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MONOGRAPH SERIES:

THE SHURA COUNCILS IN THE PERSIAN GULF

Number 1: July 2019

Kuwait's National Assembly: Roles and Dynamics

Hamad H. Albloshi

Introduction

The scholarly literature on the legislative branch of political systems often disregard the Middle East region and specifically the Gulf countries (Iran, Iraq and the GCC states). The traditional approach, based on the classical political science division of executive authority between presidential, semi-presidential and parliamentary systems, and the focus on the representation criteria makes any analysis of this complex region of a revolutionary republic (Iran), a reconstituted republic (Iraq since 2003), and a group of Arab monarchies with very distinct traditions and governance styles and political cultures, difficult. These countries' governance systems feature a variety legislative practices and different degrees of accountability and balance between the legislative and the executive branches of government, and certainly some work better others, but they do not as a rule enjoy consolidated or semi-consolidated democratic systems. The fact that the Gulf region has remained, broadly speaking, in the grey zone of the hybrid political regimes, without a clear definition of the attributions granted to the legislative/shura/consultative councils, has made this project necessary in order to explore and understand what is the actual role, function and performance of the elected and appointed chambers in this particular region and under what institutional structures do they function.

Scholars attribute to the legislative chambers three main roles within the political systems:

1. Linkage, representation, debate and legitimation;
2. Oversight and control, mainly on the executive branch;
3. Policy making.

Bearing in mind these commonly accepted attributes, the objective of this project is to use comparative elements to analyze the different case studies that compose the Gulf region in the three roles, and to address the following questions:

Which is the primary role of the councils within the political system in the Gulf region?
Which grade of autonomy the councils have regarding the executive branches of government?

How influential the councils can be in the policy making process?

What makes a legislative body efficient?

How representative and accountable they are?

What is the perception from the civil society about the role and performance of the councils?

To fill the gap in the literature, this 'Majlis in the Gulf' project gathered a distinguished group of scholars and specialists from within the region, equipped with the necessary methodological and comparative tools, to discuss and assess the role, function and performance of every one of the legislative/consultative chambers in the Gulf region. The project was initiated within the Gulf Studies Center at Qatar University, led by Dr Luciano Zaccara, and supported at its launch by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Gulf Office). The project has reached the publication phase of the wide-ranging research generated by its participants with the support and collaboration of the al-Sabah

Programme in International Relations, Regional Politics and Security at Durham University.

The results of the many debates and discussions, and the findings of our team will be captured and disseminated in a new monograph series – *The Shura Councils in the Persian Gulf Sub-region* – jointly published by the Qatar University Gulf Studies Center and the al-Sabah Programme at Durham University. These publications will be available free of charge through the two universities' websites for interested parties to consult and download.

The coordinators of this project and the publications series would like to thank the authors for their participation in this project, as well as the unyielding support of the Gulf Studies Center directors, Drs Mahjoob Zweiri and Abdullah Baabood, and the rest of the team, Arwa Kamal Eldin Gaf Abbas, Farah Anwar AlQawasmi, Ashleen Williams, Amjed Rasheed and Juline Beaujoun. Without them and their input this project and monograph series would not have been possible.

Luciano Zaccara and Anoushiravan Ehteshami

Doha and Durham

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Introduction

The Kuwaiti political system is unique among its Arab counterparts in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Kuwaitis enjoy political freedom in comparison to other states in the region. Political groups are active and the civil society is strong in Kuwait. Elections are organized regularly to choose members of different institutions, but the parliamentary elections are the most important elections that are held in the country. Citizens go to polls, supposedly, every four years to elect 50 members to the parliament, which is also called the National Assembly or *Majlis al-Ummah*. The parliament is one of three branches of power in the country beside the executive power and the judiciary. This paper will deal with the Kuwaiti parliament by asking and attempting to answer the following question: what are the functions of the parliament in Kuwait? In other words, what does the Kuwaiti parliament do? It comes to the conclusion that this institution plays an important role in the country despite its limitations and the nature of the political system that will be explained.

This paper will be divided into five sections. It will begin with a section on the historical background of the parliament in the country. This is followed by a section about composition and representation in the *Majlis*. The third section will deal with its internal dynamic. The fourth section will discuss its legislative role, and the fifth section would be the conclusion.

Historical Background

The ruling family migrated to Kuwait in the 17th century and began its reign in 1752 when Sabah bin Jābir gained power as the ruler of the country. Kuwait however did not become an independent country until 1961. The official history of Kuwait tells that people elected bin Jābir for the position. This means that the role of the Sabah family was not established through the use of force.¹

Historically, the relation between the emir and the people was based on consultation, or what Ghanim Alnajjar calls “the partnership role”.² However, this relationship was disturbed by the end of the 19th century when Mubārak al-Sabah, who was also known as Mubārak the Great, seized power after killing his two brothers Muhammad and Jarrāh in 1896.³ Mubārak tried to govern without consulting the people

and his relationship to the merchant class was disturbed. Mubārak's two sons, Jābir and Sālim, who ruled the country after his death, continued their father's way of governing.

However, the people of Kuwait decided to end that type of ruling in 1921 when Sālim al-Mubārak died. They gathered and issued a statement that encouraged the Sabah family to choose a new emir who would accept the participation of the Kuwaitis in ruling the country and form a consultative council to share power with him. The ruling family agreed and the new emir, Ahmad al-Jābir, created the Consultative Council or *Majlis al-Shūrā* that consisted of 12 appointed members in 1921.⁴

The council was dissolved because of personal disputes among its members⁵ and in 1938 another council was formed when the emir decided to hold small elections to choose members of the Legislative Council or *al-Majlis al-Tashrīfī*. The merchant class won the majority in the new council. Unlike the Consultative Council of 1921, the Legislative Council wrote the first constitution of the country, legislated and even challenged the authorities of the emir, Ahmad al-Jābir.⁶ Consequently, al-Jābir dissolved it in the same year.⁷ The emir's action was followed by repressive policies that resulted in the detention of some politicians and the execution of Muhammad al-Minayyis, who opposed the emir's actions. Another supporter of the *Majlis*, Muhammad Qiṭāmī was killed in a clash with security forces. Others decided to flee the country and took refuge in Iraq.⁸

In the period between 1939 and 1961, Kuwait had different elections for small councils, such as religious endowments, education and municipality. Kuwaitis were advocating for more participation and the moment came in 1961. In June 1961, Kuwait became an independent state and the emir, 'Abdullah al-Sālim (d.1965), called for elections to choose a Constitutional Assembly, which was responsible to write the constitution in December 1961.⁹ Reasons behind this decision are beyond the scope of this paper, but al-Sālim wanted to institutionalize politics in the country through a constitution and a legislative assembly.¹⁰

Since then, however, there have been attempts to undermine the constitution in several occasions. The first attempt came just six years after the independence when the authorities rigged the elections in 1967.¹¹ Nine years later, the regime, during the reign of Sabah al-Sālim, suspended the constitution and ended the parliamentary life. In 1981, however, the emir, Jābir al-Ahmad, decided to revive the constitution,

therefore, the parliamentary life resumed. This did not last for a long time as the constitution was suspended again in the period between 1986 and 1992. Since then, the constitution has not been suspended and many parliamentary elections have been held.

Before dealing with the parliament and the constitution, it is important to clarify the meaning of one term that has been used in the political life in the country for a long time: the opposition. Since the beginning of the 20th century, many political groups and parties appeared in Kuwait. Some of them were seen as the opposition. However, it is important to note that the opposition in Kuwait is not similar to those in democratic countries. *Al-Mu'āraḍa*, as the opposition is called in Kuwait, has evolved and gone through different phases, and their demands have changed over time. Some of political groups have opposed the regime when it suspended the constitution in 1976 and 1986. They have been also critical of the authorities inside the National Assembly. In addition, they have opposed attempts by the government to undermine the power of the *Majlis*.

Composition and Representation:

As it was discussed, Kuwaitis struggled with the ruling family in order to be able to participate in the decision-making process. This struggle has influenced the nature of the political system after the independence. On the one hand, people were eager to transform the political life and to create a system of checks and balances. On the other hand, some members of the ruling family were not willing to easily give up their absolute power. As a result of this tension, a constitution was written in 1962 that tried to limit the absolute power of the ruling family, but at the same time to take their reservations into the consideration. Therefore, members of the opposition were not happy with the constitution. It did not satisfy their demands, for reasons that will be discussed throughout the paper, but for them, it was a major step in the political development in Kuwait. Some of them were members of the Constitutional Assembly but did not want to delay the emergence of the constitution because they believed that it would be changed and improved in the future.¹²

After issuing the constitution, the political system in the country transformed from tribalism to institutionalism. Therefore, three main institutions emerged: the

legislative power (the National Assembly), the executive power (the cabinet), and the judicial power. The first two branches of governance are interrelated.

The parliament consists of 50 members as stated in article 80 of the constitution, which says: “the National Assembly is composed of fifty members elected directly by universal suffrage and secret ballot in accordance with the provisions prescribed by the electoral law.”¹³ The article gives another important indication of the shape of the *Majlis*. It says the following: “Ministers who are not elected to the National Assembly are considered exofficio members thereof”.¹⁴

This article was included in the constitution because the political system is neither a parliamentary nor presidential. Based on the Explanatory Note on the constitution, the political system in Kuwait is somewhere between parliamentary and presidential systems. It was deliberately designed this way because, as the Note indicates, “presidential systems are in republican [countries].”¹⁵ Furthermore, the Note asserts that the decision was taken not to become a fully parliamentary system because of the negative outcomes of such systems. The Note stresses that in the parliamentary systems parties have the upper hand in their countries and are sources of instabilities.¹⁶ However, what is important to note is that the decision was taken for reasons beyond that.

No doubts that presidential systems are not applicable in monarchies, however, Sa‘ad al-‘Abdallah al-Sabah, a member of the ruling family, wanted a presidential system.¹⁷ It can be assumed that he supported the presidential system not because of its effectiveness, but because he wanted a political system that makes the emir the head of the executive power as well, therefore, to limit the ability of the *Majlis* of questioning him. The other choice the writers of the constitution had was the parliamentary system. In fact, some members of the Constitutional Assembly pushed toward adopting that. For example, Ḥumūd al-Khālīd, a member of the Assembly, asserted that: “the parliamentary system is the best for Kuwait.”¹⁸ At the end, members of the Assembly agreed to combine both systems in one. Therefore, the system in Kuwait is neither parliamentary nor presidential, but it is somewhere in between. The country has an elected parliament, but the prime minister and his cabinet do not come as a result of direct election. At the same time, the emir plays a major role in the political life. For example, he appoints the prime minister, he can veto any legislation issued by the parliament, and he can oppose any attempts to amend the constitution. This contradicts

responsibilities that a King or a Queen has in other monarchical countries with fully parliamentary systems.

This combination between the parliamentary system and the presidential system gives the assumption that the country has a semi-presidential system similar to the system in France for example. However, the semi-presidential system is not applicable to the Kuwaiti case. In France, the executive power is shared between the president and the prime minister, who is appointed by the former based on the results of the parliamentary election. In other words, the president has to appoint the head of a party that has the majority in the assembly.¹⁹

The process of appointing the prime minister in Kuwait is different. As they differed over the nature of the system, members in the Constitutional Assembly disagreed over the appointment of the prime minister. As it was mentioned above, the emir appoints the prime minister, and the constitution dealt with this issue in article 56, which stated that the emir “after traditional consultations, appoints the Prime Minister and relieves him of office”.²⁰ Therefore, the right to appoint the prime minister was given to the emir, who decides to appoint anyone regardless of the results of the parliamentary elections. Ultimately, the power that the emir has exceeds that of the members of the parliament when it comes to appointing the prime minister.

Now, it is important to ask the following question: who appoints the ministers in the cabinet? As it was stated, the political system in Kuwait is not a parliamentary system, therefore, the parliament does not appoint the ministers and has no rights to approve them before their appointment. The abovementioned article 56 of the constitution continues to address the issue related to the executive power by stating that the emir “also appoints ministers and relieves them of office upon the recommendation of the prime minister.”²¹ The article continues to assert that “ministers are appointed from amongst the members of the National Assembly and from others”.²² This means that they can be appointed from outside the parliament. What is important to note is that upon their appointment, ministers become part of the assembly and have the same rights as other elected members. However, they “do not participate in vote of confidence,” after the impeachment of other ministers as it will be explained later.²³

Some members of the Constitutional Assembly did not believe that anyone should be appointed from outside the parliament. Ahmad al-Khaṭīb, a pan-Arab member of the Assembly, did not only oppose the idea of appointing ministers from outside the parliament, but also had his reservations on appointing members of the

ruling family in the cabinet. He believed that appointing ministers from outside the parliament was a “dangerous step ... and damages the spirit of democracy”.²⁴ He pressed on the importance of having a monarchical constitution with the emir having a ceremonial role.²⁵ This comment was not easy to be accepted by members of the Sabah family, that some of them were part of the Assembly. Sa‘ad al-‘Abdallah al-Sabah described al-Khaṭīb’s comments as “dangerous,” while Jābir al-Ali al-Sabah said the following: “what Ahmad has said is irritating us and we cannot stand it. I urge the *Majlis* to discuss this article [56] and give its opinion, or we will have another way”.²⁶ He did not elaborate on the “other way,” but the expression shows the attitude of some members in the ruling family toward democracy and the transformation of power from them to the people.

At the end, the Assembly agreed to appoint ministers from outside the parliament, including members of the Sabah family. It was agreed that the members of the cabinet could reach 16 members including at least one elected from the parliament. Therefore, the outcomes have been in the benefit of the ruling family. The latter has the right to appoint the prime minister, and to choose unelected ministers, who have the same rights as other elected legislators, to become part of the parliament.

Thus, the parliament consists of 50 elected members and from one to 14 appointed ministers, in addition to the prime minister. Thus, the National Assembly can have as many as 65 members or as few as 50 members. Since the ruling family wants to dominate the political scene in the country, it tries to appoint as many ministers as it can from outside the National Assembly to increase its power. Therefore, when members of the National Assembly demand more representation in the cabinet, their requests are denied. The cabinet of 1992 was the exception because it contained six elected members of the parliament. This decision was influenced by the political context at that time. The country had been recently liberated from Iraq and national consensus was important for the ruling family.

Chart one shows the number of seats given to elected members of the parliament. Cabinets nine, ten, thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen were excluded because they were formed while the constitution was suspended and elections were not held. Out of the 30 cabinets, 13 of them had one elected member of the parliament. This means that 43.33 percent of the Kuwaiti cabinets included only one elected minister.²⁷ This confirms the assumption that the ruling family tries to choose as few of the elected legislators to the cabinet as possible to increase its influence in the National Assembly.

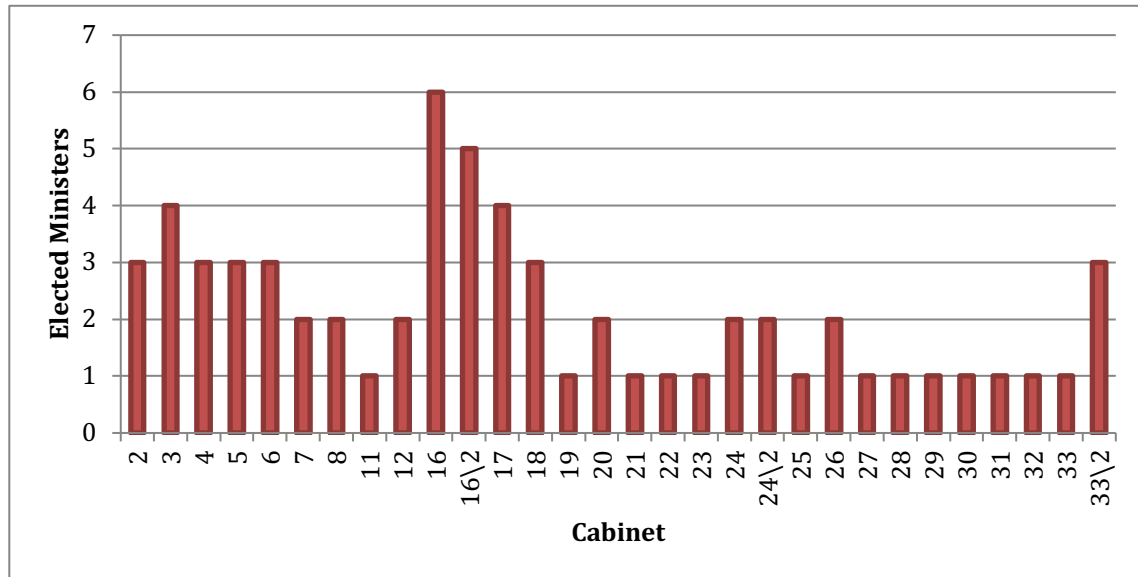


Chart One: Number of Elected Ministers in the Executive Power in Kuwait Since 1963

It is important to note, however, that the participation of members of the ruling family in the cabinet has decreased over time. There were 12 members, including the prime minister, of the Sabah family in the cabinet that was formed in the time of the Constitutional Assembly. Only three were from the public.²⁸ The next cabinet had 11 members of the ruling family. However, this changed over time and reached three in five cabinets as it is shown in chart number two. The chart shows numbers of the ruling family in the cabinet since 1963. The Ministry of Interior Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have always been in the hands of the ruling family.

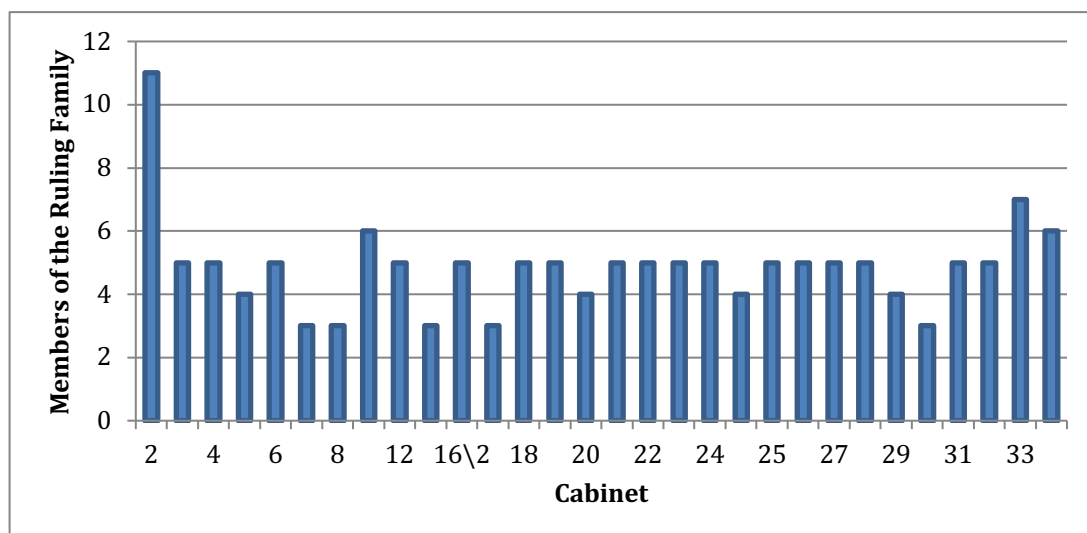


Chart Two: Number of the Ruling Family in the Executive Power in Kuwait Since 1963

Choosing fewer ministers from the parliament is one way to dominate the political scene, and the other way is to intervene in the parliamentary elections. The regime has been intervening in every election in order to get as many supporters of it to the Assembly. This act is easier when the country is divided into many electoral districts. Therefore, since the first elections that were organized after the independence in 1961, the ruling family and the opposition have had different views regarding the number of the districts. From the beginning, the ruling family wanted to divide the country into many districts. They wanted 20 districts, while the leaders of the opposition wanted one district. At the end, the country was divided into ten districts. In 1981, however, a decree was issued by the former emir, Jābir al-Ahmad, and increased the numbers of districts into 25. This meant more districts with fewer constituents. In other words, this meant increasing the ability of the regime to intervene in the elections. How?

With small number of constituents, candidates do not need many votes to win a seat in the parliament. In some cases, candidates became legislators with only 400 or 500 votes. For example, Jāsim al-Ṣaqir won the elections in 1981 in the third district only with 462 votes.²⁹ In small districts with few constituents, candidates are able to buy votes by bribing people in order to gain their support, or to provide them with services in the bureaucratic system such as offering jobs or high ranked positions to their voters. Some of these services are illegal. Nevertheless, they are tools in the hands of the authorities to increase the number of their supporters in the parliament. Those who are pro government are usually given access in the bureaucratic system to increase their chances to win seats. Therefore, it is fair to argue that because of its impact on corruption, “the main controversy in Kuwaiti politics has been, and continues to be, electoral districts”.³⁰

Moreover, after the elections, the government provides the same services to its supporters in the National Assembly and “buys” them as well. This has been recently revealed by a former minister of health, ‘Abdul-Raḥmān al-‘Awaḍī in an interview. He said: “I used to buy flight tickets for some legislators to gain their loyalty ... each one of us [the ministers] had four or five legislators with him.”³¹ Al-‘Awaḍī talked about bribing members of the parliament by 200 or 300 Kuwaiti Dinars. If each minister, including the prime minister, had the ability to buy only two members of the National Assembly by bribing them, this means that 32 legislators were in the side of the government. By 2011 the legislators became more expensive, some of them gained millions of Kuwaiti Dinars, in a scandal that will be discussed later.

The country was divided into 25 districts until 2006 when the authorities were forced to reduce them into five because of a popular youth movement known as *Nabīha 5* or “we want it five.” The movement believed that reducing the number of the districts would decrease corruption by weakening the ability of the government to manipulate the parliamentary elections.³² Based on this new system, the 50 elected legislators come from five districts in the country - ten from each electoral district. In this system, people had the right to vote for four candidates in their district. However, the new system did not eliminate tribalism or sectarianism, and it did not end the government’s interference in the election. But, the new system helped political groups to build coalitions during the elections to exchange votes. This was critical in 2012 when the opposition gained the majority in the *Majlis*.

Kuwaitis are divided based on religion into Sunnis and Shi‘a, and with very small Christian minority. Most of the Kuwaitis are also divided ethnically between Arabs and Persians. At the same time, there is another division between the Arabs. They are divided into two groups: the Bedouins and non-Bedouins (Hadar). It can be argued that the districts are designed in a way that gives all social groups the chance to be represented in the *Majlis*. For example, the Shi‘a are concentrated in the first district, and because of that, they usually win about five seats during each election. For instance, in February 2012 election the Shi‘a gained six seats in the district, and in 2013 elections they gained five seats, while in 2016 they gained 4 seats. The same argument can be made about the tribes that are mostly concentrated in the fourth and fifth districts.

Internal Dynamics

As it was discussed, parties and political groups do not have the right to form the cabinet because this right was taken from the people and given to the ruling family. The right to form parties is not mentioned in the constitution. At the same time, it does not ban them. Different political groups have appeared in the country since the beginning of the 20th century. Their demands have evolved as the political process changed in the country. They represent different social and sectarian groups and different ideological orientations.

Perhaps the most influential political groups are the Islamists in general, and the Constitutional Islamic Movement (CIM) or *al-Ḥaraka al-Dustūriyya al-Islāmiyya* in particular. This group represents the Muslim Brothers in the country. The CIM was officially founded after the liberation of Kuwait in March 1991.³³ However, the existence of the Muslim Brothers as a political orientation began in 1950s.³⁴ At that time, their influence was limited because of the pan-Arab and leftist movements and groups that were operating in Kuwait. However, this changed since 1967 when Arab-secular regimes were defeated by the state of Israel. This convinced many people, including Kuwaitis, that the solution for the Arabs' and Muslims' predicaments would be reached through Islam. Therefore, the Islamists began to gain legitimacy in the Middle East and among the Kuwaitis and as time passed, the Muslim Brothers became stronger.

This group is not the only Islamist group in Kuwait. There are Salafī groups as well. These groups have more restricted understanding of Islam and its application in Muslim societies. The main group among them is the Salafī Islamic Assembly or *al-Tajammu' al-Islāmī al-Salafī*, which was formed in 1991 as well. The group, similar to the CIM, had been active in the country before that.³⁵

The Shi'a have formed their political groups as well. The beginning of their activities as organized political groups started immediately after the Iranian Revolution in 1979. After the revolution, some Shi'a, especially youth were attracted by the Iranian revolutionary model. This portion of the Shi'a community in Kuwait is the most organized and influential one, and its political party is known as *al-Taḥāluf al-Islāmī al-Waṭanī* (the National Islamic Coalition). This group is not the only Shi'i group as there are other Shi'i groups in the country.³⁶

Liberal and Leftist political parties also exist in the country. These parties are the continuation of the pan-Arab movements that operated since 1950s. Their political orientations and ideologies have evolved through time. Today there are three main political groups that represent them: *al-Minbar al-Dīmūqraṭī* (the Democratic Tribune), *al-Taḥāluf al-Waṭanī* (the National Coalition), and *al-Tayyar al-Taqaḍḍumī* (the Progressive Movement). The first two are liberal political groups, while the third is a leftist group that focuses on social justice and leans toward socialism.

These parties compete in the electoral districts during the parliamentary elections, but they cooperate in some occasions as well. They usually have few candidates in each

election. These candidates are distributed in all districts in the country and in many cases only few of them make it to the *Majlis*.

Not a single party has been able to gain the majority in the National Assembly since independence. Therefore, even if five members of a certain group made it to the parliament, they still would not be able to apply their program because they would have to convince 45 other members, in addition to 16 members of the cabinet. Thus, the only option they are left with is to build coalitions inside the parliament with other groups.

Different blocs have been created in the National Assembly since 1999 when *Kutlat al-‘Aamal al-Sha‘bī*, or the Popular Bloc, the first parliamentary bloc, was founded. The bloc consisted of representatives from all parts of society; therefore, it went beyond the sectarian and tribal divisions in the country. It mainly focused on issues related to corruption and leaned toward more populist legislations such as increasing the salaries of the citizens. The bloc was soon followed by other blocs in the *Majlis*. *Kutlat al-‘Aamal al-Waṭanī* (the National Bloc) was another bloc founded by liberals in 2006.³⁷ This bloc was a coalition of non-Bedouin Sunni middle class citizens and merchants. The bloc had its liberal agenda in comparison to the Popular Bloc or the Islamists, who also had their blocs. The most important one among them was *Kutlat al-Tanmiya wa al-Iṣlāḥ* (the Development and Reform Bloc). Moreover, independent legislators create their own blocs as well.

Members of these blocs agree on certain issues, but their votes inside the parliament are not always unanimous. For example, the Popular Bloc’s members voted differently on canceling consumer loans in December 2006. Ahmed al-Sa‘dūn, and Hassan Juwhar opposed it, Musallam al-Barrāk, Muhammad al-Khalīfah, and Marzūq al-Ḥibaynī supported it, while Ahmad Larī and ‘Adnān ‘Abdulṣamad abstained.³⁸

These blocs create larger coalitions either inside or outside the parliament to counter the government in certain times. For example, in the parliamentary election of February 2012, the opposition was able to gain 35 seats, these seats were divided among different political groups, parties, and individuals. Some of them were members of the abovementioned blocs. Out of these blocs, they created a larger coalition known as the Majority Bloc or *Kutlat al-‘Aghlabiyya*. This was the only time that a big coalition of different political parties and blocs were able to make the majority in the parliament. This encouraged them to demand nine seats in the cabinet, but their request was denied.

In general, these coalitions do not make more than one-third of the parliamentary seats. At the end of the day, we end up with a chaotic scene when legislators shift their

alliances, change their votes, and focus more on issues that benefit their constituencies. This gives the government the leverage to manipulate the situation. In fact, it can be argued that the only “party” or organized political group that gains the majority in the National Assembly is the cabinet because it has 16 ministers, who are also members in the *Majlis*, in addition to its supporters among the legislators who can reach as many as 35 or even 40 persons. This gives the regime, in many cases, the upper hand in the National Assembly.

Legislative Role:

The National Assembly should last for four years as article 83 states.³⁹ However, the emir can dissolve it before that. This is another right that is given to the emir. According to article 107 “The [e]mir may dissolve the National Assembly by a decree in which the reasons for dissolution is indicated. However, dissolution of the Assembly may not be repeated for the same reasons”.⁴⁰ The emir should also call for new elections after the dissolution, but this should not exceed “two months from the date of dissolution,” according to article 107.⁴¹ So Far, the *Majlis* has been dissolved based on this process for seven times: 1996, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2013, and 2016.

The parliament’s four years are divided into different sessions. The first session is organized after two weeks of the elections.⁴² Regular sessions begin in October by an order from the emir, and they should not be shorter than eight months.⁴³

The *Majlis* has a speaker who is elected by its members. Historically, all the speakers have been male speakers. This is mainly because Kuwaiti women gained their political rights in 2005. The Speaker is elected by the majority votes of the National Assembly where both elected and unelected members have the right to vote. This means that the cabinet has the leverage to influence the result as it has up to 16 votes. Since 1999, the government had a supporter in that position. Ahmad al-Sa‘dūn, one of the main figures within the opposition was the speaker of the National Assembly in 1985, 1992, and 1996. In 1999, he lost the election to Jāsim al-Khrāfi (d. 2015), a pro government politician, who served as the minister of finance in the second half of 1980s. He supported the government in many critical crises.⁴⁴

Al-Khrāfi's nephew, Marzūq al-Ghānim is the current speaker. He, despite his previous support for the opposition on some issues, is a pro government politician as well. Perhaps the main indication of his support for the regime was a recent bill that has been approved by the *Majlis* and verified by the emir in only two weeks. The bill prevents those who were accused of insulting God or the emir from running in parliamentary elections. It is believed that the target was a former legislator and a main opposition figure, Musallam al-Barrāk, who was released from jail in April 2017 after serving a two years prison sentence because of his criticism of the emir in 2012.⁴⁵

As it was said, the cabinet is the strongest political group within the parliament, however, in some periods it loses this leverage as some of its supporters shift alliance and stand with the opposition. This leads the government to either resign⁴⁶ or the emir to dissolve the parliament hoping for a new *Majlis* with more cooperative legislators. However, as it was mentioned above, the regime has dissolved the parliament and suspended the constitution in two periods. The first one was in the period between 1976 and 1981, and the second one was from 1986 and 1992.

The Assembly has five major roles to play. The following pages deal with these roles. First, it explains the legislative process. Second, it sheds lights on its financial responsibilities. Third, it discusses its role in checking the works of the executive power (scrutiny). Forth, it deals with its role in appointing the crown prince. Fifth, it focuses on the functions of committees within the National Assembly.

Legislative Process

The most important role that any parliament has in the world is to legislate for the country. The Kuwaiti parliament is not different. The constitution deals with this role in article 79, which states “no law may be promulgated unless it has been passed by the National Assembly and sanctioned by the [e]mir.”⁴⁷ Therefore, two steps should be taken in order to pass a law in Kuwait.

For this first part, legislators and ministers can propose a bill that goes first to committees in the parliament before its members vote on either approving or dismissing it. When the bill gets enough votes, it should go to the second phase, which is the approval of the emir. The latter has the right to veto a bill within 30 days of its submission by the *Majlis*. In this case, the bill goes back to the *Majlis* and if it is approved by a two-thirds majority vote, the bill becomes a law. There is one step left

before a law comes into force, which is to publish it in the official Gazette. According to article 178: “Laws are published in the Official Gazette within two weeks of their promulgation and come into force one month after their publication. The latter period may be extended or reduced for any law by a special provision included in it”.⁴⁸

Since its formation after the elections of 2016 until March 2016, the current *Majlis* has presented more than 880 bills, while the executive power has presented about 270 bills in the same period. Not all of these proposed bills became laws as many of them did not get enough votes in the parliament or were vetoed by the emir or were put a side by some committees.⁴⁹

In addition, the emir has the right to issue decrees when “the National Assembly is not in session or dissolved,” as it is seen in article 71 of the constitution.⁵⁰ However, these decrees should not contradict the constitution; instead, they should be on urgent matters, and should be submitted to the National Assembly during its first session after a recess. Since the independence, more than 1100 such decrees have been issued.⁵¹

The Financial Authorities

The parliament has different financial authorities. It has the right to impose taxes, to deal with loans, and to approve the budget. The ministry of finance proposes the budget and presents it to the cabinet, then to the parliament, which has to approve it. The parliament has the right to suggest changes on the budget. Taxes should be implemented through a law as article 134 of the constitution asserts. This means that it should go through the parliament in order to be implemented. Issues related to the financial authorities of the *Majlis* appear in articles 134, 136, 137, and from 140 – 148 of the constitution.⁵²

Oversight

The National Assembly scrutinizes the executive power in many ways. First, the legislators can question the ministers or the prime minister to clarify “matters falling within their competence,” according to article 99.⁵³ Since the first *Majlis* in 1963, thousands of questions have been submitted to the government, and in the current *Majlis* alone the legislators have submitted more than 3700 questions.⁵⁴

Second, the *Majlis* can discuss political, economic, or social issues in the parliamentary sessions. Five members have to sign a request to do that. The aim of this process is to secure “clarification of the Government's policy and to [exchange] views thereof”.⁵⁵

Third, the *Majlis* has the right to establish “committees of inquiry or to delegate one or more of its members to investigate any matter within its competence.” Officials in the executive power, including ministers, “must produce testimonials, documents, and statements requested from them”.⁵⁶

Fourth, perhaps the most important tool in checking the government is impeachment. Article 100 of the constitution deals with this issue. It states the following: Every member of the National Assembly may address to the Prime Minister and to Ministers interpellations with regard to matters falling within their competence. The debate on such an interpellation shall not take place until at least eight days have elapsed after its presentation, except in case of urgency and with the consent of the Minister concerned. Subject to the provisions of Articles 101 and 102, an interpellation may lead to the question of no confidence being put to the Assembly.

There have been more than 100 impeachments or attempts to impeach ministers or prime ministers since 1963. These impeachments are followed, as it was stated, by a vote of no confidence. This request should be signed by ten legislators. It is signed after the impeachment and the vote does not take place before seven days of the submission of the request. The confidence is withdrawn when the majority supports the request. It is important to note that ministers, who are also members in the National Assembly, do not vote as they are considered, by default, supporters of their colleagues in the executive power. No minister has lost his/her job as a result of a vote of no confidence, yet. This happens because the government has the upper hand in the parliament, and the system is not parliamentary. Nevertheless, in some cases, legislators are able to build a coalition against certain ministers and easily have the number of votes needed to withdraw confidence from him/her. In this case, the targeted minister resigns before the vote of no confidence. However, his/her political career does not end here because he/she may come back to the cabinet as a head of another ministry, or becomes a consultant to various institutions in the country, especially in the office of the emir as the case of Yūsuf al-Ibrāhīm, Muhammad Sharār, and ‘Ali al-Jarrāh

Seventeen of the impeachments were against two prime ministers: the former prime minister, Nāṣir al-Muhammad and the current prime minister, Jābir al-Mubārak. This tool was not used against prime ministers until 2006. In the period between 1963

and 2003, the crown prince was the head of the government as well. Therefore, members of the National Assembly were reluctant to impeach the prime minister because it would damage the image of the coming emir. In 2003, however, the two positions were separated because of the health condition of the former crown prince, Sa'ad al-'Abdallah al-Sabah. Jābir al-Ahmad, the emir at that time, decided to make his brother, Sabah al-Ahmad, who was the deputy of the prime minister, the head of the executive power. In the period between 2003 and 2006, the prime minister was not impeached because of Sabah al-Ahmads' political as well as social status in the country and because of the assumption that he would be the next emir.

The situation changed in 2006, when Sabah al-Ahmad, as predicted, became the emir after the death of his brother Jābir and the abdication of the former crown prince, Sa'ad al-'Abdallah al-Sabah. The newly appointed emir continued to separate the position of the crown prince from the position of the prime minister. His brother Nawwāf al-Ahmed was appointed as the crown prince, while his nephew, Nāṣir al-Muhammad, was chosen to become the prime minister. The latter did not enjoy his uncle's political or social status, therefore, a request to impeach him was submitted by Ahmad al-Sa'dūn, Ahmad al-Milayfī, and Fayṣal al-Mislim in the first political crisis he encountered with the opposition. The attempt to impeach him came in 2006 because members of the National Assembly believed that his cabinet was not serious in changing the electoral system in order to reduce corruption during elections.

This attempt was followed by many other attempts and marked a change in the political behavior in the country. Attempts to impeach al-Muhammad continued until he agreed to face his opponents in the National Assembly in 2009. Therefore, he became the first prime minister in the history of the country to be impeached. It is true that the impeachment was conducted behind closed doors; the step, however, was significant. The previous attempts had failed either because of the resignation of the cabinet or the dissolution of the parliament by the emir. For example, the 2006 attempt had failed because of the dissolution of the parliament, while the cabinet resigned in December 2008 after another attempt to impeach al-Muhammad.

Legislators cannot raise the issue of no confidence against the prime minister after being impeached as article 102 indicated. However, the same article asserts that parliamentarians can announce their inability to cooperate with him by submitting that to the emir, who "may either relieve the Prime Minister of office and appoint a new Cabinet or dissolve the National Assembly".⁵⁷ If the emir decides to dissolve the *Majlis*

and calls for elections while the new *Majlis* refuses to cooperate with the same prime minister, “he shall be considered to have resigned as from the date of the decision of the Assembly in this respect, and a new Cabinet shall be formed”.⁵⁸

Choosing the Crown Prince:

In addition to the above-mentioned roles, the National Assembly in Kuwait has the ability to choose the crown prince, therefore, the coming head of the state. When a newly emir is appointed to his position, he has to choose a crown prince within a year of reaching power. The name of the crown prince should be submitted to the National Assembly, which has to approve him to the position by a majority of votes. If he does not gain the support of the parliament, the emir has to submit three names to the *Majlis* to choose one of them to the position.⁵⁹

The National Assembly played a major role in solving a critical crisis in 2006. It was said earlier that the former emir Sa‘ad al-‘Abdallah al-Sabah abdicated his position. When his predecessor- Jābir al-Ahmad- died, he was announced by the government as the emir. However, because of his health problems, the government asked the parliament to look at his ability to role the country. The parliament, based on medical records that were presented to it, decided to force Sa‘ad al-‘Abdallah al-Sabah to abdicate. It then agreed with the decision that had been taken by the ruling family to choose Sabah al-Ahmad to be the next emir. The transition, therefore, was not complicated. The National Assembly then approved Nawwāf al-Ahmad as the crown prince.

If the position of the emir becomes vacant, as a result of death or abdication, before choosing a crown prince, the cabinet becomes the de facto ruler and has to nominate a person from the ruling family to become the emir and then refers that to the National Assembly to approve it.⁶⁰

The Ratification of International Agreements

The Kuwaiti government has the right to establish relationships with other countries and to cooperate with international organizations. Therefore, in order to strengthening these relationships, they may sign treaties, which have to come to the National Assembly in order to be ratified. As soon as these treaties are ratified, they become part

of the internal law in the country and the authorities should not neglect them.⁶¹The National Assembly does not have the right to amend the treaties, but has the right to postpone its ratification.⁶²

Committees

The National Assembly has many committees that deal with different issues. Some of them are permanent and others are temporary. The membership of these committees differs from one to another. Some have five members and others have seven. The permanent committees are the following: Complain, Interior and Defense Affairs, Economical and Financial Affairs, Legal and Legislative Affairs, Educational and Cultural Affairs, Health, Social, and Work Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Public Facilities, Protection of the Public Wealth, Budget, and Priorities.⁶³

The temporal committees are formed for certain reasons, especially when there is an urgent need to deal with a problem or an issue. They are formed based on a suggestion of five legislators.⁶⁴ The National Assembly has formed different temporary committees in the previous legislation period, including committees on Human Rights, Housing, Youth and Sport, and the Disabled.⁶⁵

Every elected member of the parliament has the right to join any of the committees by announcing that. If the number of the legislators who want to join a committee exceeds its designated number, elections are held during a parliamentary session and the cabinet has the right to vote. Its votes can influence the formation of the committees and can affect the legislator process in the National Assembly.

Conclusion and Evaluation of Kuwait's Majlis:

This paper dealt with the legislative power in Kuwait that is embodied in the parliament or the National Assembly. It asked and attempted to answer the following question: what are the functions of the parliament in Kuwait? Through careful examination of the function of the parliament, the paper came to the conclusion that the National Assembly is a major step towards a representative system, and that it is an important institution. The Kuwaiti parliament plays a major role in the political life of the country. It has the right to legislate, to monitor and oversight the cabinet, to approve the budget, to choose the crown prince, and to ratify international agreements signed by the government.

However, the parliament's power is limited because of the nature of the political system, which is neither parliamentary, nor presidential. As a result of that, the constitution gives the executive power and the emir certain rights that limit the ability of the parliament to function effectively. These rights make them more influential in the decision making process in comparison to the National Assembly. This appears in many ways. As it was discussed in the paper, the emir has the right to appoint the prime minister regardless of the results of the elections. Also, the prime minister has the right to appoint his cabinet from inside and outside the parliament. In addition to that, the cabinet is part of the National Assembly and its ministers have the same rights as its elected members, except when there is a vote of no confidence. Moreover, the emir has the right to dissolve the parliament, and is given the right to issue decrees when the parliament is not in session.

These rights can be used to weaken the parliament and to limit its power. They are also used as tools to weaken the position of the political groups. One of the main examples on this regard is the right to issue decrees when the parliament is not in session. The emir has the right to issue such decrees when the situation is urgent, but these decrees can influence the political process for the benefit of the executive power, as the case of the electoral system that was changed in 2012. As it was said, a parliamentary election was organized in 2012 and the opposition gained 35 seats in the National Assembly for the first time in the history of the country as a result of the intense political atmosphere in Kuwait that began in 2009.

At that time, the former prime minister, Nāṣir al-Muhammad was accused of corruption. As a result, a youth movement, known as *Irḥal* (leave), emerged and demanded his resignation. The movement needed two more years to reach its goal. Cases of corruption were revealed and al-Muhammad was accused of being behind them. The critical case was revealed when the bank accounts of some members of the National Assembly had large deposits.⁶⁶ The scandal coincided with Arab Spring. Successful revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt led many in Kuwait to think that change is possible, therefore, they pushed toward the resignation of the prime minister.

When al-Muhammad resigned, the parliament was dissolved by the emir and a new election was organized. Because of the political atmosphere, the opposition gained the majority in the National Assembly. However, this did not last for a long time. As the tension intensified between the cabinet and the elected legislators, the emir

postponed the parliamentary sessions for one month. Then, the critical moment came when the constitutional court dissolved the parliament because of irregularities in accepting Nāṣir al-Muhammad's resignation.

This decision was followed by a decree issued by the emir based on article 71 to change the electoral system. As it was mentioned, Kuwait is divided into five districts, with each has ten representatives in the National Assembly. People had the right to vote for four candidates. This helped political groups and parties to build alliances and exchange votes. The emir's decree took this right from the people and forced them to vote for one candidate. The new system prevents political groups from building alliances, which decreases the chances of the opposition to gain the majority. Therefore, it can be argued that the aim behind the decree, which was approved by the constitutional court a year later, was to weaken the opposition and keep it as a minority in the National Assembly.

This behavior and the fact that the system does not give enough space for people to govern led some within the country to demand the transformation of the political system into a parliamentary one. This appeared in a proposal presented by *I'tilāf al-Mu'ārada* (the Opposition Coalition) that was founded in 2014. The proposal demanded the amendment of many articles in the constitution to move toward a parliamentary system. However, there is a dilemma.

In order to amend the constitution there is a need for an agreement between members of the parliament and the emir. Article 174 of the constitution deals with this issue. According to the article, the emir or "one-third of the members of the National Assembly have the right,"⁶⁷ to request to amend the constitution. Then the proposed changes should be supported by the majority in the *Majlis* before they are debated. Then, two-third of its members should vote in order to pass the proposed changes. These changes do not come into force before the ratification of the emir.⁶⁸ This process makes it hard for any political groups to transform the political system through changing the constitution. First, it might be hard to convince the majority in the National Assembly to amend the constitution, as there is no consensus among them on the parliamentary system. Second, even if the two-third of votes were secured, the ruling family might not accept the idea of transforming the system and the emir might veto the proposed change.

Therefore, the hands of the people are tied. It is difficult for them to gain the majority in the National Assembly, they cannot appoint the prime minister, appointed

ministers become part of the parliament and have the same rights as its elected members, and changing the constitution is not an easy step because it requires a majority that is hard to reach.

Moreover, the regime has the ability to repress its opponents. It is true that freedom of expression in Kuwait is better than other countries in the region. Nonetheless, the regime has taken many measures in violation of basic human rights. This appears in the way the regime dealt with *Karāmat Waṭan*, a social movement that followed the change the electoral system in 2012.⁶⁹ This movement emerged immediately after the emir's decree. *Karāmat Waṭan*, or the dignity of the nation, organized many rallies to oppose the decree. The authorities used different tools in dealing with the opposition and *Karāmat Waṭan*: (1) they relied on force to end the rallies, (2) they arrested and brought members of the opposition, especially the youth, to the courts, (3)⁷⁰ they harmed them in their jobs,⁷¹ and (4) they revoked the citizenship of some of them. The latter has been the most effective⁷² because people might be willing to go to jail, or lose their jobs, but they are not willing to lose their identity and nationality.

These measures have helped the regime to end protests in the country. Elections were organized twice after *Karāmat Waṭan*: one in 2013 and the other in November 2016. The former election produced a *Majlis* that was cooperative with the executive power, however, it was dissolved by the emir. Facing regional challenges was the main reason behind the call for the early elections, but this might have not been the real reason. Whatever the real reason behind dissolving the parliament was, the fact remains that the *Majlis*'s existence rely on the hands of the authorities regardless of its members.

The new election in 2016 brought back some members of the opposition to the *Majlis*, but they failed to have the majority. Members of the current *Majlis* have to counter the executive power to deal with corruption and to change some of the laws that empowers the government to repress its opponents. However, the main question is the following: will they be able to do that? The answer might be negative because they do not have the majority. In fact, they have failed to weaken the power of the government to revoke the citizenship from the Kuwaitis. When the government revokes the citizenship of any person for any reason, he or she does not have the right to go to court to challenge the decision. When the current *Majlis* wanted to give the people this right, it failed because the government has the majority.

Despite these limitations, the National Assembly remains an important institution in the country because of its discussed responsibilities. It also remains the main institution that provides the political groups with a platform to influence the decision making process in the country. This was the reason behind the decision of some political groups to participate again in the parliamentary elections of 2016 after boycotting them in December 2012 and July 2013. They had boycotted the elections as a protest to the emir's decree to change the electoral system. It is also possible to assume that the *Majlis* is seen by many people as an important institution. This assumption is based on the percentage of people who vote in the elections. In many cases the percentage of their participation exceeds 60%.

Notes

- ¹ Muhammad 'Abdulqādir al-Jāssim, *Rūḥ al-Dustūr: Naẓariyyat al-Tawāzun Madkhal Ilā Fikrat al-Dawla wa al-Qānūn*. Kuwait: Dār Qurṭās, 2007, p. 63.
- ² Ghanim Alnajjar, *Madkhal Littatawwur al-Siyāsī Fī al-Kuwait*. Kuwait: Dār Qurṭās, 1996, p. 9.
- ³ 'Abdul-'Azīz Hussein, *Muḥāḍarāt 'An al-Mujtama' al-'Arabī Bi-al-Kuwait*. Kuwait, Dār Qurṭās, 1994, pp.103 – 104.
- ⁴ Ghanim Alnajjar, *Madkhal Littatawwur al-Siyāsī Fī al-Kuwait*, 16 – 17.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.
- ⁷ Michael Herb, *The Wages of Oil: Parliaments and Economic Development in Kuwait and UAE*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014, p. 79.
- ⁸ For more information about that see the memo of Khālid al-'Adsānī, the secretary of the council. Accessible online at <http://taqadomi.com/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/06/سليمان-خالد-مذكرات-العدساتي.pdf>.
- ⁹ Abdo Baaklini, "Legislatures in the Gulf Area: The Experience of Kuwait, 1961-1976", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 14:3, August 1982, pp. 359 – 379.
- ¹⁰ Ahamd al-Khaṭīb, *al-Kuwait Min al-Imāra Ilā al-Dawla: Thikrayāt al-'Amal al-Waṭanī Wa al-Qawmī*. Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-'Arabī, 2007, pp. 223 – 224.
- ¹¹ Michael Herb, the Origins of Kuwait's National Assembl, LSE Kuwait Program. Accessible online at http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/65693/1/39_MichaelHerb.pdf.
- ¹² Ahamd-al-Khaṭīb, *al-Kuwait Min al-Imāra Ilā al-Dawla*, p. 246.
- ¹³ "Kuwait: Kuwaiti Constitution," World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). Accessible online at http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=181003.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ "al-Muthakkara al-Tafsīriyya Li Dustūr Dawlat al-Kuwait," Majlis al-Umma. Accessible online at http://www.kna.kw/pdf/Dostoor_Notes.pdf.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ Ahmad Ali al-Diyian, *Wilādat Dustūr al-Kuwait*. Kuwait: Dār Qurṭās, 1999, p. 18.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ Kenneth Newton and Jan W. Van Deth, *Foundations of Comparative Politic: Democracies of the Modern World*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 96 – 97.
- ²⁰ "Kuwait: Kuwaiti Constitution,"
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ Kuwait. Kuwait City. Al-Majlis al-Ta'sīsī, Maḥḍar Jalsa 20/62. Al-Majlis al-Ta'sīsī, 1962. December 18, 1962, 6 – 9.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*

- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ It is important to note that changes happen in the cabinet from time to time either for the resignation of a minister or change in the prime minister's agendas. Changes took place in cabinet 16, 24, and 33. In the chart, (2) was added to the number of the cabinet that experienced that change. This data is generated from two websites: Kuwait Politics Database <http://www.kuwaitpolitics.org>, and Council of Ministers General Secretariat <https://www.cmgs.gov.kw>.
- ²⁸ Al-Tashkīlāt al-Wizāriyya, Council of Ministers General Secretariat. Accessible online at <https://www.cmgs.gov.kw/Council-of-Ministers/Current-Ministerial-Formation.aspx?YearConfig=296313e8-44f3-4a38-ae5d-bf4905ddbd87>.
- ²⁹ Jasim Hamad Abdullah al-Saqir, Kuwait Political Database. Accessible online at <http://www.kuwaitpolitics.org/DataPage288.htm>.
- ³⁰ Ghanim Alnajjar, "Struggle over Parliament in Kuwait," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008. Accessible online at <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=20845>.
- ³¹ "Wazīr al-Ṣiḥa al-Asbaq 'Abdul-Raḥmān al-'Awaḍī: Kunt 'A 'ṭī Ba 'd al-Nuwwāb Min 'Kīṣī' al-Tathākīr wa Kunt 'Aksab Wala'ahum," YouTube Video, 1:06, posted by "Mawqī' Baraka al-Ikhhārī," January 27, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqdBw3t-t_A.
- ³² Hamad Albloshi and Faisal Alfahad, "The Orange Movement of Kuwait: Civic Pressure Transforms a Political System," in *Civil Resistance in the Middle East: Popular Struggle, Democratization and Governance*, ed. Maria J. Stephan. Taylor & Francis Group, 2010, pp. 219 – 32.
- ³³ Falah al-Mdaires, *Jamā'at al-Ukhwān al-Muslimīn Fī al-Kuwait*. Kuwait: Dār Qurṭās, 1999, p. 46.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 20.
- ³⁵ Abdul-Reda Assiri, *al-Niḏām al-Siyāsī Fī al-Kuwait: Mabādi' wa Mumārasāt*. Kuwait: Dār al-Waṭan, 2012, pp. 162 – 164.
- ³⁶ For more information about the Shi'ī groups in Kuwait see: Falah al-Mdaires, *al-Ḥaraka al-Shī'iyya Fī al-Kuwait*. Kuwait: Dār Qurṭās, 1999; Hamad H. Albloshi, "Sectarianism and the Arab Spring: The Case of the Kuwaiti Shi'a", *The Muslim World*, 106, 2016).
- ³⁷ Abdul-Reda Assiri, *al-Niḏām al-Siyāsī Fī al-Kuwait*, 175.
- ³⁸ Isqāṭ al-Qurūd 2006, Kuwait Political Database. Accessible online at <http://www.kuwaitpolitics.org/positions25.htm>.
- ³⁹ "Kuwait: Kuwaiti Constitution,"
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² Assiri, 104 – 105.
- ⁴³ "al-Lā'īḥa al-Dākhiliyya Limajlis al-Umma," Bawwābat al-Kuwait al-Iliktrūniyya. Accessible online at <http://www.kt.com.kw/ba/la-cha.htm>.
- ⁴⁴ For more information about his positions please see his page on Kuwait Political Database. Accessible online at <http://www.kuwaitpolitics.org/DataPage53.htm>.
- ⁴⁵ In 2012 al-Barrāk gave a speech and directly addressed the emir and criticized him over the regimes desire to change the electoral system.
- ⁴⁶ The government resigned on October 30, 2017 after the impeachment of one of its members: Muhammad al-Abdallah, the minister of state.
- ⁴⁷ "Kuwait: Kuwaiti Constitution,"
- ⁴⁸ "Kuwait: Kuwaiti Constitution,"
- ⁴⁹ for more information about the statistics see the National Assembly's website: <http://search.kna.kw/web/Retrieval/Home.aspx>
- ⁵⁰ "Kuwait: Kuwaiti Constitution,"
- ⁵¹ The National Assembly's website: <http://search.kna.kw/web/Retrieval/Home.aspx>.
- ⁵² "Kuwait: Kuwaiti Constitution,"
- ⁵³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴ See the online archive on the National Assembly's website: <http://search.kna.kw/web/Retrieval/Home.aspx>
- ⁵⁵ article 112 "Kuwait: Kuwaiti Constitution,"
- ⁵⁶ article 114 "Kuwait: Kuwaiti Constitution,"
- ⁵⁷ article 102 "Kuwait: Kuwaiti Constitution,"
- ⁵⁸ Ibid.
- ⁵⁹ Article 4: "Kuwait: Kuwaiti Constitution,"
- ⁶⁰ Assiri, 62.
- ⁶¹ Article 70: "Kuwait: Kuwaiti Constitution,"
- ⁶² Assiri, 75.

- ⁶³ Assiri, 101 – 102, and “Tashkīl Lijān Majlis al-Umma al-Dā’ima,” Kuwait National Assembly. Accessible online at <http://www.kna.kw/clt-html5/committees.asp>.
- ⁶⁴ Assiri, 102.
- ⁶⁵ “Tashkīl Lijān Majlis al-Umma al-Dā’ima,”
- ⁶⁶ “Amwāl Li-Nuwwāb Turbik al-Maṣārif Wa Al-Jihāt Al-Riqābiyya”, *al-Qabas*, August 20, 2011, 1.
- ⁶⁷ “Kuwait: Kuwaiti Constitution,”
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ For more information about the movement see: Hamad H. Albloshi and Michael Herb, “*Karamat Watan: An Unsuccessful Nonviolent Movement*”, *The Middle East Journal*, 72: 3, 2018, pp 408 – 430.
- ⁷⁰ Khālid al-Fiḍāla. A youth member of the opposition. Interview by author. Personal Interview. Kuwait, September 21, 2015.
- ⁷¹ Yūsif al-Shaṭṭī. A youth member of the opposition. Interview by author. Personal Interview. Kuwait, October 1, 2015; Su’ūd al-Misallam. A youth member of the opposition. Interview by author. Personal Interview. Kuwait, October 8, 2015; al-‘Iraimān, Muhammad. A youth member of the opposition. Interview by author. Personal Interview. Kuwait, April 18, 2015, and September 5, 2015.
- ⁷² Fawwāz Farḥān, A leftist and a youth member of the opposition. Interview by author. Personal Interview. Kuwait, September 30, 2015.