

Kuwait- Summary

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Background:

Kuwait is moderately Arab Spring-y, its one of the closest US allies in the region, and its often cited as the most democratic country in the Middle East. For example, they have had a constitutional system since 1992, one year after their liberation from Iraqi control. Women have had full political rights since 2005 and even hold seats in their Parliament. However, scholars are worried there is a big risk of democratic backsliding in Kuwait, which could send a dangerous signal in the region.

The only data we could find on US democracy assistance to Kuwait shows that from 1990-2005, Kuwait did not receive any USAID democracy assistance. In 2010, Kuwait received only \$15,000 in democracy assistance. From <http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/gratis/SeligsonGraphics-19-2.pdf> and <http://marketplace.publicradio.org/maps/middle-east/us-aid.html>

Reasons to include Kuwait:

Has a few “US key” warrants, “Kuwait key” democracy model warrants, more advantages than just a big democracy advantage

Reasons not to include:

Doesn't have the big think tank reports with multiple solvency cards, but maybe that is forthcoming since Kuwait's Arab Spring-esque turmoil is still fairly fresh?

Should Kuwait be included?:

Hard to say until we see the other country work. There are not many Kuwait affs under the most limited “democracy assistance” phrase- some support for “constitutional reform” and some for “electoral reform”, though the authors really seem to be discussing the same major issues. Expanding to “democracy promotion” isn't helpful. It just seems like we are in a time period where the literature has not yet produced a robust set of proposals for US action in response to recent events in Kuwait. That said, if many other country work-groups return with the same sentiment for their countries, I do think Kuwait has going for it that there are warrants, if not tons of cards, as to why the US should support Kuwaiti democracy more than it does in the Squo.

Solvency/Proposals for US action

Kuwait is in need of political reforms—question of how the US can assist in the transition. This isolates a couple of affirmative possibilities

--freedom of speech

--political party formation

Real Clear World 4/6

In Kuwait, Protests Meet the Water's Edge,

http://www.realclearworld.com/blog/2011/04/in_kuwait_protests_meet_the_waters_edge.html

Kuwait has certainly been quiet relative to its neighbors since Tunisia erupted in January. With no taxes on its citizenry, a 95 percent literacy rate and a parliament with real powers predating any other in the Gulf region, most experts expect that quiet to hold. But Kuwaitis are well aware of the pan-Arab uprisings that surround them, and some believe the small Gulf city-state may be the next stop for major protest. “The potential for problems are there,” said Zalmay Khalilzad, former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq and Afghanistan, citing political corruption, the illegal status of the Bedoun and the role of the emir. “The huge challenge for the U.S. is how we should assist the Kuwaitis to head off such a crisis,” Khalilzad added. “Additional reforms may be needed to head this off.” The emir and his family cannot be publicly criticized, and in early February, one of Kuwait’s largest protests in recent memory erupted over the stateless status of nearly 80,000 residents. Security forces in Jahra quickly descended on the protests, which turned violent within hours. Corruption is also a central issue challenging Kuwait’s parliamentarians. And while parliament has in some ways liberalized over the years - women have been able to vote and run for election since 2005 - there are no formal political parties representing the sides of debates Kuwaitis want to have publicly. U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait Deborah Jones disagreed with Ambassador Khalilzad, noting that Kuwait has a “built-in elasticity,” with a free press and freely elected parliament. Jones did, however, concede the country’s need for political reforms. “I think we’ve seen that they have tried to strike a balance between allowing demonstrations and freedom of speech without allowing violence,” Jones said. “I don’t think we’re headed for crisis. I think, like everywhere, we are in a phase of transition. The difference in sophistication is clear in the fact that their first blogosphere activity, politically, was to reduce the number of voting districts,” Jones added. “I mean, this is a big difference from saying, ‘tear down the government.’” Kuwait is one of the most important logistical allies for the United States in the Middle East, serving as a stabilizing force next to Iran and Iraq. “We have a lot at stake there,” Khalilzad noted. “But it also means we have relationships with people. We can influence what happens.”

US support for Kuwaiti democracy prevents backsliding.

Brown 09 (Nathan, senior associate at the CEIP’s Middle East program and professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington, “Moving Out of Kuwait’s Political Impasse,” JUNE 2009, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=23320&prog=zgp&proj=zme>)

Is There a Place for the United States? Kuwaiti democracy owes a strong debt to the strong support of President Bush—ironically, however, it was George H. W. Bush, not his son, who bears responsibility for undergirding Kuwait’s democratic institutions. The elder Bush tied the restoration of Kuwait following the Iraqi occupation to the restoration of its constitution and parliament. In 1991, Kuwaiti leaders were made to understand that the U.S. security guarantee depended on their acquiescence to a political system that allowed for popular participation.[6] Kuwaiti democracy owes a strong debt to the strong support of President Bush **Ironically, the younger President Bush**, far more identified with expansive rhetoric about democracy and freedom, **undermined U.S. support for Kuwaiti democracy. The U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq depended heavily on Kuwaiti cooperation, and U.S. interest in domestic Kuwaiti political affairs quickly atrophied**. **But** the United States still remains the pillar of Kuwaiti security policy and **there are limited but definite signs that over the past year the United States has revived the elder Bush’s policy**. The current ambassador to Kuwait, for instance, publicly stated that “our hope is that Kuwait finds ways within its constitution to move forward,”[7] acknowledging the gridlock but also suggesting that an unconstitutional suspension of parliament would not be greeted warmly by the United States. The United States need not involve itself in any of the details of Kuwaiti constitutional engineering. **But if the revival of a general U.S. interest in the domestic scene is sustained, the results could be quite salutary for the cause of political reform in Kuwait. By politely discouraging the default option of an unconstitutional dissolution of parliament, the United States can encourage Kuwaiti political forces to**

bargain out real reform and discourage the ruling family from imposing an illusory or short-term solution. As opposed to most other states in the region, **basic democratic structures and practices exist; they only need some tinkering and some protection.**

US support is the key issue for Kuwaiti democracy.

Brown 09 (Nathan, senior associate at the CEIP's Middle East program and professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington, "Kuwaiti Democracy in Crisis," MAY 16, 2009, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/?fa=view&id=23127>)

The Kuwaiti Experiment in Trouble? **Kuwaiti democracy is threatened** not directly by the gradual erosion of political certainty—democracy is all about uncertainty, after all—but **by the disillusionment this has caused.** And perhaps **not notable is the declining democratic determination of two critical supporters of Kuwaiti democracy**—the business community and **the United States.** The traditional business elite, the backbone of the constitutional order in a previous generation, has watched as the parliament has paralyzed decision making and become the preserve of tribal and neighborhood deputies more interested in securing benefits for their constituents than in transforming Kuwait into an international economic powerhouse. And the traditional business elite's economic position in Kuwait has also declined in relative terms, as new economic actors have entered the scene. The United States has followed a stranger pattern. **In the 1990s,** at a time when it payed only lip service to the idea of democracy elsewhere in the Arab world, **American support for Kuwaiti democracy was critical. But under the leadership of George W. Bush, when the United States elevated democracy to the defining element of its declared policy, American priorities in Kuwait turned sharply in the opposite direction. The American relationship with Kuwait was important—but primarily as a means for moving equipment and troops into and out of Iraq. Internal Kuwaiti developments were of secondary interest.** As the parliament seemed to become a place where Islamists of various stripes operated freely, it was viewed as a less friendly institution in official American eyes. To be sure, the fact that Kuwaiti women were granted full political rights attracted American attention—but the fact that all Kuwaitis, male and female alike, were in danger of losing all of their political rights excited no mention. There may be a slight shift under the Obama administration—the current US ambassador did express her hope that Kuwaitis would resolve their problems thorough constitutional means—but **the United States is both weaker and more distracted than it was a decade ago.**

Kuwait = MEPI country

Current US efforts regarding democratization

Katzman 5/19

Kenneth, Specialist in Mideast Affairs, CRS Report, Kuwait: Security, Reform, and U.S. Policy,
<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21513.pdf>

The U.S. Embassy in Kuwait uses various programming tools, including discussions with Kuwaiti leaders, public diplomacy, and funds from the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), to encourage further democratization. However, Kuwait is considered perhaps the furthest along in the Gulf on democratization, and some believe U.S. policy should concentrate elsewhere in the Gulf where civil society and public participation are less well established. In Kuwait, MEPI funds have been used to enhance the capabilities of the media, to promote women's rights, to support democracy initiatives, and to provide a broad spectrum of educational opportunities. Several Kuwaiti organizations, such as the Kuwait Women's Cultural and Social Society, actively promote democratization.

***** DemA Mechanism stuff *****

Electoral Reform

Kuwait needs electoral reform.

Brown 09 (Nathan, senior associate at the CEIP's Middle East program and professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington, "Moving Out of Kuwait's Political Impasse," JUNE 2009, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=23320&prog=zgp&proj=zme>)

Three such **devices immediately suggest themselves. A first would be a better-designed electoral reform.** The 2006 measure was supposed to diminish vote buying and tribal voting and encourage broadly programmatic politics. It had the precise opposite effect; **in the 2008 and 2009 elections, the role of blocs and proto-parties declined,** large tribes made the transition effortlessly (smaller ones were often big losers), **vote buying apparently continued,** and the successful candidates generally owed their election to a host of individual factors (deep pockets being one of the most important). The **tribes are probably too deeply entrenched** to dislodge completely and their effect is not wholly unhealthy (they do force the needs of outlying communities to be met), **but an electoral system that actually offered real incentives to the formation of coherent political blocs would make for a very different parliament.** Some Kuwaitis have even spoken of converting the country into a single electoral district with Kuwaitis choosing among party lists. Such a system would probably have to be combined with a high threshold to prevent the lists from being a device for further entrenching tribal representation. **A more robust system of blocs and parties would change the ruling family's way of doing business,** but it would not fundamentally threaten its position.

Constitutional Reform

Constitutional reform key to Kuwaiti political stability.

Hasan 6-10-11 (Omar, Kuwait needs deep reforms to end crises: analysts, http://www.zawya.com/story.cfm/sidANA20110610T055200ZPQO39/Kuwait_needs_deep_reforms_to_end_crisis_analysts)

Kuwait must carry out major constitutional reforms, including limiting the powers of the Al-Sabah ruling family, in order to resolve its lingering political dilemma, analysts and politicians say. So far, Kuwait has avoided the unrest sweeping many Arab countries, but **youth activists have been holding huge rallies** on Fridays for the past three weeks to press for the ouster of the prime minister. A power struggle between Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Mohammad al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and his deputy Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Sabah, both senior members of the ruling family, became public during a stormy parliamentary session on May 31. It was not the only dispute within the family. Opposition MPs immediately launched a petition calling for the dismissal of both officials, holding them responsible for the country's crises. **"Political turmoil will not end without real, deep-rooted constitutional reforms,"** said Nasser al-Abdali, **head of the private Kuwait Society for the Advancement of Democracy**. "This means keeping the ruling family away from running the executive management of the country on the way to achieving something similar to a constitutional monarchy," Abdali told AFP. Unchallenged for more than 250 years, the ruling family in OPEC's fifth largest oil producer is accused of being embroiled in an intense power struggle that is stalling development. **"A dangerous struggle is taking place among members of the ruling family,"** liberal MP Abdulrahman al-Anjari said. "I am afraid that **if no real constitutional reforms are implemented, these disputes will spread** like cancer. We have to contemplate adopting constitutional monarchy," Anjari said. Mohammad al-Dallal, representative of the Islamic Constitutional Movement, the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, warned that **"their (the family) infighting is damaging the country," and risking its very existence**. Independent political analyst Saleh al-Saeedi believes infighting within senior members of the ruling family has recently intensified. "They are fighting for power, financial and economic influence and for control of the decision-making process... The intensity of the struggle has sharply increased," Saeedi told AFP. "Fighting within the ruling family has moved to the street, the media and parliament and will be difficult to bring it back to its old (secret) form... the process appears to be out of control," he said. Besides the emir, crown prince and the prime minister, members of the ruling family also permanently hold the key cabinet posts of defence, interior and foreign affairs. Kuwait has been rocked by a series of political crises since Sheikh Nasser became prime minister in February 2006. Six governments have resigned and parliament dissolved three times. **Kuwait's version of democracy is also blamed for triggering disputes. Often described as a "half democracy", the Kuwaiti parliamentary system,** introduced about 50 years ago, **is seen by many to have several serious shortcomings. Under the constitution, many powers are concentrated in the hands of the emir who selects the prime minister, dissolves parliament and approves ministers and, above all, cannot be criticised.** Non-stop political wrangling has been blamed for stalling a \$112-billion four-year development plan adopted in 2010, besides delaying mega projects including those in the vital oil sector. Despite its massive surpluses of about \$300 billion, 94 percent of Kuwait's income still comes from oil while almost three quarters of the gross domestic product is generated by the public sector. MPs have repeatedly claimed widespread corruption in most public agencies which the government failed to halt. According to the Berlin-based Transparency International, Kuwait slipped on the Corruption Perception Index from 35 in 2003 to 66 in 2009 before improving to 54 last year, but remains in last place among its Gulf partners. Besides limiting the role of the ruling family, analysts and **political groups have called for key reforms. "We must have a law to legalise political parties and amend the constitution to boost popular participation,"** Saeedi said. **Political parties are banned in Kuwait** but several groups act as de facto parties. **"Political disputes will continue in the country if these reforms are not adopted soon,"** Abdali said, while opposition MPs insist that ousting the prime minister is a pre-condition to end the crises.

Constitutional reform good

Brown 09 (Nathan, senior associate at the CEIP's Middle East program and professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington, "Moving Out of Kuwait's Political Impasse," JUNE 2009, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=23320&prog=zgp&proj=zme>)

A second device would be constitutional reform. Rather than having cabinet members appointed without a parliamentary vote (and often without more than rudimentary parliamentary consultation), a vote of confidence could be required. And rather than having each minister individually answerable for his policies and conduct, the principle of collective responsibility could be introduced. **The reform would offer parliament a far larger voice in the formation of the cabinet but once it expressed that voice the resulting cabinet could be more confident of a majority for its initiatives.** Ministers would have to defend their policies jointly, forcing them to coordinate on policy rather than march off in different directions as they do now. And, **much to the ruling family's delight, the parliament would not be able to harass the cabinet through grilling individual ministers.** Of course, the same parliamentary questioning would still take place, but the drama of a grilling—a procedure that resembles a political trial more than a routing parliamentary inquiry—would no longer take center stage because it would no longer be seen as a prelude to a vote of confidence in an individual minister. At present, grillings are deemed sufficiently confrontational that Kuwaiti public life seems to revolve around nothing else when they are pending; grillings in Kuwait receive the same obsessive attention that most societies reserve for major sporting events. And ruling family members often regard it as beneath their dignity to submit themselves to such a spectacle. True majority rule with collective responsibility might be more boring, but it would also likely be far more productive.

*Political party/consensus problems

Brown 09 (Nathan, senior associate at the CEIP's Middle East program and professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington, "Moving Out of Kuwait's Political Impasse," JUNE 2009, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=23320&prog=zgp&proj=zme>)

But it is not simply greater inclusiveness that ties Kuwait's political system in knots. After all, many functioning democracies are more diverse than Kuwait. The system's paralysis is caused by the strong preference for consensus and the absence of parties. The combination gives every small group in Kuwait not merely a voice but also a veto. In a sense, the system requires consensus but simultaneously makes that consensus difficult to achieve.

Consensus is required both formally (a small number of deputies can launch a grilling and a no confidence motion) and informally (the cabinet generally reflects a great plurality of political inclinations and constituencies rather than a narrow majority coalition). Similarly, the weakness of the party system has a legal root (parties are simply not recognized under Kuwaiti law; even the electoral system has turned out to be far more amenable to tribal candidates and wealthy individuals than to political parties). But just as important is a critical informal tendency: the ruling family deals with the citizenry as a collection of individuals, groups, constituencies, and demands and has resisted any attempts to deal with the parliament as a collection of political blocs. The result is that elections rearrange much but resolve little.

Kuwait actually took a lurch toward a political party system in 2006. Taking advantage of their successful assembling of a coalition for electoral reform, three strong blocs formed in the parliament (Islamic, populist, and liberal) and worked to hammer out a common legislative agenda. Such blocs had a long history in Kuwait but had varied considerably in their ability to act cohesively; even when they had shown some internal unity they almost always eschewed any efforts to work together. But for a moment in 2006, it seemed like a cohesive parliamentary majority had formed (termed by its members the "bloc of blocs")—a troubling one for the government to be sure, since it was oppositional in character. The ruling family was hardly likely to allow the new majority coalition to form the government—that would have surrendered cabinet formation wholly to the elected parliament. But it did not even seek to favor one bloc and exclude the others, a move that might have fostered the nascent party system while maintaining a strong ruling family role.

Instead, the ruling family showed a preference to returning to an atomizing divide and rule approach, reaching out to particular deputies, co-opting some members of each group and playing off the blocs against each other haphazardly. After the 2009 elections, for instance, a cabinet was cobbled together that included a motley group of tribalists, representatives of different ideological currents, ruling family members of varying reputations, and a few technical experts.

The blocs not only fell out with each other, as might have been expected, but they also began to disintegrate. (By 2009 matters had progressed to the point that when I asked one Islamist to describe his relationship with other Islamists, he despondently said "We have a truce," bemoaned the need to coordinate with other Islamists one by one, and concluded by complaining "I find liberals easier to deal with than other Islamists.") The blocs performed unimpressively in the 2008 parliamentary elections and became almost irrelevant in the 2009 voting.

Internet freedom

Internet freedom in Kuwait key to breakdown authoritarian control

Wheeler 10 (Deborah L, assistant prof of poli sci at the U.S. Naval Academy, with Lauren Mintz, The Internet and political change in Kuwait, April 15, http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/04/15/the_internet_and_political_change_in_kuwait)

Will Internet diffusion and enhanced citizen communication capabilities help to open up the "closed societies" of the Middle East? U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is banking on it. "Internet freedom had become a fundamental principle of American foreign policy," she said in a well-received speech in March. "Even in authoritarian countries," she argued, "information networks are helping people discover new facts and making governments more accountable." Do Arabs themselves think that the diffusion of the Internet will make their societies in the Middle East more open and "more accountable" as their publics become increasingly politically aware and socially networked? A survey of Internet users we conducted in Kuwait last summer suggest that they do: More than 80 percent stated that the Internet has a definite impact on Arab politics. That's a tantalizing sign that Arabs do see the potential for the Internet to drive change ... even if they may turn out to be wrong. Last July, we worked with a group of students at the American University in Kuwait to design a unique survey of Internet use in the emirate. The students were given a list of 29 questions and asked to interview a cross section of Kuwaiti Internet users including men and women, young and old, from across the social-class spectrum, including only Kuwaiti nationals. The sample ultimately included 267 Internet users, with ages ranging from 16 to 61. Although this is not based on a random sample, the survey offers a fascinating glimpse into the online life of Kuwait's wired public. We found that the average number of hours per week spent online for both Kuwaiti men and women was 20 hours. Almost 100 percent owned a mobile phone, and they sent on average 34 text messages a day. Nearly 100 percent of those surveyed had Internet access at home, while more than 75 percent have Internet access on their mobile phones. More than 65 percent of those Kuwaitis interviewed have a Myspace or Facebook page, and 30 percent of those surveyed visit blogs regularly. At the same time, only 4.5 percent of the Kuwaitis surveyed actually blog themselves. An impressive 80.5 percent of the Kuwaitis surveyed thought that the Internet was significantly impacting local politics. In the open-ended part of the interviews, the Kuwaitis explained their assessment in ways that closely match Clinton's hopes. For example, some argued that the Internet "opened Arab minds." Others stated that with Internet use growing in the region, states could no longer hide political information from their publics: As one said, "It makes people see what governments try to block on TV and mislead the people about." Another pointed to the impact on youth: "It is opening the eyes of the younger generation, and they are exercising more freedom. They can compare freedom in their countries with other countries." Most telling, however, is one Kuwaiti who responded that the Internet is having an impact on politics, "because people feel safer expressing themselves via Internet." The Kuwaitis in the survey look both to their own politics and abroad for examples of how the Internet is changing politics. Some pointed to the Internet's role in helping to organize campaigns for the 2009 Kuwaiti elections. Highlighting an awareness of the Internet's relationship to politics, one Kuwaiti surveyed states, "The biggest impact it had on politics recently was during the U.S. elections and Kuwaiti parliamentary elections. People's votes were swayed using electronic messages." Some attributed great political power to their own bloggers, while others pointed to the Iranian election protests, which they thought would not have been possible without new media tools. Another observes that the Internet "is helping women's rights and women's awareness," pointing to the role of Internet campaigning in the 2009 election of four female MPs to the Kuwaiti parliament. Those hoping for dramatic change should not get carried away, however. From the outside looking in, it is difficult to see such "transformations" affecting policymaking and the institutions of state. In addition to giving publics more information access and networking abilities, the Internet has likewise given more power to the authoritarian state, especially enhanced powers of surveillance. The Internet increases the power of publics and states simultaneously, and Middle Eastern state authority has not crumbled (even if legitimacy has waned in some cases). We are seeing significant transformations in public engagement and risk taking, but as yet little change in the formal institutions of power. That's a start: As Hannah Arendt once observed, "No revolution is even possible where the authority of the body politic is truly intact." The growing online engagement of Kuwaiti youth cannot be ignored, but we are far from knowing whether their hopes that it will manifest into political change will be realized.

More on this- internet freedom foments political reform-
http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/02/20/reform_or_the_flood_in_the_gulf

Inherency

Kuwait wont move on its own.

Brown 09 (Nathan, senior associate at the CEIP's Middle East program and professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington, "Moving Out of Kuwait's Political Impasse," JUNE 2009, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=23320&prog=zgp&proj=zme>)

Of course, pursuit of such solutions would immediately encounter a fundamental problem: the path toward any political reform is generally blocked by the very problems that make it so necessary. Any move forward must be a product of the same political system that finds any decisive action difficult. Electoral reform, for instance, would require deputies elected under one system to do away with it—a rare occurrence. Constitutional reform is even more difficult to contemplate. Procedurally it is not hard, but politically it would require a broad national consensus. On two occasions the previous amir coupled suspension of the parliament with a call for amending the constitution; on both occasions he eventually felt compelled to reconvene the parliament without securing a single change. For many years, Islamist deputies championed a proposed amendment that would have strengthened the constitution's commitment to the Islamic Sharia, a broadly popular idea, but one successfully resisted by both the ruling family and by liberals. In short, constitutional reform would require a strong national consensus and a willingness on the part of all parties to trade in their veto in a paralyzed system for a voice in a more effective one.

Kuwait is facing political turmoil- protestors are calling for the dismissal of the government

[aljazeera.net](http://www.aljazeera.net) 04 Jun 2011 (Kuwait protesters demand PM's removal Thousands rally in Gulf state seeking dismissal of government, parliament's dissolution and snap [pollshttp://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/06/20116493343254151.html](http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/06/20116493343254151.html))

Thousands of youth activists have rallied in Kuwait for the removal of the prime minister, pushing the oil-rich Gulf state closer to political turmoil. "The people want to topple the prime minister," chanted more than 3,000 protesters late on Friday night for the third straight week, braving temperatures close to 40 degrees Celsius in the desert state. Speakers called on the emir to remove Sheikh Nasser Mohammad al-Ahmad al-Sabah, the prime minister, and put an end to bitter feuds among members of the al-Sabah ruling family. "A dangerous (power) struggle is taking place among members of the ruling family. Their disputes and struggles will certainly negatively impact us," liberal MP Abdulrahman al-Anjari told the crowd. "I am afraid that if no real constitutional reforms are implemented, these disputes will spread like cancer. We have to contemplate adopting constitutional monarchy," al-Anjari said. **Family feud** Kuwaiti media on Friday had urged Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah to put an end to a power struggle between the prime minister and his deputy Sheikh Ahmad Fahad al-Sabah, following a stormy parliamentary session on Tuesday. Speakers at the rally, however, said both officials should be sacked. They also called for the government to be dismissed, for parliament to be dissolved and for snap elections to be held. OPEC member Kuwait has been rocked by a series of political disputes over the past five years, which have been blamed in part on squabbling within the ruling family. In 2006, a power struggle among the al-Sabahs resulted in an unprecedented vote by parliament to remove the then emir, Sheikh Saad Abdullah al-Sabah, on health grounds. Since February 2006, when Sheikh Nasser became prime minister, six cabinets have resigned and parliament has been dissolved three times amid high political tension that has stalled development in this wealthy state. The ruling family has run the affairs of Kuwait since it came into existence more than 250 years ago, and Kuwaitis have seldom questioned their continuing rule. The emir, crown prince and the prime minister are all from the family, which also controls the key ministerial portfolios of defence, interior and foreign affairs.

***** Potential Advantages *****

Democracy Adv

Kuwaiti democracy risks backsliding- and is a symbol for the region

Lynch 09 (Marc, senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment, Kuwait's democracy experiment on the line, Thursday, March 19, 2009, http://lynch.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/03/19/kuwait's_democracy_experiment_on_the_line)

One of the odd features of the recent American interest in Arab democracy is that it has focused on unlikely places. Iraq after the invasion and Palestine before statehood have drawn significant attention from American enthusiasts of Arab democracy, but did not seem particularly fertile ground. But out of the limelight, **slow steps toward democracy have taken place in Kuwait.** The Kuwaiti political system today is not fully democratic, but neither is it fully monarchical—it occupied a halfway house in between the two. **But Kuwait's democratizing experiment is currently on the line and the political crisis there bears watching.** If you were to read the Kuwaiti constitution, you would get the impression that its system is some kind of constitutional monarchy—it combines an amir from the ruling family with an elected parliament. That parliament has legislative authority as well as tools to oversee the executive. But for many years, the ruling family was able exercise authority in a manner more like its autocratic cousins in the Gulf than a real constitutional monarchy. And it was generally able to do so without violating the constitution by monopolizing key positions and by co-opting some parliamentary deputies and playing the rest off against each other. On some occasions the parliament showed an independent streak and even seemed poised to summon some royal ministers for parliamentary questioning. On such occasions, the amir suspended parliament (once in the 1970s and once in the 1980s). But the ruling family's ability to dominate the parliament has decayed. Cooptation does not seem to work. Parliamentary deputies now seem more likely to compete in their ability to criticize ministers than they are to curry their favor and patronage. The ruling family continues to hold some key positions, but most of its ministers are no longer treated as sacrosanct—some have even been pressured into resignation. The ruling family itself no longer seems so united (and recently divisions reached the unprecedented point that the content of private family discussions were leaked to the press). Parliamentary reformers successfully pressed for a prime minister who, while a royal, does not double as crown prince (the dual role made it more politically difficult to criticize him). But **if the ruling family has lost some of its dominance, the parliament has lost much of its coherence. The role of tribal deputies has grown, and the ideological and sectarian fracturing of the parliament has become more marked.** As a result, **the parliament is increasingly able to hamper the work of the cabinet but far less able to impose any coherent agenda of its own. The result has been gridlock. Rather than priding themselves on their slowly democratizing system, Kuwaitis have reacted with dismay as their system has tended toward paralysis.** A spate of democratic reforms might be one avenue for forward movement—such as a prime minister who is a commoner; a full party system, and a cabinet that has a clear parliamentary majority and a clear opposition. But instead **the country is now faced with the possibility of retreat from democracy.** After repeated attempts by some parliamentarians to subject the prime minister to formal parliamentary questioning—a normal democratic step in some countries, but considered an affront to the dignity of the ruling family in Kuwait—the country's amir has unmistakably signaled displeasure. On March 18, he dissolved the parliament and called for new elections. While the amir resisted the urge to suspend the parliament, he spoke so strongly against the behavior of confrontational parliamentarians that it was difficult to avoid the impression that he would consider a full suspension. And the call for new elections was combined with rumors that he would turn to the current crown prince to take over as prime minister—reversing the separation of the two positions that democratizing reformers had worked so hard to obtain. (Rumors were earlier floated that the amir would use the electoral interregnum to decree a new electoral law—a step that would probably be unconstitutional but that would be difficult to reverse.) Nobody expects the new elections to resolve the crisis—elections in 2006 and 2008 only seemed to deepen the dysfunction. Nor is combining the positions of crown prince and prime minister likely to cow parliamentarians—in the last years before the separation of the position, ambitious parliamentarians had increasingly signaled that they would no longer defer to tradition and treat the prime minister as immune from direct questioning. Indeed, earlier this year, when the amir was reported to have described the current prime minister as a future amir (essentially upending tradition in Kuwait and probably annoying some members of the ruling family by naming not only his successor but also his successor's successor), no parliamentarians backed off. **The Kuwaiti experiment in limited by expanding democracy is today at a critical point.** The crisis there may be less dramatic than those in Iraq and Palestine and it is certainly less bloody. **But one of the Arab world's most democratic systems is at issue, and supporters of Arab democracy should be paying close attention.**

Kuwait key model for the region.

Brown 08 (Nathan, senior associate at the CEIP's Middle East program and professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington, "What is at Stake in Kuwait's Parliamentary Elections?," http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/brown_kuwait_elections_FAQ_final.pdf)

Yet **Kuwait's low-level political crisis may have some serious implications for democracy in the Gulf.** The ruling family tends to blame the parliament for country's failure to develop as rapidly as Dubai. Some in Kuwait appear envious of the dynamic Dubai model where the government can make decisions unhindered

by democratic institutions. And **other countries in the region are coming to see Kuwait as a negative model of what democracy can cause to happen. Kuwaitis are increasingly debating how to reform (or whether to scale back) their democratic experiment.**

Kuwait democracy is important in the region

WSJ 9

Kuwait's Democracy Faces Turbulence, 4/9/09, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123911916184897231.html>

Watched across the Arab world, the unfolding crisis of democracy in Kuwait has implications far beyond this small emirate. The country hosts major U.S. military bases and sits atop the world's fifth-largest oil reserves at the strategic intersection of Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran. The standoff puts the spotlight, once again, on a crucial policy dilemma for Barack Obama's administration: whether Washington should pursue the Bush-era commitment to free elections in the Arab world, or whether it should concentrate on propping up friendly autocratic regimes, be they in Dubai, Cairo or Riyadh. Democracy in Kuwait has its supporters. Though Kuwaitis often complain about their decrepit airport, crowded hospitals and crumbling central business district, not all are ready to surrender their liberties for Dubai-style gleaming malls and skyscrapers. "If you ask me, do you want to trade democracy for concrete high-rises, my answer is -- no way," says Rola A. Dashti, chairwoman of the Kuwait Economic Society. If anything, the recent experience of Dubai, facing a cash crunch because of a massive construction spree engineered by that emirate's ruler, shows the need to maintain checks and balances over how oil revenues are spent here in Kuwait, Ms. Dashti says. "This is the wealth of the nation, not the wealth of one man. We need accountability." Kuwait's ruling family, the house of Sabah, agreed to a constitution giving large powers to an elected parliament when the country became independent from Britain in 1961. Twice in the past, the Sabah suspended this constitution to impose absolute rule. The last such intervention happened in 1986, as the region was racked by the Iran-Iraq war and Kuwait's large Shiite religious minority grew increasingly restive.

Protests could spill over and could collapse Kuwait

Arab Times 6/4

Kuwait: Sheikh Nasser The Right Choice, <http://mespectator.blogspot.com/2011/04/kuwait-sheikh-nasser-right-choice.html>

We understand that the people have freedom to express their opinions or issue press statements. They can also present some ideas in the National Assembly or in front of the Amir. However, we cannot understand why some of them have resorted to stealing phone numbers from the records of the cooperative societies or elsewhere to send messages to everyone to participate in the signature campaign against the reappointment of Sheikh Nasser. This campaign is nothing but an exhibition activity that does not have any link to the Constitution. It is rather an attempt to contravene the Constitution and interfere in the Amiri affairs. If they were really protecting the Constitution, the organizers of the campaign should have realized that the Amir has the right to listen to their demands. They have voiced their concerns to him, so why did they choose the chaotic method? Taking to the street is a childish method that leads to destruction. It has destroyed Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen, while it nearly destroyed Bahrain if it were not for God's intervention. Do they want Kuwait to follow the same destructive path? We need to ask the proponents of the signature campaign: What was the sin committed by the people whose signatures they falsified or those they signed for as their proxies? Were these people aware of the falsification? By the way, we are ready to publish names in the list for the public to know the truth. They merely wasted the time of our youths, similar to what they have done with the "We Want It Five" campaign. They started campaigning for a single constituency after the failure of the five-constituency system. The troublesome minority lawmakers paralyzed national activities for months, during which they dragged all sectors into various sensitive issues. They want to overcome the stress of failure in the games and struggles to achieve their objectives. Far from all these games, let us implore the reappointed prime minister to abandon tolerance and leniency, because such principles do not work with mischievous people keen on wreaking havoc in the country. They are wicked people, raising positive slogans to conceal their bad intentions.

US Demo Promo Adv

Renewed US commitment to Kuwaiti democracy key to US democracy promotion in the region.

Brown 09 (Nathan, senior associate at the CEIP's Middle East program and professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington, "Moving Out of Kuwait's Political Impasse," JUNE 2009, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=23320&prog=zgp&proj=zme>)

The United States can play such a role, but should it want to? What are the benefits? Here we must come to terms with the legacy of the younger Bush. By speaking so boldly of the "freedom agenda" but delivering only a host of regional challenges, the recent **Bush administration paradoxically created two problems simultaneously: it raised expectations far too high but it also discredited any effort to promote political reform. Kuwait provides an opportunity for the United States to correct itself. A modest but real commitment to reform would have modest but real payoff in two ways. First, Kuwait provides an opportunity to the United States to engage directly and at low cost** with the political forces that so trouble it elsewhere in the region. Such contacts have occurred in the past in Kuwait and have picked up over the past year after a prolonged lull; they should be sustained. **On the Islamic spectrum in particular, Salafi movements, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Shi'i movements of various stripes are all active in Kuwait, but none question the country's relationship with the United States.** Liberals and nationalists would find no purchase if they positioned themselves in opposition to the United States, even if they wished to do so (and they do not). **The United States cannot resolve its relationship with political Islam or with the various legacies of Arab nationalism by its actions in Kuwait; that would be promising far too much. But it can train a cadre of diplomats and analysts to engage such forces and foster in them far more than book knowledge of the political forces confronting the United States elsewhere.** When the U.S. ambassador to Egypt invited a Muslim Brotherhood parliamentarian to join a dinner, an intensive transatlantic political debate followed. When the U.S. ambassador or embassy personnel pay a call on Kuwaiti Salafis, it barely even provides grist for a day of local gossip. **Second, a successful attempt to sustain the Kuwaiti democratic experiment would have mildly positive regional effects for the cause of political reform. In earlier decades, Kuwait served as a positive model for some Gulf states.** The Bahraini constitution of 1973, for example, was modeled on the Kuwaiti document. **Kuwait no longer seems like such a positive model—in fact, the political stalemate in the country now serves as a negative model. A revival of Kuwaiti democracy will not lead to a "Gulf spring" much less an Arab one. But it will prevent elections and parliaments from becoming symbols of stagnation and paralysis.**

US-Kuwait Security Relations Adv

US support for democracy key to Kuwaiti commitment to the US-Kuwait security relationship.

Terrill 07 (Dr. W. Andrew, the MacArthur Professor of National Security Affairs at the Strategic Studies Institute, "Kuwaiti National Security and the U.S.-Kuwaiti Strategic Relationship after Saddam," September 2007, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/summary.cfm?q=788>)

The United States also has a vested interest in regional political reform and ongoing democratization in Kuwait. Beyond being a valuable strategic ally, **Ku- wait has also shown a commitment to expanding democracy in an evolutionary way that supports U.S. aspirations for both stability and more inclusive government within the region.** Kuwaitis have a long-standing democratic tradition that they have attempted to blend with the continued authority of a ruling monarchy that has been in power since the 1750s. The existence of this monarchy and the history of democratic expression are key components of the Kuwaiti national identity. Additionally, **Kuwaitis may be especially concerned about maintaining their democratic image abroad because of their continuing need for international support against potential enemies.** Kuwait is clearly the most democratic country among the Gulf Arab states, and the **Kuwait democratization effort serves as an important if still incomplete example to the region.** Kuwaiti democratization has shown particular vitality over the last year, and **the United States needs to continue supporting such efforts to ensure that they are not ephemeral. The United States must also remain aware that democracy and moderation are not the same thing, and that elections in Kuwait have empowered a number of Islamists who appear deeply unsympathetic to U.S. goals for the region.** This monograph notes that **the United States can, if insufficiently careful, neglect the Kuwaiti relationship** and fail to adequately consult the leadership and take Kuwaiti interests into account. **Kuwaitis have the potential to become more jaded and less cooperative in their relations with the United States if they view themselves as taken for granted or dealt with as subordinates. The United States has a long history of resentful allies carefully measuring the degree of cooperation they will give in return for security guarantees.** There is no need for this to occur with Kuwait. **Moves to strengthen U.S.-Kuwait relations thus become important and may become especially vital** if setbacks in Iraq eventually prompt a U.S. withdrawal under less than optimal conditions. Strong efforts should be made to prevent sectarian warfare in Iraq from spreading to Kuwait under such scenarios. Such efforts may require a great deal of new and creative thinking by both Kuwaitis and Americans as the threat of a conventional Iraq attack has now been overshadowed by the dangers of spillover from an Iraqi civil war, new and deadlier terrorism, and large-scale subversion.

Collapse now

Lack of a legal framework risks sectarian war in kuwait

Kareem may 17 (mona, writer for jadaliyya.com shiaphobia hits kuwait may 17 2011
<http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/1603/shiaphobia-hits-kuwait->)

The attendant dangers of this renewed sectarian trajectory put the Shia, once again, under the same suspicious spotlight they had experienced previously during the Iraq-Iran War. However, this time, it is spurred by the legitimate and popular political demands that the “Arab Spring” has reignited that seem to be the actual threat to the illegitimate regimes of the region, beyond long-standing Arab-Iranian rivalries. This should highlight, again, the importance of having a detailed and clear set of anti-discrimination laws and actually applying them. Some argue the Kuwaiti constitution clearly criminalizes discrimination; however, Kuwait, as with the rest of the GCC countries, lacks a legal framework that would punish the sectarian statements made by parliament members and politicians, many of which could lead to a sectarian war.

Economy Adv?

Kuwait economy tanking

Diwan 11(Kristin, Assistant Professor of Comparative and Regional Studies at the American University School of International Service, “Kuwait: too much politics, or not enough?,” Foreign Policy, January 10, 2011 http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/01/10/kuwait_too_much_politics_or_not_enough

Such legislative oversight and popular accountability is unheard of in the Arab Middle East. Yet few Kuwaitis stopped to celebrate this hard fought step toward a genuine constitutional monarchy, and few Gulf citizens looked to Kuwait in envy. Indeed, **in this boom era of oil prosperity, Kuwait -- once the exemplar of the Gulf -- has increasingly come to be viewed as a mess. The most recent grilling of PM Sheikh Nasser al-Mohammed was the eighth of his tenure**, a tumultuous five year period which has seen six different governments and three elections, two after constitutional dissolutions of the parliament due to repeated conflict between lawmakers and the executive. **The political instability has taken its toll on the economy: while Qatar, the U.A.E., and even Saudi Arabia have surged ahead with bold projects of infrastructure development and economic diversification, Kuwait has stayed much the same.** No one can deny the constitutional empowerment of its parliament, or the dynamism of its civil society organizations and media. Yet some have come to question their value: what has all of this popular participation achieved for Kuwait and its people?

Political gridlock hurts infrastructure development

Brown 09 (Nathan, senior associate at the CEIP’s Middle East program and professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington, “Moving Out of Kuwait’s Political Impasse,” JUNE 2009, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=23320&prog=zgp&proj=zme>)

The standoff is also a problem for Kuwait because it blocks clear policy moves in any direction. Important projects have been held up and fundamental economic decisions have been avoided or cancelled after they were taken. Parliamentarians stand ready to examine government contracts and large projects (motivated both by suspicions of graft and favoritism and also—if critics are to be believed—resentment if friends, relatives, or followers were excluded from lucrative deals). **An economic stimulus package was mired in political bickering until parliament was dissolved** pending this year’s elections (the amir used his authority to issue emergency decrees when parliament is not meeting). A fourth refinery for the oil industry and a large deal with Dow Chemical were cancelled; in both cases solid business considerations for or against the projects were drowned out by the political wrangling. **Constant reshuffles in top positions make it difficult to pursue any consistent policy.** The country’s infrastructure is quite unimpressive, given the level of oil revenues the government has enjoyed; businessmen complain of a sclerotic regulatory environment but despair of reform. Compared with the dynamism evident further south in the Gulf, Kuwait seems stagnant.

Human rights adv?

Current Kuwaiti law creates a secondary class of people who lack all legal rights and are regularly dehumanized

kareem march 26 (mona, writer for [jadaliyya.com](http://www.jadaliyya.com), the bidun of kuwait: a look behind the laws 2011
<http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/contributors/14279>)

There are 120,000 Bidun jinsiyya (without nationality) in Kuwait today suffering from the lack of political, economic and human rights. None of them can legally obtain birth, death, marriage or divorce certificates. The same applies to driving licenses, identification cards, and passports. Bidun have no access to public education, health care, housing, social security or employment. And while they face some of the state's harshest discrimination policies, they have no recourse to the law and its courts. Simply stated, the Bidun, who are equal to about 10% of the Kuwaiti population, do not exist. They have been dehumanized and rendered invisible by government policies coupled with pervasive social stigmatization. Those in positions of power and their allies have used the same excuses to prevent the Bidun from being granted Kuwaiti citizenship and given their civil and human rights. They argue that the Bidun are of Iraqi origins and have hidden their real identification documents in order to get Kuwaiti citizenship and enjoy the benefits of the welfare state. Cruder, everyday conversations characterize them as "uncivilized and savage bedouins" who do not represent the "modern" and more "refined" culture of Kuwaiti society. The Bidun are portrayed as disloyal subjects who are culturally different and thus do not deserve Kuwaiti citizenship. Several reporters and international organizations, such as Human Rights Watch, Refugees International, and others have been working on furthering the cause of the Bidun. While they have tried to increase societal awareness of the Bidun, little is known of their miserable living conditions, and pervasive societal discrimination against them persists. The recent protests of Bidun in [Sulaibiya](#), [Taimaa](#), and [Ahmadi](#) that started on February 18th, 2011 and called for granting the Bidun citizenship have attracted more attention now than in the past due to regional revolutions and uprisings. Around one thousand persons are said to have gathered in all the protests combined to demand rights that the Kuwaiti government has long denied them.

Now is the critical time to act- discrimination will increase because of instability in neighboring Bahrain- the plight of the Bidun's need to be exposed

kareem march 26 (mona, writer for [jadaliyya.com](http://www.jadaliyya.com), the bidun of kuwait: a look behind the laws 2011
<http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/contributors/14279>)

These are critical times in Kuwait. Events in Bahrain have incited sectarian discrimination amongst all Kuwaitis. Certain newspapers have addressed the [Bahrain protests](#) through a sectarian lens, most notably the Al-Watan newspaper, which has caused several sectarian incidents in Kuwait in the past. In a recent incident, Al Watan carried an article that pointed out and condemned the video of Yaser Al-Habib, a Shi'a who was shown cursing Aysha, the wife of prophet Mohamed. This led the Kuwaiti government to [strip him of his citizenship](#). Kuwaiti society also features class and status-based discrimination as they have always been practiced against the Bidun and other Kuwaiti communities. The pro-Bidun Kuwaiti activists, politicians and writers are making a big mistake by failing to point out these practices of discrimination in Kuwait. Instead, they keep focusing on debating and demanding the implementation of the laws and rules to help solve this long-standing problem. While addressing the importance of implementing these laws is crucial, it makes little sense to do so without first raising public awareness on the status and living conditions of the Bidun. Otherwise, the government and its allies can easily abuse public ignorance in order to get the green light to further oppress the Bidun or other minorities in the future.

Unequal access to rights represents a security risk to the entire world

Refugees international 2010 (Kuwait: Still Stalling on Statelessness
<http://www.refugeesinternational.org/policy/field-report/kuwait-still-stalling-statelessness>
Wed, 05/12)

Without the bonds of citizenship stateless individuals face denial of subsidiary human rights as noted above. And because governments are frequently unwilling to seek solutions to the plight of stateless people, they muddle along with half-measures that create an underclass often exploited politically and economically. The situation can be, and has been, compared to a game played with great sophistication by the country's leadership, but the pawns are the lives of real people. The surest guarantors of national, regional, and global security are inclusive and equal access to civil rights and services and the prevention of discrimination based on ethnicity, religious affiliation, or gender. No government, including those with large numbers of stateless persons within their borders, can remain as one scholar put it, "silent and sitting." A European representative likened the situation to air quality. He explained this analogy saying, "What one country does affects us all."

Neg- No uprising

It is not expected to break out any time soon

Katzman 5/19

Kenneth, Specialist in Mideast Affairs, CRS Report, Kuwait: Security, Reform, and U.S. Policy, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21513.pdf>

The January 5, 2011, no-confidence vote by no means resolved the conflict between the government and the opposition within the Assembly. Concurrently, the broader Arab uprisings affected the schisms within Kuwait. 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 of 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. That protest was held but reportedly only attracted a few hundred demonstrators. A demonstration by the stateless Kuwaiti residents known as “bidoons,” demanding citizenship, was held on March 11. 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.

Despite having political protests, Kuwait’s were fairly mild—oil money quelled dissent

Clause 5/9

F. Gregory Gause III, professor of political science at the University of Vermont, Arab Spring: Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, <http://www.usip.org/publications/arab-spring-bahrain-and-saudi-arabia>

How do you assess the state of the “Arab Spring” in the Arab Peninsula and the Gulf? No part of the Arab world was immune from the “winter of Arab discontent.” As we have yet to see whether democracy emerges from the political unrest, it is too soon to call this an “Arab Spring.” The oil monarchies, Bahrain excepted, were probably the least affected area. Oman saw some demonstrations in towns outside of Muscat. Kuwait had demonstrations before Tunisia, but things seem to cool down there as the region heated up. I think the most important factor keeping the monarchies relatively quiet is oil money. They have lots of it, and they are willing to use it to tamp down dissent. It is no accident that the two monarchies that saw the most serious protests are the two with the least amount of hydrocarbon rents to deploy.