



Beyond Islamists & Autocrats

KUWAIT: Democracy Trumps Reform

■ DAVID POLLOCK

The July 2017 headlines about a severe internal Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) crisis, pitting Qatar against Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain, note that the role of mediator falls to a fellow GCC member: Kuwait. This role befits Kuwait's status as a sort of middle ground, relative to its neighbors, in terms of several disputed issues: sectarian demographics, relations with Iran, and ties to Islamist parties or fundamentalist groups. In at least one respect, however, Kuwait stands out from many other Arab states today: it has a comparatively functional, stable, and peaceful system of parliamentary elections, including successful opposition candidates, a media environment freer than most, and an active network of relatively independent civil society organizations. So, on the face of it, Kuwait would seem to be a prime candidate for further progress toward something approaching Arab democracy, neither absolutely autocratic nor totally theocratic.

Yet, six years after the Arab Spring, Kuwait continues to present a series of political paradoxes. Almost a constitutional monarchy, but with a royal family that rules as well as reigns, it has one of the most active and em-

powered democratically elected parliaments of any Arab state. Nevertheless, that parliament more often blocks rather than bolsters real political, social, or economic reform, and restricts rather than reinforces the country's struggling civil society beyond the chamber's walls. For the past fifteen years and more, the parliament has been dissolved by the emir, Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah, at irregular but frequent intervals amid increasingly raucous and rancorous public controversy. Moreover, sectarian tensions between the Sunni majority and the large Shia minority have risen steadily during the same period. Still, Kuwait remains largely stable, and when compared to so many other Arab societies, this little country remains a model of "consensual sects."¹

All in all, politics in Kuwait represent more of a social safety valve than a vehicle for major policy changes, whether of the progressive or regressive sort. Autocrats, Islamists, and others jockey seriously and continually for power and privilege, but hardly anyone ever really wins or loses completely.² The would-be reformers, as explained in the following sections, are an exceedingly diverse lot, so they are unlikely ever to take over. Still, they effectively prevent either the autocrats or the Islamists from entirely controlling public life. In this sense, Kuwait's paradoxical and unusual situation can be considered something of a success story.

The Kuwaiti Context

Ten years ago, the author published a monograph about Kuwaiti politics that raised these introductory questions, all but one of which are still relevant today:

- What is the outlook for stability or reform in this evolving yet still essentially traditional society and governing system?
- How will it deal with possible democratic, demographic, and Islamist challenges?
- Will its fabulous oil wealth be more of a lubricant for, or a solvent of, the social sinews that have held it together?
- What is the likely spillover effect on Kuwait of the continuing crisis in Iraq, and of the emergence of Iran as a major contender for regional influence?

The sole question that is no longer relevant is the one about Kuwait's "fabulous oil wealth." Oil prices, on which the whole economy critically depends, skyrocketed to record highs throughout much of the last decade, only to plummet to historic lows in the past three years. The calamitous drop in oil prices, which shows no sign of a major reversal, means that the country is running a budget deficit for the first time in fifteen years. Kuwait is now compelled to borrow money, slash spending, and contemplate cutting consumer subsidies and even imposing a corporate income tax. Those prospects were primarily responsible for the emir's decision in late 2016 to prorogue the parliament and force a new election, despite the risks of losing his solid loyalist majority in that body and reviving large segments of the opposition. The question today is how this relative austerity or at least economic contraction will affect Kuwaiti politics, civil society, and public life generally over the coming years.

Before answering that question, another, logically preceding one must first be addressed: what else has changed in and around Kuwait over the past decade? The answer is everything and nothing. Just beyond the country's borders, the region has undergone incredible turmoil: the Arab Spring and its disastrous turn to civil wars, the startling spread of Iranian influence and murderous Sunni-Shia conflicts, the rise and fall of the Is-

lamic State, and more. Inside Kuwait, over the same ten years, numerous parliaments and elections have come and gone; protest demonstrations and unrest erupted on an unusually sustained basis in 2011–13, among both youth and tribal elements of society; and the country's overall population of both citizens and expatriates increased by nearly 50 percent.

One astute young Kuwaiti political analyst, tellingly writing under a pseudonym to avoid prosecution, put it this way in late 2016:

Since 2006, corruption and incompetence have reached unparalleled lows in Kuwait, which stirred an opposition movement among all shades of society. The movement reached unprecedented levels in 2011, removing a sitting prime minister and presumptive heir to the throne, and along the way revived the all but dead nationalists and communists, galvanized the popular yet unorganized socialists, and reenergized the thriving Islamists. The movement has since receded, but with the increased government corruption and incompetence, it is bound to rekindle and gain momentum.³

Public, very concrete allegations of rampant corruption are common in Kuwait. One candidate for parliament in 2016, Abdullah al-Trejji, listed the Dow Chemical Company, the distribution of agricultural properties, and the Olympic Council of Asia as cases in point.⁴

Such charges ring more loudly lately because oil wealth is no longer the panacea for widespread corruption and favoritism in high places. On the contrary, the steep decline in oil prices and revenues is forcing Kuwait's government to contemplate painful cuts to the comfortable welfare-state cushion across the board. In this environment, popular pressures for good governance and even political transformation take on newly compelling urgency and resonance.

But the government's reaction so far has largely been to impose even tighter restrictions on freedom of expression and civil society—beyond those first instituted in response to the Arab Spring—rather than address the root problem.

Nevertheless, the November 27, 2016, parliamentary election suggested that Kuwait's main political and so-

cial issues, procedures, personalities, and overall trends and characteristics have hardly changed at all. As a subsequent section will explore in detail, various veteran opposition figures did score some electoral successes, but more than half the new deputies remain government loyalists. The country seems permanently stuck being among the most democratic but least dynamic of the entire region. Raucous political debate, yes; revolution or even real reform, probably not.

To be sure, a different way of expressing that paradox would be to claim that Kuwait has remained among the most stable states in the region, even in the face of looming external and internal challenges. Moreover, this alternative view probably helps explain a lot about Kuwait's predicament.

Kuwaiti Public Opinion

Many, maybe most Kuwaitis, even if they are dissatisfied or disappointed with the status quo, nevertheless prefer it to the uncertainty of radical change—and certainly to the chaos and bloodshed they see all around them in the wider region. A rare political poll, supervised by the author in late 2015, showed that Kuwaitis overwhelmingly reject the most extreme version of Islamism, namely the Islamic State (or Daesh, in colloquial Arabic). A mere 3 percent rated the group at all favorably. Moreover, asked to pick their first and second priorities for Kuwait's foreign policy, respondents chose "the conflict against Daesh" over any of the five other choices offered.

The same survey, however, offers some insight into other axes of public opinion polarization. One axis is the sectarian divide. Around a quarter of Kuwaitis voice a positive view of both Iran and Hezbollah—roughly reflecting the proportion of Shia among Kuwait's citizens, and a higher percentage than in all other Arab publics polled, except plurality-Shia Lebanon. In sharp contrast, the majority of Kuwaitis say they have either a "fairly negative" (33 percent) or "very negative" (41 percent) attitude toward the government of Iran. And Iran's ally Hezbollah gets even more negative (78 percent) ratings.⁵

Given these views, and the disparity among different segments of the public, it should come as no surprise that many Kuwaitis are concerned both about Iran and about

sectarian strife. From the list of six possible foreign policy priorities, "the conflict between Iran and Arab countries" and "the conflict between sects or movements of Islam" were tied for first place—each with about 20 percent of the total. In addition, just 15 percent of the overall public expected any improvement in Kuwait's own relations with Iran over the next few years.

On internal political issues, polling data are exceedingly sparse, and one must settle for educated estimates. One young Kuwaiti scholar provides this perspective:

Roughly only a tenth of Kuwaitis desire true democracy with a constitutional monarchy preserving the [symbolic] status of the ruling family. Another tenth prefer to live under absolute monarchy, while the remaining majority seek varying degrees of reform to the current system that would more or less preserve the status quo. This may be attributed to affluence, fear of change, and a lack of positive examples of democracies in the region.⁶

This seems a plausible assessment, given the hard data about widely perceived internal and external threats. In such circumstances, caution is likely to be the preferred option for most people. As a result, when considering the prospects for reform in Kuwait, expectations of popular support for drastic changes should be adjusted downward. In this respect, too, little has changed since the author wrote ten years ago that many Kuwaitis seem grudgingly content with "their own middling mixture of oil-based affluence and traditional social surroundings, somewhere in between the atmosphere of Dhahran and Dubai."⁷ More appealing than revolution or even dramatic reform to most Kuwaitis, and therefore more plausible, is a series of modest steps toward meeting certain popular demands. With that backdrop in mind, the next sections explore some of the most salient actors and avenues for gradual progress in that direction.

Islamists vs. Reformists

Activist advocates of change in Kuwait, a small but significant group, appear roughly evenly divided between Islamists and others, including an incongruous mixture of nationalist, populist, liberal, and tribal elements.

The Islamists are themselves internally divided between Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and Salafi types, with the latter further split into pro- and anti-government factions.

Kuwaiti civil society is likewise divided. Some informal liberal or protest organizations have sprouted in the last few years, such as the anti-corruption National Committee to Monitor Violations, the student-oriented “Orange” and “Fifth Fence” groupings—which backed demonstrations and opposition parliamentary candidates—women’s support groups, and the Popular Action Movement (“Hashd”), which initially demanded serious political concessions but then split apart under government pressure. Such groups, however, are outnumbered and outspent by the recognized, mostly Islamic formal charity organizations. A partial roster tells the story: the Social Reform Society, Islamic Heritage Restoration Society, Direct Aid, Sheikh Abdullah al-Nouri Charitable Society, Prisoners’ Solidarity Society, Sunna Sciences Society, Kuwait Relief, al-Najat Charitable Society, Good Tidings Charity, and Patients Helping Fund Society.

All such social action groups are eclipsed by the panoply of more traditional Kuwaiti social gathering salons, whether of the Sunni (*diwaniya*) or Shia (*husseiniyah*) persuasion. These highly informal yet influential forums are the real arenas where much of Kuwait’s public policy is debated and initiated. Overall, however, they are fragmented by their individual focus on clan, local, or—at most—community interests and issues. They rarely coalesce in any practical way. In part as a result of these divisions, no major policy departures, either reactionary/religious or relatively progressive, from either overtly political or civil society actors, appear on the near-term horizon.

For the medium term, the MB is probably the strongest of the lot. While no party is formally recognized, in the words of one local observer, it is

the only organized political party with a substantial following. Other parties either lack organization and structure or have only a small number of subscribers... Readiness on the ground puts the Brotherhood at an advantage to capitalize on sociopolitical change when it happens. Perhaps, similar to North Africa, Islamists are destined to be the gate through which democracy makes its debut in the Gulf.⁸

Indeed, at least one outside expert makes a powerful argument that Kuwaiti Islamists are already becoming less Islamist and more reformist. Courtney Freer writes that lately the movement “has emphasized compromise and gradualist reform over radical domestic political transformation...put aside their strict social agendas and worked more closely with non-Islamist opposition to advance common democratic aims.”⁹ Significantly, she sees this evolution as characteristic of several different strands of Kuwaiti Islamist organizations, from the MB-affiliated Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM) to the Salafists to some smaller groupings.

So far, however, this pragmatic tendency exists mostly in the realm of rhetoric, not action. Even so, it reflects not so much ideological evolution as practical necessity in response to the severe constraints imposed by the country’s competing political and social forces. And if the Islamists in Kuwait are patient, it is because alongside the country’s active and comparatively open political and commercial life, Kuwaiti society is already traditionally Islamic in many ways: no alcohol, no public eating during Ramadan, heavy doses of traditional Islamic education, sharia-based family law, and much more.

The next test will come in Kuwait’s incoming parliament, where Islamist and other opposition or independent members working in tandem could conceivably muster a majority for significant reforms—especially in the economic but possibly also in the social or even political arena. If that happens, and if the royal family and its acolytes acquiesce, then perhaps the entire premise of this essay series will require refinement. At least in Kuwait, it will no longer be a matter of reform “beyond autocrats or Islamists” but rather of reformists, autocrats, and Islamists all engaged in pursuing incremental changes. Whether those changes will be truly significant or merely marginal lowest-common-denominator ones is necessarily an open question. So far, however, the historical pattern of marginal changes appears to be repeating itself.

So Who Are the Real Reformers?

In the longer term, there is some prospect that non-Islamist reformers might take the lead. The Kuwaiti observer cited before notes that

The last wave of political protests [was] neither led by nor incited by the Islamists...And the majority of the protesters...were of tribal background...This will grant emerging liberal movements greater access to larger numbers of tribal youths. In addition, low oil prices will rid the Gulf's populations of the curse of affluence, which has paralyzed them for decades...Against this backdrop, it is still possible for future parties leading the sociopolitical change to be liberal and secular...The demonization of the Brotherhood and the outdatedness of Salafists diminish the Islamists' chances of leading the political future of the country in the long run.¹⁰

In this long-shot scenario, Kuwait could eventually evolve into something more like a European constitutional monarchy, where the royals reign but do not rule. Real power would probably be exercised through the democratic forms already in place, perhaps with new legal guarantees for minority rights and individual freedoms. Islam would become more of a private choice than a set of public policies. And this transformation would be accomplished peacefully, if not by acclamation or consensus.

If this seems utopian today, recall the surprises of the past six years. While it is true that many parts of the region are even now experiencing a wave of reaction or counterrevolution against the excesses and unbearable strains of those changes, the unprecedented, protracted economic squeeze caused by the downturn in energy prices is a wild card that makes even remote possibilities, such as the one outlined above, worthy of contemplation.

For now, Kuwait's most authentic reformers are keeping a relatively low profile while they assess the limits of official tolerance. Among them are academics like Shafeeq Ghabra, writers like Saud Alsanousi, journalists like Muna al-Fuzai, young entrepreneurs like Sulaiman bin Jassem, NGO leaders like Khaled al-Fadala, and youth movement organizers like Tariq al-Mutairi of the Civil Democratic Movement (Arabic acronym: *Hadam*). Add to this list parliamentarians or ex-parliamentarians like Musallam al-Barrak, Marzouq al-Ghanim, and the lone woman in the newly elected chamber, Safa al-

Hashem. These are all impressive and often courageous individuals. What remains highly uncertain is whether they can coalesce into a more coherent trend, attract greater popular support, and ultimately succeed in advancing a serious reform agenda.

Reform and the Royal Family

A key factor here, yet one often overlooked in discussions of this kind, is how the government will react to pressure for change. The emir and his entourage have more power than the elected parliament or any realistic extralegal challengers. But the relationship between Kuwait's ruling Sabah family and the country's civil society and reformist movements is a complex one.

On the one hand, intrafamilial splits over succession, particularly between two powerful nephews of the aging current emir, play out in mutual public allegations of corruption, which energize the opposition and prompt protests calling for reform. On the other hand, the Sabahs are past masters at selectively either suppressing or coopting potential opposition elements, whether sectarian, student, tribal, populist, or other, thereby effectively short-circuiting any movement for major political or social change. The suppression aspect is epitomized by the jailing last year, even after many protests and appeals, of their most outspoken parliamentary critic, Musallam al-Barrak, and by increasingly draconian restrictions on media and social media. The cooptation is most evident in the quiet deals made recently with various tribes, factions, or civil society groups to compromise on some of their concerns in exchange for political quiescence.¹¹

In this delicate political dance, the royals almost surely enjoy the support of the "silent majority" of their subjects, wary as they must be of violent instability, Islamic extremism, and sectarian strife, or just intolerable uncertainty. This has especially been the case in the past four years, as civil wars worsened in other Arab states—while Islamic State terror spread even into Kuwait itself with the worst terrorist incident in recent memory: the bombing of a Shia mosque, at the cost of dozens of victims, in June 2015.

But there is now a new factor at work in this complex equation—long-term austerity compelled by last-

ing low oil prices. The Kuwaiti government currently has no choice but to borrow money, slash spending, or do both—potentially leading to new outcries for some kind of change, contradictory and controversial as those calls might be. It is still far from clear whether the royal family will respond to this dilemma with more repression or more reform. The most plausible scenario, as in the past, is some ad hoc, incremental, and most likely incoherent combination of the two.

In this situation, the stage is set for Kuwaiti reformers to press cautiously forward on a number of fronts. One obvious, albeit difficult, first step would be to push for a reversal of the tougher limits on freedom of expression and association imposed in the past few years. Fresh anti-corruption measures in return for acceptance of other economic reforms, including some needed belt-tightening initiatives, could be another step. In subsequent phases, more fundamental reforms could be considered, from the institution of a true parliamentary system requiring an affirmative vote of confidence on cabinet appointments to curtailment of the emir's unrestricted right to dismiss the parliament altogether.

Kuwait's November 2016 Election

On November 26, 2016, Kuwait held a snap parliamentary election for the seventh time in just the past decade. The result in all cases has been political stability, but bordering on stagnation. True to form, Kuwait's latest election, while seemingly boosting the country's opposition forces, is likely to prolong this trend. The new postelection cabinet showcases some personnel and portfolio shifts but holds little promise of big policy departures. This exercise in limited Arab democracy provides some intriguing lessons about the larger themes from the preceding discussion.

The previous parliament was dismissed by the emir, as allowed by Kuwait's constitution, after deputies insisted on their right to grill cabinet ministers regarding controversial policy proposals. In this case, those proposals were twofold: first, a cut in petroleum subsidies and related forms of official largesse to cope with the drastic decline in oil prices, on which the government and the whole economy largely depend; and second, a

further tightening of the ongoing security crackdown on free expression and association—including an unprecedented requirement that every resident of the country submit a DNA sample for purposes of identification and possible investigation.

Both proposals were widely and understandably unpopular. But rather than confront and decide on the issues directly, Kuwaiti officialdom typically took a "time-out" by calling an early election. Thus, the first lesson of this episode, really a reminder of previous ones: this parliamentary electoral maneuver usually works to defuse a political crisis but at the price of postponing any serious policy departures, often indefinitely.

Second, on a related note, this time the self-styled opposition dropped its boycott of the two previous elections and was therefore able to score a dramatic comeback at the polls. These longstanding critics of Kuwaiti cabinets and government policies, as previously noted, are a mixed bunch, the more so because formal political parties are not allowed. Some are Sunni fundamentalists of the MB type, known locally as the ICM; others are more traditional Salafists; and still others emphasize populist, nationalist, or occasionally even liberal positions.

In this iteration, ICM candidates garnered around four of the fifty seats in parliament, plus an equal number of sympathizers. Salafists did approximately the same. An additional eight or so seats went to candidates vaguely identified with other currents in the "loyal opposition," mainly of the populist or nationalist sort. Altogether, about half the chamber will now be considered not pro-government. This stands in sharp contrast to the previous two parliaments, for which the opposition boycott guaranteed the government a solid majority of support. Significantly, fully thirty of the previous fifty members were not returned to office. In this sense, at least, the election serves as a renewed safety valve for accumulated frustrations that might otherwise have spilled over into serious protest demonstrations, as occurred sporadically between earlier elections in 2011–13.

Yet even now, roughly half the parliament will remain pro-government. This segment is also a motley crew: some hard-core royalists, some tribal followers, some "service deputies" associated with patronage or other royal family favors—and six deputies from the Shia mi-

nority of this majority–Sunni Muslim society. The nearly even balance between opposition and pro-government camps practically ensures both continued controversy and continued policy paralysis. Thus the outlook: stability in the streets, but little real reform.

In this newly elected parliament, mainly because the Sunni opposition is back in the game, the Shia “lost” three seats compared to the previous one. They will be way down from their seventeen seats in the 2011 parliament, which more nearly reflected their proportion in the electorate. Nevertheless, Shia remain active, vocal, and lawful participants in Kuwaiti politics, and in the country’s overall economic and public life. One could rightly say that in a region tragically replete today with bloody religious conflict, Kuwait remains an admirable oasis of calm and coexistence. It represents a victory, however fragile, for democracy over demography and a model of peaceful political intercourse between sects.

More broadly, though, how representative will Kuwait’s new parliament be of the country’s overall population? The answer is not so much. Turnout in this election was estimated at 70 percent, considerably higher than in other recent contests, as the opposition returned to the fray. And the poll was fiercely contested, with more than four hundred candidates initially competing for the fifty parliamentary mandates. However, three-quarters of Kuwait’s population of 4.5 million are noncitizen expatriate workers, along with over 100,000 *bedoon* (stateless) Arab tribal residents in the border areas, none of whom can vote.

Women citizens, by contrast, are allowed to vote and run for office, with greater potential power than in any other GCC state. Around 10 percent of the original candidates in this electoral round were women. But only one was elected, roughly similar to previous outcomes, since Kuwaiti women were granted the franchise a decade ago. This will not be a diverse parliament in that respect, although it is a democratically elected one. Ironically, the handful of women who have served in Kuwait’s legislature have almost invariably supported the government rather than the opposition, which has often been either indifferent or actively hostile to women’s empowerment. As with the Shia minority, certain democratic rights and freedoms are sometimes seen as receiving better protection from above than from below. This is one more example of the tensions in Kuwait between the impulse for reform and the

reluctance to risk a frontal challenge to the unsatisfying yet generally tolerable existing system.

Can Kuwaiti Democracy and Reform Coexist?

Kuwait, in sum, is a curious case of formal democratic elections and other institutions that temper both autocracy and potential theocracy—but also tend to work against deeper political, social, or economic reform, and even against the full development of civil society. Within this unusual framework, the distribution of power among the palace, the Islamists, and the non-Islamist reformers or government critics creates a kind of equilibrium beneath a surface picture of continual political turmoil. The long-term potential for major change exists; but it is usually sidetracked by the realities of Kuwaiti public life: the electoral safety valve, the deep divisions among would-be agents of change from different directions or communities, the social conservatism of most Kuwaitis in general, and the heavy economic dependence of nearly all Kuwaiti citizens on the state.

This country is thus a useful counterexample to some of the most notorious stereotypes about Arab political behavior. It demonstrates that oil wealth does not necessarily preclude some forms of democracy, belying the elegant but oversimplified proposition that in all rentier regimes there can be “no representation without taxation.” Its parliamentary experience suggests as well that, at least in some cases, Islamist participation in electoral politics can be accommodated within a pluralistic, essentially moderate framework.

And if Kuwait’s example supports one generalization about Arab reform, it is that monarchs can triangulate reform and stability at least as well as elected rulers. They can supply a kind of balance to other political forces, including Islamist ones. They can act as arbiters, allowing different players to contend without undermining their own ultimate authority—and thus allow reform to proceed at a measured pace. Clearly, that pace is too slow and uneven for some Kuwaitis, and perhaps too uncertain or permissive for others. Indeed, Kuwaitis do not agree among themselves about the desired nature of reform—which is one reason this hybrid monarchy with some democratic features continues to function, even if few are completely satisfied with it.

For U.S. policy, Kuwait should be considered another welcome exception to the “rule” that Arab democracy tends to produce either instability or some form of Islamist or sectarian rule. Kuwait, in particular, is still an important regional U.S. military outpost, global energy partner, and geographic buffer against potential Iranian aggression in the vital Gulf arena. Even if the Trump administration cares less about democracy abroad than did its predecessors, or perhaps about the Middle East altogether, it can breathe a sigh of relief that Kuwait’s election probably makes it at least one strategic ally whose

internal stability need not worry Washington unduly. Kuwaiti politics are a fragile balance of reform, repression, and reaction; but this very fragility makes almost all the players careful not to rock the boat too hard.

Given Kuwait’s conservative political and economic instincts, it is unlikely to adopt any major reform initiatives on its own. Nor should it be prodded to do so; greater U.S. or other outside involvement in its domestic arena would probably be counterproductive. The ancient wisdom of “first, do no harm” should be carefully heeded here.

Notes

1. This term was coined by the author for Kuwait a decade ago in *Kuwait: Keystone of U.S. Gulf Policy*, Policy Focus 76 (Washington DC: Washington Institute, 2007), <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/kuwait-keystone-of-u.s.-gulf-policy>.
2. For an excellent analysis of this delicate balance, see Shafeeq Ghabra, “Kuwait: At the Crossroads of Change or Political Stagnation,” policy paper (Middle East Institute, May 20, 2014), <http://www.mei.edu/content/article/kuwait-crossroads-change-or-political-stagnation>.
3. Mijbel al-Talli, “Prospects for Reform in Kuwait,” *Fikra Forum*, November 21, 2016, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/prospects-for-reform-in-kuwait>.
4. Nawara Fattahova, “Ex-Lawmaker Dr. Abdullah al-Treiji Speaks Out against Corruption, Security Threats,” *Kuwait Times*, November 17, 2016, <http://news.kuwaittimes.net/website/ex-lawmaker-dr-abdullah-al-treiji-speaks-corruption-security-threats/>.
5. David Pollock, “New Kuwaiti Survey Reveals Sectarian Divide, Concerns about Iran,” *Fikra Forum*, October 28, 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/new-kuwaiti-survey-reveals-sectarian-divide-concerns-about-iran>.
6. Talli, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/prospects-for-reform-in-kuwait>.
7. Pollock, *Kuwait*, p. 11, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/kuwait-keystone-of-u.s.-gulf-policy>.
8. Talli, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/prospects-for-reform-in-kuwait>.
9. Courtney Freer, “The Rise of Pragmatic Islamism in Kuwait’s Post-Arab Spring Opposition Movement,” working paper (Brookings Institution, 2015), p. 1, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Kuwait_Freer-FINALE.pdf.
10. Talli, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/prospects-for-reform-in-kuwait>.
11. For a more detailed explication of this important topic, see Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, “Pushing the Limits: The Changing Rules of Kuwait’s Politics,” *World Politics Review*, March 17, 2016, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/18241/pushing-the-limits-the-changing-rules-of-kuwait-s-politics>.

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