



Beyond Islamists & Autocrats

Narratives of Reform in the UAE

■ LORI PLOTKIN BOGHARDT

IN A REGION marked during recent years by mass protests, revolution, civil war, interstate conflict, and rising extremism, the United Arab Emirates is a success story on many levels. The country's vast oil resources make it one of the wealthiest states per capita in the world. Emirati leaders have pursued economic and social development projects of epic proportions, and citizen support for the country's national leadership is generally understood as high. The World Happiness Report, sponsored by the United Nations, has ranked the UAE as one of the happiest countries across the globe—and the Arab world's happiest.¹

The UAE, however, is one of the most restrictive states in the Middle East when it comes to political rights and civil liberties. This has been the case for some time; for example, political organization has always been illegal in the UAE. However, since the Arab Spring swept across the region in 2011, public space for discussion of political reform has contracted even more in the country. Critical discourse on this issue is strongly discouraged by both the state and society.

In this environment, prominent Emirati intellectuals, activists, and others known to support a generally plu-

ralistic and inclusive approach to governance based on their writings, lectures, and activities have taken different paths. Some have assumed important positions in government. Others are working in respected policy institutes supported by Abu Dhabi. A small number continue to press gently for more-inclusive governance and society as independent citizens—sometimes with and sometimes without the general support of the state. Still others are choosing to steer clear of all politics for the time being.

That various pluralistically oriented Emirati figures are choosing paths inside, outside, on the periphery of, and either supported or disavowed by the government, as well as the path of silence, points to the multiple narratives of reform in the UAE. One narrative is that the government itself is the most important driver of reform in the country. A second narrative is that there are some opportunities for influence and gentle activism on reform issues, albeit with significant caveats. A third narrative focuses on the restrictive climate for discussion of reform enforced by the state. Finally, a fourth narrative highlights popular support for the UAE leadership's current course, regardless of its approach to political inclusiveness.

These four narratives are diverse and complex, and in some areas they conflict with one another. Still, each is a valid component of the UAE's reform story. This essay examines these four narratives and then addresses U.S. policy on reform issues in the current environment.

GOVERNMENT AS A DRIVER OF REFORM

In the UAE context, political reform generally refers to the leadership's efforts to streamline bureaucracy and increase efficiency—which it has done laudably in recent years—as opposed to charting a genuine path toward more inclusive governance. But when it comes to social reform, in certain areas the leadership is an important driver. That the UAE has an interest in a social reform agenda is not an unusual phenomenon for Arab Gulf states—although policies linked to this phenomenon play out differently in various Gulf countries. Indeed, one frequently hears among non-Islamist Gulf elites the belief that some Gulf governments, or elements of them, are more forward leaning than their own populations in terms of their interest in social reform. Often, this is a gentle reference to the local popularity of ultraconservative Islamists whose platforms do not embrace principles of social inclusiveness.

One genuine systemic-reform project driven by the UAE leadership is what has been termed broadly “tolerance.” Promoting cultural and in some ways religious tolerance represents a strategy by the UAE to contribute to economic progress, address population diversity, and fight the spread of explicitly intolerant Islamist extremism. To be sure, tolerance is not consistently afforded across the board to all elements of UAE society, and the state also supports certain religious elements that promote unequivocally intolerant views.

With regard to diversity, the UAE vies with Qatar as home to the world's largest proportion of foreign nationals among its population. Approximately 89 percent of the UAE's 9.6 million people are non-Emirati.² More than half of the Emirates' population is South Asian, with Indians outnumbering Emiratis by more than two to one.³ The presence in the UAE of several dozen churches of various denominations, two Hindu temples, and two Sikh temples is appropriately often cited as an example of the UAE's support for religious tolerance and diversity.

In recent years, the government has widened the institutionalization of its tolerance agenda in response

to growing security threats. In February 2016, the UAE went so far as to appoint a minister of state for tolerance, Sheikha Lubna al-Qasimi, and a national program for tolerance was approved by the cabinet in June.⁴ These latest developments complement official efforts in place since the early 2000s. They also benefit from the work of approved nonprofit organizations like the Watani social development program, established in 2005. Watani emphasizes the concept of shared values over shared national origins, and embraces cultural pluralism as a part of both Emirati identity and the UAE experience for nonnationals.⁵

Another area in which the UAE has spearheaded reform involves promoting professional opportunities for women, including by placing women in visible leadership positions. For example, eight of the country's twenty-nine cabinet appointees are women, and women make up 20 percent of the Emirati diplomatic corps, according to government statistics.⁶ Emiratis often trace the success of women in professional arenas, including business, media, health care, and elsewhere, to the strong influence of the still-living Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak al-Ketbi, the influential third wife of the first UAE president, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan.

With regard to the country's parliamentary-style advisory body, the Federal National Council (FNC), 20 percent of its forty members are currently female. The UAE also holds the distinction of having the region's first female head of parliament, Amal al-Qubaisi, who was unanimously elected FNC speaker and president in November 2015. Some say that the government's appointment, rather than popular election, of all but one of the female FNC members indicates the government is ahead of its population with regard to supporting women in leadership positions.

More broadly speaking, the FNC itself is a story of limited reform. To be sure, the UAE leadership has taken important steps to expand its representative character. Originally a fully appointed body established in 1972, the FNC is now partly indirectly elected. Electoral colleges chosen by the rulers of the UAE's seven emirates have elected half of the FNC's membership during the past three elections. In 2006, 6,595 Emiratis were given the

opportunity to vote for FNC representatives; in 2011, the college was expanded to include 129,274 Emiratis; and in 2015, 224,281 citizens were permitted to vote. The last figure probably represents about one-third of Emiratis of national voting age (25 years).⁷

Outlining his vision for the new voting practices in 2005, UAE president Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahyan stated that the institution of partial, indirect elections was meant to “promote a culture of political participation among citizens and create a mood of democracy.”⁸ The expanded electoral college, however, has not been accompanied by broader FNC authorities. Nurturing the development of partners in decisionmaking has not appeared to be the leadership’s driving interest in FNC reform. Instead, the electoral changes may be understood as part of a national consolidation effort, wherein popular representatives of the seven disparate emirates are brought together under a single federal umbrella.⁹ All FNC candidates run on individual platforms because political organization is prohibited. During sessions in 2015–16, the FNC discussed family law, health care and public safety, company layoffs, and government pensions, among other issues.

In January 2016, the northern emirate of Sharjah became the first of the seven to hold elections for some members of its Executive Council.¹⁰ Half of its forty-two seats were offered up for direct election, and voter participation was high, including 67 percent of registered voters, 42 percent of whom were women.¹¹ Like the FNC, the role of Sharjah’s Executive Council remains advisory.

INDEPENDENT VOICES

Today, a small number of Emiratis address basic reform issues publicly in ways that are sometimes tolerated by the UAE government. One is Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, a retired political science professor from United Arab Emirates University. Yet Abdulla is far from retired; now a nonresident fellow at London and Washington research institutes, he participates in multiple international conferences each year, where he discusses Gulf political trends. At home, Abdulla has supported fully enfranchising Emirati citizens and granting legislative powers

to the FNC. He also has advocated for a stronger civil society, including a freer press and expanded civil rights.

Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, who is well known for his social media commentary on Arab affairs and has a Twitter following of approximately 465,000 as of October 2016, is another leading figure in this realm. Al Qassemi, a member of Sharjah’s ruling family, has advocated for a more pluralistic vision of Emirati society as well as broader civic engagement. He stirred heated debate among Emiratis in September 2013 when he wrote that the UAE should consider developing a clear path toward citizenship for long-term foreign residents contributing to society.¹² In July 2016, Al Qassemi published a complimentary article that featured the stories of Arab immigrants who had been naturalized by the UAE.¹³

Voices like those of Al Qassemi and Abdulla are rare in the UAE. Since the region’s first Arab Spring protests and the rise in influence of antiestablishment Islamist groups, the already-limited number of independent voices in the country has retreated.¹⁴ Today is a period of quiet for activists and reformers.¹⁵ The reasons are understandable: intellectuals and others wishing to engage publicly on issues of reform and rights encounter a climate of severe intolerance. This climate is shaped not only by government policies but also by a society that is generally antagonistic toward the idea of reform that is understood to put national stability at risk.

In fact, the sense of threat to the UAE—from some Islamists at home, and from destructive regional forces—has created a formidable “rally around the flag” effect and “fortress mentality” in the UAE.¹⁶ There is widespread rejection on Emirati social media sites, for example, of calls for reform. Such calls are not infrequently labeled as treason. As reported by numerous activists, an environment of civil harassment prevails.

Abdulla has described how even the label “liberal” is rejected when it comes to identifying one’s personal political positions and activities. He argues that, in 2016, “no one in his right mind would describe himself as a liberal. Society thinks liberals are dangerous, revolutionary. Discussion of participation, democracy, and reform has all but disappeared.”¹⁷ His observations echo the sentiments of other Emiratis.

Al Qassemi, for his part, maintains that it would indeed be worthwhile for the UAE to “cultivate liberal voices and accentuate existing ones, so that discourse is not dominated by ‘house’ Islamists [Islamists sponsored by the government] and ultranationalists who are not fit for the twenty-first century.”¹⁸ Indeed, there may come a time when state and society will view these two strengthened constituencies that currently dominate the discourse as not serving the country’s interests.

More broadly, some also point to the UAE’s “quietist” tradition to help explain the limited nature of independent political activity. Unlike Kuwait, Bahrain, and some areas of Saudi Arabia, the UAE does not have a history of robust formal political life. Traditionally, the *majlis*, a special area for hosting guests inside or near the home, has represented the focal point for engagement by the public with the leaders of the country as well as each other.

This practice continues today, sometimes in more modern and grandiose forms. Sheikh Muhammad bin Zayed bin Nahyan, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi and de facto president of the UAE, hosts at his *majlis* Emiratis as well as international leaders, innovators, and intellectuals to inform his leadership.¹⁹ Sheikh Muhammad bin Rashid al-Makhtoum, the UAE’s vice president, prime minister, and the ruler of Dubai, has a “smart *majlis*,” whereby citizens and others can submit proposals online for building the future of Dubai.²⁰ Other rulers and senior family members hold a more traditional open *majlis*, where various issues are discussed and debated. The principle of consultation is a driving force behind political leadership in the UAE.

Today, Emirati civil society remains dominated by government-approved and supervised charities and environmental groups. But, over time, Emiratis have shown more extensive interest in public civic and political activity. Early signs of collective political consciousness came in the form of petitions to the rulers focused on urban dilemmas, such as transportation and housing, as well as demands for more equitable resource distribution across the seven emirates.²¹ The announcement of partial elections for the FNC in 2005, as well as a petition asking for additional FNC reform in 2011, generated excite-

ment among activists, academics, former officials, writers, and the local media. More recently, Emiratis have used social media as a political vehicle, including to influence government plans to reduce subsidies to widows and divorcees. According to activist Ahmed Mansoor,

History shows that Emiratis, like most people, do want change, and have asked for it in many different forms and at many different intervals throughout the history of the UAE, and the time will come again when people will gain their free will and ask for real political reform and political participation.²²

REDLINES

The most important factor contributing to limited reform activism may be concern about where exactly the state’s redlines are, and personal and family security. The government has acted severely against those perceived to have crossed a line with critical commentary or politically oriented activity. While punitive action has especially targeted Islamists, including associates and supporters of the Emirati organization affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Islah, it has not been limited to them.

Although such tactics had been used prior to 2011, the years immediately following the first Arab Spring protests saw a more aggressive policy evolve toward what was deemed unacceptable behavior. To be sure, the UAE—along with Qatar—was home to the “mildest” Arab Spring experience in the Gulf. In March 2011, 133 prominent individuals sent a gently worded petition to UAE president Sheikh Khalifa and the Federal Supreme Council, the country’s top decisionmaking body, consisting of the rulers of each of the seven emirates. The petition asked that FNC voting rights be extended to all adult citizens and that the FNC be granted legislative and oversight powers.²³

The petition drive originally was led by some among the liberal current, but Islamist signatures dominated due to Islamists’ numerical and organizational strength. Because of an anticipated negative government reaction to a document signed by many Islamists, some of the

petition drive's liberal leaders had gone so far as to ask their Islamist friends not to sign.²⁴

What followed was a series of punitive measures targeting activists and others. This coincided with a period of wider uncertainty across the region as opposition protests toppled governments in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. With political Islamists gaining power and influence across the Arab world, UAE security measures especially focused on al-Islah, then the most organized group in the country. In early 2011, the UAE disbanded al-Islah's board and the Islah-dominated jurist and teacher associations. Seven al-Islah associates were stripped of their citizenship later that year. Ultimately, over the subsequent years, the UAE pursued arrests and prosecutions of around one hundred al-Islah associates and their supporters, especially after the group was blamed for receiving support from external Brotherhood elements to undermine the government. In fact, these measures represented an escalation from previous campaigns that had sought to weed out al-Islah influence in Emirati schools and other government institutions.

At the same time, Abu Dhabi worked to silence several non-Islamists, including an influential member of the liberal current who had signed the petition. Ahmed Mansoor had been running an online discussion forum on democracy and rights issues, and had commented critically about the leadership in ways that ultimately crossed a redline. Along with four others, Mansoor was imprisoned for several months in 2011. He also was terminated from his job, deprived of his passport, thus prohibiting him from travel, and dealt other severe consequences. Mansoor continues to engage in rights awareness work primarily on social media under the shadow of state penalties. There are strong indications that the state is monitoring his activities closely.²⁵

In the end, from the government's perspective, the petition may have represented potential seeds of collective opposition that included both the Islamists as well as members of less organized political trends.²⁶ However, the fact that Mansoor is no longer imprisoned, as contrasted with so many al-Islah associates, contributes to the argument often touted by Emiratis that the government's policy toward liberals and in-

dependents differs from that toward political Islamists, despite overlaps.

Today, political commentary or activity from almost any quarter that veers from state policy may not be tolerated and can lead to punitive action. This includes not only independent, Islamist, and other commentators at home but also foreign individuals and institutions linked to reform-oriented discourse about the UAE. A number of such foreign organizations with offices in the UAE were shuttered in 2012, including two democracy-promoting institutions, Germany's Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the U.S.-funded National Democratic Institute, in March of that year; the Abu Dhabi hub of the U.S. polling and research firm Gallup, also in March; and in December, the RAND Corporation's Abu Dhabi office. Foreign individuals have been requested to leave the country, or denied entry, for apparently similar reasons.²⁷ In 2016, Britain went so far as to advise its citizens traveling to the UAE not to post material online "appearing to abuse/ridicule the country or its authorities" because such activity is considered a crime punishable under UAE law and there are "cases of individuals being detained, prosecuted and/or convicted for posting this type of material."²⁸

LOCAL PERCEPTIONS

Against this backdrop of severe restrictions is what is fundamentally understood as general public support for the government, which can be confusing for non-UAE audiences. In the UAE, government advocates and non-Islamist critics agree that Emirati citizens broadly support the direction in which their national leadership is taking the country. This includes support for state security actions against al-Islah. Many Emiratis speak disdainfully about an Islamist project, and believe that political Islamists represent a security threat to their country and the Arab world more widely.

Support for the government is especially prevalent among liberally minded citizens. The wealthiest emirates of Abu Dhabi and Dubai have built substantial backing among this constituency by aggressively enacting liberal economic and some social reforms, according

to the Emirati analyst Muath al-Wari.²⁹ Furthermore, while there is a growing pluralistically inclined middle class of businesspeople, media professionals, intellectuals, and others who in some countries might push for more-liberal political and social reform, many among these groups perceive that they benefit from the current situation. This includes views of the leadership as a bulwark against political Islamists, who the liberal-oriented constituencies believe would bring about regressive economic and social policies.

In this regard, some Emiratis look at the experience of Kuwait, with its more robust parliamentary system, as an utterly unappealing example of political inclusiveness. Here, the perception is that openness has transformed a country that once was a bastion of liberal thinking into one of increasing Islamist political domination, economic stagnation, and social conservatism. There are other reasons for the growing strength of Kuwait's Islamists, but this is a prevalent view in the UAE.

There are also powerful elite interests built into the existing system in the UAE. The most influential segments of the citizen population have vested interests in the current way of doing business. This includes leading businesspeople and tribes that benefit from special relationships with government officials.³⁰

Finally, there is the issue of political apathy. This is prevalent especially in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, which together are home to approximately two-thirds of Emirati nationals. A common narrative one hears from both officials and citizens is how far the country has come in such a short time. Over about a half-century, the geographic area that is now the UAE has grown from poor fishing villages, small desert oases, and pastures roamed by Bedouin to one of the wealthiest states in the world, with renowned modern metropolises. Health care, education, and infrastructure all have experienced rapid and transformative growth. An important aspect of this narrative is that while oil money has fueled this growth, UAE leaders have driven it.

It should be noted that such sentiments are also echoed by middle- and upper-class foreign residents in the country. Frequently, such residents express a genuine sense of gratitude for the opportunity to live and work in

the Emirates. Some Palestinians, for example, compare their lives favorably to those Palestinians and their children who have been naturalized in Jordan. The UAE has provided temporary residence visas to more Syrians as a percentage of its own citizen population than any other Gulf state, according to official counts—even though the impermanent nature of their legal stay in the UAE contributes to a desire to move elsewhere.³¹ And in September 2016, the UAE became the first Gulf country to declare its intention to accept Syrian refugees (15,000 over the next five years).

U.S. POLICY

The UAE has grown to become one of the strongest U.S. partners in the Middle East on a host of regional security, counterterrorism, and other issues. The complex and sometimes conflicting narratives of reform in the UAE add a layer of complication to the enduring American desire to balance such strategic interests with political and other values. Furthermore, any encouragement by the United States regarding sensitive domestic policies in the Gulf is especially difficult when, as is often the case, America's Gulf partners understand them to run counter to their own security interests. As former deputy assistant secretary for the Arabian Peninsula Stephen Seche observed during this summer's U.S. presidential election campaign season, "How we achieve the proper balance between our values and our interests... is a question as complex as it is unwelcome, for this president and whoever succeeds him."³²

The UAE's social reform projects certainly should be welcomed by the United States as part of a genuine recognition of the UAE's strengths. Of course, this should not be done with eyes closed to the illiberal policies also pursued by Washington's strategic partner. On rights and other issues, a close working relationship at the leadership level is one dynamic understood to enhance U.S. influence in the Gulf. A driving force behind the UAE's institution of elections for some FNC members in the mid-2000s was President George W. Bush's "Freedom Agenda," which encouraged foreign governments to give a greater voice to their people. U.S. influence

was strengthened by the close relationship shared by the president and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice with Emirati and other Gulf leaders.

A particular tool that Emirati and other Gulf citizens cite as effective in influencing their governments on rights issues is official, high-level public and private expression of concern about particular cases. There are strong indications that such an approach occasionally encourages Gulf governments to change course regarding certain

measures against critics and others. This kind of action should be pursued on a case-by-case basis.

When it comes to implementing more profound systemic changes, the United States will need to wait for its Gulf partners to believe it is in their interest to make adjustments. Some Emiratis maintain that more open political discourse might be tolerated when the region's Islamist extremist threat has subsided.

NOTES

1. John F. Helliwell, Richard Layard, and Jeffrey Sachs, eds., *World Happiness Report 2015* (New York: Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2015), <http://worldhappiness.report/ed/2015/>.
2. Jure Snoj, "UAE's Population—by Nationality," *BQ*, April 12, 2015, <http://www.bq-magazine.com/economy/socioeconomics/2015/04/uae-population-by-nationality>.
3. *Ibid.*
4. "UAE Cabinet Approves National Tolerance Program," *National*, June 8, 2016, <http://www.thenational.ae/uae/uae-cabinet-approves-national-tolerance-programme>.
5. Kristin Smith Diwan, ed., *Gulf Societies in Transition: National Identity and National Projects in the Arab Gulf States*, Workshop Report 3 (Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, 2016), http://www.agsiw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/National-Identity_Web-1.pdf.
6. Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, "Women in the UAE," <http://www.uae-embassy.org/about-uae/women-uae>.
7. The Emirati citizen population is about 1.1 million, and some 34 percent of Emirati citizens are under the age of twenty-five; see Oxford Business Group, "Meeting the Needs of a Growing Youth Population in the Middle East," <https://www.oxfordbusinessgroup.com/analysis/dividend-or-liability-meeting-needs-region%E2%80%99s-growing-youth-population-0>.
8. Emirates News Agency (WAM), "FNC Is on Course to Have a Greater Say in Functioning of Government," June 23, 2013, available at <http://arabnewsnetwork.asia/fnc-is-on-course-to-have-a-greater-say-in-functioning-of-government/>.
9. Kristin Smith Diwan, "UAE Elections: A Managed Opening That Unites the Federation," Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, October 21, 2015, <http://www.agsiw.org/uae-elections-a-managed-opening-that-unites-the-federation/>.
10. Afkar Abdullah, "Huge Turnout for Sharjah Consultative Council Elections," *Khaleej Times*, January 29, 2016, <http://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/government/huge-turnout-for-sharjah-consultative-council-elections>.
11. Afkar Abdullah, "Impressive 67% Voter Turnout for Sharjah Polls," *Khaleej Times*, February 1, 2016, <http://www.khaleej-times.com/nation/sharjah/impressive-67-voter-turnout-for-sharjah-polls>; Thaer Zriqat, "Woman Is First Past the Post in Sharjah's Historic Election," *Khaleej Times*, January 31, 2016, <http://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/woman-is-first-past-the-post-in-sharjahs-historic-election>; Dana Moukhallati, "Sharjah Voters Honoured to Take Part in UAE's First Local Election," *National*, January 28, 2016, <http://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/sharjah-voters-honoured-to-take-part-in-uaes-first-local-election>.
12. Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, "Give Expats an Opportunity to Earn UAE Citizenship," *Gulf News*, September 22, 2013, <http://gulfnews.com/opinion/thinkers/give-expats-an-opportunity-to-earn-uae-citizenship-1.1234167>.
13. Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, "United Arab Emigrants: Stories of Pioneer Arab Migrants Who Became Emirati," Medium, July 27, 2016, <https://medium.com/@SultanAlQassemi/united-arab-emigrants-92314e7f3eca#.koy2j8xu4>.
14. Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, interview by author, July 2016.

15. Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, interview by author, July 2016.
16. Muath al-Wari, interview by author, July 2016.
17. Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, interview by author, July 2016.
18. Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, interview by author, July 2016.
19. Crown Prince Court, "Majlis Mohamed bin Zayed," <https://www.cpc.gov.ae/en-us/thecrownprince/Majlis/Pages/default.aspx>.
20. See Mohamed Bin Rashid Smart Majlis, <http://www.mbrmajlis.ae/en#home>.
21. Diwan, ed., *Gulf Societies in Transition*, http://www.agsiw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/National-Identity_Web-1.pdf.
22. Ahmed Mansoor, interview by author, August 2016.
23. "Emiratis Asking UAE Rulers to Reform the Parliamentary System" (in Arabic), iPetitions, <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/uaepetition71/>.
24. Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, interview by author, July 2016.
25. For example, see Raphael Satter, Jon Gambrell, and Daniella Cheslow, "Activist Discovers iPhone Spyware, Sparking Security Update," Associated Press, August 25, 2016, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/8d0f8f49d3384d5fa806ce8e4d7b5bd8/apple-boosts-iphone-security-after-mideast-spyware>.
26. Abdulkhaleq Abdullah [spelled "Abdulla" elsewhere], *Repercussions of the Arab Spring on GCC States* (Doha: Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies, 2012), <http://english.dohainstitute.org/file/get/5b1fafdb-19d4-4946-a18e-f3115c6fd0aa.pdf>.
27. For example, see Kyle Sinclair, "Why London Academic Was Banned from UAE," *National*, February 25, 2013, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/politics/why-london-academic-was-banned-from-uae>; Libby A. Nelson, "Kicked Out of the UAE," *Inside Higher Ed*, August 31, 2012, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/08/31/american-professor-suddenly-fired-zayed-university>; and Stephanie Saul, "NYU Professor Is Barred by United Arab Emirates," *New York Times*, March 16, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/17/nyregion/nyu-professor-is-barred-from-the-united-arab-emirates.html?_r=0.
28. Gov.UK, "Foreign Travel Advice: United Arab Emirates," September 26, 2016, <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/united-arab-emirates/local-laws-and-customs>.
29. Muath al-Wari, interview by author, July 2016.
30. Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, "Reform in Arab Gulf Regimes Is Unattainable—for Now," *Guardian*, January 26, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jan/26/reform-arab-gulf-regimes-unattainable>.
31. See Lori Plotkin Boghardt, "Toward a Realistic Assessment of the Gulf States Taking in Syrians," PolicyWatch 2493 (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 30, 2015), <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/toward-a-realistic-assessment-of-the-gulf-states-taking-in-syrians>.
32. Stephen Seche, "Tiny Bahrain Poses Big Headache for U.S.," *Boston Globe*, June 30, 2016, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2016/06/30/how-condones-bahrain-bad-behavior/L92ihKmPMC5PvCmj6tedaJ/story.html>.

Lori Plotkin Boghardt is the Barbara Kay Family Fellow at The Washington Institute, where she specializes in Arab Gulf politics and U.S.-Gulf relations. She has worked as a Middle East analyst for the CIA and Science Applications International, a research fellow at the Brookings Institution, an analyst at RAND, and a Soref Fellow at the Institute. The author of Jordan-Israel Peace: Taking Stock, 1994-1997; and Kuwait Amid War, Peace and Revolution: 1979-1991 and New Challenges (Palgrave Macmillan), she holds a PhD in international relations from the University of Oxford.

