

Regimes, Identities, and Regional Order Kuwait, Qatar, and the Gulf Cooperation Council

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Abstract

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is an authoritarian regional organization whose unity among its six constituent kingdoms of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Oman waxes and wanes in cyclical fashion. Historically, periods of cross-regime cohesion have been followed by defection. This essay examines the GCC since the Arab Spring, characterized by crisis-fueled unity, followed by sharp divergence from Kuwait and Qatar in two regards: Kuwait by refusing to ratify an internal security pact that would have transnationalized standards of repression, and Qatar by maintaining an activist foreign policy that defied GCC consensus by engaging Iran, Islamists, and other GCC foes. Unlike conventional neorealist explanations, this essay argues that such small state defections from regional order stem not from a desire to compensate for security weaknesses but rather from an effort to protect their underlying regime identities. In Kuwait, constitutive norms of domestic pluralism and openness, rooted in historical tradition, so permeates the Sabah dynasty and its societal linkages that integrating Gulf standards of coercion is seen as profoundly incompatible. In Qatar, a new relational understanding of the Thani monarchy as an activist global force, distinct from its Gulf peers, negates the impulse for deeper regional integration. The reassertion of these regime identities helps explain resistance to regionalism even when bandwagoning with the GCC majority would objectively enhance state survival. In sum, domestic order trumps regional order.

Keywords: Authoritarianism, foreign policy, GCC, identity, Kuwait, monarchies, Qatar, regimes.

The study of the international dimensions of authoritarian rule has advanced in recent years across two streams of research. One is the transnational *diffusion* of nondemocratic practices across borders, including the circulation

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of ideology and learning of new policies during episodes of crisis.¹ The second is the more deliberative process of *collaboration* between authoritarian regimes that share common goals of resisting Western pressure and monitoring domestic opposition, including the new concepts of autocracy promotion and democracy prevention.² These are crucial areas that continue to develop, but they also tend to emphasize trajectories of convergence in which autocracies act in unison—for instance, by sharing or emulating strategies of repression—in ways that mirror the democratic model. Too often overlooked are negative cases in which proximate autocracies do not act in unified and convergent ways while seeking the same goal of survival, a circumstance illustrated by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the increasingly divergent pathways taken by Qatar and Kuwait.

These cases highlight *regime identity* in explaining a theoretical puzzle: why do these principalities, indefensible small states in a hostile geopolitical zone, reject the material security to be gained from regional integration? Such seemingly irrational actions reject an authoritarian club designed to redistribute the costs of maintaining power and thus maximize the chances of survival. The answer to this puzzle is ideational. These monarchies are not growing more democratic. Rather, regional integration would undermine their historic regime identities such that standing *alone* engenders more relative security than standing together with an alliance whose sole purpose is to improve collective survival. The power and pull of authoritarian regime identity make Qatar and Kuwait theoretically interesting cases, because for them domestic order trumps regional order.

The entrée to this puzzle comes through crisis. Among regional organizations, the GCC ranks among the world's most autocratic. Its six members (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates [UAE], and Oman) are ruling monarchies dependent upon hydrocarbon rents. The GCC's impetus in 1981 was insecurity, when these kingdoms faced a rising tide of domestic dissent and credible foreign predation in post-revolutionary Iran. Since then, diplomatic coordination, military cooperation, and economic ties have been increased. During the 2011–2012 Arab Spring, the GCC was

¹ Thomas Ambrosio, "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion," *International Studies Perspectives* 11 (2010): 375-392; Kurt Weyland, "Patterns of Diffusion: Comparing Democratic and Autocratic Waves," *Global Policy* 7, no. 4 (2016): 557-562; Karrie Koesel and Valerie Bunce, "Diffusion-Proofing: Russian and Chinese Responses to Waves of Popular Mobilizations against Authoritarian Rulers," *Perspectives on Politics* 11, no. 3 (2013): 753-768; and Steven Heydemann and Reinoud Leenders, "Authoritarian Learning and Authoritarian Resilience: Regime Responses to the 'Arab Awakening'," *Globalizations* 8 (2011): 647-653.

² Rachel Vanderhill, *Promoting Authoritarianism Abroad* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2013); Lucan Way, "The Limits of Autocracy Promotion: The Case of Russia in the 'Near Abroad,'" *European Journal of Political Research* 54, no. 4 (2015): 691-706; Christian von Soest, "Democracy Prevention: The International Collaboration of Authoritarian Regimes," *European Journal of Political Research* 54, no. 4 (2015): 623-638; and Oison Tansy, *International Politics of Authoritarian Rule* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

a cradle of collaboration; member states helped extinguish a popular uprising in Bahrain, announced a new era of Gulf unity, and even briefly considered adding the Arab world's two non-Gulf kingdoms, Morocco and Jordan. Yet since the Arab Spring, this regional order has become stricken with crisis. Since June 2017, Saudi Arabia and several allies imposed a diplomatic and commercial embargo against Qatar partly due to its unorthodox foreign policy, which entailed cordial relations with Iran and support for Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, among other controversial positions. This diplomatic crisis, in turn, underscored how far Kuwait also had distanced itself from the GCC consensus through its *domestic* practices. Years earlier, Kuwait alone refused to ratify the GCC's 2012 Internal Security Pact, the Arab world's first coordinated effort to harmonize policing practices and political repression across borders. While the GCC often has incubated disputes among members, the current crisis today has all but killed the organization, with Qatar and Kuwait openly weighing an exit, while Saudi Arabia creates a more specialized partnership with carefully selected allies, both GCC (such as the UAE) and non-GCC (such as Egypt).

This study presents *regime identity* as an explanation for Qatari and Kuwaiti defection from GCC regionalism. It is predicated upon qualitative historical research, supplemented by fieldwork in Kuwait conducted in February 2017, which consisted of observations of public events and interviews with Kuwaiti and Qatari officials. The core argument is that the Qatari and Kuwaiti choice to reject the GCC expresses the incompatibility of regime identities with Gulf regionalism. Regime identity in the Gulf context, here is defined as the self-conception held by each dynastic leadership that contains the constitutive norms and relational understandings that it believes generates an appropriate political order. Norms refer to the implicit rules and goals that regulate permissible behavior in domestic society; relational understandings refer to exclusive comparisons with peer regimes (in this case, the Gulf monarchies).

The different described components clash with GCC regionalism in distinctive ways. In Kuwait, the *constitutive norms* of regime identity encompass a domestic component—the open quasi-democratic relationship between the ruling Sabah dynasty and Kuwaiti society, manifested over the past century by repeated political bargains and expressed through markers of pluralism (such as an elected parliament), lacking elsewhere in the Gulf. Transnationalized repression through the 2012 Internal Security Pact would erode this “Kuwaiti-ness,” and with it the regime's self-conception. Even though this diminutive kingdom experienced its largest protests in history during the Arab Spring, its leadership rejected the importing from and sharing of repressive methods with neighbors. Whereas Kuwaiti regime identity emphasizes its domestic traditions, Qatar's *relational understanding* involves an external component, namely the Thani monarchy's recent reorientation away from the Gulf and toward the non-Arab international

system. Such “globalization without Arabization” has led to not only the kingdom’s reconstruction as an oasis of wealthy cosmopolitanism, but also counterintuitive foreign policies such as warm ties with Iran. The Qatari leadership perceives Iran to be less dangerous than GCC regionalism, despite Iran’s projectable coercive capabilities having enhanced in recent years, and its active involvement in conflicts within Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen.

This essay draws upon a vibrant research tradition linking identity to foreign policy within the Middle East, but in a unique way. Identity politics in large Arab states such as Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia have invoked substantial interest from Middle East scholars; in this region, it is uncontroversial to argue that how nondemocratic regimes treat threats, pursue goal-oriented interests, and manage opposition reflects the power of ideas.³ However, most work takes an “outside-in” approach in tracing how *transnational* identities and ideologies, such as Arabism, Islamism, or sectarianism, can influence the formation of *national* identities. While this is a crucial interaction, less attention has fallen upon how identities as understood through the lens of regimes can constrain foreign policy behavior within a framework of regional integration. Most identity-based work in the region also has ignored the tiny littoral kingdoms of the Arabian Gulf such as Qatar and Kuwait, which usually are studied as sites of sectarian identity conflict (i.e., Sunni versus Shi‘a) at the societal level rather than as meaningful arenas of identity formation at the regime level.⁴ Further, their foreign and domestic policies continue to be explained frequently through the language of rentierism rather than ideational concerns.⁵ Yet, not all their policies can be reduced to rentier politics and oil wealth.

There is one caveat. This study aims to introduce an ideational variable in a sea of materialist arguments, and through case-level comparisons illustrate the value added of considering regime identity as an explanatory factor. Prioritizing contrast over precision, it is therefore agnostic as to which component of regime identity—constitutive norms or relational understandings—may be

³ See, for instance, Michael Barnett, *Dialogues in Arab Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Marc Lynch, *State Interests and Public Spheres: The International Politics of Jordan’s Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Lawrence Rubin, *Islam in the Balance: Ideational Threats in Arab Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014); Ewan Stein, “Beyond Arabism vs. Sovereignty: Relocating Ideas in the International Relations of the Middle East,” *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 4 (2012): 881-905; and May Darwich, “Ideational and Material Forces in Threat Perception: The Divergent Cases of Syria and Saudi Arabia during the Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988),” *Journal of Global Security Studies* 1, no. 2 (2016): 142-156.

⁴ Lawrence Potter, ed., *Sectarian Politics in the Persian Gulf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁵ See, for instance, Anoushiravan Ehteshami, “GCC Foreign Policy: From the Iran–Iraq War to the Arab Awakening,” in *New Politics of Intervention of Gulf Arab States*, LSE-Middle East Centre Collected Papers 1 (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2015), 13-22.

more relevant to regional order. Such fleshing out is important but requires a robust theoretical foundation to be laid first, which is the intention here.

At the boundary between comparative politics and international relations, the analysis proceeds as follows. The first section reviews the GCC and the authoritarian nature of its regional order, ending with the monarchical convergence seen in the Arab Spring. The second lays out Qatari and Kuwaiti policy divergence after the Arab Spring, showing why conventional hypotheses drawn from existing theories of neorealism and transnational identity fail to explain the current situation. The third section presents case studies of Kuwait and Qatar, exploring how and why their regime identities have resisted pressures for greater regional integration. The concluding section reinforces the theoretical implications of the study for our understanding of authoritarian regimes, regional integration, and small-state foreign policy.

Regional Authoritarianism and the Arab Spring

Before engaging prevailing hypotheses and identity, discussing the regional context is required. The Arabian (or Persian) Gulf constitutes a distinctive geographic order within the wider Middle East regional system. It is a “regional security complex”—that is, an ordered set of relations among proximate states defined by intense security interdependence and the mutuality of threat and fear.⁶ Saudi Arabia and Iran are currently its most assertive actors; the United States remains the paramount hegemon, with its heavy militarized presence a guarantee of local sovereignty. This geopolitical arrangement has several implications for the study of regimes.

First, since the last vestiges of British colonialism disappeared in 1971, the balance of conventional power (e.g., militaries, populations, and treasuries) has been asymmetrical. The largest states of Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia have towered over the littoral principalities of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates, whose diminutive territories, tiny militaries, and indefensible borders render them consumers rather than producers of security.⁷ Second, given its strategic geography and hydrocarbon geology, the area is prone to militarized conflict and outside interventionism, highlighting the inherent weaknesses of the smallest kingdoms. It has seen three major wars since the 1980s, namely the Iraq–Iran War (1980–1988), the 1990 Gulf War, and the Iraq War of 2003. The latter removed Iraq as a regional power, but in doing so also amplified the potential threat of Iranian belligerence against the

⁶ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 40–88.

⁷ F. Gregory Gause, *The International Relations of the Persian Gulf* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 6–8. The militaries of the littoral kingdoms remain small, highly specialized units often staffed by foreigners, which may occasionally embark upon foreign operations (e.g., Emirati Special Forces in the ongoing Yemeni civil war) but lack the absolute numbers and depth at home to repel any invasion by a large power such as Iran.

Arabian kingdoms.⁸ Above all, the United States remains the most powerful foreign actor in the Gulf, supporting the economic and military stability of each GCC kingdom.

Third, these Sunni Arab kingdoms are extremely permeable to transnational ideologies, such as sectarian mobilization of Shi'a minority (or in Bahrain's case, majority) communities. The specter of sectarian unrest has preoccupied many policymakers since 2003, due to Shi'a political domination in post-Saddam Iraq, the rising strength of Hezbollah, and increased Iranian military and nuclear capabilities.⁹ Finally, since the 1980s, Iran has served as the primary threat to the extent that its presence catalyzed the GCC.¹⁰ The 1979 Iranian Revolution replaced the U. S.-allied Pahlavi monarchy with an Islamic Republic that threatened to export its ideology of radical Islamism, and also stoked sectarian loyalties among Shi'a communities living in the Gulf. The collective sense of external vulnerability and domestic insecurity was real; by the early 1980s, many of these kingdoms had been targeted by Shi'a militant networks, while also becoming frontline theaters in the Iraq–Iran War.¹¹ This geopolitical fallout resulted in the ministerial and leadership summits responsible for birthing the GCC.

Thus, the GCC was the creation of authoritarian leaderships during a moment of crisis. Iran was the trigger: no Iran, no GCC. In contrast to neoliberal views that see the creation of regional alliances and organizations as the product of economic interests, in the Gulf the regionalist moment came from a hardwired impulse—regime survival.¹² The GCC always has reflected this realist logic. It is a regional organization, insofar that it employs its own staff, maintains a permanent headquarters, and hosts hundreds of technical committees and ministerial councils.¹³ On the other hand, its secretariat is a paper tiger with no formal prerogative to dictate member policies, giving GCC member states little external pressure to concede sovereignty for the sake of

⁸ Steve Yetiv, *The Absence of Grand Strategy: The United States in the Persian Gulf, 1972–2005* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 76–115.

⁹ Shehata Muhammad Nasser, *Siyassat al-nuzhum al-hakima fil-bahrain wal-kuwayt wal-arabiyya al-sa'udiyyah fil-ta'amul m'a al-matalib al-shi'iyyah* [Policies of the ruling governments of Bahrain, Kuwait, and Arab Saudi Arabia in dealing with Shi'a demands] (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2009), 125–166.

¹⁰ Gause, *The International Relations of the Persian Gulf*, 46–49.

¹¹ For more on the GCC's origins as relating to Iran, see Joseph Kechichian, "The Gulf Cooperation Council: Containing the Iranian Revolution," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 13, no. 1 (1989): 146–165, and Emile Nakhleh, *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Policies, Problems, and Prospects* (New York: Praeger, 1986).

¹² Abdul Khaleq Abdulla, "The Gulf Cooperation Council: Nature, Origin, and Process," in *Middle East Dilemma: The Politics and Economics of Arab Integration*, ed. Michael Hudson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 158–160.

¹³ John Duke Anthony, "The 38th GCC Summit: A Counter-Interpretation," National Council Analyses and Assessments of NCUSAR, Washington, D.C., December 21, 2017.

regional integration.¹⁴ For instance, in economic terms, the GCC has created a customs union and increased trade exchange, but infrastructural linkages outside of electricity grids remain poor and a proposed common currency perennially ossified in debate.¹⁵ Yet, these kingdoms would greatly benefit from structural unification, given their vulnerability to energy price shocks and undiversified economies. Likewise, bilateral quarrels have not been fully neutralized by GCC mediation; long-running territorial claims between Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, and island disputes between Bahrain and Qatar, are cases in point.

However, there is a reason why many Arab observers consider the GCC an “illustrative example, if not a prototype, of a potentially successful Arab regional integration experiment.”¹⁶ For small states like Qatar and Kuwait, rentier wealth is no guarantee of survival, as the latter’s occupation during the Gulf War signified. Lacking projectable coercive power, their absolute disadvantages are rife: territorial vulnerability, proximate hostile powers, and permeability to external influences. During periods of geopolitical shock, the GCC has enabled the Gulf autocracies to converge on security and political integration to minimize these structural weaknesses in ways unattainable within the larger and more fractious Arab League.¹⁷ For example, in the 1980s, during the height of the Iraq–Iran War, the Gulf monarchies established a joint military force called Peninsula Shield. While this force had few deterrence capabilities, it still represented the most sustained pan-Arab coordination and command structure in the region.¹⁸ More recently, the GCC’s military cover helped legitimate the March 2011 Bahraini intervention, when a two-thousand-member force comprising Saudi and Emirati troops entered the island kingdom to suppress its popular uprising and preserve the embattled rule of the Khalifa monarchy. Moreover, regional radar control sites have become interlinked; today, if foreign aircraft intrude over the western coastline of Saudi Arabia, Kuwaiti commanders receive word almost as quickly as Saudi monitors do.¹⁹

¹⁴ See, for example, Jeffrey Martini, Becca Wasser, Dalia Dassa Kaye, Daniel Egel, and Cordaye Ogletree, *The Outlook for Arab Gulf Cooperation* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2016).

¹⁵ Matteo Legrenzi, *The GCC and the International Relations of the Gulf: Diplomacy, Security, and Economic Coordination in a Changing Middle East* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 57-72.

¹⁶ Abdullah, “The Gulf Cooperation Council,” 167.

¹⁷ Indeed, the GCC’s history can be divided by the geopolitical shocks that triggered unifying initiatives (i.e., the Iraq–Iran War, the Gulf War, the Iraq War, and the Arab Spring. See further, Yusuf Khalifa Al-Yusuf, *Majlis al-tawa’un fi muthallath al-waratha wal-naft wal-quwwa al-ajnabiyyah* [The Gulf Cooperation Council in the triangle of legacy, oil, and foreign powers] (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2014), 273-312.

¹⁸ Yoel Guzansky, “Defence Cooperation in the Arabian Gulf: The Peninsula Shield Force Put to the Test,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 50, no. 4 (2014): 640-654.

¹⁹ Confidential interview by author with official from Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kuwait, February 12, 2017.

To be sure, security integration remains uneven: for instance, these kingdoms have struggled, even under the prodding of the United States, to create a joint missile defense system against Iran.²⁰ Yet, the broader point is that however half-formed these gains have been, they represent the rare case of sustained pooling of collective security in the Arab world. The GCC is the exception, not the norm, in terms of recognizing security interdependence.

The Arab Spring represented the latest efflorescence of unity and convergence, as the regionalist impulse again took precedence in a context of geopolitical crisis. While the Gulf appeared an oasis of relative stability compared to the unrest elsewhere, in reality both regime officials and national media reacted with alarm for reason that the source of threat initially came from their own societies.²¹ Protest movements in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Oman inspired by the contagious contention from Tunisia and Egypt also brought the issue home.

The GCC's collective response took three forms. The first was reframing. By spring 2011, many Gulf voices were calling the GCC not just a security and economic alliance, but also the new "club for monarchies" (*naadin lil-malakiyyaat*) that could serve as the Arab world's last bastion of respite and stability.²² All these regimes backed the March 2011 intervention in Bahrain, which preserved one autocracy and quashed a likely revolution, even as they also assented to NATO intervention in Libya to roll back another Arab dictatorship.²³ Indeed, the May 2011 GCC summit considered the possibility of expanding the GCC to include the non-Gulf kingdoms of Morocco and Jordan. Through that fall, foreign ministers and other officials from the GCC kingdoms plus Morocco and Jordan convened regularly in closed sessions.²⁴ These meetings brought together not just official emissaries but also various senior princes familiar with each other through family ties, shared investments, and social networks.

²⁰ Ari Kattan, "GCC Missile Defense: Obstacles on the Road to Integration," Missile Defense, Extended Deterrence, and Nonproliferation in the 21st Century—Collected Papers No. 6 (College Park: University of Maryland, January 2017).

²¹ May Seikaly, "Democratic Challenge in the Gulf: Between Aspiration and Desperation," in *The Silent Revolution: The Arab Spring and the Gulf States*, ed. May Seikaly and Khawla Mattar (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2014), 23-27.

²² "Indhimam al-magrib wal-urdun lil-majlis al-khalij aw nawha lil-malakiyyaat badil 'an al-jaami' al-arabiyya" [Membership of Morocco and Jordan to the GCC or toward a monarchical club substituting for the Arab League], *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, May 20, 2011.

²³ Daniel Odinius and Philipp Kuntz, "The Limits of Authoritarian Solidarity: The Gulf Monarchies and Preserving Authoritarian Rule during the Arab Spring," *European Journal of Political Research* 54, no. 4 (2015): 639-654.

²⁴ "Ijtima' wuzaraa' khaarjiyyah duwwal majlis al-ta'aawun al-khaliji wal-magrib wal-urdun al-ahad" [Meeting of the foreign ministers of the GCC countries and Morocco and Jordan on Sunday], *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, September 9, 2011.

The second form was diplomatic unison. The GCC adopted its most belligerent anti-Iranian platform since the 1980s, one that espoused a singular narrative: the peaceful Gulf kingdoms were being victimized by external subversion and sectarian strife emanating from an empowered Iran, and they had to unite to safeguard their regional space. For instance, Bahrain's uprising was framed in Gulf media as one orchestrated by Iranian puppeteers attempting to depose a Sunni Arab monarchy. For some, the entire Arab Spring was little more than a "Trojan horse" for Iran to implant sectarianism in the Arab world.²⁵ In this context, two notable statements emerged from several summits. The first, in April 2011, openly accused Iran of violating the sovereignty of all GCC kingdoms; the second, in December 2011, declared the intention to explore the possibility of a political confederation, one that could preserve the monarchical structures of each kingdom, while creating a more unified institutional structure. Combined with this were new economic initiatives: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE not only ramped up domestic spending, but also announced a \$20 billion program for new development projects in the least prosperous GCC states of Bahrain and Oman.²⁶

Finally, the GCC states embarked upon the transnationalization of repression, harmonizing standards and means by which domestic threats could be eliminated. While transnationalized repression among regionally bound autocracies is not new—Project Condor in Latin America and the Safari Club in sub-Saharan Africa come to mind, for instance—this was the first such case in the Arab world. Enshrining this was the December 2012 Internal Security Pact, an updated version of a much older proposal that had been floated unsuccessfully in past decades. The agreement called for the sharing of personal information of citizens; aggressive pursuit of legal targets across borders; integration of security and intelligence assets during periods of unrest; extradition of any individuals wanted by any government; and uniform legal standards of criminality. After its release and ratification by most member states save Kuwait, the impact was immediate. One was draconian new antiterrorism laws in several states such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which criminalized an impossibly broad range of speech.²⁷ Another was cross-policing, or incidents in which monarchical regimes arrested citizens for criticizing *other* fellow GCC monarchies. Between January 2012 and August 2015, there were over 150 such cases in the Gulf (compared to virtually none prior to the Arab Spring).²⁸

²⁵ Mohamed Binhuwaidin, "Essential Threats to the Security of the GCC Countries in the Post-Arab Spring Era," *Digest of Middle East Studies* 24, no. 1 (2015): 18-21.

²⁶ Mehran Kamrava, "The Arab Spring and the Saudi-Led Counterrevolution," *Orbis* 56, no. 1 (2012): 98.

²⁷ Fred Lawson and Matteo Legrenzi, "Repression and Monarchical Resilience in the Arab Gulf States," *International Spectator* 52, no. 1 (2017): 76-87.

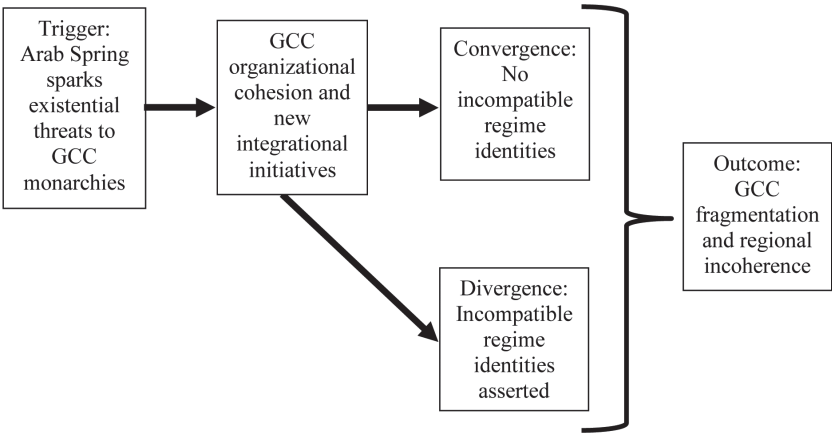
²⁸ Author's count from unpublished original dataset on cross-policing.

Divergence in Context

The described backdrop accentuates the puzzle at hand. As the preceding backdrop illustrates, the GCC is not a paragon of successful regional integration, and indeed in recent years the organization has appeared as anything but a viable platform for integration. However, Qatar and Kuwait's authoritarian divergence began well before the current troubles—in fact, almost immediately after the 2011–2012 Arab Spring period of organizational unity. Such defection makes little strategic sense, given the structural weaknesses of these small states and a regional context still defined by endemic conflict and security interdependence. Kuwait's domestic policy has rejected regional standards of transnational repression embodied by the GCC's pathbreaking 2012 Internal Security Pact, while Qatar's foreign policy has raised the ire of the conservative Saudi-led consensus by more openly engaging Iran, supporting Islamist movements, and projecting soft power through media platforms such as Al-Jazeera. Far from reflecting the current organizational doldrum, such divergence is partly the cause of it.

The thesis here entails that deviating policies result from the assertion of regime identities whose content is deemed incompatible with GCC initiatives: that is, domestic order over regional order. When no such incompatible identity exists, there is convergence, which explains not just the circumstance of Saudi Arabia, the largest state, but also why Bahrain and the UAE follow closely.²⁹ Figure 1 charts out this sequential pathway.

Figure 1. Theorized Pathway of Divergence



²⁹ Oman is a special case that has not so much diverged recently, but historically always stood slightly outside the GCC consensus on various issues due to *idiosyncratic* factors with the rulership beyond the scope of this essay.

Qatar's foreign policy defected from its commitment to the Saudi-led GCC position in key regards, for instance, by actively supporting Islamist movements banned in most of the other kingdoms—one of the prime reasons why its GCC antagonists have accused the kingdom of supporting terrorism. While it had hosted Hamas officials long before the Arab Spring, the Qatari leadership alone backed the brief tenure of the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt, and delivered significant economic aid and diplomatic support during its time in office. It also gave refuge to Brotherhood officials after the July 2013 Egyptian military and subsequent crackdown against the movement and backed particular factions in the Syrian and Yemeni civil conflicts. Its Al-Jazeera conglomerate broadcast critical programming, raising the ire of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. In March 2014, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the UAE withdrew their ambassadors in protest; relations were restored only when Qatar pledged to undertake concessions. Concord with the rest of the GCC was temporary, however. Qatar supported Saudi-led GCC initiatives, such as the March 2015 intervention in Yemen and designation of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. It also had little issue with the Internal Security Pact; in fact, Qatar's Emir Tamim was the first GCC leader to sign and ratify it.³⁰

Yet, Qatar remained bullish on Iran. It did not downgrade economic relations with Tehran, with which it worked over usage of their shared natural gas field in the Gulf. For instance, in January 2016, most GCC kingdoms withdrew their ambassadors from Tehran after attacks on Saudi diplomatic installations. Qatar was the last to do so, and still maintained communications with Iran, from direct-line talk with the Iranian president to delegated meetings with Iranian representatives in Iraq.³¹ Indeed, throughout this crisis, the Emir repeatedly called for dialogue between the GCC bloc and Iran over other issues, including their conflicting positions in the Yemeni and Syrian conflicts.³² Such openness paved the way for the 2017 crisis, which was incited by several contingent factors—Saudi political shakeups that elevated hardliner Muhammad bin Salman, Qatari negotiations with Shi'a militants in Iraq and Syria, accusations that Emir Tamim had publicly praised Iran, and hacking incidents involving the UAE.

After the embargo, the crisis escalated when Qatar refused to capitulate on ultimatums regarding its foreign policy. Threats against Qatar's Thani regime came in spades; throughout August, rumors swirled in Gulf media about new Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman's plotting a coup against Tamim.³³

³⁰ David Roberts, "Qatar and the Brotherhood," *Survival* 56, no. 4 (2014): 29.

³¹ "Iran President Holds Phone Conversation with Qatari Emir Over Gulf Relations," *National (UAE)*, May 27, 2017.

³² "Amir Qatar yutalib bi-hall al-khilafat al-khalijiyah al-iraniyyah 'ala mabda' hiwar" [Qatari emir calls for a Iranian—Gulf solution on principle of dialogue], *Al-Rai Al-Youm*, September 13, 2016.

³³ "Maza'im 'an 'inqilab fashil bi-qatar khuttatu lahu shaykh min aal-thani" [Allegations of a failed coup in Qatar orchestrated by a Sheikh of the Thani clan], *Arabi21.com*, August 6, 2017.

At the same time, relations with Iran intensified further, with Tehran sending a modest volume of food and other symbolic aid to compensate for the embargo. In August, Qatar normalized relations with Tehran, returning its ambassador despite GCC consternation. In September, its officials floated the possibility of leaving the GCC altogether, an idea first proposed in private in July.³⁴ By February 2018, when Kuwait hosted the 38th official GCC summit, media observers were declaring the organization “dead,” as Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE refused to send high-level officials due to Qatar’s attendance, the latter two striking their own bilateral pact to deepen cooperation outside the GCC framework.³⁵

That Qatar’s Thani leadership perceives Iran to be less threatening six years after the apex of anti-Iranian posturing during the 2011–2012 Arab Spring crisis is telling. Since that frantic period, Iran has expanded its physical capacity to commit the very thing the GCC states historically have feared—to intervene in Arab countries, backing Shi’a forces and projecting its power abroad. Iranian actions since then have entailed supporting the Houthi movement in Yemen, protecting the Assad regime in Syria (which, in turn, battled some militants backed by Qatar), deploying troops in Syria and Iraq, and continuing to sponsor Hezbollah.

Kuwait’s departure from the GCC position has been subtler, but still carries importance. Like Oman, Kuwait did not join the Saudi-Bahraini-UAE embargo and threats against Qatar; but unlike Oman, the Kuwaiti leadership under Emir Sabah undertook vigorous diplomatic efforts as the intermediary between Doha and Riyadh. It delivered the ultimatums made by the GCC bloc, seeking to soften the most hardline demands to make them more palatable. Such active mediation stemmed from Kuwait’s own unique self-created distance from the GCC in another issue domain, which had not gone unnoticed in the Gulf media and other capitals—its refusal to ratify the 2012 Internal Security Pact, which the other five monarchies formally ratified during 2013–2014. The agreement drew controversy throughout Kuwaiti civil society, given its dramatic implications.³⁶ If ratified, the Kuwaiti government could now begin cracking down on its own citizens if they criticized, say, Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy or Bahraini matters. Many Kuwaiti activists believed such transnationalizing repression was a stepping stone to a Gulf confederation that would essentially resemble Saudi Arabia or Bahrain.³⁷

³⁴ “Qatar tulammih li-insihab min majlis attawun al-khaliji” [Qatar hints its withdrawal from the GCC], *Al-Rai Al-Youm*, September 2, 2017.

³⁵ See, for instance, “Gulf Leaders Quit GCC Summit, as UAE Strikes Military Pact with Saudis,” *Middle East Eye*, December 5, 2017.

³⁶ “Durus amniyyah” [Security lessons], *Al-Jarida*, February 21, 2014.

³⁷ See, for example, “Al-amniyyah al-khalijyyah: taslim matlubin wa-da‘m amni li-muwajaha al-idhtirabat” [Gulf security: The extradition of the wanted, and security support to confront disorder], *Al-Jarida*, April 11, 2013.

After repeated debate during 2014–2015, the Kuwaiti parliament—an elected body whose approval was necessary, albeit one lacking executive authority—refused to ratify the agreement, despite the Emir’s initial pressures to do so. Herein lies the enigma. Parliamentary resistance to the agreement was driven by the kingdom’s sizable civil society and liberal voices. Inversely, however, the royalist regime refused to squash this resistance, but it could have easily done so with strategies it already had leveraged to quiet opposition on other issues.³⁸ For instance, journalists, advocates, and even members of parliament (MPs) accusing high-ranking royals of corruption, an extremely sensitive topic, found themselves under harassment or prosecution. Several newspapers affiliated with liberal opposition also were shuttered for breaching other red lines. If nothing else, the Emir could have dismissed parliament and either passed the measure by decree, or else called for (and manipulated) new elections to instantiate a more subservient legislature—a tried-and-true tactic, leveraged repeatedly since Kuwait gained independence in 1961.³⁹ Parliaments were dismissed three times during 2011–2016 alone. Yet, none of these transpired, much to the surprise of Kuwaiti oppositionists: “Some of us feared [the regime] would raise fists to pass the agreement, but they just gave up and moved on.”⁴⁰

Much as Qatar’s demurring on Iran is curious, given that the objective threat from Tehran has increased over time, the Kuwaiti leadership’s soft stance on the Internal Security Pact is peculiar, because domestic threats to its autocratic power also have grown since the Arab Spring. While Bahrain commanded attention for its March 2011 uprising, which attracted over 100,000 participants, in October 2012, mass protests in Kuwait also drew over 100,000 citizens demanding democratic reforms and new parliamentary elections. This constituted the largest example of organized resistance in Kuwaiti history, so much so that some Kuwaiti writers nervously debated whether revolution finally had arrived in the kingdom.⁴¹ Heightened activism, especially against perceived abuses of royal spending and power, continued to characterize Kuwaiti civil society in the following years.

All the GCC states share two baseline conditions—their states externally reside under the military umbrella of American hegemony, and they are autocratic monarchies in terms of regime type. Beyond this, however, variance in state behavior is not predicted by the most popular hypotheses that prevail in the literature on Gulf politics and regional affairs. First, neorealists see Kuwait and Qatar as small states that should be especially sensitive to problems of

³⁸ Fatiha Dazi-Heni, “The Arab Spring Impact on Kuwaiti ‘Exceptionalism’,” *Arabian Humanities* 4 (2015), <https://journals.openedition.org/cy/2868> (accessed September 19, 2017).

³⁹ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, “Politics and Opposition in Kuwait: Continuity and Change,” *Journal of Arabian Studies* 4, no. 2 (2014): 214-230.

⁴⁰ Confidential interview by author with human rights activist, Kuwait, February 14, 2017.

⁴¹ “Did Kuwait Protest Show a Real Threat to the Regime?” *Al-Monitor*, October 23, 2012.

regime survival. Their winning strategy should be to band with other Gulf kingdoms to neutralize two dangers: perceived external threats, which must be balanced against, or else potential domestic threats, which must be omnibalanced.⁴² This hypothesis operates well with GCC kingdoms such as Bahrain and the UAE; they suffer the same weaknesses and have cohered tightly together as well as alongside Saudi Arabia since the Arab Spring. Yet, Qatar and Kuwait have not. Qatar's independent-minded foreign policy has swerved it away from the GCC, despite Iran, the most credible aggressor to the Arabian monarchies, having enhanced its material and military capabilities since the Arab Spring. Meanwhile, Kuwait's reticence at regionalizing cross-border repression would suggest it is a very poor omni-balancer in terms of utilizing foreign policy to defuse internal opposition. Yet, its Sabah dynasty has no more wish to lose power to Arab Spring-style revolutions than any other fellow monarchy.

Another hypothesis originates from studies emphasizing transnational forces such as sectarian identity. To counter the danger of both Iran and sectarian conflict with Shi'a communities, some suggest that a Sunni Arab Gulf (*khaliji*) identity has coalesced, and culturally provides a basis for greater collaboration by emphasizing common tribal, linguistic, and historical experiences. This sense of "Gulf-ness" should result in more cooperation, especially when facing non-Gulf threats in the form of Iran or even Islamist movements originating in other parts of the Arab world, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas.⁴³ However, again, such an argument does not predict the status quo crisis. If anything, Qatar and Kuwait offer examples of how more parochial identities have overtaken an incipient transnational Gulf identity.

A final idea is that of hedging. From a systemic perspective, some members of a security alliance may defect in order to maximize their survival options if they believe an aggressor could become an ally in the future.⁴⁴ This coalescent thesis seemingly would resolve the problem of regional divergence on neorealism's own terms. Yet, that small states will hedge does not indicate *which* do so. It does not specify why Kuwait, for instance, sees little value in upgrading its domestic repression to the same degree as Bahrain, despite both monarchies having witnessed the largest protests in their histories during

⁴² Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), and Stephen David, "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (1991): 233-256.

⁴³ Michael Barnett and F. Gregory Gause, "Caravans in Opposite Directions: State, Society, and the Development of Community in the Gulf Cooperation Council," in *Security Communities*, ed. Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 186-189. This *khaliji* identity also is invoked in the memoirs of Abdullah Bishara, the GCC's first Secretary-General. Abdullah Bishara, *Bayna al-muluk wal-shuyukh wal-sulaatin* [Between kings and sheikhs and sultans] (Kuwait: Center for Diplomatic and Strategic Studies, 2004), 600-640.

⁴⁴ Yoel Guzansky, "The Foreign-Policy Tools of Small Powers: Strategic Hedging in the Persian Gulf," *Middle East Policy* 22, no. 1 (2015): 112-122.

the Arab Spring. Nor does it predict why Qatar, not the UAE, has gradually perceived Iran as less of a threat, even though both, in structural terms, are equally vulnerable to militaristic aggression from the east.

Within this analytical context, an ideational variable—that of regime identity—may help explain the behavior of the Qatari and Kuwaiti autocracies since the Arab Spring.

The Power and Pull of Regime Identity

Sprawling literatures on identity have left behind a Babel's tower of conceptual definition. The pragmatic view here defines regime identity as a political self-conception with two substantive components: *constitutive norms* and *relational understandings*.⁴⁵ Constitutive norms regulate domestic behavior. They encompass the rules and values that delineate what the social purposes and political goals of the regime ought to be. Norms are intrinsic and institutionalized; that is, through habituation, they guide how leaders perceive the appropriateness of different options, including what policies are permissible and which are not. They often are oriented domestically by indicating how a regime should treat its own members as well as society. Relational understandings, by contrast, entail the regime's external behavior. They include cognitive comparisons that illustrate the similarities a regime has with peer regimes, as well as the differences that drive them apart. Such understandings therefore mark a regime's worldview that formulates how it must relate to other regimes, including any exclusionary expectations—that is, what must be done to help distinguish the regime from others, if necessary.

Constitutive norms and relational understandings can be either historically inherited or socially constructed. However, when at least one of these components is seen to be incompatible with an existing policy trajectory, then regime leaders will react by changing course. They do so for both intrinsic and instrumental reasons. Intrinsically, a discordant policy commitment can induce discomfort and rejection when it does not fall within the range of what an existing identity would regulate as appropriate regime behaviors. Inversely, dissonant policy options can be seen as harmful to the regime's well-being by undercutting its basic identity.

At the same time, regime identities do not operate uniformly across time; as social psychologists know well, identities can exert inconsistent effects upon actions based upon contextual cues. The dynamic seen within the GCC is one where crises temporarily *mute* these identities: in the presence of collective threats or exogenous shocks, the Gulf kingdoms are more likely

⁴⁵ This borrows from the conceptualization of identity advanced by Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko Herrera, Alastair Ian Johnston, and Rose McDermott, "Identity as a Variable," in *Measuring Identity: A Guide for Social Scientists*, ed. Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko Herrera, Alastair Ian Johnston, and Rose McDermott (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 17-32.

to pursue integrational efforts that embody the imperative of regime survival (e.g., the Iranian Revolution, Gulf War, Arab Spring). Thus, the 2011–2012 Arab Spring apogee of Gulf consensus, driven by fear of internal revolution and amplified by the threat of Iranian incitement, set the GCC kingdoms onto a pathway of increased integration. However, as the crisis faded, parochial regime identities reasserted themselves in ways that foreclosed staying on the pathway of intensified regional order. In Kuwait, a constitutive norm of the Sabah monarchy’s identity as a dynastic family was close engagement with the country’s long historical tradition of competition, openness, and pluralism that marked civil society and, broadly, the relationship between the ruling family and its constituents. This proved stronger than the impulse to sign the 2012 Internal Security Pact and its transnationalization of repression. The relational understanding of the Thani monarchy’s identity as a dynastic order more recently oriented Qatar away from the Arabian Gulf as a regional and global actor without traditional constraints. This contravened the short-term commitment to the Saudi-led GCC platform of belligerently opposing Iran and Islamist movements, among other policy positions, that were seen as incompatible with Gulf integration. Figure 2 highlights the basic analytical framework of this identity variable.

Figure 2. Regime Identities in Kuwait and Qatar

	Kuwaiti Identity		Qatari Identity	
	Constitutive Norms	Relational Understandings	Constitutive Norms	Relational Understandings
Compatible with Regional Order (GCC from 2011 – 2012 Arab Spring)?	No: Commitment to domestic pluralism conflicts with demand for transnational repression.	Yes: No large-scale policy defections from GCC.	Yes: No large-scale policy defections from GCC.	No: Globalization without Arabization; orientation away from Gulf regional security complex.

Notably, the concept of regime identity borrows conceptualizations by identity scholars within comparative politics and constructivist theorists in international relation. It accepts that identities brandish social meaning and therefore are “a property of international actors that generates motivational and behavioral dispositions.”⁴⁶ However, it does not repeat the starkest implications that identity outweighs all other variables or, as in thick constructivism, that all material reality is completely prefigured by ideational forces bound

⁴⁶ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 224.

by performance or intersubjectivity.⁴⁷ The argument here is measured and pragmatic. It suggests that alongside other conventional factors, an autocratic leadership's defining self-conception—which can draw upon both social constructions and material history—may help explain why it prioritizes certain interests and policies when given a choice, such as whether to comply with a regional organizational consensus or else to deviate from it. The predominant interest, of course, is survival; regime identities are not configured to self-destruction. But how autocracies calibrate their domestic and foreign policies to attain this leaves ample room for ideational concerns.

It is also crucial to distinguish regime identity from national identity and state identity. National identity refers to the material and symbolic content of a society's understanding and recognition of itself. In Gulf societies, there are not only national identities but also subnational ones concerning tribe, sect, Islam, gender, and other ascriptions; a sizable anthropology has sprouted around this topic.⁴⁸ State identity entails the expectations and commitments of a state at the external level, in interaction with other states within the international system. Regime identity in the Arabian Gulf is a hybrid concept that has both these domestic and systemic components. It is articulated by the ruling elite in ruling monarchical systems (i.e., the king or emir, alongside the bevy of advisers and usually relatives that comprise the institutional core of the decision-making apparatus). This conceptualization reflects two important contextual realities.

First, in most Gulf kingdoms, a dynastic monarchy can never lose sight of itself as not just an institution but also a biological enterprise—a *family*—in constant social contact with other families, tribes, and groups in society. Long before British imperialism reified fluid tribal frontiers into legal state boundaries, family kinship networks for rulers played a major role in political order by mediating relations with other tribes, forming the most immediate basis of power and providing constant exposure to societal interests.⁴⁹ In the post-colonial era, royal families played double duty: once competing branches had been eliminated, rulers implanted entrusted relatives into new state institutions, providing to them a blood-driven sense of monopoly over coercive and financial resources.⁵⁰ For these reasons, regime identities in the

⁴⁷ See, for instance, Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow 1955 & 1959* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), and Nicholas Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2012).

⁴⁸ See, for instance, Paul Dresch and James Piscatori, eds., *Monarchies and Nations: Globalisation and Identity in the Arab States of the Gulf* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), and Alanoud Alsharekh and Robert Springborg, eds., *Popular Culture and Political Identity* (London: Saqi, 2008).

⁴⁹ James Onley and Sulayman Khalaf, "Shaikhly Authority in the Pre-oil Gulf: An Historical—Anthropological Study," *History and Anthropology* 17, no. 3 (2006): 189-208.

⁵⁰ J. E. Peterson, "Rulers, Merchants, and Shaikhs in Gulf Politics: The Function of Family Networks," in *The Gulf Family: Kinship Policies and Modernity*, ed. Alanoud Alsharekh (London: Saqi, 2007), 21-36.

Gulf Arabian kingdoms require recognizing and engaging domestic society, even though these are nondemocratic regimes whose authority does not originate from electoral contestation.

Second, because most of the GCC kingdoms share common tribal dynastic history, underwent the British imperial experience, and have adopted similar mechanisms of political rule, they constitute reference points for each other's identity. That is, Qatar will more likely compare its foreign policy with another Gulf kingdom, such as Saudi Arabia or the Emirates, rather than a non-Gulf country, whether republic (e.g., Syria) or monarchy (e.g., Morocco). Likewise, Kuwaiti leaders will contextualize their domestic political environment not by imagining the consequences of having an Algerian-type crackdown on opposition, but rather by imposing the kind of systematic repression seen in another GCC state such as Bahrain or Oman.

To summate, the argument here is that regime identities in Kuwait and Qatar explain why these royal autocracies diverged from the regional order embodied in the GCC unity of 2011–2012. The origins of these regime identities, as well as their effects on perceptions and policies, can be found in the subsequent case studies. In Kuwait, the constitutive norm of pluralism runs deeply throughout the country's historical development over the past century and has been recognized and institutionalized by the royal family. Its meaning may well be mediated or reconstructed over time, but it originates in material and cultural foundations of the Kuwaiti political order. In Qatar, forging a new relational understanding of “globalization without Arabization” is far newer, a product of the post-1995 palace coup and a new leadership believing that the monarchy's fundamental role should be that of a global actor, concerned with engagement with external trends far outside the Arabian Gulf.

Kuwait: Constitutive Norms of Openness and Pluralism

The principle of consultation between ruler and ruled in Kuwait is embedded in the sheikhdom's political development. In the mid-eighteenth century, the prevailing tribal clans and merchant families of the area installed Sabah rulers for their perceived skill in diplomacy and mediation, especially resolving social conflicts.⁵¹ Starting in the early twentieth century, a string of conflicts erupted between Sabah leaders, who were backed by the British, politically ambitious, but economic bereft, against merchant families who inversely held considerable wealth but little political power. Though other social forces populated the area—Bedouin tribes, a Shi'a minority, and petty laborers—the merchant elite represented the most educated edge of local society.⁵² Disputes in 1910 and 1921 resulted in costly political standoffs, the result of

⁵¹ Yusuf Bin 'Isa Al-Qina'i, *Safahat min ta'rikh al-kuwayt* [Pages from Kuwaiti history] (Kuwait: N. P., 1968).

⁵² Jill Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 37-39.

merchants chafing under onerous taxes and other extractive demands from an increasingly intolerant Sabah rulership. The struggle came to a head with the 1938 Majlis crisis, when a coalition of merchants self-elected a legislative assembly (*majlis*), riding a groundswell of local support in order to administer customs duties, monitor the ruler's spending, and otherwise claim authority in contravention to the primacy of Sabah rule.⁵³

While the Sabah leadership was able to disband the democratic movement, the ultimate outcome of this conflict was greater inculcation of compromise and bargaining within the political routines of Kuwait, bringing regime and society together in a continual process of negotiation. The merchants' preponderance of wealth and capital still meant that the ruling family had to tolerate its loudest source of dissent. In addition, the British provided no diplomatic or military assistance to the embattled ruling family, believing that the skirmishes unfolding between urban activists and the Sabah clan did not merit intervention. As a result, the Sabah leadership not only was forced to accept the place of the merchant opposition, but also had incentive to broaden its base of popularity by forging coalitional ties with other social forces that had been hitherto marginalized, in particular the Shi'a minority and certain Bedouin tribes.⁵⁴ By pledging protection and representation in return for their loyalty at this critical juncture, Kuwaiti political order pluralized considerably. In the 1950s, for instance, on the eve of independence, a vibrant civil society consisting of professional interest groups, one of the freest media sectors in the region, and vocal opposition networks coalesced around issues of Arab Nationalism and democratic reform but were almost entirely tolerated by the Sabah leadership.⁵⁵

Starting in the 1960s, with newly independent Kuwait infused with oil wealth and class structures rapidly blurring, openness and pluralism permeated state-society relations in several ways. First, the Sabah regime refused to develop a large coercive apparatus to police society, believing instead that it could bargain with opponents during times of conflict as it had in the past.⁵⁶ Of course, there were periods of censorship and arrests; but with a tiny military and few incidents of imposing widescale violence against civil society, the enlarging bureaucratic state led by Sabah royals never cloistered itself from opposition. Even the merchant elites benefited: despite the Sabah family's now possessing unparalleled resources to destroy its old foes, it chose instead to

⁵³ Kamal Osman Salih, "The 1938 Kuwait Legislative Council," *Middle Eastern Studies* 28, no. 1 (1992): 66-100.

⁵⁴ Sean Yom, *From Resilience to Revolution: How Foreign Interventions Destabilize the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 56-59.

⁵⁵ Simon Smith, *Kuwait, 1950-1965: Britain, the Al-Sabah, and Oil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 70-78.

⁵⁶ Jill Crystal, "Public Order and Authority: Policing Kuwait," in *Monarchies and Nations: Globalisation and Identity in the Arab States of the Gulf*, ed. Paul Dresch and James Piscatori (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 164-170.

enrich and protect them as key players in the new trade-oriented economy.⁵⁷ The royal palace maintained close contacts with merchant conglomerates and its other societal partners, including Bedouin tribes and the Shi‘a minority; it remained embedded within society.

Second, the keystone to this mild authoritarian rule, the elected unicameral parliament, became an indomitable institution within the political landscape. Despite the Sabah Emir still commanding near-absolute authority, popular pressures for democratic representation combined with royal habituation to recognize civic interests, resulting in the Arabian Gulf’s only parliamentary institution, which has existed since its inscription in the 1961 constitution.⁵⁸ Elections, sometimes manipulated or boycotted and resulting in subservient legislatures (as in 1967) and other times allowing for extremely critical bodies (as in the 1990s), became mainstays of public life. Thus, parliament retained a meaningful role in reviewing and promulgating all major legislation, including ratification of agreements such as the 2012 Internal Security Pact, although the Emir also could suspend parliament and rule by decree at times, as occurred in 1976–1981 and 1986–1990. The Gulf War provides a piquant representation of this reciprocal relationship. After Iraqi occupation, Kuwaitis welcomed back Sabah autocracy—but also called for the rapid restoration of parliamentary life, which Western powers also desired.⁵⁹

Third, Kuwaiti society itself came to embody, and continually reproduce, a cultural repertoire of debate, vocalization, and participation. Traditional practices such as the *diwaniya*, the regular familial gathering of male kin for the purpose of open discussion, became integrated into urban life—from becoming inviolable spaces inside private homes to the public expectation that even prominent politicians, such as the Emir and well-known parliamentarians, should hold *diwaniya* gatherings and allow notables to attend.⁶⁰ This repertoire of citizen engagement with politics also was perpetuated in schools and universities, civic associations, marketplaces, and the lively media sector. The prevailing attitude held that the Sabah royals never conquered Kuwait; they ruled only with some meaningful degree of consent, which could be given only if social forces were allowed the autonomy and political right to participate.⁶¹

The protest wave that moved through Kuwait throughout the 2011–2012 Arab Spring thus fit into a long-running pattern of political contestation,

⁵⁷ Pete Moore, *Doing Business in the Middle East Politics and Economic Crisis in Jordan and Kuwait* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 70–81.

⁵⁸ Michael Herb, *The Wages of Oil: Parliaments and Economic Development in Kuwait and the UAE* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 101–105.

⁵⁹ Steve Yetiv, “Kuwait’s Democratic Experiment in Its Broader International Context,” *Middle East Journal* 56, no. 2 (2002): 257–271.

⁶⁰ Farah Al-Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed: A History of Oil and Urban Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 168–172.

⁶¹ Mary Ann Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy Politics and Society in Contemporary Kuwait* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 59–100.

including a number of grassroots protests during the 2000s about electoral reform. Still, within royal circles, the fear of potential mass unrest was tangible, especially given events in the fellow GCC kingdom, Bahrain. One crucial sign was that, as protests mounted throughout 2012, the Sabah family's own *diwaniyyah* convened and pled for public obedience to the Emir.⁶² Despite this, the largest protests in Kuwaiti history occurred by year's end. It was in this context of uncertainty that Emir Sabah, who had taken power in 2006, initially agreed to the 2012 Internal Security Pact. Upon returning to Kuwait, however, the royal entourage found it a tough sell for two constituencies.

The first was the parliament, where a clear majority—including, notably, a number of conservative tribal deputies assumed to be “pro-government”—registered their objections to the agreement, believing it to be mismatched with Kuwait's political culture. As one MP recounted, “This was not an easy directive, it created suspicion... [we] have this instinct, any time you talk about security measures here, there will always be the question of *why* and for *how long*.”⁶³ By 2015, it was clear that parliament would not buy into the pact, which failed to leave its initial committee hearing. The second constituency was civil society, and here resistance was equally vocal. Though some conservative figures backed the royal push, the Kuwaiti media gave voice to opposing scholars, commentators, activists, and former officials. Critics argued that the pact not only violated the constitution but also was antithetical to the reciprocal understanding Kuwaitis had with Sabah authority.⁶⁴ Indeed, many began questioning the entire goal of closer GCC integration, arguing that too much convergence with more repressive kingdoms such as Saudi Arabia would infect Kuwaiti society and its democratic leanings with the “wrong” values.⁶⁵

For Emir Sabah and the royal decision-making core, the issue was not whether the regime could ensure the treaty's ratification, but whether doing so comported with its conception of what served as appropriate behavior within Kuwaiti politics. In practical terms, it always had the leeway to suppress its loudest critics and manipulate parliament, if necessary. Throughout 2013–2014, for instance, many oppositionists found themselves under harassment and arrest when they broached red lines of political discourse, such as accusations of royal corruption and enfranchising new citizens. More than a few new protests attracted uncharacteristically harsh police responses. Further, resistant parliaments were straightforward to dismiss, or else MPs were notoriously easy to bribe: in fact, many of the Arab Spring protests targeting

⁶² Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, “Politics and Opposition in Kuwait: Continuity and Change,” *Journal of Arabian Studies: Arabia, the Gulf, and the Red Sea* 4, no. 2 (2014): 225.

⁶³ Confidential interview by author with a member of parliament, Kuwait, February 16, 2017.

⁶⁴ See, for instance, “Matab al-intifaqiyyah al-amniyyah” [Security agreement bump!] *Al-Jarida*, November 20, 2012.

⁶⁵ “Limatha arfadh al-ittihad al-khaliji” [Why do I refuse the Gulf Union]? *Al-Rai*, May 18, 2012.

royal corruption in Kuwait concerned the well-known reality that at any given time, numerous MPs were operating on the royal payroll.

Yet, the prevailing sentiment across discussions with senior Sabah princes staffing key ministries and royal institutions became one of disquiet. The security agreement could be ratified, but the underlying issue represented a foreign standard of repression that transgressed shared constitutive norms. By imposing GCC guidelines about who to arrest and how to police, the Sabah dynasty would be ignoring its longstanding role of bargaining and compromising with domestic society. Systematic repression could certainly extirpate opposition, but as in Bahrain or Saudi Arabia, it could also alienate the Shi'a community with whom the Sabah had shared close relations, and fundamentally reverse an implicit code of public conduct.

Further, many within the Sabah clan began to recognize how permeable Kuwait had become to regional influences—and not for the better. While Kuwait saw itself as part of the Gulf regional security complex in geopolitical terms, developments such as the security pact revealed an alarming side-effect of regional integration. Convergence would not come about with the other GCC kingdoms' progressing to these democratic leanings; rather, it would likely occur if Kuwait's democratic proclivities *regressed* to the Gulf mean. The Kuwaiti model would not diffuse outward, but rather the Gulf model of closed autocracy would diffuse inward. There were limits, then, to solidarity within the GCC: the willingness to talk politics freely “runs in Kuwaiti blood”—but not, it was invoked, in the blood of other Gulf societies.⁶⁶

By 2015, after parliament again declared the issue a nonstarter, Emir signaled that the security agreement was no longer relevant, and rarely raised it again. By that point, the Sabah regime already had decided to return, at least partly, to a more conventional method of disarming opposition through constructive engagement. Senior princes, for instance, fanned out to give audience to unhappy tribal communities whose youth had participated in the protests, while royal ministers created a bevy of new youth initiatives and institutions to allow activists, bloggers, and protesters a more measured platform of expression.⁶⁷ To be sure, the loudest critics continued to attract unhealthy attention from state prosecutors and the police; but nothing approaching the repressive standards embodied in the Internal Security Pact ever materialized.

Qatar: “Globalization without Arabization”

Whereas the constitutive norms within Kuwaiti identity stem from episodic practices that have historically shaped the relationship between regime and society, the relational understanding that has pulled Qatar away from the GCC results from a far newer construction—the foreign policy orientation that the

⁶⁶ I am indebted to HRH Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad for this snippet. Interview by author, Kuwait, February 15, 2017.

⁶⁷ Ulrichsen, “Politics and Opposition,” 228.

peninsular kingdom's Thani dynasty created after 1995. That year, leadership succession brought to power Emir Hamad in a palace coup, and with him a new set of royal advisers and family kin to staff the Qatari state. By then, the constitutive norms linking the Thani family to domestic society had developed quite differently than in Kuwait. With a smaller population lacking sectarian cleavages, and a weaker merchant class, Qatari society did not frequently mobilize political contestation for greater voice to the same degree. The most notable unrest occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, when Qatari workers protested against the British-run oil firm and, to some degree, the ruler.⁶⁸ Competition and rivalries within the ruling family also continued well into the 1970s, with infusions of oil and gas wealth only temporarily smoothing over tensions.⁶⁹ Indeed, Emir Hamad's ascent in 1995 came at the expense of his father, who unsuccessfully plotted with Saudi and Emirati recognizance to reclaim the throne while exiled abroad.

The resulting change in Qatari behavior at the external level exemplifies the importance of individuals and idiosyncratic factors in foreign policy change. Sheikh Hamad and the family members closest to his decision-making process simply brought a completely different set of views into office, one that sought to detach the peninsular kingdom from Saudi hegemony.⁷⁰ Prior to the coup, the self-conception of the Thani dynasty was one of protective subordination to Saudi Arabia. While this fueled resentment among younger princes, such as Hamad, at their dynasty being "a perceived feudal vassal," it also embodied another domestic reality.⁷¹ The Qatari citizenry was tiny, numbering perhaps 70,000 in the late 1980s, and had few of the civic myths and national symbolism that Kuwait enjoyed.⁷² In this context, apart from a few internal political reforms such as loosening censorship, the post-coup regime looked outward. It sought to construct a new external self-conception in relational contrast with its Gulf peers, especially Saudi Arabia. That reconstructed regime identity embodied the logic of what one Qatari official called "globalization without Arabization"—an ideational orientation toward the international system that would emphasize Qatar as a global actor rather than a Gulf or even Arab one and reduce Qatar's vulnerability within the Gulf regional security complex.⁷³

Such reconstruction of identity in its relational component falls in line with constructivist views of foreign policy that emphasize how role and status-

⁶⁸ Herb, *Wages of Oil*, 84-85.

⁶⁹ Crystal, *Oil and Politics*, 156-158.

⁷⁰ Faisal Mukhyat Abu Sulaib, "Understanding Qatar's Foreign Policy, 1995–2017," *Middle East Policy* 24, no. 4 (2017): 40.

⁷¹ Mehran Kamrava, *Qatar: Small State, Big Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 71.

⁷² J. E. Peterson, *The Arab Gulf States: Steps toward Political Participation* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 84.

⁷³ Confidential interview by author with Qatari official, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Qatari Embassy), Kuwait, February 21, 2017.

seeking can take precedence over conventional security concerns. Small states that lack material capabilities recognize their diminutive position in the international anarchy: “the perception of smallness infiltrates the calculations of decision-makers and officials,” who see foreign policy as a natural arena by which to create another image emphasizing not size but *brand*.⁷⁴ For the Thani monarchy’s elite decision-makers after the mid-1990s, this Qatari brand required some immediate *realpolitik*. Of great need were more rentier revenues, which would come from developing natural gas fields over which Iran had claim, and so required engagement with Tehran. Beyond this, however, Qatar’s relational understanding was carefully rebuilt in a sequence that focused first upon the regional system and then the global stage.

First, at the regional level of the Arab world, Qatari foreign policy adopted a stance by the early 2000s of balanced neutrality with an undercurrent of activism. Indeed, the Qatari constitution of 2003—drafted in an institutional effort to reboot the regime’s narrative— explicitly mandates that the kingdom’s foreign policy “strengthen international peace and security by...encouraging peaceful resolution of international disputes.”⁷⁵ By the late 2000s, Qatari negotiating teams had attempted to diplomatically intervene in Yemen, Lebanon, Darfur, Sudan, Chad, and Djibouti, efforts lubricated by ample amounts of cash to offer as incentive for combatants to stop fighting. While some of these engagements were more symbolic than effective, the underlying impulse was to demonstrate Qatar’s stark contrast with Saudi Arabia, whose historical support for certain factions in conflict arenas such as Lebanon and Yemen had removed any veneer of claimed neutrality.⁷⁶ One exceptional outcome of this reorientation was the cultivation of ties with a range of Islamist actors, including Hezbollah and Hamas, unlike most other Gulf kingdoms. Another was, paradoxically, the maintenance and deepening of official ties with Israel. Those relations continued even when Qatar, as a U. N. Security Council member in 2006, criticized the Israeli government for its war against Hezbollah, yet refused to break off ties despite GCC pressures.⁷⁷

If Qatar’s regional outlook reflected a new self-conception as a monarchical regime autonomous from its Gulf peers, then its international outreach and branding efforts expressed a wider vision of the Thani dynasty serving as cultivator for an oasis of globalization. Starting in the early 2000s, the regime sought to propagate “a business-orientated, modern, savvy, and popular

⁷⁴ Babak Mohammadzadeh, “Status and Foreign Policy Change in Small States: Qatar’s Emergence in Perspective,” *International Spectator* 52, no. 2 (2017): 26.

⁷⁵ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Arab Spring: Policy Drivers and Regional Implications* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2014), 6.

⁷⁶ Lina Khatib, “Qatar’s Foreign Policy: The Limits of Pragmatism,” *International Affairs* 89, no. 2 (2013): 419.

⁷⁷ Uzi Rabi, “Qatar’s Relations with Israel: Challenging Arab and Gulf Norms,” *Middle East Journal* 63, no. 3 (2009): 452-454.

brand,” seamlessly compatible with both East and West, and for which its Arab geographic locality meant little.⁷⁸ Such hyperactive diplomacy entailed several components, all of which drew heavily upon its burgeoning rentier wealth: projection of soft power through the Al-Jazeera media conglomerate; separate security assurances with the United States, such as allowing American air operations to relocate their Middle East command center from Saudi Arabia to ‘Udeid Air Base during the Iraq War; and the establishment of cosmopolitan entities inside Qatar, such as the Museum of Islamic Art, Education City, think tanks, film festivals, and sporting events. By dissolving, in the global imagination, the physical connection between Qatar and its Arab environs, the Thani regime sought to remake its own image as being cosmopolitan.

Within this context, Qatari foreign policy defected from the GCC consensus after the Arab Spring, which expressed a trajectory set into motion more than a decade earlier. In fact, even in the years preceding the Arab Spring, Qatari–Iranian relations were marked by close consultation to a degree unrivaled in the GCC. Between February 2008 and February 2010, for instance, seventeen official state visits occurred between the countries, including two trips to Tehran by Emir Hamad and one visit to Doha by Iranian President Ahmadinejad.⁷⁹ Further, during the Arab Spring, while Qatari leadership fell back into the conservative Gulf fold during the peak of revolutionary fear, its foreign policy across the Arab world was marked by continued activism, including participating in the NATO intervention in Libya and backing a variety of Syrian opposition and militant forces during the early stages of that country’s civil war.⁸⁰ The peaceful succession in June 2013 between Emir Hamad and his son, Emir Tamim, only magnified the regime’s variance with the GCC; that fall, for instance, Qatar gave refuge to Muslim Brotherhood leaders following the Egyptian military coup and subsequent crackdown, which precipitated new tensions with Saudi Arabia.

As divergence spawned crisis in the summer of 2017, the effects of Qatari’s relational shift in identity through its foreign policy had become palpable from the outside. First, Qatari officials recounted that the most common criticism delivered through diplomatic backchannels from opposing GCC states was that the Thani leadership was not acting in an “Arabist” or pro-Arab way—that it was privileging its internationalist status over its “real” status as a small Arab state that should contribute to regional, or at least Gulf, consensus.⁸¹ Similarly, pro-Saudi media outlets attacked Al-Jazeera and other Qatari media as being

⁷⁸ David Roberts, “Understanding Qatar’s Foreign Policy Objectives,” *Mediterranean Politics* 17, no. 2 (2012): 236.

⁷⁹ Kamrava, *Qatar*, 84.

⁸⁰ Mohammed Nuruzzaman, “Qatar and the Arab Spring: Down the Foreign Policy Slope,” *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 8, no. 2 (2015): 226-238.

⁸¹ Confidential interview, Qatari official, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Qatari Embassy), Kuwait, February 21, 2017.

a platform for sedition against Arab unity by giving voice to Islamist groups such as Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as contributing to the unrest of the Arab Spring.⁸² Second, Arab media aligned with Saudi Arabia and its GCC allies conceded Qatar's outsized global influence, by linking the kingdom to the support of terrorism and strife via its Iranian and Islamist connections. One analysis sneered that the Qatari monarchy had become a "bloated government" and was, through Gulf pressure, slowly returning to "its normal size"—that normal size being, presumably, a localized kingdom oriented toward maintaining the conservative status quo across the region and the Gulf.⁸³

Increased Qatari–Iranian relations have provoked only further isolation from the GCC. Herein lies the clearest evidence of how the Thani regime's relational dimension, rather than conventional security concerns, is guiding Qatari foreign policy. Iran has greatly expanded its regional power since the Arab Spring with successful financial or military interventions to sustain Shi'a-aligned actors in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. With the former three countries intact, there is now a geographic shatterbelt of Iranian-supported Shi'a territory stretching from the Mediterranean to the Gulf. The growth of this projectable coercive capacity and geopolitical influence composes the reason why Saudi Arabia and several other GCC states maintain their aggressive posture against Iran, which continues to serve as the primary threat to their external security. Yet, the Qatari monarchy's perception of Iran as a threat has remarkably diminished, but not because it somehow has immunized itself from any attack from the east.

Conclusion

This analysis has explored the cases of Kuwaiti and Qatari policy divergence in the context of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The puzzling upshot again should be reiterated: each regime leadership feels more secure today *not* reaping the benefits of collective security associated with regional integration. The Qatari monarchy prefers economic bombardment over sacrificing its relational understandings of itself; the Kuwaiti monarchy would rather not embrace the transnationalization of GCC repression, despite experiencing furious popular unrest during the Arab Spring. The identity-based imperatives inherent in these choices go beyond traditional material interests, and express constitutive norms, in the Kuwaiti example, and relational understandings, in the Qatari case, that have guided how these leaderships have perceived threats, pursued

⁸² "Aljazeera al-qatariyyah minbar al-fitna 20 'aman" [Qatar's Al-Jazeera a platform of sedition for 20 years], *Al-Madina* (Saudi Arabia), June 2, 2017.

⁸³ "Akhiran hukumat Qatar al-muntafakha ta'ud li-hajmiha al-tabi'i 'jazira saghira'" [Finally, Qatar's bloated government returns to its natural size of a small island], *Al-Watan* (Syria), June 14, 2017.

goals, and embarked upon the most optimal course of action.

Within the study of Middle East authoritarianism, especially of monarchist autocracies in the Gulf, the novelty of identity as a concept comes into play, given that regime behavior has frequently been analyzed through the lens of materialist theories (usually variants of neorealism) that construe major decisions as a function of some survival strategy. To be sure, there is something intuitively incontestable about this: neither the Kuwaiti nor Qatari leaderships believe they are pursuing their identities on the road to demise. The problem is that such rationalist theorizing would predict GCC cohesion and greater alliance-building, not the divergence witnessed today. Hence, the core contribution, here, is that the power and pull of identity in even small states that are vulnerable to outside forces, such as Kuwait and Qatar, can shed light onto why these regimes believe there are hard limits to regionalism—and thus, ultimately, why regional orders sometimes falter or even fail among autocracies that should otherwise share the singular goal of regime persistence.

At a contextual level, the need to bring the Arabian Gulf into wider theorizing is also apparent, given its absence in the literature on regionalism and regional organizations; that is, Gulf integration is not well-addressed in work on regional integration. For political economists, the Europe-centric orientation of classic regional integrationist theory has been supplemented by newer comparative political economy work engaging Asia, North America, and Latin America, but very seldom the Arab world.⁸⁴ The Middle East figures into parallel theorizing about regional security complexes and regional orders—but always in a generalized way that emphasizes the Arab–Israeli conflict or great powers, and, hence, ignores the Arabian Gulf as its own regional zone.⁸⁵ The analysis here suggests this imbalance should be corrected.

Finally, at the case-oriented level, the research presented here reinforces the value of Kuwait and Qatar as resonant examples of small-state foreign policymaking. The study of foreign policies within small or weak states is fragmented across multiple fields. As the hypotheses reviewed earlier show, neorealist assumptions still hold these actors hostage to the structural instinct for material security.⁸⁶ Geographic divides also fragment scholarship. Key

⁸⁴ Walter Mattli, *The Logic of Regional Integration* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Finn Laursen, ed., *Comparative Regional Integration: Europe and Beyond* (London: Routledge, 2010); and Christina Schenider, “The Political Economy of Regional Integration,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 20 (2017): 229–248.

⁸⁵ Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Peter J. Katzenstein, *A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); and David Lake and Patrick Morgan, eds., *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

⁸⁶ Jeanne Hey, ed., *Small States in World Politics: Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2003); Miriam F. Elman, “The Foreign Policies of Small States: Challenging Neorealism in Its Own Backyard,” *British Journal of Political Science* 25 (1995): 171–217; and Efraim Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States* (London: Routledge, 1988).

work on how “strategic culture” and other soft variables shape foreign policy has been grounded almost entirely on great powers.⁸⁷ Newer research on ideational concerns, such as applications of role theory, emerged around small Western states rather than the developing world.⁸⁸ Small states also figure into newer theories of international hierarchy, but always as subordinate units to hegemonic powers that gladly sacrifice sovereignty for external patronage and protection—not as intentional actors weighing identities and interests.⁸⁹ Given these gaps, the Middle East cases of Qatar and Kuwait have much to offer in bridging the space between ideational insights drawn from small states elsewhere and foreign policymaking in the Middle East.

⁸⁷ Exemplars include Randall Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler’s Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), and Stephen Rosen, “Military Effectiveness: Why Society Matters,” *International Security* 19, no. 4 (1995): 5-31.

⁸⁸ See, for instance, Cristian Cantir and Juliet Kaarbo, “Contested Roles and Domestic Politics: Reflections on Role Theory in Foreign Policy Analysis and IR Theory,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 8 (2012): 5-24.

⁸⁹ Alexander Cooley, *The Logics of Hierarchy: The Organizations of Empires, States, and Military Occupations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), and David Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).