberately conflate anti-regime complaints with support for violent radicals. The Al Khalifa, for example, tried to cast all their opponents as Iranian-backed terrorists, even though many of those involved in anti-regime protests had quite modest agendas. Although the ruling families of other states are often more politically astute, Gulf rulers still see their countries as personal fiefdoms rather than a land for all their citizens.

Unrest may increase as government resources shrink in the future. Gulf leaders may become less able buy off dissent. Already in Bahrain, the Al Khalifa are torn between sating family greed or buying off

other Bahraini elites. Oman, while having a less rapacious ruling family, is also running low on revenues and has a large population to satisfy. Such problems will increase over the years as the Gulf populations grow and oil wealth stays constant.

Even if they were willing, Gulf governments face severe constraints in their efforts to implement reform. Barring an unexpected upswing in the oil market, regime revenues are not likely to increase dramatically in the coming years even as local populations grow. Most regime officials are cautious and act only with a large degree of elite consensus, making it hard to respond rapidly to new developments. Sweeping reforms are particularly difficult, as Gulf ruling families depend heavily on tradition to legitimate their rule. Furthermore, most political and economic reforms will directly affect the ruling family's own power and wealth, making it hard for rulers to gain support for such reforms among key decision makers even when they recognize the need for change. (68)

In the short-term, reform would also exacerbate the "expectations gap." The expectations of the good life remain high. Any belt-tightening or even continued stagnation will only highlight that the government is not fulfilling its expected role. The regimes' lukewarm efforts to cut the social safety net and increase prices closer to market levels have already engendered criticism. (69)

The Gulf regimes' co-optation can contribute to the overall level of discontent. There is often little relationship between acumen and financial success in the Gulf. Individuals who receive poor educations in economically unproductive subjects such as religious studies receive lucrative government positions and have little incentive to train for a modern economy. Similarly, the safety net in general decreases incentives for individuals to take entry-level jobs that require considerable labor.

Gulf groups also are increasingly able to organize overseas. Saudi and Bahraini opposition groups are active in

London, spreading anti-regime messages in press releases and via the internet. (70) So far, these organizations have not threatened the security of the Gulf regimes, but they represent a possible chink in their armor.

The Gulf states will find it difficult to control the intellectual environment. Images of brave Palestinian fedayeen or zealous Afghan mujahedin serve as role models for Gulf youths, leading them to see violence as an acceptable form of political action. Similarly, the intellectual environment in the Gulf is influenced by radical thinkers in Egypt and elsewhere. These intellectuals and theologians often provide an ideological foundation that justifies violent action even when local intellectuals support the regime. Thus, anti-Saudi activists make a point of declaring the Al Saud un-Islamic, an attack that compels the faithful to resist the ruling family.

Completely stopping direct foreign intervention will also be difficult if not impossible. For strategic, domestic, and ideological reasons, both Iran and Iraq might seek to incite unrest in the Gulf, particularly if they see it as a tool to weaken the U.S. presence on the peninsula. Such support might consist of infiltrating provocateurs into the Gulf, training local radicals, or providing funds to recruit members and buy weapons.

On their own, the Gulf states lack the military means to defend against foreign governments directly. Calling in the United States, however, runs the risk of discrediting the regimes even further with their own peoples. Instead, the Gulf states have used an accommodative foreign policy to try to gain their neighbors' and other radicals' goodwill, a policy which has generally led to peace. But, foreign meddling could increase according to the caprices of foreign powers.

Two countries particularly likely to face trouble are Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Of all the Gulf states, the Al Khalifa confront the most instability with the fewest resources. Iran has regularly meddled in Bahraini politics, and rampant discrimination, economic woes, and political exclusion keep the Shi'a simmering. Riyadh

faces a different set of challenges. Although its economic problems are not as extreme as Bahrain's, the coming decades will probably see continued stagnation and declining living standards. Moreover, many Saudis see the Al Saud as too close to Washington. For both these countries, the opposition appears to have too few resources to directly challenge the ruling families. The Al Saud and the Al Khalifa have weathered similar storms in the past, and they will not hesitate to clamp down on any organized dissent.

FINAL WORDS

The above clouds should not obscure the high level of stability in the Gulf. Regardless of their merits, the Gulf governments must be lauded for their skill in staving off unrest. Despite a host of potentially destabilizing factors, these governments have kept the peace with remarkably few problems. These monarchies may seem bastions of a traditional order, but they are also tremendously innovative, with leaders who know how to foster, as well as accommodate, political change. (71)

The Gulf states' experience suggests lessons for both scholars and policymakers. Some of the lessons, such as the ability to keep the peace by co-opting and repressing activists, might be applied to other turbulent regions. Indeed, when asking why violence breaks out around the globe, we should examine the capacity of states to repress, bribe, and pursue other policies to limit internal conflict.

Yet other elements of the Gulf environment are distinct: few governments in the world control wealth as completely as do the Gulf regimes. The region's unusually porous intellectual environment, and the monarchical political systems, also limit comparisons that can be drawn to the Gulf experience. Despite these limits, scholars can learn more about keeping the peace in turbulent environments from regions like the Gulf.

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NOTES

1. For a survey on the causes of conflict, see Stephen R. David, "Internal War: Causes and Cures," *World Politics* 49 (July 1997), 552-76; Ted Robert Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts* (Washington: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1993); Stephen G. Brush, "Dynamics of Theory Change in the Social Sciences: Relative Deprivation and Collective Violence." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 1996, pp. 523-545; Jeff Goodwin and Theda Skocpol. December 1989. "Explaining Revolutions in the Contemporary Third World," *Politics and Society*, Edward N. Muller, *Aggressive Political Participation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1978); Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

2. See Daniel Byman and Stephen Van Evera, "Why They Fight? Hypotheses on the Causes of Contemporary Deadly Conflict," *Security Studies* 7:3 (Spring 1998), pp. 45-50 for a discussion of democratization and civil conflict. See Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," *International Security* 20, no. 1 (summer 1995), pp. 5-38.

3. This essay examines these six states as a similar class of cases, when in fact they differ in many important ways. To name only a few: Bahrain, in contrast to the other five states, has a majority Shi'a population. Saudi Arabia is much larger than its neighbors and, along with Qatar, champions a puritanical form of Sunni Islam. Kuwait has a nascent democracy, while Saudi Arabia remains a narrow autocracy. Bahrain and Oman have relatively little oil or gas;

the other four states have enormous reserves. Such differences, of course, have a tremendous impact on the politics of these countries. However, we contend the differences outweigh the similarities and thus they can be analyzed - carefully - together. Further work distinguishing the characteristics of these states would be highly valuable.

4. For much of this time, all the Gulf states except Saudi Arabia were, in essence, British protectorates. Britain withdrew from the area in 1971.

5. For the United States and entire industrialized world, stability in this region is vital. The relative share of Gulf energy is likely to grow in coming decades, as reserves elsewhere decline. Anthony Cordesman, *Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE* (Boulder, Westview Press, 1997) and Gary G. Sick, "The Coming Crisis in the Persian Gulf," in *The Persian Gulf at the Millennium: Essays in Politics, Economy, Security, and Religion*, eds. Gary Sick and Lawrence G. Potter, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), p. 15.

6. This report does not examine the potential problems stemming from the large number of expatriate workers in the Gulf, which are often more than half the total population in the country.

7. For a review of civil society in the Gulf, see Jill Crystal, "Civil Society in the Arabian Gulf" in *Civil Society in the Middle East*, Vol. II, Augustus Richard Norton, ed. (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996). Crystal argues that civil society in Kuwait is growing but that it remains limited elsewhere in the region, largely due to government restrictions.

8. "Bahrain: Alleged conspiracy used as a cover for consolidating tribal dictatorship," Bahrain Freedom Movement, 3 June 1996 communique.

9. For more on this phenomenon, see Donatella Della Porta, "Left Wing Terrorism in Italy," in *Terrorism in Context*, Martha Crenshaw, ed. (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), pp. 105-159.

10. For a fascinating review of this process, see Jill Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
11. Crystal, "Civil Society," p. 274; Gregory F Gause, *Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1994), pp. 88-101; and authors' interviews with U.S. government officials, January and May 1998.
12. Sick, 1997, p. 21.
13. See "Bahrain: Economy goes down as Al Khalifa imports more foreign troops," Bahrain Freedom Movement, 20 February 1997 communique.
14. The Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia, 14 July 1998 communique, e-mail version.
15. In 1996, Bahrain depended on oil and gas for some 65 percent of its total revenues. The figures for the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait are 84 percent, 73 percent, 76 percent, 68 percent, and 73 percent respectively. Sick, 1997, p. 17.
16. Cordesman, *Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE*, p. 7, Table Four.
17. Sick, p. 17.
18. In Oman and Saudi Arabia in particular, the youth population is large. In these two countries, the percent of the population under 14 in 1997 was over 40 percent. CIA Factbook 1997. <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/country-frame.html>. Accessed on October 19, 1998.
19. This figure includes all princes and princesses, even those from minor branches of the family, who receive some state money. Simon Henderson provides a similar figure in *After King Fahd: Succession in Saudi Arabia*. Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute. Policy Paper 37, 1994, p. 7, note 1.
20. Authors' interviews with U.S. government officials, February 1998.
21. Authors' interviews with Bahraini government officials and journalists, January 1998.
22. See, for example, "Your Right to Know, the End of the Deference Era," CDLR Bulletin No. 30, 13 January 1995, FBIS-NES-95-027, internet version. Saudi opposition groups blame the Al Sa'ud for the "destruction" of the Saudi economy.
23. Historically, in the Gulf states the Sunni sect of Islam has dominated the Shi'asect. The split between the two sects occurred shortly after the Prophet Mohammed's death and concerned the issue of who would lead the Muslim community. Over time, the Shi'a have developed their own communal identity that is distinct from the that of the mainstream Sunni community. In the Middle East, Shi'ism is dominant only in Iran. Iraq, Bahrain, and Lebanon also have Shi'a majorities, but in all three countries the Sunni community dominates political power.
24. The literature on the effects of modernization is vast. A survey would include Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966 (1953)); and Walker Connor, "Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying," *World Politics* 24 (April 1972), pp. 319-55.
25. "Kuwait: Youths Said Seizing Satellite Dishes, VCRs", Cairo Al-Akhbar, 30 January 1997, p. 2. FBIS-NES-97-024.
26. For reviews of Arab nationalism, political Islam, and their ability to mobilize, see Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991 (1982)); Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundations of the Islamic Revolution in Iran*. New York: New York University Press (1993); Jerrold D. Green, *Revolution in Iran: The Politics of Countermobilization*, Praeger, 1982; Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); and Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).
27. Michael Collins Dunn, "Is the Sky Falling? Saudi Arabia's Economic Problems

and Political Stability," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. III, No. 4, April 1995, p. 38.

28. For an overview, see Mamoun Fandy. "From Confrontation to Creative Resistance: The Shia's Oppositional Discourse in Saudi Arabia," *Critique* (Fall 1996), pp. 1-27.

29. Louay Bahry, "The Opposition in Bahrain: A Bellwether for the Gulf?" *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (May 1997), p. 50; Authors' interviews with U.S. government officials, February 1998. Unemployment information for the Gulf states is difficult to gather, as individuals have no incentive to register as unemployed because they receive no financial benefits for doing so. The 30 percent figure for Bahraini Shi'a may be conservative. Munira A. Fakhro, "The Uprising in Bahrain: An Assessment," in "The Coming Crisis in the Persian Gulf," in *The Persian Gulf at the Millennium: Essays in Politics, Economy, Security, and Religion*. Eds. Gary Sick and Lawrence G. Potter. (New York: St. Martin's press, 1997), p. 177.

30. The Islamic opposition in Saudi Arabia can be divided into four groups, although the boundaries blur in practice. Perhaps the most important, and the least known, groups are the followers of religious leaders such as Safar al-Hawali and Salma al-Auda, who gained widespread support after the Gulf war. Many of the thousands of Saudis who fought in Afghanistan may support these religious figures or others with a similar agenda. A second group consists of The Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights (CDLR), the Movement for Islamic Reform (MIRA), and other groups that operate from overseas but have little following in the Kingdom itself. Saudi Shi'a represent a third group, but they are carefully monitored by the Kingdom's security services and appear to have a moderate agenda. The fourth group, which is probably quite small, involves the Committee for Advice and Reform, which is headed by Usama bin Laden, one of the world's most important sponsors of political violence. Roy P. Mottahedeh and Mamoun Fandy, "The Islamic Movement: The Case

for Democratic Inclusion," in "The Coming Crisis in the Persian Gulf," in *The Persian Gulf at the Millennium: Essays in Politics, Economy, Security, and Religion*. Eds. Gary Sick and Lawrence G. Potter. (New York: St. Martin's press, 1997), pp. 307-308.

31. In 1994, the Omani government arrested over 200 people in connection with a radical Sunni plot to destabilize the country. The government charged 131 of these suspects and tried them in secret; all prisoners were released in November 1995 as part of a general amnesty. Cordesman, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE, pp. 136-137.

32. In 1994 in Burayda, the regime arrested 157 people who were protesting the arrest of a religious leader Dunn, p. 35. Opposition groups claim thousands were arrested (authors' interviews).

33. Even non-violent religious leaders often oppose the regime. In 1992, 107 Saudi religious leaders signed a petition that, among other things, called on the government to implement Islamic law more strictly, reduce corruption, and sever relations with non-Islamic countries and the West. It also called for a formal role in government for religious leaders. Anthony Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia: Guarding the Desert Kingdom*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), p. 38.

34. Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia*, pp. 35-41; Gause, 94-98 and 156-160.

35. Nadav Safran, *Saudi Arabia: The Ceaseless Quest for Security* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 357.

36. See "Bahrain: Defendants' Confessions Reported," Manama WAKH, FBIS-NES-96-110, 5 June 1996 and "Bahrain: Interior Ministry on Arrest of 'Hizballah of Bahrain' Group," Manama WAKH, FBIS-NES-96-107, 3 June 1996.

37. Authors' interviews, conducted in October 1997.

38. John W. Amos II, "Terrorism in the Middle East: The Diffusion of Violence," in *Middle East Terrorism: Current Threats and Future Prospects*, Yonah Alexander ed., New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1994), p. 154. Later, freeing the terrorists captured in

Kuwait became a major goal of terrorists in Lebanon and in Kuwait.

39. Edgar O'Ballance, *Islamic Fundamentalist Terrorism, 1979-1995* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), p. 152.

40. See Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985) and Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

41. Kuwait's Hezbollah's true membership size, while unknown, is probably quite small. The term, however, is used indiscriminately to include Shi'a ideologues, those with pro-Iran sympathies, and Islamists who oppose a U.S. military presence in the region.

42. Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 42; authors' interviews with U.S. government officials, March 1998.

43. For the best theoretical work on the use of security services and other forms of political control to keep the peace - albeit in very different circumstances - see Ian Lustick, "Stability in Deeply Divided Societies: Consociationalism Versus Control," *World Politics* 31, 3 (April 1979).

44. "Bahrain Uprising: 3 Years Old." Bahrain Freedom Movement e-mail. December 4, 1997."

45. Bahry, pp. 44-53; Cordesman, *Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE*, pp. 107-114, 282, 196-201, and 374-376; Authors' interviews.

46. Cordesman, *Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE*, p. 137.

47. Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia*, p. 42; Cordesman, *Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE*, p. 137.

48. Authors' interviews of U.S. government officials and Gulf citizens, January and February 1998.

49. For examples of co-optation, see "Your Right to Know."

50. Cordesman, *Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE*, p. 53; Authors' interviews.

51. Shafeeq Ghabra, "The Islamic Movement in Kuwait," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. V, No. 2, May 1997, pp. 58-72;

Authors' interviews with U.S. government officials

52. Cordesman, *Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE*, pp. 114-115, 198-199, 283, and 375..

53. The definitive account of co-optation remains Martin Zonis, *The Political Elite of Iran*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

54. Ghabra, p. 59; authors' interviews with U.S. government officials.

55. Bahry, pp. 52-54; Authors' interviews with Bahraini academics and government officials, January 1998.

56. Authors' interviews with Gulf state officials, October 1997 and January 1998.

57. Authors' interviews with U.S. government officials, September 1998.

58. Article 44 of the Kuwait Constitution only allows the formation of associations, not political parties. After 1991, however, many associations have become in essence political parties. Kuwait has three Islamist associations: the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM), the Islamic Popular Alliance (IPA), and the Islamic National Alliance. In the 1996 elections, these forces won (by some counts) 15 seats. All three groups elected several deputies directly affiliated with them. However, six Sunni Islamists who were nominally independent but have ties to both the ICM and the IPA also were elected. Kuwait's secular leaders are grouped together in the Democratic Forum.

59. Shafeeq Ghabra, "Voluntary Associations in Kuwait: The Foundation of a New System?" *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 2, Spring 1991, pp. 199-215.

60. Cordesman, *Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE*, pp. 52-53; Authors' interviews of U.S. government officials, September 1998.

61. Cordesman, *Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE*, pp. 134-135.

62. Gause, *Oil Monarchies*, p. 116; William A. Rugh, "What are the Sources of UAE Stability?" *Middle East Policy*, Vol. V, No. 3, September 1997, p. 19.

63. Cordesman, *Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE*, p. 231.

64. Authors' interviews of Bahraini businessman, January 1998.
65. Safran, p. 269.
66. For example, the Gulf Cooperation Council Secretary General declared, "Iran is an essential participant with the GCC states in the security of the waters of the Gulf." As quoted in Gause, *Oil Monarchies*, p. 135.
67. See Safran, pp. 116-119, 235.
68. An excellent description of these tensions can be found in Gregory F. Gause, "The Political Economy of National Security in the GCC States." in "The Coming Crisis in the Persian Gulf," in *The Persian Gulf at the Millennium*, pp. 61-84.
69. See "On Saudi Events," CDLR Bulletin No. 31.
70. See, for example, the CDLR's website at <http://www.ummah.org.uk/cdlr/> or the Bahrain Freedom Movement at <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/Bahrain/>
71. This observation was made about Middle East monarchies in general by Lisa Anderson, "Absolutism and the Resilience of Monarchy in the Middle East," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 106, No. 1 (1991), p. 3.