

Algeria

Revolt Possible

Youth Unemployment

Youth unemployment and disenfranchisement threatens political revolt in Algeria despite memories of the 1990s civil war.

Beardsley, 2011 [Eleanor Beardsley June 1, 2011 NPR In Rich Algeria, Youth Face Meager Future <http://www.npr.org/2011/06/01/136854232/in-rich-algeria-youth-face-meager-future>]

The North African country of Algeria borders both Tunisia and Libya, but after being scarred by a civil war during the 1990s, Algerians have not rebelled like their neighbors. But that could change. And observers warn that there could be an explosion if the government's promise of change doesn't come fast enough. Seventy percent of the Algerian population is under the age of 30, and its discontent is growing. In the capital, Algiers, a part-time street vendor named Omar sells kitchen utensils and children's clothes — anything he can get his hands on — from a blanket on the sidewalk at the sprawling market below the casbah. But work is irregular because the police crack down constantly on black market vendors, he says. And with no steady income, he can't afford an apartment — or even a life. "I live at home with my mother and sisters. We have one room and a kitchen. I made a little space for myself out on the balcony. I can't marry or have children because I have no future," he says. "There's nothing here." Omar says only those lucky enough to have connections can hope for a decent job or an apartment. The government promised him a bright future when he did his military service. But they lied, he says. Omar is not alone. Economists say the majority of young Algerians are trapped in impoverished lives that are going nowhere. Officially, youth unemployment is around 20 percent. Many say that in reality it's pushing 50 percent. Terrorism used to be the government's most pressing problem; now it's lack of opportunities for young people, says Nacer Mehal, Algeria's minister of communications. "It's not easy to build a good democracy and to open and to develop the country," Mehal says. "We try." Mehal says the government is trying to help young people by creating jobs and offering microcredits targeted at young entrepreneurs. It's also building housing units across the country. The Algerian state can afford to do all this because it is enormously wealthy from the country's gas and oil reserves. But many Algerians say it's hard to justify such a rich country having so many poor people. In Bab el-Oued, a poor suburb of Algiers, kids play soccer on a concrete lot while young men hang out, showing off and arguing. The decrepit, colonial-era apartment blocks of Bab el-Oued desperately need fixing up — or, some say, tearing down. Mustapha Bouabdullah walks up the five flights of crumbling marble stairs to his apartment. He says Algeria's political class, which he calls a gerontocracy, lives on petrodollars and has no solutions whatsoever for the country's youth. "There is a frustration among young people in the Arab world when faced with the cultural, social and technological progress of the West. The powers that be are overwhelmed, and young people refuse all dialogue with them because they are obsolete," he says. Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika has promised a wide range of reforms and did lift a 19-year-old emergency law earlier this year. But it's not Bouteflika people seem to hate — it's the corrupt system behind him, and a political party that has been in power since Algeria won independence from France in 1962. There are small street corner protests every day in the Algerian capital, but they are quickly squelched by Algeria's well-equipped riot police. Tariq, 25, and his friends say they want real democracy and more freedom now. Tariq says it's not just about jobs; they want to be able to have leisure time, to enjoy culture, to be able to travel freely — to live regular lives. Abdelouhub Farsaoui works with Rassemblement pour les Jeunes, a group that is trying to empower young people. He says mass migration and suicide have both increased as young people have lost hope. Government ministers have always glorified Algerian youth in speeches, says Farsaoui, but they do nothing to build a future for young people. "Instead of preparing them to take the reins of power and oversee the destiny of this

country, the system does everything to shut young people out and make sure they play no role in the democratic development of this country," Farsaoui says. And so, he continues, there is no cadre of young politicians ready to replace the aging ruling class. Meanwhile, Omar has walked out to the Algiers beach, just across from the casbah. He looks out across the Mediterranean Sea. The lucky ones have gone to France and Spain and even America, he says — we'd all be migrants if we could.

Youth Unemployment Fuels Political Discontent in Algeria

Eileen **Byrne** May 11 **2011** [financialtimes.com Algeria's job generation challenge

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/d3bfec24-7bee-11e0-9b16-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1OW95zG9o>]

Lotfi, a mild-mannered young man from a working-class Algiers neighbourhood, earns a little from driving and other odd jobs that he hears about through his network of male friends – always an important resource for north Africa's unemployed. Algerians, he says, "just want to work with dignity, have their rights, be able to set up a home. That's all." Would he himself ever take to the streets in protest? "Of course," he replies. "We are sick of this regime." Three days of rioting in the capital and other towns in January may have been driven by economic grievances, but they also saw a surfacing of resentment against an authoritarian state. Since the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, the Algerian government is well aware of how parallel currents of discontent can converge. It responded with steps to ease economic pressures, and promises of political reform. Unemployment among young people in the towns remains an intractable problem for which even the political opposition has no easy answers. It affects both men and women: Dalila Touat, a 35-year-old physics graduate, unemployed since leaving college, became a cause célèbre in March after being threatened with a prison sentence for distributing leaflets urging action on jobs. She was acquitted by a court in the western port city of Mostaganem on April 28. Joblessness overall in Algeria fell from 15 per cent in 2005 to 10 per cent in 2009 (the latest date for which figures are available), according to Algerian government and International Monetary Fund estimates. But among under-24-year-olds in the towns it eased only to 25 per cent. Successive impressively named "plans" for economic reform have been unveiled since Abdelaziz Bouteflika became president in 1999, but the challenge facing the government increasingly starkly is to generate jobs. Algeria derives about 67 per cent of its tax receipts from oil and natural gas production – industries that employ only about one in 100.

Political Reforms Are A Sham

The opposition sees political reforms as a government ploy and as unrepresentative of Algerian people.

Sadek 2011 [Mouna Sadek Algeria begins political reform process 2011-05-26

http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2011/05/26/feature-01]

Algeria's hotly debated reform process kicked off in the capital last week as political leaders met with Senate President and reform commission chair Abdelkader Bensalah to present their ideas. Bensalah was appointed by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to lead the negotiations, which began on May 20th. But the process has been marred by controversy, with opposition parties boycotting the talks while others denounced the exclusion of union representatives and civil society activists. "What we are asking for today is not to rush into action to pacify the anger on the streets, but to work towards radical answers to the people's demands, rather than just papering over the cracks," said former presidential candidate Mohamed Saïd. The consultations involve a number of veteran political operatives, including former President Chadli Benjedid, former Chairman of the High Council of State Ali Kafi, former Defence Minister Khaled Nezzar, and former Prime Ministers Mouloud Hamrouche, Ali Benflis, Sid Ahmed Ghozali, Mokdad Sifi, and Smail Hamdani. Opposition parties went so far as to describe the process as a political manoeuvre designed to ease social tensions. Former Prime Minister Sid Ahmed Ghozali, who met with the reform committee on Saturday (May 22nd), said he suspected the government of wanting to "deprive Algerians of their rights in a legal manner, having done so in an illegal manner for some time". "My criticism of the current government is that they do not abide by the law. They haven't taken the opportunity to apply the laws and see where they need to be changed," Ghozali told reporters. The Front of Socialist Forces (FFS) labelled the discussions a "political circus". "We need to cleanse the political field of these people who came to power against a backdrop of violence and the state of emergency," declared Karim Tabou at a public meeting in the Algiers suburb of El Harrach. "Any involvement in these flights of fancy would be synonymous with complicity in the distortion and denial of the will of the people," read a statement from Said Saidi's Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD). However, political parties within the presidential alliance have come out in support of the process. "Our party has set up three working groups to examine the political proposals that we shall bring before this commission," Miloud Chorfi, spokesman for the National Democratic Assembly (RND), explained to Magharebia. "We've suggested two areas to study," said [Bouguerra Soltani](#), head of the Movement for the Society of Peace (MSP). "The first is connected to how reforms will be carried out. The priority must be for constitutional reform, before other laws and codes can be reviewed. After all, the Constitution is the basis of all draft laws." The Islamist El Islah Movement also presented a series of proposals for the "completion of political reforms and mechanisms to bring them about", according to the party's Secretary-General, Djamel Ben Abdeslam. "The political parties and figures who have been invited along do not represent the people," said Mohand Ameziane, a representative of the National Co-ordination of Autonomous Students ([CNAE](#)). "Young people represent the majority and, as such, are a force for change; if those in power have good intentions, then they must talk to all elements of civil society," Ameziane told Magharebia.

Current reforms are a sham to maintain power.

AFP, Friday 20 May **2011** [Algeria to hold reform talks, boycotted by opposition Ahram.org

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/12537/World/Region/Algeria-to-hold-reform-talks,-boycotted-by-opposit.aspx>]

Algerian political leaders prepared to start talks on democratic reforms on Saturday but the opposition plans a no-show to protest what they call a feeble attempt at real change. President Abdelaziz Bouteflika in April pledged a number of reforms to be introduced before the end of the year including modifying the constitution and revising electoral law, as popular uprisings swept through the Arab world against authoritarian regimes. He asked a panel of members of recognised political parties and experts in constitutional law to come up with further proposals that would be submitted to parliament or a referendum. He invited all political parties, regardless of whether they are represented in parliament or not, to take part in the process. He has tasked speaker of the National Council (Senate) Abdelkader Bensalah to start sounding political parties, flanked by two advisers to Bouteflika -- General Mohamed Touati and a former minister Mohamed Ali Boughazi. But already opponents view the choice of the trio of negotiators as a thinly-veiled attempt by Bouteflika to keep his grip on power. "We wait for concrete action towards change in order to re-establish trust in power and the state, not just fiddling around," said Karim Tabbou, secretary of the Socialist Forces Front (FFS) which will boycott the talks. Said Sadi, leader of the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD) which was established after January 21 riots that left five dead and 800 injured, said that the government-initiated talks were simply a "monologue against change." "The era of political tinkering is over," he added. The French-speaking daily El-Watan on Thursday said that the government "will find itself consulting itself. It might as well ask its traditional clients to participate, which will be presented as external contributions to the regime." The independent newspaper earlier wrote that the president's proposals are aimed at supporting a system which "wants to keep things in hand while making it appear it is reforming, which it is not." Algeria's 1996 constitution was last amended in 2009 to allow the 74-year-old Bouteflika, first elected in 1999, to seek a third term. He has not indicated his intentions when his mandate ends in 2014. His promises came amid Algerian discontent over wages, jobs, working conditions, and corruption at the top echelons of the government. Protesters have staged regular protests since the beginning of the year, although they are often quashed by police.

Brink of Revolution

Government attempts to give economic and political concessions may not work for long – Algeria is on the brink.

Anthony Faiola April 9, 2011 [Algerians warily consider the risks of an uprising The Washington Post A-SECTION; Pg. A01]

"Why am I not protesting?" laughed Nouider Bakhi, 45, a school administrator gazing at the small pro-**democracy** rally last Saturday from the cooling shade of a cigarette stand. "Because what works in Tunisia and Egypt may not work in **Algeria**. . . . Of course we want change, but what will it take to reach that goal? Look at Libya. It is tearing apart and people are dying. You think we don't watch that violence and wonder which way it would happen here?"

Algeria's retreat from full-scale revolt is key to calculations of just how broadly the historic uprisings sweeping the Arab world might ultimately transform the region. In many ways, **Algeria** and its far smaller neighbor, Tunisia, present a tale of two countries.

This nation, sprawling from the blistering Sahara to the Mediterranean Sea, became the region's first after Tunisia to see the outbreak of unrest, with riots over high food prices erupting in January inside the dense French colonial slums towering above the glistening Bay of Algiers.

In Tunisia, similar riots triggered a movement soon joined by unions, opposition leaders and members of the middle class to drive out Ben Ali, who fled the country Jan. 14. But here, the Algerian government has managed to check public rage through a combination of measured tolerance for social protests, food subsidies and pay raises, as well as minor political concessions.

It may not work for long. With youth unemployment at 30 percent and millions of workers laboring in a precarious black market, **Algeria** could still explode, observers say. But for millions of Algerians - ruled since 1999 by the authoritarian Bouteflika, who fronts a hidden power structure of intelligence officers and military generals - the uprisings pose a particularly tough choice.

Algeria is on the brink – Revolution Likely If Economic Demands Are Not Met

Anthony Faiola April 9, 2011 [Algerians warily consider the risks of an uprising The Washington Post A-SECTION; Pg. A01]

But the force of the historic uprisings across the region is without doubt fanning social unrest here that could still turn political. Over the past four weeks, more than 70 unions and trade groups have challenged bans on demonstrations in Algiers by rallying for higher wages and better contracts from the government.

But many, such as Ain Defla, 43, are clear about the scope of their demands. Protesting with other teachers recently, she said: "I don't care who the president is. We just need our economic demands met."

To ease the pressure, the government is making extraordinary promises. A plan is being launched to offer virtually any Algerian 21 / 2 acres of land and cheap loans to farm it. Towns and cities are allowing the

young and unemployed to set up unlicensed fruit and clothing stalls. Massive sums are being pledged to aid many more in establishing businesses.

But opposition leaders say even the oil-rich government cannot possibly make good on all its promises and is only prolonging a broader social uprising.

It may come down to whether the government can indeed satisfy the likes of Youcef Meskine, an unemployed 30-year-old in Bordj Menaiel, a town 50 miles east of Algiers where angry youths have torched the tax office and vandalized a government job center.

Like many in town, he was promised a loan by government officials, which he planned to use to start a house-painting business.

But "that was two weeks ago, and I haven't seen any of the money yet," Meskine said. "But trust me, if they don't keep their promises this time, **Algeria** is going to blow up."

No Revolt

Lack of Support for Pro Democracy Movements

Less repression & promises of political reforms are preventing widespread support for revolution in Algeria.

Anthony Faiola April 9, 2011 [Algerians warily consider the risks of an uprising The Washington Post A-SECTION; Pg. A01]

To be sure, Algerians enjoy somewhat more freedom than, say, Tunisians did under Ben Ali. State television is strictly controlled here, and Bouteflika won his third term in 2009 with 90 percent of the vote. But newspapers are able to openly criticize the government in ways that would bring jail time in some Arab countries. And the government has mostly employed batons and cattle prods against demonstrators, not guns.

Though most here doubt his word, Bouteflika has promised unspecified political reforms. He has lifted a 19-year-old state of emergency, but the move had little real impact because most of the government's police-state powers are enshrined elsewhere in Algerian law.

Yet Algeria's opposition is weak and divided. Though as many as 3,000 to 5,000 rallied for **democracy** on Feb. 12 in what was meant to be a sustained show of force, the movement has not drawn mainstream support.

Economic Reform Prevents Revolt

Risk of revolution has passed. Government economic concessions have undercut calls for political reform.

Anthony Faiola April 9, 2011 [Algerians warily consider the risks of an uprising The Washington Post A-SECTION; Pg. A01]

ALGIERS - Only a few weeks ago, **Algeria** seemed on the brink of revolution, with thousands taking to the streets to demand the ouster of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. But much like the crowd gawking at the few lonely activists who recently showed up for a political protest at a busy roundabout here, this North African country is now watching from the sidelines as the Arab spring tries to bloom.

Popular revolts are upending authoritarian systems across the region, spreading deeper into Arab countries with some of the harshest regimes, including Syria. But while there are **democracy**-fervent nations such as Tunisia, where the uprisings started and where sustained protests rapidly ousted President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, there are many others, such as neighboring **Algeria**, where change is a moving target.

Instead of a clamor for **democracy**, doctors and teachers, auxiliary police officers and transportation workers are taking to the streets of this energy-rich nation with demands for higher wages, while pointedly sidestepping calls for political change.

Much as Saudi Arabia did to quell protests there, the Algerian government is literally trying to buy time, doling out economic concessions that include promises to double salaries for everyone from police officers to court clerks and pledges to give millions of Algerians free land and cheap loans.

In the face of gilded promises, the Algerian public, weary after a long history of violence, seems to be weighing the cost of change. Lacking broad support and crippled by infighting, those directly calling for Bouteflika to step down have diminished in number, with the pool of die-hard protesters still rallying every Saturday outnumbered by riot police nearly 50 to 1.

Political Reform Prevents Revolution

No Risk of Revolution - Algeria Is Engaging in Political Reforms Now

Xinhua 2011 [Political reforms in Algeria sovereign decision: PM English.news.cn 2011-05-30 05:40:17 http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-05/30/c_13900136.htm]

ALGIERS, May 29 (Xinhua) -- Algeria Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia said Sunday that political reforms in the country are a sovereign decision instead of being dictated by foreign forces. Ouyahia told a press conference here that the reforms have nothing to do with protests erupted in January, referring to demonstrations provoked by the soaring food prices which coincided with a wave of unrest in the Arab region. "The situation in Algeria is not the same as countries which have witnessed turbulence in recent months," Ouyahia said, adding that Algeria "has traversed an important path in terms of democracy, and today there are 40 independent parties, 80 newspapers and 60 non-affiliated trade unions." mOuyahia further called on the opposition to "participate massively and efficiently to make those reforms a success." Algeria President Abdelaziz Bouteflika has pledged to implement political reforms with the consent of the majority of political actors in the country. The reforms include making amendments to the constitution and other laws and codes, including the election code, party code, information law and the representation of women in elected councils.

Recent Violent History Prevents Revolt

Fear of additional violence and uncertainty of the president's power prevent revolution.

Anthony Faiola April 9, 2011 [Algerians warily consider the risks of an uprising The Washington Post A-SECTION; Pg. A01]

An Arab spring of sorts budded here in 1988, with a revolt against a one-party system that led to a much-heralded political opening. But within four years, the nation descended into civil war with Islamist extremists, ushering in more than a decade of terror that claimed upwards of 160,000 lives. That came only three decades after the end of a war for independence from France in which the death toll topped 1 million.

Fear of another cycle of violence is holding back Algerian society now. Standing near a faded belle epoque building in Bab el-Oued - a teeming slum where riots over food prices, poor housing and the lack of jobs broke out in January - Medhi Fadlane, 25, is one of the angry Algerians restless for change. But even he, like many others in the neighborhood, sounds a note of caution about pressing for it too fast.

"I remember the bombs that went off when I was younger, and I don't want to go back to that," said Fadlane, a physics major. He later continued, "I feel troubled in my heart about having no future, and I blame the government. We want them out, but I think it might take a little while. We don't want chaos, either."

In addition, uncertainty over Bouteflika's real power - it remains unclear whether he runs the feared intelligence services or their chiefs run him - has thus far prevented him from becoming the obvious single target of street protests.

"If Bouteflika were ousted, it would make no difference," said Karim Tabbou, secretary general of the opposition FFS party. "This is not Libya. **Algeria** is a country with a thousand Gaddafis."

Fear of certain violence prevents additional uprisings in Algeria

Tim Cohen February 14, 2011 [Business Day (South Africa) Will Egypt's revolution cross the Sahara?]

Algeria is another country now mentioned. But Egypt has a nonpolitical military. The main repressive organ there was the police. In **Algeria**, the situation is different, even though feelings are comparable. There were protests last month against high food prices. There were casualties and protests included stone-throwing, tear gas and Molotov cocktails. But unlike Egypt, no one is in any doubt that the Algerian security forces will use live ammunition. The popular opposition to another civil war in **Algeria** strengthens the hand of the army. **Algeria** is also something of a petro-state, with a missing middle class.

Recent Civil War Prevents Massive Protests in Algeria

Hala Jaber February 6, 2011 [NEWS; Pg. 16,17 The Sunday Times (London) The domino effect: Tunisia has fallen, Egypt is on the brink... who is next as a hunger for change engulfs the Arab world]

ALGERIA

RULER President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, acceded 1999

DEMOCRACY RANKING 125

ISLAMIST THREAT

High Since the early 1990s conflict involving armed Islamists has claimed about 150,000 lives in **Algeria**. Although political violence had declined, the country has recently been shaken by a campaign of bombings carried out by a group calling itself Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM). The group was formerly known as the Salafist Group for Call and Combat, and has its roots in an Islamist militia involved in the civil war in the 1990s

IMPORTANCE TO WEST

High Has large oil and gas resources. Millions of Algerian expats live in European countries. However, analysts believe **Algeria**, having suffered one civil war, has little appetite for massive street protests that could provoke another

DOMINO FACTOR 3

Misc

Algerian FLN (National Liberation Front) Opposes Western Intervention In Libya

BBC Monitoring Middle East 2011 [May 13, 2011 Algerian official attacks West's "intervention" in Libya]

At 1515 gmt on 13 May, Libyan state-controlled Al-Jamahiriyah TV showed part of a recorded speech by a senior official of the ruling Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN). The FLN official addressed a meeting of Libyan tribes' chiefs in Tripoli. The fiery speech, which seems to reflect Algeria's official stand with regard to the conflict in Libya, was often interrupted by applause and chants of "long live Algeria".

In his address, member of the FLN Central Committee Sadek Bouguetaia vented his anger at NATO and the West, in general, for "intervening" in Libya. He said the Libyan conflict needed to be settled by Libyans themselves and the West had no right to intervene in the internal affairs of a sovereign state.

"We are against all these measures and we have said this is a Libyan internal issue which must be solved through dialogue between the sons of Libyan people. We have said we are against foreign military intervention and against the Western states, which are using [UN Security Council] Resolution 1973 to pursue their interests. We were against foreign intervention, against foreign invasion and attacks on the Libyan people because Libya is a sovereign state and a member of the UN.

Bouguetaia asked: "Is it reasonable that a sovereign state - which is a member of the African Union, of the UN and of the Arab League - to be subjected to this barbarian and brazen aggression before the eyes of the whole world? Our stand is unshakable and will remain unshakable in the same way that Algeria and its history are unshakable.

"We have said this is an internal issue which will be solved by the Libyan people, by you, by the Libyan tribes in Benghazi, Darnah, Tobruk and Ajdabiyah. With your great wisdom and dogged determination you are perfectly capable of solving your problem and of rejecting any foreigners interfering in your internal affairs.

"We were astonished from the beginning. We have never expected that one day the sons of the heroic, noble, brave and Arab Libyan people would fight each other. Our question is: Who is going to benefit from such infighting? Is it in the interest of the colonial France? Is it in the interest of Zionism? Or is it in the interests of Britain, the US, Italy and Spain?

Bouguetaia added: "I believe, like many others, this is not an issue of democracy, human rights, freedoms or freedom of expression. If democracy and free expression bring NATO and their latest advanced bombs, jet fighters and submarines to shell our relatives, families, women and children, we tell them go to hell with such democracy."

Terrorist Threat is High In Algeria

Hala Jaber February 6, 2011 [NEWS; Pg. 16,17 The Sunday Times (London) The domino effect: Tunisia has fallen, Egypt is on the brink... who is next as a hunger for change engulfs the Arab world]

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Lebanon

No Revolt

Political Diversity & Relative Openness Prevent Revolt

Political Diversity and a Relatively Open System Prevent Revolution

Justin D. Martin May 31, 2011 [The Christian Science Monitor Amid Arab Spring fires, why isn't **Lebanon** in flames]

During the presidency of George H.W. Bush, some of the chief's staffers referred to Portland, Oregon as "Little Beirut." The joke was thought to be clever because the highly liberal enclave of Portland saw massive demonstrations when the president came to town, and everyone knew, presumably, how hostile and incendiary a place the capital of **Lebanon** was.

Israel likes to portray itself as a stable country unfortunately positioned among bellicose neighbors, but **Lebanon** is truly a country that has served as the military playground of neighboring powers.

Lebanon, with "an amalgam of religious communities and their myriad sub-divisions...is the sectarian state par excellence," wrote David Hirst in "Beware of Small States," and "was almost designed to be the everlasting battleground for others."

In 2011, though, **Lebanon** looks like a comparatively sturdy system, exhibiting calm highlighted by successful overthrows in Egypt and Tunisia, and forceful challenges to power in Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, and unrest in typically quiet Oman.

What is **Lebanon's** secret? Well, it's actually the country's lack of secrets that sustains it. **Lebanon** is arguably the most open society in the Arab world, in everything from tolerance of homosexuality to the transparency of its banks and its relatively unhindered press system. **Lebanon** has survived because it is a country that isn't threatened by dissent as a matter of course.

"[I]n a region where hereditary monarchies or one-party republics were the norm," wrote Mr. Hirst, "**Lebanon** [has] a resilient democratic tradition which, however flawed, sets it apart from everywhere else." Uncertain though its future may be, **Lebanon** has a system in which a number of groups check the power of others. "In **Lebanon** there is no single dictator to confront," The New York Times reported in April. Pluralistic dysfunction is the best kind. The article was headlined "In **Lebanon**, a More Patient Protest."

Open System Allows Protest Without Revolt

Justin D. Martin May 31, 2011 [The Christian Science Monitor Amid Arab Spring fires, why isn't **Lebanon** in flames]

Lebanon's relative calm in Arab Spring

Cairo, Tunis, and Manama were once cities to which people would flee when things fell apart in **Lebanon**. In 2011, though, some people in besieged Arab capitals headed for the relative calm of

Lebanon's cedars. Now in Beirut there is a "sense of calm, even complacency, in the Lebanese political class about the stability of the political scene," Marc Lynch wrote in his blog for Foreign Policy in March.

Other governments in the region talk about openness and tolerance, but other than **Lebanon**, few Mideast nations toil for them in earnest. "Transparency and open dialogue are effective, vital elements in the structure of mature and civilized nations," the United Arab Emirate's monarch, Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, has said. Yet in 2011, his minions jailed bloggers and dissidents, and he sent soldiers to Bahrain to crush pro-democracy demonstrations.

Since Hosni Mubarak's ouster in Egypt, where the new dawn of democracy was all about governance in the sunshine, the military, now in control, has jailed a blogger, murdered several demonstrators, and sexually tortured female protesters.

Lebanon has certainly experienced protests, too. Thousands of Lebanese turned out in Beirut on April 10, and again a few days later, protesting **Lebanon's** system of religious confessionalism, its national system of power-sharing based on religious affiliation. You probably didn't hear news of this demonstration, though, because Lebanese forces didn't kill demonstrators as regimes have recently done in Bahrain, Jordan, Libya, Egypt, Syria, and Yemen.

A tolerance that survives upheaval and dissent

Lebanon's comparatively open system has readied it to handle caustic public expression without people tearing one another's heads off. Recent Lebanese demonstrations weren't exactly asking politely for change. "Revolution against the regime!" and "People want the fall of the regime!" were among protesters' chants, according to Agence France-Presse.

Lebanon is not free from unrest. An armed Hezbollah in **Lebanon** that addresses its grievances militarily constantly threatens the country's buoyancy, and the group's belligerence contributed to the Lebanese government's collapse in January.

The ongoing militarism of Hezbollah, though, is not the most existential threat **Lebanon** has faced in its history. This is a country that overcame one of the most gruesome civil wars imaginable - which ended only in 1990 - a conflict that killed more than 150,000 people, or more than five percent of the entire population. (The US Civil War killed two percent of Americans.)

A lasting cliché about Beirut is that it's like the "Paris of the Mideast," which is a rather silly comparison. Parisians know downright nothing about what Lebanese have endured over the past half century - uncertainty and upheaval that could only be weathered by the most tolerant household in the neighborhood.

Lebanon Promote Terrorism and Threatens Regional Stability

Iranian Domination of Lebanon Through Hezbollah Turns Lebanon into an Iranian Satellite and Hub of Terror and Violence Which Could Spill Over into Israel

Keinon et al. 2010 [HERB KEINON, YAAKOV LAPPIN and HILARY LEILA KRIEGER; Jerusalem Post staff contributed to this report. Israeli official: Ahmadinejad in Lebanon is like a 'landlord visiting his domain.' The IDF's eyes are wide open, Barak asserts Jerusalem Post October 14, 2010 Thursday pg. 1]

Not wanting to detract from significant opposition inside **Lebanon** to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's visit there on Wednesday, Israel took a low official profile on a trip it deems highly provocative, with Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu not publicly addressing it.

Netanyahu's silence, however, should not be interpreted as a lack of concern in Jerusalem regarding the symbolism of the trip, or what it presages for **Lebanon** and - by extension - for Israel.

Ahmadinejad in **Lebanon** is "like a landlord coming to inspect his domain," Foreign Minister spokesman Yigal Palmor said.

"He is bringing a message of violence and extremism, and his presence makes it even clearer that Hizbullah, at the order of the Iranians, has built a state within a state," he said. "This is far removed from Lebanese interests."

Netanyahu's spokesman Mark Regev said that "Iran's domination of **Lebanon**, through its proxy Hizbullah, has prevented **Lebanon** from being a partner in peace and turned **Lebanon** into an Iranian satellite and a hub of regional terror and instability."

One of Israel's main concerns is that the Iranian president's visit will embolden the extremists inside **Lebanon**, something that could trigger another round of internal violence there that could easily spread across the border. If there was hope in the past that **Lebanon** was in the moderate Arab camp, this visit - according to sources in Jerusalem - shows that it is an Iranian satellite on Israel's northern border.

"Anyone concerned with **Lebanon's** real interests wants to keep the border with Israel quiet," the official said. Iran, with its extreme ideology, has an agenda divorced from **Lebanon's** interests, spurring concern in Jerusalem that Teheran may be more ready to heat up the border with Israel, because it has little real concern about the price **Lebanon** would have to pay, the official added.

Sources in Jerusalem said the visit demonstrates that **Lebanon** - thanks to Hizbullah - has turned into an Iranian client state firmly in the axis of extreme countries that support terrorism and are opposed to peace.

The US administration slammed Ahmadinejad's visit to **Lebanon** on Wednesday, suggesting it threatens the stability of the small, religiously fragmented country.

Ties With Iran Threaten Lebanese Independence

Close Ties With Iran Threaten Lebanon's Viability as an Independent State

Keinon et al. 2010 [HERB KEINON, YAAKOV LAPPIN and HILARY LEILA KRIEGER; Jerusalem Post staff contributed to this report. Israeli official: Ahmadinejad in Lebanon is like a 'landlord visiting his domain.' The IDF's eyes are wide open, Barak asserts Jerusalem Post October 14, 2010 Thursday pg. 1]

"We reject any efforts to destabilize or inflame tensions within **Lebanon**," US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in response to a journalist's question posed while she was in the Balkans. "We would hope that no visitor would do anything or say anything that would give cause to greater tension or instability in that country," she said.

White House spokesman Robert Gibbs called the visit, which includes a trip near the border with Israel, a continuation of Ahmadinejad's "provocative ways."

Gibbs also touched on a sensitive point in **Lebanon** - whether Hizbullah is more committed to the sovereignty of **Lebanon** or is a means of giving neighboring countries control in the country when he said, "I think that it also suggests that Hizbullah values its allegiance to Iran over its allegiance to **Lebanon**."

Clinton emphasized that the US supports "the integrity and sovereignty of **Lebanon**."

She added that while her words might not "have any influence," the message that the world opposes those who would destabilize **Lebanon** is one "the world needs to convey to the Iranians."

The security establishment sent a business-as-usual message, but behind the scenes, Israel is closely monitoring the visit.

"This visit shows Hizbullah's growing dependence on Iran," Defense Minister Ehud Barak said. "The IDF's eyes are wide open."

The defense minister was touring the Golan Heights where he met with soldiers and inspected tanks.

"**Lebanon** could cease being an independent country, and we must follow what is taking place from the intelligence and military perspectives," he added.

U.S. Military Aid

Cuts in U.S. Military Aid Would Leave a Power Vacuum In Lebanon That Would Be Filled By Radical Interests

Worth 2010 [The New York Times August 24, 2010 Tuesday U.S. Aids Lebanese Military Because of, and Despite, What It Gets in Return ROBERT F. WORTH; Nada Bakri and Hwaida Saad contributed p. A7]

WASHINGTON -- Earlier this month, Israeli soldiers were pruning a tree on their country's northern border when a firefought broke out with Lebanese soldiers across the fence, leaving one Israeli and four Lebanese dead.

The skirmish seems to have been accidental. But it quickly set off a war of words in Washington and Beirut, with American lawmakers warning of Hezbollah infiltration in the Lebanese Army, and threatening to cut off \$100 million in military aid.

It is a situation that has played out many times before -- in Yemen, Pakistan and other countries troubled by insurgencies or militant movements and receiving American military aid -- and that is likely to be repeated. The Americans want to help their friends in the Middle East while insisting that they rigorously cut off militant groups like Hezbollah, the Shiite movement that is committed to Israel's destruction.

But the realities on the ground almost always demand difficult compromises that can seem, from Washington, like dangerous concessions to the enemy.

Lebanon, for instance, is an intricate patchwork of sects and political factions where the army plays the precarious role of a middleman. No one can avoid working to some degree with Hezbollah, the most powerful military and political force in the country. The alternative, **Lebanon's** pro-Western factions say, is much worse.

"Should we undermine the army and give the whole country to Hezbollah?" said Paul Salem, the director of the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut. "It's a classic 'cut off your nose to spite your face.' "

So far, the State Department has strongly defended the military aid to **Lebanon**, saying that the army's presence in the south helps to keep the country stable, and that withdrawing the money could create a dangerous vacuum. But the argument challenging aid is likely to resurface, especially in light of Syria's resurgent influence in **Lebanon** and the relative weakness of the more secular Western-allied political factions.

Even before the border skirmish, some in Congress had voiced deep unease about providing military aid to a country where Hezbollah has a place in the cabinet and runs its own intelligence and communications networks. The American aid was conceived in 2005, after Syria withdrew its military from **Lebanon** and a pro-Western political alliance seemed to be gaining strength, with the goal of disarming Hezbollah.

The administration of President George W. Bush gave strong verbal support to **Lebanon's** anti-Syrian parliamentary alliance, and in 2006 the 34-day war between Israel and Hezbollah buttressed the notion that **Lebanon** needed a stronger military as a national alternative to the Shiite group's militia. American military aid began to flow to **Lebanon** for the first time in decades.

But later that year, **Lebanon's** coalition government broke down amid a confrontation between the country's main political camps. When violence broke out in May 2008, the United States and other Western countries stood on the sidelines as their Lebanese allies suffered a humiliating defeat by Hezbollah.

As a result, Washington's Lebanese allies found themselves with a gun to their heads. Recognizing that the Bush administration was unwilling to back them with force, they began to compromise and move

toward reconciliation with Syria, which backs Hezbollah. Even Prime Minister Saad Hariri, who once led the charge against Syria, is now bowing to political reality and has been to Damascus, Syria's capital, four times in the past year.

The Lebanese Army, meanwhile, has been so intent on preserving its status as the country's one neutral institution that it is now largely impotent. During the fighting in May 2008, for instance, soldiers sat in their American Humvees and watched, unwilling to take sides.

That led some Israel-friendly members of Congress to question the usefulness of aiding **Lebanon's** military. When the border skirmish took place this month, some American lawmakers went further and echoed what Israeli officials were saying: that Hezbollah's growing power in **Lebanon** seemed to be extending to control over the army.

There is little evidence of that. The army is still largely commanded by Christian generals who were trained in the United States. Like **Lebanon** itself, the army contains a mosaic of political affiliations. What American politicians often fail to understand is that even pro-Western Lebanese tend to regard Israel -- which has repeatedly invaded and bombed its northern neighbor -- as a hostile force. Soldiers in southern **Lebanon** are authorized to open fire if they see violations of the United Nations cease-fire that ended the 2006 war.

Another point often overlooked in the West is that the army's mere presence in southern **Lebanon** is a novelty. Troops were deployed there -- with Hezbollah's permission -- under the terms of the cease-fire brokered by the United Nations in 2006. It was the first time that Lebanese soldiers had defended the southern border in decades, thanks to the disruptions of **Lebanon's** 15-year civil war and the long Syrian military occupation.

For many Lebanese, having their own military back on the border was a point of great national pride. To some, it was a possible first step toward disarming Hezbollah, which has justified its arsenal in part through the inability of the Lebanese military to defend the country from Israel.

The army has already proved its usefulness -- to both **Lebanon** and the West -- in other ways. In the summer of 2007, it fought Fatah al Islam, a militant group linked to Al Qaeda, in a Palestinian refugee camp in northern **Lebanon**.

That episode also underscored the army's woefully underequipped state. With no precision weapons or combat helicopters, the army had to resort to dropping bombs by hand from Vietnam-era helicopters, and the conflict dragged on for months. Even now, many in **Lebanon** resent the United States for failing to provide the advanced equipment they say the army needs.

In that context, it is scarcely surprising that the American threats to block aid to **Lebanon's** military drew angry responses from Lebanese leaders. Recently, **Lebanon's** defense minister, Elias Murr, said that if American aid came on the condition that **Lebanon** not use its weapons against Israel, then he would reject it and seek other donors.

Mr. Murr's comments may be partly bluster. But it seems likely that when faced with the alternatives -- leaving **Lebanon** with offers of military support from Russia, Syria or Iran -- Congress will probably back away from its threats to starve **Lebanon's** army.

The same pattern can be seen in other countries across the greater Middle East: a flawed national army is not ideal, but it is usually better than chaos or a vacuum that can be filled by suicidal militants and their patron states. As if to prove the point, on Aug. 14 the Lebanese Army killed two members of Fatah al Islam.

For Washington, minor victories like that may be worth the price of military aid, even if the broader goal of disarming larger militant groups -- including Hezbollah -- is out of reach.

Kuwait – Submitted By Kris Willis

Purpose

Below is some research from over the past year regarding Kuwait. My intention is to give some background information and the best description I can regarding the current political climate within Kuwait. I want the debate community to make a well informed decision in reference to whether or not to include Kuwait in the topic. I am going to attempt to be as objective as possible.

Background

Background from **Katzman 11'** [Congressional Research Specialist: Kuwait: Security, Reform, and U.S. Policy. Kenneth Katzman

Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs February 8, 2011 <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21513.pdf>]

(***I recommend reading this whole report as it is from the US Congressional Specialist and highlight multiple possible areas for democratic assistance and represents the best description of Kuwait current political environment and the US's relations regarding these issues.)

Summary

Kuwait was pivotal to two decades of U.S. efforts to reduce a threat posed by Iraq. After U.S. forces liberated Kuwait from Iraqi invading forces in February 1991, Kuwait was the central location from which the United States contained Saddam during 1991-2003, and it hosted the bulk of the U.S.-led force that invaded Iraq in March 2003 to remove Saddam from power. It is the key route through which U.S. troops have been withdrawing from Iraq during 2009-2011.

Kuwait's relations with the current government of Iraq are hampered, in part, by issues not fully resolved from the August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, although a January 12, 2011, visit by the Kuwaiti prime minister appeared to represent a major, at least symbolic, breakthrough. With the strategic threat from Iraq sharply reduced, Kuwait is cooperating with U.S.-led efforts to contain Iranian power in the Gulf. At the same time, like the other Gulf monarchy states, Kuwait seeks to maintain normal economic and political relations with Iran so as not to provoke Iran or cause it to increase its support to pro-Iranian movements in Kuwait.

Kuwait has been troubled domestically for at least five years, but due to factors unrelated to or unlike the reasons for the unrest throughout the Middle East in 2011. The domestic disruptions have taken the form of infighting between the elected National Assembly and the ruling Al Sabah family primarily over the political dominance and alleged corruption of the Al Sabah. In March 2009, the infighting led to the

second constitutional dissolution of the National Assembly in one year, setting up new parliamentary elections on May 16, 2009. That produced an Assembly that was considered more pro-government, and included four women, the first to be elected to the Assembly in Kuwait since women were given the vote in 2005. However, over the subsequent two years, the Assembly has turned against the ruling family, producing two unsuccessful attempts (the most recent on January 5, 2011) to vote no confidence in Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser al-Muhammad al-Ahmad Al Sabah. The political deadlock has prevented breaking longstanding legislative and regulatory logjams holding up key energy projects, including some projects involving major foreign energy firms.

Kuwait has been only lightly touched by the unrest sweeping the Middle East in 2011. There have been only small political demonstrations in Kuwait during the period of region-wide unrest, perhaps because Kuwait is considered a relatively wealthy society where citizens do not want to take risks to achieve greater freedoms. However, the government response to the small demonstrations has, in some measure, tarnished Kuwait's reputation as a protector of rule of law and human rights in the Gulf region. Suppressive measures have included beatings of demonstrators and imprisonments of journalists. However, Kuwait's tradition of vibrant civil society and expression of opinion led to the resignation of the interior minister, held responsible for repressive measures, on February 7, 2011, in advance of a planned public demonstration. The cabinet resigned on March 31, 2011, rather than face questioning from a Shiite parliamentary deputy about its reaction to the unrest in Bahrain.

On other regional issues, the political stalemate in Kuwait has contributed to a tendency among Kuwaiti leaders to defer to Saudi Arabia and other more active Gulf states. Kuwait has not attempted to take a leading role in formulating new approaches to the Arab-Israeli dispute, in mediating disputes within the Palestinian territories, or trying to determine Iran's role in Gulf security and political arrangements.

My take on the current environment

I spent the last two months of the high school topic researching Kuwait, specifically with the intent to write a negative file centered on the internal politics of the country as it related to troop withdrawal. Below is a collection of some of the internal links and descriptions to support my claims I will make in this review. It is not all encompassing, but does represent the literature that could be expected regarding Kuwait and political/democratic reforms.

I believe the country has some great potential for inclusion. There is a strong democratic movement within the country aimed at predominately two goals: Economic reforms via privatization and moving away from government run businesses and oil, and human rights with an emphasis on those who are not Kuwaiti gaining equal rights (close to 40% of the people in Kuwait fit into groups being excluded currently). Some literature suggests these movements are working together and others say they are separate factions. There is also literature that argues some of these movements (namely those aimed at equal rights) are instigated by the Iranian regime and hence will be a likely case debate area. There is

also some literature about women's rights and issues within the country that could also serve as an affirmative (or negative) case area.

Kuwait also represents a good topic country because of its close relationship to the US and vital interests within MENA. From Oil, troops and forward deployment, Iran and proliferation issues, Iraq withdrawal, and its role as a "role-model" for democracy and human rights within the region, Kuwait serves as a country with lots of advantage areas to debate and democracy is a key internal link to all of these issues.

However, there are some drawbacks to the inclusion of Kuwait. The largest one would be the relationship the US has with Kuwait, the many active programs they jointly work together on (here is an extensive list of previous programs/projects the US State department worked on with Kuwait: <http://2002-2009-mepi.state.gov/c10156.htm>). However, this also cuts through some of the debates about Government to Government cooperation because the relationship is there and strong. Also, if the USAID was the actor, according to the USAID website there currently are no programs in Kuwait through USAID: <http://www.usaid.gov/locations/> (it is a map and designates not programs in Kuwait). Which could mean it is a better country but needs to be considered when crafting a resolution.

Another potential problem (although it could be an advantage area as well) is the Kuwaiti Government doesn't just crackdown on movements, it also restricts information that can be release and published. It recently expelled the al jazeera news agency from within the country. After this happened, which also included a strengthening on restrictions for Kuwaiti news agencies, there were virtually no articles written about the democratic protests from this point on. I recognize this could be great for debate and a good reason to include Kuwait; however, it severely cuts the number of articles and information about the current events within Kuwait and also calls into question the reliability of news coming from Kuwait. While this may be great for debate, it could also prove problematic for productive and thoughtful debate about the country. I feel strongly about the education and knowledge produced from and through debate, and I think it is lost if the information we have access to is not valid or reliable. I am sure many will say that is what debate is for, and I agree with this to a large extent, but if both sides of the issue are false then the discussion has no chance to be fruitful.

Evidence

Kuwait is on the brink of full-scale protests and the opposition wants the removal of the current government.

Koons 2/11 [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/11/blow_up_in_the_gulf?page=full, JENNIFER KOONS | FEBRUARY 11, 2011 is a freelance reporter and a former journalism teacher at Northwestern University in Qatar].

DOHA, Qatar — Following sympathy demonstrations in front of the Egyptian Embassy in Manama, Bahrain, on Friday, Feb. 4, protesters

there have declared a "day of rage" on Feb. 14, nine years to the day after the country declared itself a constitutional monarchy. King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, a Sunni, rules over a Shiite-majority population that has long called for greater political representation -- though certainly without the urgency that has characterized recent opposition rhetoric, which includes a list of 14 demands: "releasing all [political] detainees and compensating them, reforming the judiciary system ... banning alcohol and prostitution ... [and] halting torture and human rights abuses."

Is the revolution coming to the Persian Gulf states?

The Persian Gulf was meant to be immune to the types of social and economic pressures that have been thought to be the catalysts for recent uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. The oil-rich Gulf monarchies, from Kuwait to Oman to Bahrain, have so far remained largely untouched by the wave of political protests sweeping across the region. But in the past few days, that has begun to change. Now, the Arabian monarchs -- historically protected from the need to democratize by their massive oil fortunes and close relations with the West -- are confronting a serious and growing threat to their legitimacy from protesters empowered by the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt.

Bahrain has a long history of subduing its Shiite minority, which has been involved in past attempts to take over power, dating back to the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, an Iran-backed Shiite group that attempted a coup in 1981. Last August, possibly cracking down in prelude to the Oct. 23 parliamentary election, the government [detained](#) hundreds of Shiites during anti-government street protests. Many of the detainees [allege](#) that they were tortured while in jail. In the days before the election, government officials blocked the opposition party's website and banned local news coverage of the arrests.

Sheikh Ali Salman, the leader of Al Wefaq, the main Shiite political group, [alleged](#) that at least 2,000 voters were blocked from casting ballots in October because of incomplete lists. Al Wefaq has claimed that Bahraini leaders gerrymandered voting districts and created a program to give citizenship to Sunnis from across the Middle East to alter the country's demographic balance. The government has also clamped down on the press and NGOs, said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch, blocking websites and arresting activists. And 25 Shiites from last fall's round-up are currently being tried under terrorism charges (two in absentia), trials that have only inflamed sentiments on both sides.

The latest protests are being organized by the same Shiite groups that organized the last round of demonstrations in the fall. But they are joined by Islamists, human rights activists, intellectuals, and several Sunni groups, according to Christopher Davidson, an expert on the Persian Gulf region at Durham University in Britain.

In an attempt to address popular grievances, King Hamad this week ordered a hike in food subsidies and reinstated welfare support for low-income families to compensate for inflation, according to the state-run Bahrain News Agency. Opposition groups expect further concessions during a scheduled speech by the king on Feb. 12. But these efforts may not go far enough to stave off a revolution, Davidson said.

"Bahrain is the most likely of the Gulf monarchies to face a broad opposition-led demonstration," he told me. "[The problem] is not merely a sectarian issue, but rather a widespread concern over an increasing wealth gap between regular Bahrainis and the ruling elite. I believe there is potential for an unseating of the current regime."

In a statement on their [Facebook page](#), organizers of the Feb. 14 rally accuse the Sunni-lead government of "suppress[ing] the legitimate rights of the people" and call for a new constitution and investigations into "economic, political and social violations."

"Events in Tunisia and Egypt convinced the Bahraini [opposition] that change could happen if there is a will," said Bahraini human rights activist Nabeel Rajab. "People have realized that they are stronger than they thought."

And Bahrain seems to just be the tip of the spear. Unrest is spreading across the Gulf states, with coordinated anti-government protests also planned in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

"By the beginning of March, we will have an idea if serious unrest in the Gulf is likely," said Davidson.

In Kuwait, planned protests are being scheduled to coincide with the upcoming 50th anniversary of the country's independence from the British Empire. The Kuwaiti government also appears to be shelling out for domestic peace. In an attempt to stave off discontent, the government recently announced a \$5 billion domestic aid package. And just a day after the protests broke out in Egypt, the Kuwaiti parliament approved further legislation to grant each citizen 1,000 Kuwaiti dinars, or \$3,580, and subsidize the cost of basic food items over the next 14 months. The payouts will begin Feb. 24 and will be given to all Kuwaitis over 21 years old.

The emir's office claimed that this grant was a one-time deal to celebrate Kuwait's 50th anniversary of independence. But, "given the nature of the gift -- specifically to offset high food costs -- this seems to be too much of a coincidence," Davidson said.

Meanwhile, in another attempt to show good faith, Kuwait Interior Minister Sheikh Jaber al-Khaled al-Sabah resigned this week amid an investigation that a Kuwaiti citizen was tortured to death in police custody.

A cross-faction opposition group called "The Fifth Fence" postponed until March 8 a planned anti-government rally as a result of the minister's resignation. "We still believe that the departure of this government is the only step that fulfils our demands," the group said in a statement promising that demonstrations would continue.

Islamist disruptions to Kuwaiti democracy destroy Democracy in the Middle East.

Pakistan Chronicle 4/9/11 [<http://www.pakistanchronicle.com/content/kuwait%E2%80%99s-democracy-troubles-arab-rulers>, Kuwait's democracy troubles Arab rulers, Published: June 25, 2009]

DUBAI: The ups and downs of parliamentary democracy in Kuwait are being used by Gulf Arab rulers to discredit the idea of representative government that dilutes their immense powers, analysts say.

A new episode in the soap opera of Kuwait's system began this week with an attempt by parliamentarians to force out the interior minister, who is a member of the ruling family. The Sabah family that dominates the cabinet is expected to remove him rather than see one of its own face a public thumbs-down in a no-confidence vote set for July 1. Last month the former British protectorate of 3.2 million — one of the world's largest oil exporters — held its third elections in three years, part of a protracted tussle for power between the ruling-family and elected parliamentarians.

But the trend in the Gulf, from commentary in state-dominated media to official statements, has been to cite Kuwait — unique in its wide, free vote for a parliament with teeth — as an argument for more dynastic and autocratic rule. The violence following Iran's recent elections has also raised Gulf fears of instability, giving another reason for no change.

Islamist and tribal deputies stand accused of holding back government development plans by voting down legislation proposed by cabinet and seeking no-confidence votes in Kuwaiti ministers.

"In recent months there was a lot of glee and schadenfreude about Kuwait's political problems. Many articles were written about the mess that Kuwait's democracy had got them into," said British academic Christopher Davidson, a Gulf specialist. Gulf countries often cite "khususiyya", or special characteristics, to justify limiting popular participation in government and prefer to avoid the word "democracy". In 2006 elections to the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates, for example, less than one percent of the country's native population was eligible to vote.

"Our leadership does not import ready-made models that may be valid for other societies but are certainly not suitable for our society," Dubai ruler and UAE vice-president Sheikh Mohammed said in an interview in April this year.

Western governments, who back the Gulf ruling families, also look askance at the sight of Islamists spoiling plans for economic liberalisation in Kuwait or gaining a say elsewhere.

"The way things go are not encouraging with development (projects) blocked by deputies. Even Kuwaitis are embarrassed about their democracy," said a Western diplomat in Riyadh.

Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef said this year the Gulf's largest country at 25 million people had no need for elections to its advisory Shura Council, and last month the absolute monarchy delayed municipal council polls for two years, snuffing out for now a brief democracy experiment.

Islamists opposed to relaxing clerical influence were the main winners in the Saudi municipal vote in 2005, which was held after Western pressure to democratise. Now many Gulf Arab liberals look to the ruling families to protect them from the Islamists, who have popular support.

Saudi intellectual Abdullah al-Ghaddami said Western-allied Gulf governments would always brand the strongest opposition force, Islamist or otherwise, as an obstacle to progress. "If we'd had elections 40 years ago the socialists and leftists would have won, since that was predominant then. Now it's the Islamists," he said. "Democracy cannot impose results that it wants. That's another form of dictatorship."

Analysts and democracy activists say the wrong lessons are being drawn from Kuwait's system, where deputies are seeking public accountability from ministers resistant to the concept.

Parliament does not form cabinets, and the prime minister, deputy prime minister, defence minister, foreign minister, information and interior are all in Sabah hands. Assembly deputies are voted in as individuals since political parties are banned. The Emir has the power to pass legislation by decree and has suspended parliament three times, including for years on end. Yet still government websites tout Kuwait as a "thriving democratic society with a democratic government". Turki al-Rasheed, a Saudi columnist who has observed Kuwaiti elections and ran a programme to encourage Saudis to vote in 2005, said ruling family members could not have it both ways.

"You cannot have royal protection and be a salaried employee," he said, dismissing the idea that Kuwait set a bad example for democracy in the region. "We don't want decoration, we want to question people who call the shots."

He said the Emir and his prime minister should appoint ministers based on merit rather than on bloodline. Whole cabinets have resigned rather than have senior al-Sabah members appear before the elected body, which triggered last month's elections as well as numerous cabinet reshuffles.

Killing private sector growth leads to reliance on Oil and Government Jobs which leads to instability. Current reforms will work to promote Private sector growth.

Egypt News 11' [<http://egyptcmnews.com/story-z865796>]

Private sector key to Kuwait's growth, March 9, 2011]

In his address, Al-Humaidi expressed concern at the inflation in the annual budget due to increasing public sector wage bills which can reach up to KD7.5 billion, projecting that these are set to increase to take up to 70 percent of the total state budget, while the expenditure on development will be only 14 percent of the total.

If matters continue at their current rate, he warned, the public sector wage bill for 2025 will come to KD25 billion, an immense burden on the state's coffers. The primary concern for Kuwait is its almost-complete reliance on oil as a source of income, said Al-Humaidi, pointing out that the profits from this sector represent 94 percent of Kuwait's annual revenue. He said that the recent oil price rises are rooted in concerns over regional volatility rather than based on demand.

We have a big problem, which is the downsizing of the private sector's role," he said, adding that there is no appetite among Kuwaitis for private sector growth, given the government's exaggerated support for the public sector and the great privileges available to all public sector workers. Al-Humaidi expressed concern that this **"governmental generosity" might lead to Kuwaitis taking to the streets to plead for it to write off their personal debts, warning that continuing in this fashion would lead to political and social disaster.**

The other guest speaker, Al-Saadoun, asserted that the primary problem in Kuwait is one of management, with the current government unable to offer the people real management or to move from those projects proposed under the existing system and those intended to advance development. The development-related plan requires the building of a state and the peaceful transfer of authority, he suggested, since all development-related projects require political stability and the existence of state institutions.

Al-Saadoun suggested that the development plan must be executed through the deployment of two simultaneous strategies, first identifying and avoiding the negative practices used in previous development initiatives so as to avoid similar consequences in the future, and secondly working to achieve genuine benefits **through letting the private sector participate directly and effectively in implementing the development plan and creating real job opportunities.** He asserted that current public sector employment practices are creating **"masked unemployment,"** which is problematic for the economy, as well as suggesting that a **gradually introduced system of private sector taxation would be another means of raising revenue.**

Al-Saadoun and Al-Humaidi both stressed the crucial importance of the private sector in strengthening Kuwait's economy, asserting that the Kuwaiti private sector is one of the most active and successful in the region in its investments and operations. Another speaker at the event, businessman Abdullah Najib Al-Mulla, also **stressed the important role played by the Kuwaiti private sector and the problems it is facing in the lack of enthusiasm from Kuwaitis to work for private sector employers who cannot compete with the pay and privileges offered by the public sector.**

Another of the prominent guest speakers at the seminar, Mahmoud Abou Al Oyoun, the executive manager of Kuwait International Bank and the former governor of the Egyptian Central Bank, said that the only common factor of any development work anywhere, whoever is carrying it out, is the vital importance of human resources. He stressed that workers are the assets to rely on in any development, saying that this is the standard whether the development plan in question successfully works out or not.

Economic Downturn in Private sector leads to social and political unrest in Kuwait.

Kuwait Times 11' [http://www.gulfbase.com/site/news/Private-sector-key-to-Kuwaits-growth_170113.aspx]

09/Mar/2011, Kuwait Times]

At its latest weekly seminar, the Arab Media Forum hosted former Kuwaiti finance minister Badr Al-Humaidi, along with the board director of Al-Shall Economic Consultants, Jassem Al-Saadoun, to offer an overview of the current economic situation in Kuwait and the general long-term economic outlook for the country.

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Kuwait is pushing Private sector reforms and growth

Arbetimes 11' [<http://www.arabtimesonline.com/NewsDetails/tabid/96/smld/414/ArticleID/167363/reftab/36/t/Oxford-Business-Group-launches-2011-Kuwait-report/Default.aspx>, Oxford Business Group launches 2011 Kuwait report Guide charts progress in economic diversification]

KUWAIT CITY, March 29: **Kuwait's efforts to boost foreign direct investment** by introducing a landmark privatisation bill are explored in a wide-ranging economic report just published by Oxford Business Group (OBG).

The Report: Kuwait 2011 provides comprehensive coverage of the ripple effects that **the new legislation is set to have as the country moves to diversify its economy**. It also looks in detail at additional **reforms earmarked by the government which are aimed at increasing the role of the private sector and driving economic growth**.

The Report includes a detailed, sector-by-sector guide for investors, together with a wide range of interviews with the country's most prominent political, economic and business leaders. The Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Deputy Premier for Economic Affairs, Minister of State for Development Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah both give their views on Kuwait's economic development.

Other high-profile interviewees include the Director-General of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development Abdulwahab Al-Bader and the Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Sheikh Salem AbdulAziz Al-Sabah.

The report also features contributions from key international personalities, including the UK Minister for Business and Enterprise Mark Prisk, and the CEO of Germany Trade and Invest Jürgen Friedrich.

OBG's new report places **Kuwait's** four-year Development Plan under the microscope, providing an analysis of the country's extensive plans to overhaul much of its infrastructure and public utilities. There is in-depth coverage of **legislative changes which could facilitate processes for foreign developers looking to invest in major projects, together with an account of the opportunities on the horizon for establishing public-private partnerships**.

(Oxford Business Group (OBG) is a global publishing, research and consultancy firm, which

publishes economic and political intelligence on the markets of the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and the Caribbean.)

Government reforms lead to Private sector growth and economic recovery.

Kamco Research 11' [<http://www.kamconline.com/NewsDetails.aspx?newsId=43920&language=en>, KAMCO (March 6, 2011): A report prepared by KAMCO Research that analyzes the performance of the Kuwait Economy and provides a detailed analysis of the current economic situation in Kuwait as well as the effects of the global financial crisis on Kuwait economic prospects over 2011.]

Kuwait Economic Outlook

Kuwait's macroeconomic performance during the years prior to 2008 was strong due to high oil prices and growing private sector especially real estate and financial services, but performance during 2009 and the short to medium term outlook was adversely affected by the economic crisis and the drop in oil prices from its 2008 high of around USD 137 per barrel. The sharp drop in oil prices during late 2008 and the beginning of 2009 has substantially reduced the fiscal and external current account surpluses.

Kuwait's economy was hit hard during 2009 mainly on the back of lower oil prices and production cuts. During the first half of 2009, oil prices tumbled to USD 37.5 per barrel, real estate and asset prices plunged, and external financing dried up. Kuwait current account surplus fell to KD 8.2 bn (USD 28.5 bn) in 2009, after having increased by more than tenfold over the past decade to KD 17.4 bn (USD 64.8 bn) in 2008. According to the Central Bank of Kuwait's latest data, Kuwait Nominal oil GDP contracted by about 40 per cent during 2009 but a massive step-up in government spending along with central bank liquidity support to the banking sector helped mitigate the impact of the crisis on the non-oil sector which grew by 5.7 per cent over the period.

The output is projected to improve gradually over the medium to long term horizon mainly on the back of a strong projected oil demand in time with the global economic recovery. **The new government regulatory initiatives and increased projected spending are likely to play a major role in pushing the economic performance forward.** In addition, **the implementation of structural reforms**, the four year development plan and the establishment of the Capital Market Authority **are crucial measures in order to diversify the Kuwaiti economy through private sector-led growth.**

Supported by an expansionary fiscal stance and high oil prices **we estimate a recovery in 2010**, with Nominal GDP expected to grow by 17 per cent after a sharp contraction of 21.2 per cent during 2009. The 2010 projections stem from a modest recovery of around 5 per cent in the non-oil GDP upon sluggish credit markets and a struggling private sector, especially real estate and financial services. While Oil GDP projections are based on the recovery in oil prices from 2009 average of USD 60 per barrel to around USD 75 per barrel during 2010 along with an estimated 3 per cent increase in production levels driving the Oil GDP component to grow by KD 4.5 bn (USD 15.7 bn) over the period.

Political instability is high in Kuwait and is preventing key reforms and leads to social crackdowns.

Katzman 11' [Congressional Research Specialist: Kuwait: Security, Reform, and U.S. Policy. Kenneth Katzman

Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs February 8, 2011 <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21513.pdf>]

Although Kuwait remains a staunch U.S. ally, it is troubled domestically. For the past five years, wrangling between the elected National Assembly and the ruling Al Sabah family primarily over the political dominance and alleged corruption of the Al Sabah has brought virtual political paralysis to Kuwait. In March 2009, the infighting led to the second constitutional dissolution of the National Assembly in one year,

setting up new parliamentary elections on May 16, 2009. That produced an Assembly that was considered more pro-government, and included four women, the first to be elected to the Assembly in Kuwait since women were given the vote in 2005. However, over the subsequent two years, the Assembly has turned against the ruling family, producing two unsuccessful attempts (the most recent on January 5, 2011) to vote no confidence in Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser al-Muhammad al-Ahmad Al Sabah.

The political deadlock has prevented breaking long-standing legislative and regulatory logjams holding up key energy projects, including some projects involving major foreign energy firms. The political infighting has also tarnished Kuwait's reputation in the Persian Gulf as a model of protections of rule of law and human rights as the Al Sabah have turned to increasingly harsh measures to suppress dissent. These measures have included beatings of demonstrators and imprisonments of journalists. However, Kuwait's tradition of vibrant civil society and expression of opinion led to the resignation of the Interior Minister, held responsible for repressive measures, on February 7, 2011, in advance of a planned public demonstration.

Political tension is high in Kuwait. It is preventing privatization and economic reforms.

Katzman 11' [Congressional Research Specialist: Kuwait: Security, Reform, and U.S. Policy. Kenneth Katzman

Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs February 8, 2011 <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21513.pdf>

2010-2011 Parliamentary Session: Disputes Expand

The political deadlock continued through the summer of 2010, although muted by the tradition of Kuwait's leaders escaping Kuwait's searing summer heat to vacation in Europe or other parts of the Middle East, such as Lebanon. The fall session of parliament was opened on October 26, 2010, by the Amir, and included presentation of the government's program for the coming year, delivered by Prime Minister Nasser. In his opening statement, the Amir called for unity and an end to widening sectarian (Sunni-Shiite) splits. During the opening meetings, the government was able to achieve appointment of its allies to key permanent committees, including interior and defense, and the legal and legislative committee.²

However, opposition deputies resumed their criticism of the government in subsequent days, threatening to question Interior Minister Jabir (for the third time in two parliamentary sessions) for his decision to release from custody two Iranian drug traffickers. Some Assembly deputies are attempting to focus the session to concrete legislative issues, including consideration of draft anticorruption and consumer protection bills. Others want to question why the government has been slow to implement a privatization law passed in the winter-spring 2010 session, but which entered into force in September 2010.

The tensions that built throughout 2010 grew nearly unsustainable by the end of the year, and have carried over into 2011. A demonstration by parliamentarians and civil society activists on December 8, 2010, protesting what they asserted were government attempts to limit National Assembly powers, was broken up by security forces; several parliamentarians were reportedly beaten. That incident sparked another call to formally question the Prime Minister on December 28, 2010 (the eighth time he appeared before the Assembly) and a date of January 5, 2011, was set for a no-confidence motion. Of the 50 elected Assembly members, 22 supported the no confidence motion and 25 opposed it, with one abstention, and two not voting.³ Some saw the vote as indicating that the government is

losing support among tribal deputies mainly from the outer districts of Kuwait City, which are inhabited by generally less affluent, naturalized citizens.⁴

Some experts assert that the government is increasingly deriving support from Shiite parliamentarians, who in the past have tended to reliably side with the opposition. The no-confidence motion by no means resolved the conflict between the government and the opposition within the Assembly. Oppositionists in the Assembly, supported by youths under a banner called the “Fifth Fence”—and who might have been inspired by the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt—called for the resignation Interior Minister Jabir al-Khalid Al Sabah on the grounds of “undemocratic practice.” They accuse him of failing to prevent the alleged torturing to death of a man in custody for illegal liquor sales. February 8, 2011, was set for a public protest—the same day the Interior Minister was to be questioned by the Assembly. However, in advance of the questioning, the Minister resigned and was replaced by Shaykh Ahmad al Humud Al Sabah; the Fifth Fence subsequently postponed the protest until March 8, 2011. Still, in consideration of Kuwait’s relative affluence and tradition of free expression through editorials and commentary, very few experts predict a broad popular uprising in Kuwait along the lines of those seen in January-February 2011 in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Unrest leads to inaction on economic reforms.

Katzman 11’ [Congressional Research Specialist: Kuwait: Security, Reform, and U.S. Policy. Kenneth Katzman Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs February 8, 2011 <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21513.pdf>] Kuwaiti Economic Policy

The global financial crisis of 2008-2009 caused unrest in Kuwait over falling stock prices and the effects of lower oil prices. As noted above, executive-legislative disputes delayed passage of stimulus measures to address the crisis. However, as the crisis has abated, the Assembly has taken some steps to try to ensure Kuwait’s long term economic health. The body passed legislation, which took effect September 2010, to privatize major sectors of the Kuwait economy. The planned privatization of Kuwait Airways is reportedly moving forward as well.

However, some Kuwaitis, particularly those newly naturalized and less affluent than longtime citizens, fear that privatization will bring higher unemployment. The deflationary financial environment of late 2008 was a contrast with mid-2008; in June 2008, the National Assembly passed a salary increase for public sector employees and approved additional citizens’ benefits to help them cope with the mounting inflation rate (then estimated at 10.14%.)

The government-Assembly political deadlock also has prevented movement on several major initiatives, the most prominent of which is Project Kuwait. The project, backed by the Kuwaiti government, would open Kuwait’s northern oil fields to foreign investment to generate about 500,000 barrels per day of extra production. The Assembly has blocked the \$8.5 billion project for over a decade because of concerns about Kuwait’s sovereignty, and observers say no compromise is in sight. As far as a project to build a fourth oil refinery, estimated to cost \$8 billion, the Assembly blocked the project in 2008 by alleging that the contracts awarded by the state oil company did not comply with procedures set out by Kuwait’s Central Tenders Committee, which handles all public sector contracts. It has not advanced.

Kuwait economy forecasting growth reliant upon political and fiscal stability

Odion-Esene 10' [6/1/2010, Brai Staff Writer, <http://imarketnews.com/?q=node/14314>]

WASHINGTON (MNI) - Standard & Poor's Ratings Services Tuesday affirmed its 'AA-/A-1+' sovereign credit ratings for Kuwait, the outlook is stable, citing the government's strong

financial position and the Emirate's wealth of resources. Meanwhile the National Bank of Kuwait -- Kuwait's largest financial institution -- predicts Kuwait real GDP will grow by 3% in 2010, before accelerating toward a 4% to 5% range by 2011-2012, "depending on the government's ability to deliver on large plans and projects in coming months".

The ratings on Kuwait are supported by the sovereign's "rich resource endowment," S&P said, which, combined with prudent policies, has enabled the government to build very strong external and fiscal balance sheet positions in recent years.

According to the NBK, the Kuwait government's preliminary budget figures for FY'2009/10 show a surplus of KD 8.2 billion (\$25.7 billion). The bank expects that number to be revised, close to KD 6.0 billion (\$18.8 billion), when the final accounts are released. This would be the 12th consecutive surplus and would leave the state's finances "in superb shape," it said. This, the bank added, gives Kuwait the flexibility and latitude to stand behind an estimated KD 31 billion (\$97.2 billion) worth of projects planned for the next 4 years "In our view, these strengths comfortably balance our view of the State's increased contingent liabilities, high institutional risks, and the slow progress thus far on structural reform, which remains a constraint upon economic growth," S&P said.

Kuwait economic health dependent upon regional and political stability- disruption cripples credit

Odion-Esene 10' [6/1/2010, Brai Staff Writer, <http://imarketnews.com/?q=node/14314>]

The ratings agency said the stable outlook on Kuwait balances the government's strong financial position against elevated regional geopolitical risks, increased contingent liabilities, and potential impediments to growth. It added that significantly reduced geopolitical risk could lead to a rise in rating in the future. Additionally, the firm said a stabilization of the relationship between the government and the parliament -- "along with a political consensus that helps to

accelerate both private domestic and foreign investments" -- should alleviate major impediments to growth and would be positive for the rating. It warned, however, that a

"sustained worsening" of political and event risks, such as a deterioration in relations with Iran, or a significant and sustained erosion of the government's asset position, could put Kuwait's creditworthiness under pressure. In a report on the Kuwait economy published over the weekend, the National Bank of Kuwait said the economy is recovering this year and real GDP should grow by 3.0%. The non-oil sector is expected to lead with growth of 4.0% while the oil sector will expand by 1.4%, recovering along with world oil demand. It noted that the consumer sector is growing, and real estate is improving, returning to levels of activity not seen since 2007-08. "Except in commercial real estate, where oversupply is weighing on the sector." The remaining sectors, though healthier, await government spending to improve further. The **NBK**

added that as they gradually come on line, government projects should lead to faster growth in 2011 and beyond. Inflation in 2010 should be steady at 4.2%, it concluded.

Islamist disruptions to Kuwaiti democracy are destroying Democracy in the Middle East.

Pakistan Chronicle 4/9/11 [<http://www.pakistanchronicle.com/content/kuwait%E2%80%99s-democracy-troubles-arab-rulers>, Kuwait's democracy troubles Arab rulers, Published: June 25, 2009]

DUBAI: The ups and downs of parliamentary democracy in Kuwait are being used by Gulf Arab rulers to discredit the idea of representative government that dilutes their immense powers, analysts say.

A new episode in the soap opera of Kuwait's system began this week with an attempt by parliamentarians to force out the interior minister, who is a member of the ruling family. The Sabah family that dominates the cabinet is expected to remove him rather than see one of its own face a public thumbs-down in a no-confidence vote set for July 1. Last month the former British protectorate of 3.2 million — one of the world's largest oil exporters — held its third elections in three years, part of a protracted tussle for power between the ruling-family and elected parliamentarians.

But the trend in the Gulf, from commentary in state-dominated media to official statements, has been to cite Kuwait — unique in its wide, free vote for a parliament with teeth — as an argument for more dynastic and autocratic rule. The violence following Iran's recent elections has also raised Gulf fears of instability, giving another reason for no change.

Islamist and tribal deputies stand accused of holding back government development plans by voting down legislation proposed by cabinet and seeking no-confidence votes in Kuwaiti ministers.

"In recent months there was a lot of glee and schadenfreude about Kuwait's political problems. Many articles were written about the mess that Kuwait's democracy had got them into," said British academic Christopher Davidson, a Gulf specialist. Gulf countries often cite "khususiyya", or special characteristics, to justify limiting popular participation in government and prefer to avoid the word "democracy". In 2006 elections to the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates, for example, less than one percent of the country's native population was eligible to vote.

"Our leadership does not import ready-made models that may be valid for other societies but are certainly not suitable for our society," Dubai ruler and UAE vice-president Sheikh Mohammed said in an interview in April this year.

Western governments, who back the Gulf ruling families, also look askance at the sight of Islamists spoiling plans for economic liberalisation in Kuwait or gaining a say elsewhere.

"The way things go are not encouraging with development (projects) blocked by deputies. Even Kuwaitis are embarrassed about their democracy," said a Western diplomat in Riyadh.

Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef said this year the Gulf's largest country at 25 million people had no need for elections to its advisory Shura Council, and last month the absolute monarchy delayed municipal council polls for two years, snuffing out for now a brief democracy experiment.

Islamists opposed to relaxing clerical influence were the main winners in the Saudi municipal vote in 2005, which was held after Western pressure to democratise. Now many Gulf Arab liberals look to the ruling families to protect them from the Islamists, who have popular support.

Saudi intellectual Abdullah al-Ghaddami said Western-allied Gulf governments would always brand the strongest opposition force, Islamist or otherwise, as an obstacle to progress. "If we'd had elections 40 years ago the socialists and leftists would have won, since that was predominant then. Now it's the Islamists," he said. "Democracy cannot impose results that it wants.

That's another form of dictatorship."

Analysts and democracy activists say the wrong lessons are being drawn from Kuwait's system, where deputies are seeking public accountability from ministers resistant to the concept.

Parliament does not form cabinets, and the prime minister, deputy prime minister, defence minister, foreign minister, information and interior are all in Sabah hands. Assembly deputies are voted in as individuals since political parties are banned. The Emir has the power to pass legislation by decree and has suspended parliament three times, including for years on end. Yet still government websites tout Kuwait as a "thriving democratic society with a democratic government". Turki al-Rasheed, a Saudi columnist who has observed Kuwaiti elections and ran a programme to encourage Saudis to vote in 2005, said ruling family members could not have it both ways.

"You cannot have royal protection and be a salaried employee," he said, dismissing the idea that Kuwait set a bad example for democracy in the region. "We don't want decoration, we want to question people who call the shots."

He said the Emir and his prime minister should appoint ministers based on merit rather than on bloodline. Whole cabinets have resigned rather than have senior al-Sabah members appear before the elected body, which triggered last month's elections as well as numerous cabinet reshuffles.

Strong Kuwait economy sustains Middle East democracy

Terril 7 [Dr. W. Andrew, senior international security analyst at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, September Strategic Studies Institute

<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/summary.cfm?q=788>]

Kuwait has been a close military partner of the United States since a U.S.-led military coalition liberated it from the iron grip of Iraqi occupation in 1991. The U.S.-Kuwait relationship since that time has been consolidated as an important alliance for both countries. Although Kuwait is a small country, it is also strategically located and supports ongoing security relations with the United States. The importance of Kuwait's strategic position can be expected to increase as the United States reduces its presence in postSaddam Iraq but still seeks to influence events there and throughout the Gulf region. Kuwait's strategic importance also increased following the U.S. decision to remove its combat forces from Saudi Arabia in 2003.³ Additionally, Kuwait rests upon approximately 10 percent of the world's known oil reserves and is expanding its efforts to explore for natural gas, making it a vital economic ally. More recently, and also of interest to the United States, the Kuwaiti experience is emerging as an especially important ongoing experiment in democratic institution-building and the expansion of democratic practices. This approach to governance is being implemented in ways that support U.S. goals for increased democratization of the region, although elections have also helped to empower some extremely conservative Islamists, such as members of the Kuwaiti Islamic Constitutional Movement, which is the political arm of the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood.⁴

Iran influence causes political instability in Kuwait recent revolutionary guard capture proves

Charbel 10 (Bechara Nassar, June 4, taught @ American University @Beruit, Middle East Online, <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/opinion/?id=39390>)

Iran–Gulf relations further worsened after the Islamic Republic announced the resumption of its nuclear programs, which Gulf countries see as a direct threat to its security and oil installations, and as a pointer to growing Iranian influence in the region that could lead to a major imbalance in power. What do Gulf countries fear from a nuclear Iran? First, we find an upsurge in Shiite influence. There is growing concern among Arab leaders over Iran's influence and its effects on Shiite minorities in Gulf countries—like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain. These minorities live in complete harmony in their countries but foreign interference and instigation could fuel disturbance and instability. In the recent past, we witnessed the removal of a Bahraini minister of state, Mansour bin Rajab, in wake of charges of money laundering for Iranian Revolutionary Guard as a means to foil sanctions imposed on it. Although details of the investigations have not been revealed, the issue ranges from money laundering to the sale of banned Iranian drugs to countries like Azerbaijan and Columbia, and to other less serious concerns that are linked to influential parties in Tehran. In Kuwait, security agencies have arrested a network of spies that worked for Iranian Revolutionary Guard. The mission of these spies was to keep tabs on Kuwait's vital military facilities and locations of US forces in the country, in addition to sending reports on the political situation in Kuwait. Although Kuwaiti public prosecution issued a circular against the publication of the incident because it is sub-judice, the real concern was that national unity could be affected. The concern was legitimate as some Shiite media sources—sympathetic to Tehran—launched a counter attack by calling the news on the busting of the network as mere hearsay that was aimed at sectarian instigation and was in the interest of Israel. It is certain that when Iran gets a nuclear bomb it would further embolden these elements and increase the influence of Iran, if it continues with its current behavior. This attitude is deepening the contradictions in society and making a sizeable portion of Gulf citizenry believe that Iran is their protector and that it is capable of supporting them by participating in politics, economy and decision-making.

