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DIVERSIFICATION OF DOMESTIC POLITICS OF THE GCC MEMBER STATES AFTER THE SECOND GULF WAR

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This paper will concentrate on exploring how the domestic politics of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have been redirected and reshaped as a consequence of the Second Gulf War. Although the war affected directly only Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, it has also been experienced by other GCC member states: Bahrain, next to Saudi Arabia, was a major base of Allied forces, United Arab Emirates had sent its jet-fighters to the operations against Iraqi troops. Therefore, while Kuwait and Saudi Arabia will be the primary focus of the paper, the rest of the Persian Gulf Arab countries will receive partial attention too.

The Second Gulf War, though brief in its duration, has been having a tremendous and profound impact on the world politics. The persisting and / or perceived threat from the still surviving Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein has been a major concern of the US government foreign policies, as well as one of the most frequently raised and debated issues in the UN. However, it is the countries, immediately bordering Iraq or those in the zone of its possible influence, that have been subjected to the re-considerations and adjustments in their politics, both foreign and domestic.

The war[1] of 1991 has stirred up the political consciousness of the citizens of the Arabian Peninsula. The anticipated democratization and liberalization process is picking up pace since, but so is an opposite trend, re-islamization[2]. The voices demanding for more democratic forms of governing had started to be raised throughout the Peninsula, most intensely in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, the new stricter laws, presumably protecting religion and implementing its requisitions, are being passed on demand and pressure on governments by the religiously concerned opposition and/or members of government. The two trends go parallel and at times are combined in the aspirations of one and the same political group, as in the

[1] "War" throughout this paper refers exclusively to the Second Gulf War of 1991 unless specified otherwise.

[2] The term 'reislamization' is used in this paper to designate the policies that promote stricter compliance and conformity of social and political life to the perceived Islamic norms and 'correct' forms of thinking and behavior.

instance of Saudi Arabian *Lajnat al-Difa' 'an al-Huquq al-Shar'iyya* (Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights): "its very name evokes the language of human rights and shari'a"[3].

Next to these general developments, which are common to most GCC states, there appeared other processes and events peculiar to each country: demands for a more fair distribution of power and the tensions between the ruling Sunni minority and the ruled Shii majority eventually led to civil unrest in Bahrain; Qatar experienced an attempted coup d'etat; partial restructuration of the governments of the UAE and Oman took place. All in all, none of the GCC countries in the 1990's remained the same in respect to the domestic politics compared to the 1980's.

Prevailing forms of ruling and political trends in the pre-war Arabian Peninsula[4]

The domestic politics in the Gulf in the 1980's have been marked and to a great extent circumscribed by a number of factors, most of them having immediate or indirect relation to Iran: Islamic Revolution in Iran, the Kaaba incident of 1979, Iran-Iraq war (First Gulf War), relative increase of domestic and international terrorism, supposedly or in reality backed by the new Iranian regime. In the face of these circumstances, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was founded in 1981. The main objective of this new organization was to coordinate and supervise security issues of the member states against the possible military threat from Iran. With the years the GCC became an economic union as well.

However, in the ruling and domestic politics, there could be observed a trend towards absolutism and conservatism, especially in those countries of the Peninsula, which had had nominally democratic elected political bodies. Kuwait, for example, had had a fairly long (in comparison to other GCC states) tradition of parliamentarism – since gaining its independence in 1961. Notwithstanding this, in 1986 the Emir having the constitutional right suspended the parliament for unspecified time[5]. Bahraini National Assembly was also dissolved by the Emir in 1976 for indefinite time and had not been reinstituted throughout the 1980's[6]. Other countries had not even had parliaments. The constitutions of these countries stipulate that as substitutes for elected parliaments the appointed consultative / or advisory councils be instituted instead. However, in some cases the constitution itself was suspended at times or not implemented fully. In two of the GCC member states (Saudi Arabia and Oman) there did not exist constitution at all until the 1990's.

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[3] D. F. Eickelman & J. Piscatori, *Muslim Politics,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996, 158.

[4] Yemen, though actually situated on the Arabian Peninsula, will not be dealt with in this paper due to the specificity of its domestic as well as foreign politics. It is not to say, however, that Yemen has not been affected by the Second Gulf War and that there are no changes in its domestic (and foreign) politics. In fact, Yemen is one of the most dynamic countries in the Arabian Peninsula in regards to the transformations of its political structures and domestic policies.

[5] The Parliament had been previously dissolved in 1976. See H. Ch. Metz, ed., *Persian Gulf States: Country Studies,* Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1993, 82.

[6] *Ibid.,* 140.

The existing political bodies, such as councils of ministers, governorates and local councils in most of the GCC states had been traditionally headed by and composed of the members of the ruling family or clan, and, on lower levels, by those from prominent families, which had come into alliance with the ruling family. This had continued throughout the 1980's but had been increasingly criticized by the individuals who aspired to positions of power and who had been denied because of their origin.

As early as the mid-70's Saudi King Faysal initiated the process of reislamization, sometimes also called 'islamization'[7], of social life in Saudi Arabia. In Halliday's words, "from the 1970's onwards, this tendency has sought to alter legal codes and state practice so that they conform more closely to what is deemed 'traditional' or correct Islamic practice"[8]. In the 1980's the process of reislamization accelerated and spread over the whole of Peninsula especially as response and an alternative to the Islamic revolution promoted and exported by the Iranian regime. On the practical level the re-islamization manifested itself in establishing of political bodies charged with supervision of religious affairs, promulgation of laws stipulating religious observances. The overall official political rhetoric was increasingly being penetrated by Islamic vocabulary.

However, in spite of reislamization, the 1980's were marked by religio-political violence and terrorism in the Gulf. During that decade, the blame for disturbances brought by the radical religious opposition fell almost exclusively on Iran – it was assumed by the Gulf governments that the radicals were either directly inspired and sponsored by the Iranian authorities or under the influence of the Iranian revolution. In fact, the Islamic Revolution had a great impact on the rise of violent opposition, especially among the Shi'i population of the GCC states. Numerous bombings, assassinations and attempts at life of local as well as foreign representatives, and even an uprising in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia were indeed undertaken by the Shi'is. During the investigations of terrorist acts, the traces were found to lead to Iran (Kuwaiti car bombings, hijacking of Kuwait Airways aircraft, attempt at Kuwaiti Emir's life, Bahraini unrests, bombings in Saudi Arabia). It has also been established that Iran financed certain groups in their terrorist actions.

Therefore, the domestic politics in the 1980's were determined and justified more or less by and through outside factors. The governments could manipulate the perceived or real threats and actually constrain any political liberalism. But once the Iran-Iraq war was over and the overall threat from Iran had diminished, the populace sought democratization, opening and liberalization of political systems in the Gulf. The Second Gulf war became a stepping stone.

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[7] For definition of 'islamization' see F. Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*, London & New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1996, 236, note 6.

[8] F. Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*, London & New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1996, 135.

Post-war changes and transformations in domestic politics of the GCC countries

It would be an exaggeration to claim that the Gulf crisis of 1990–1991 is solely responsible for the changes in the domestic politics of the GCC states. However, the war was a catalyst, which ignited the simmering political consciousness of the Gulf citizens. It is true that popular pressure had been exercised on the governments also in the late 1980's: members of the suspended Kuwaiti Parliament had engaged in 1989–1990 in Constitutional Movement seeking to reinstitute the parliament, Saudi nationals had been pushing for formation of a promised and long awaited Consultative Council. In Bahrain, calls for fair distribution of power and widening of representativeness in the governing bodies had been raised long before the Gulf crisis, too. Yet, the real changes took place after the war of 1991.

The socio-political structure of the GCC countries can be roughly divided into three layers. First layer consists of the ruling family, second layer is composed of ulama, lay intellectuals, businessmen, and prominent families, the third layer comprises the lower-middle strata, foreign workers, women, bidun[9], and bedu. On the first layer no negotiations regarding any significant changes are accepted by the ruling clans. On the third layer, there also has been little negotiation and therefore almost no changes. The middle layer is the one, which has been boiling with demands, bargaining, negotiations, and confrontations. It is this layer where most transformations of domestic politics took place. Therefore, the changes directly affected only the middle layer and did not include much of the third.

The most radical, even if yet symbolical, changes are probably observed in Saudi Arabia. In the aftermath of the war, King Fahd promulgated in 1992 The Basic Law of Government. This proto-constitution[10] for the first time in the history of Saudi Arabian state-hood defined in a written manner the basic principles of state and government and their relation to the populace. It also delineated the economic prerogatives of the state. Parallel to the 'constitution', Fahd promulgated The Shura Council Statute. He finally institutionalized the advisory body to the King, which, however, has no independent right of judgment and therefore does not curtail the King's absolute power. Moreover, all sixty (lately ninety) members and the chairman of the Shura Council are chosen by the King himself[11]. Fahd also revised the Council of Ministers System in the same year. Shortly afterwards (in 1993) he introduced The Provincial System. The reform of provincial system in a way is the biggest achievement in Saudi Arabia towards

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[9] 'Bidun', from Arabic 'without', is referred to those inhabitants of the Gulf states who, though being originally from the tribes which had dwelled in the Peninsula or having lived in the Gulf for many years, for various reasons have been denied citizenship of one or the other Gulf state. Also see J. Crystal, "Civil Society in the Arabian Gulf", *Norton,* A. R., *Civil Society in the Middle East,* Leiden & New York & Koeln: E. J. Brill, 1996, 265, footnote 11.

[10] Officially the Basic Law is not referred to as Constitution. For possible reasons see D. F. Eickelman & J. Piscatori, *Muslim Politics,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996, 62.

[11] *The Shura Council Statute*, Article Three, 1992.

the representativeness of governing structures. First of all, under the new division of provinces into districts, the local councils will be close and potentially more attentive to the needs of local populations. Secondly, the provincial councils under the law have to include "not less than 10 natives of the province with knowledge, experience and specialization"[12]. Though these members are not elected but appointed, the formal requirements that they be "domicile of the province"[13] and have "knowledge, experience and specialization" are embryos of the representative structures of governing.

All these novelties, however, were implemented not because of the King's good will. They were preceded by tensions and negotiations with opposition and certain pressures from outside. As Eickelman and Piscatori point out, "especially since the Gulf crisis of 1990–1991, Saudi Arabia has witnessed an explosion of public discussion on the fundamental nature of its society and politics"[14]. Most of the discussion and debate concerning the form of rule in Saudi Arabia revolves around the issues of democratization and islamization of political system and structures. The government with the King in front of it is surrounded by the political opposition ranging from semi-secular liberals to pro-democratic religionists, to radical Islamists.

There is a liberal opposition in the Kingdom, as well as there are similar opposition groups elsewhere in the GCC states, who see in sticking to the Islamic principles in detailed manner, as the governments are assumed to do, a danger of falling back on the old socio-cultural track that it considers to have left Muslim societies behind the rest of the world in socio-political and economical development. This opposition is manned by the members of the middle class, who earned their education recently and mainly abroad. It has increased in the early 1990's with more and more graduates returning home from overseas or completing their studies in the Gulf. These people usually do not belong to the ruling elites by their origin and therefore are excluded from participating in decision-making political bodies. Thus, they call for more civil rights, emancipation, democracy and greater political participation and basically are against Islamic trend. The ideal of such oppositions are the USA and countries of Western Europe.

As for the Islamic religious camp, in the aftermath of the Second Gulf war, there appeared a rather unified and consistent ulama opposition to the government policies. Its primary concern is the ambivalence of the reislamization project initiated by Faysal and carried on throughout the 1980's. Some of the ulama find the reislamization not to have taken the right track and have been left in oblivion. There have been yet other groups not satisfied with the governmental reislamization project, and these are Islamic radical opposition. Oppositional Islamic radicalism in the Gulf can be traced back to the late 1970's. However, some maintain that in Saudi Arabia "it was only in the 1990's that a more sustained, non-episodic radical Islamic opposition

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[12] *Provincial System*, Article Sixteen, Clause (e), 1993.

[13] *Ibid.*, Article Seventeen, Clause (d).

[14] D. F. Eickelman & J. Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996, 157.

movement emerged"[15]. Thus, practically starting with 1990's, the governments of the Gulf states have been finding themselves surrounded from one side by groups of citizens demanding relaxation of government policies, and from another side, by some ulama who, though on a moderate level, urge governments to review their policies, reislamization first of all among them, and from yet another side, by radical groups eager to push reislamization to its extreme, actually, at the expense of the present governments. It should be noted that virtually all oppositional groups employ Islamic rhetoric and at the first sight might seem to be the protagonists of one or the other kind of reislamization. However, this is more due to the ethics of political rhetoric in the GCC countries.

In Kuwait, religiously orientated political opposition has been allowed to participate in the government. Kuwait has the longest and richest experience of political participation with its parliamentary tradition in the Gulf. However, until 1992, islamically oriented members of the parliament made a tiny minority in the National Assembly of Kuwait and their concerns were successfully ignored by the majority. Islamic movements gained more support in the wake of the Second Gulf War, and the composition of the 1992 elected parliament had 20 seats (40% of total) occupied by their members (Islamic Constitutional Movement 8 seats, Islamic Popular Movement 8 seats, and National Islamic Coalition (Shi'i) 4 seats). In the 1996 parliament elections Islamic movements won 19 seats (38%), respectively 8, 8, 3 seats in the 50-seat parliament. Unofficially called 'progovernmental' members made 28% in 1992 and 36% in the 1996 elected parliament. This way, since the early 1990's there has appeared and gaining voice a loose Islamic bloc in the National Assembly.

Whereas Saudi Basic Law declares "God's Book and the Sunnah" to be the constitution of the Saudi Arabian state[16], stipulating that Shari'a is the ultimate source of legislation in the country, Kuwaiti constitution allocates less significance to the Shari'a. The clause of constitution declaring Shari'a *a* source of legislature has been the target of more rigorously disposed elements of society. The legal opposition (members of Majlis Al-Umma) since the very adoption of Kuwaiti constitution in 1962 has been pushing its demand to make the Shari'a *the only* source of Kuwaiti legislature, much like in Saudi Arabia. The most recent call for this fundamental change was forwarded by 37 deputies of Kuwaiti National Assembly, when they submitted in January of 1998 a proposal calling for changing the second article[17] of the Kuwaiti Constitution. The proposal stipulates that Islam be "state's religion and Islamic Shari'a *the only* source of legislation"[18].

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[15] J. Kostiner, "State, Islam and Opposition in Saudi Arabia: the Post-Desert Storm Phase", in *Maddy-B. Weitzman & E. Inbar*, (ed.) *Religious Radicalism in the Greater Middle East*, London & Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997, 75.

[16] *The Basic Law of Government*, Article One, 1992.

[17] Currently Article Two of Kuwaiti constitution reads: "The religion of the State is Islam and the Islamic Sharia shall be a main source of legislation".

[18] *Kuwait Times*, January 28, 1998, 1.

So far the second article of Kuwaiti constitution remains unaltered, but the government comforted the oppositional Islamic wing of the parliament on some other issues of smaller scale. As an English language Kuwaiti daily reported, that "under pressure from Islamic MPs, Kuwaiti authorities last July (1997) banned concerts and music parties judged contrary to Islamic law"[19]. Among the achievements of the same members of the parliament is the creation of a separate body to censor books. The committee was set up by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information after a scandal related to selling of some 60 titles at an Arabic book fair, which were previously deemed un-Islamic and were supposed to be banned. The Islamic block in the parliament demanded that the Minister of Information resign for failure to complete his duty to guard against un-Islamic literature being circulated in the country. In a move to soften the tension the minister established a book censorship committee of seven members, one of whom is cleric.

It has been observed that religious institutions in the Gulf are being extensively bureaucratized[20]. In Saudi Arabia this process is most extreme and has been intensified in the 1990's. The proliferation of ministries and councils charged with supervising religious affairs is indeed impressive: next to the existing Ministry of Hajj there was established a new Ministry of Islamic Affairs, *Awqaf, Da'wa*, and Guidance, then Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, and Council for Islamic Call and Guidance. The latter "two bodies were made to responsible for guidance of Saudis abroad, moral behavior and proper conduct of mosque functionaries, and mosque activities at home"[21]. The position of Grand Mufti, vacant since 1969, was reinstituted in Saudi Arabia in 1993.

Moderate opposition to government policies

While opposition seems to have been given a significant voice in the government of Kuwait, the moderate opposition both religious and liberal in Saudi Arabia is still underrepresented in the political bodies of the country. The moderate religious opposition consists of lower to middle echelons of religious establishment, such as faculty of religious educational institutions, members of religious committees, and some mullahs. The liberal wing of the moderate Saudi opposition forces consists of educated lay members of the middle classes. To the moderate, certainly religious but also liberal opposition, Islam is a democratic religion and social system: if properly applied, Shari'a is a source of democracy. Their primary concern is the "lack of seriousness" in abiding by the Shari'a" from the side of the government[22]. This opposition is

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[19] *Kuwait Times*, January 14, 1998, 3.

[20] F. G. Gause, III. *Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States,* New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1994, 15.

[21] J. Kostiner, "State, Islam and Opposition in Saudi Arabia: the Post-Desert Storm Phase", in *Maddy-B. Weitzman. & E. Inbar,* (ed.) *Religious Radicalism in the Greater Middle East,* Frank Cass: London & Portland, OR, 1997, 87.

[22] F. G. Gause, III. *Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States,* New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1994, 35.

against the selective approach of the governments to the Islamic principles and their usurpation of the interpretative right. In their written petitions to the governments the ulama and lay intellectuals expressed their fear that certain governmental practices "may lead to the separation of religion from the reality of the life of the people"[23]. Therefore, it can be said that moderate opposition in Saudi Arabia (and it could be believed to suit other Gulf states) encompasses at the same time religious sentiment and democratic aspirations.

Such opposition refrains from drastic actions to further its considerations. It does not engage in agitation of the masses and rather deals with the rulers directly. Probably the most paradigmatic case is the attempt of this opposition to approach the ruler in the most cautious manner, such as sending petitions signed by ulama and prominent citizens. In the early 1990's Saudi King received at least three such petitions urging him to open political participation by creating a consultative council, declare the constitution, more attentively follow Shari'a, and curb the corruption in the governmental circles. In the end, partially as a result of these petitions by the end of 1993 Saudi Arabia already had a form of constitution, Basic Law, a Consultative Council, and a new Provincial System.

The wave of establishing the consultative councils and general widening of political participation along with initiatives to ensure accountability of governmental officials went across the GCC countries – Oman and Bahrain established the consultative councils in 1991–1993, elections to the Kuwaiti parliament were held in October of 1992 (and then in 1996), ministries go under scrutiny of parliament or advisory councils to the rulers. The whole Kuwaiti cabinet of ministers was impeached by the National Assembly and thus forced to resign in the spring of 1998.

Despite the reforms in the political systems of the Gulf states, the governments there, at least rhetorically, stick to Islamic principles and portray their countries first and foremost as Islamic states. As Gause has pointed out, in the Saudi case, "the Basic System specifically states that the constitution of the kingdom is founded on the Quran and the *Sunna* (traditions) of the Prophet Muhammad, maintaining the position of Saudi Arabia, as the Islamic state par excellence, has no need for a formal constitution"[24]. The presence of an opposition, however, ruins the image of a perfect (Islamic) state. On the other hand, since the whole political discourse in Saudi Arabia and to a lesser extent in other Gulf states is religiously charged, the opposition use religious rhetoric to back their claims and not to provoke governments' reaction against them as anti-islamically oriented opposition. Most of opposition demands (those for democratization and liberalization, among them) are judged against Islamic principles and usually backed with prophetic traditions or Quranic sayings. Moderate opposition figures do not put themselves against the governments but rather seek to advise (*nasaha*) them. This was

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[23] F. G. Gause, III. *Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1994, 35.

[24] *Ibid.*, 106.

made clear in a petition, itself called "Memorandum of Advice" (*muzzakkarat al-nasiha*), sent to the Saudi King by over a hundred ulama in the summer of 1992. The posture of advising rather than opposing opposition has been upheld throughout the 1990's.

After receiving the petitions the Saudi King and his government tried to co-opt the religious (as well as lay) dissent. The established Consultative Council has some ulama from among the 'oppositionists' as its members. Some members are from lay elite of the country and not even from the most prominent families. By incorporating oppositional elements into official governing web, Saudi rulers on one hand can portray their politics as a fair (democratic) process, and on the other, silence the opposition, for, in fact, the power and influence of the Consultative Council and provincial councils is minimal.

Religious radicalism

The radicals, though not united into one greater front, have been challenging the Gulf governments and state policies for quite some time. Their activities (more often violent than peaceful) send a clear message that they, unlike the moderates, are totally opposed to the local governments and their policies. The radicals consider the current reforms to be a bluff: in their eyes the present governments are not legitimate, they are not even Islamic (in form and policies).

Radical religious opposition consists of various segments of Gulf societies: students of religious schools, some ulama, but lay people are also a frequent constituent of it. It is important to note, that radical opposition is more organized outside the Peninsula. This opposition, contrary to the moderate, makes its agenda known to public, it broadcasts its views and concerns on radio, publishes and distributes the brochures and studies on the corruptness and meanness of the Gulf governments. However, violent actions are also a common part of expressing their dissent (the bombing of US army barracks in Dhahran, for example).

The governments' reaction and subsequent dealing with this sort of opposition is harsh and firm – the troublemakers are silenced by all means. Amnesty International, Committee for Human Rights in the Arabian Peninsula, and Middle East Watch have been reporting imprisonments, tortures and occasional killings of radical dissidents, especially in Saudi Arabia[25]. International organizations are concerned about the fairness of trials: to them freedom of belief, speech, and expression are among the fundamental human rights to be guarded by the state, and not suppressed, as they see it in Saudi Arabia and sometimes in other GCC countries. Government of Saudi Arabia (and occasionally of other Gulf states), in its turn, argues that the oppositional radicals are criminals posing threat to the stability, integrity and security of the state, and therefore it insists on dealing with them in the strictest manner. Since corporal

[25] S. K. Aburish, *The Rise, Corruption and Coming Fall of the House of Saud*, London: Bloomsbury, 1995, 111.

punishments as well as death punishment are part of the Shari'a, their application in the eyes of the Saudi government is justified.

As has been pointed out, religious radicalism and terrorism were a big concern of the Gulf governments in the 1980's. Moreover, it was believed (and also occasionally proved) that behind this stood Iran. The situation in the 1990's, however, is changing – Iran has backed down from exporting Islamic Revolution to other Muslim regions, and the GCC countries sought to improve their relation with the Islamic Republic. The meeting of Organization of Islamic Conference in Tehran in 1997, attended by representatives from the GCC countries, and their addresses to the hosting government is but one indication of the trend to warming up relations and intensification of contacts. Therefore, the radicals in the Gulf states might eventually lose support from Iranian authorities and then the faith in the Islamic Revolution.

In this respect, "the existence of such Islamic groupings indicates that, like most other parts of the Middle East, Saudi Arabia [and other Gulf countries] too is witnessing certain, if sometimes distinct, aspects of the general phenomenon of the political revival of religion"[26]. However, neither religious radicalism nor other forms of political opposition to the current policies of the Gulf governments are supported by common masses that they could pose an immediate threat to the state. The opposition is small, not unified and so far well coped with by the governments.

Economical and / or political crisis?

In the light of economic and political transformations in Muslim societies, there has been much talk by Western islamologists, as well as by Muslim intellectuals themselves, of some sort of crisis in the Muslim world. It has been argued that the reaction to that crisis manifests itself in what has been referred to as politicization of Islam with all other synonimic names of this process. Regarding the Gulf states, it is difficult to assess whether there is any crisis, and where it is[27]. Even if certain political or economic developments allow one to assume that the Gulf states have been facing constraints in these spheres lately, the changes in and developments of politics in the region are not a response to such a crisis. Politically, the regimes in the Gulf states have survived since the inception of these states with the same families ruling them. There have not been any major socio-economic crises in the Arabian Peninsula, compared to the ones in other Muslim countries. Neither have there been any high scale civil disturbances (though the events of 1995–1996 in Bahrain were a close call, involving civil as well as sectarian issues). The only indications of possible conflicts that could lead to serious political crisis remain

[26] N. N. Ayubi, *Over-stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*, London & New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1995, 238–239.

[27] The crisis of Kuwaiti government in the first part of 1998 can hardly be associated with reislamization or politicization, though on the broader level it represents discontents and tensions within policy making in Kuwait.

of sectarian nature (Shii-Sunni tensions in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and to a lesser extent in Kuwait) but so far these also have not amounted to a full-scale crisis.

On the other hand there is increasing talk of a *coming* crisis[28]. This forecast crisis is analyzed through economic and political patterns. On the economic level, the Gulf states are experiencing a decline in revenues from oil business[29]. Since their economies depend on oil to a great extent[30], these countries are projected to face severe economic restrains in a near future, if they do not change their economic policies. As Sick argues, the economic policies of the Gulf governments either change slowly or do not change at all[31]. On the other hand, Gulf states reconsider their situation and place more stress on foreign investments. It is reported that "in 1989 Kuwait earned more income from its vast overseas investments located in the capitalist metropoles than from its oil production ($8.8 billion as compared with $7.7 billion)"[32]. Therefore, even if economic situation raises certain concerns, it still does not seem to constitute economic crisis, much less political.

The question of succession

All GCC states are hereditary monarchies. However, the procedure of succession to the throne is not always precisely verbalized. In Omani case, Sultan Qabus has no progeny to take up his place upon his death. He has not chosen the heir apparent, thus leaving the issue open and allowing the possibility of political strife. In Saudi Arabia the situation is somewhat opposite: there are too many contestants to the throne. Though the successor to Fahd is appointed, the future perspective is indefinite. The Basic Law merely stipulates that "Rule passes to the sons of the founding King, Abd al-Aziz Bin Abd al-Rahman al-Faysal Al Sa'ud, and to their children's children"[33]. This clause and the requirement for the Heir Apparent to be "the most upright among them (the sons of Ibn Saud and their sons)", however, is insufficient: there is no stated mechanism and criteria to determine "the most upright". Therefore, one of the crucial points in the future development of internal stability and domestic as well as foreign politics of the GCC member states' governments is the problem of succession. This issue is being raised more intensely in realization of the ever-deteriorating health of the aging King Fahd, Emir Jabir As-Sabah of Kuwait.

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[28] G. G. Sick, "The Coming Crisis in the Persian Gulf", in *G. G. Sick & L. G. Potter* (ed.), *The Persian Gulf at the Millennium,* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, 11–30; S. K. Aburish, "The Rise", *The Rise, Corruption and Coming Fall of the House of Saud,* London: Bloomsbury, 1994.

[29] For actual and estimated decrease in oil revenues see *New York Times,* June 23, 1998, A6.

[30] Not less than 65% of total revenues of GCC states came from gas and oil revenues in 1996. For UAE the percentage is even 84%. G. G. Sick, "The Coming Crisis in the Persian Gulf", in *G. G. Sick & L. G. Potter* (ed.), *The Persian Gulf at the Millennium,* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, 17.

[31] G. G. Sick, "The Coming Crisis in the Persian Gulf", in *G. G. Sick & L. G. Potter* (ed.), *The Persian Gulf at the Millennium,* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, 24–28.

[32] S. Bromley, *Rethinking Middle East Politics,* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994, 145.

[33] *The Basic Law of Government,* Article Five, Clause (b), 1992.

Conclusion: democracy, but only along with islamization

The events and processes currently taking place in the political realm of the GCC states are promising from the perspective of increasing representativeness of the political systems there. However, these changes are accompanied by the persisting tendency towards islamization. Though reislamization *per se* does not contradict the process of democratization, to every democratic step in the domestic politics of the Gulf countries there is made a conservative, restricting counter-step. The governments try to suit both sides and at the same time do not wish to make too many concessions to the opposition. Though the reinstitution of the parliament in Kuwait is a step towards democratization of political system in the country, in reality only around 8–9 % of all citizens have the right to vote. As has been pointed out, consultative councils throughout the Gulf have been established but with little if at all power (to check the absolutism of monarchs). For these and other reasons, Bromley makes conclusion that "the prospects for democratic reform are scarcely visible"[34]. Other observers are also pessimistic[35].

The truly democratic and all-encompassing process of liberalization of political systems of the GCC states has yet not been started. Any openly secular political opposition is deemed criminal and ruled out. Any dissent or objection to the monarchy is severely punished. On the level of social relations, foreign laborers have no rights or representation. In fact, the socio-economical formation of the Gulf societies resembles slavery, where expatriates voluntary sell themselves into temporary slavery to private Gulf citizens or the states. Gender relations are of segregational nature. Though there appear occasional voices advocating women's or foreign laborers' rights, no real steps have been taken to improve their status in society.

The socio-political processes in the Gulf countries are very complex and polyvalent – it is too difficult to label them or put within any defined confines. As this paper projected to show, seemingly contradictory ideologies of islamization and democratization nevertheless go parallel to each other, yet both seem to affect only a selected strata of the Gulf societies. If one can speak of democracy and liberalism in the Gulf in any sense, it would probably apply only to upper-middle to middle male citizen strata, and not more. Yet, it would be unfair to say that no democratic changes are taking place in the Gulf: the representativeness of governments is slowly but surely increasing. Therefore, the GCC states should not be put along the autocratic and dictatorial states elsewhere in the world, but rather regarded as promising.

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[34] S. Bromley, *Rethinking Middle East Politics*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994, 147.

[35] See M. Faour, *The Arab World after Desert Storm*, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1993, 43–45; S. K. Aburish, *The Rise, Corruption and Coming Fall of the House of Saud*, London: Bloomsbury, 1995; Kh. B. Sayeed, *Western Dominance and Political Islam: Challenge and Response*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995, 84–101.

ĮLANKOS KOOPERACIJOS TARYBOS ŠALIŲ VIDAUS POLITIKOS ĮVAIRĖJIMAS PO ANTROJO ĮLANKOS KARO

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Santrauka

Kuveito-Irako konfliktas turėjo esminės įtakos kaimyninių šalių, o ypač valstybių – Įlankos Kooperacijos Tarybos narių – vidaus politikos pokyčiams. Pasinaudodami neįprastoje situacijoje susidariusia įtampa Arabijos pusiasalio intelektualieji sluoksniai pradėjo aktyviau spausti savo šalių vyriausybes koreguoti tiek vidaus, tiek išorės politiką. Tarp 1990 ir 1993 politiškai sąmoningos grupės peticijomis „atakavo" savo šalių vyriausybes, kad šios Irako grėsmės akivaizdoje imtųsi ryžtingesnių veiksmų, garantuosiančių tiek vidaus stabilumą, tiek visuomenės sutelktumą galimos agresijos atveju. Įlankos valstybių vadovai, siekdami, kad gyventojai palaikytų ir paremtų jų režimus, ryžosi „reformuoti" valstybės valdymą, revizuoti kai kuriuos vidaus politikos aspektus. Demokratiškai nusiteikusių jėgų spaudžiami jie sutiko padaryti šiokių tokių demokratijos etikete pažymėtų kosmetinių valdymo struktūrų pakeitimų, tuo tarpu atakuojami islamiškai nusiteikusių sluoksnių, pradėjo vykdyti savo valstybių viešojo gyvenimo reislamizacijos politiką.

Būtent reislamizacija yra esminis kintančios Persijos įlankos valstybių vidaus politikos aspektas: viešoji sfera ir ją palaikanti retorika sąmoningai ir nuosekliai spraudžiamos į „islamiškuosius" rėmus. Tačiau, „islamiškumo" normos ir ribos dažniausiai apibrėžiamos pačių vyriausybių, tik nominaliai atsižvelgiančių į religijos žinovų – ulama – patarimus. Dar daugiau, reislamizacija Persijos įlankos šalyse yra selektyvaus pobūdžio, tai yra taikoma tik tam tikroms socialinio gyvenimo sritims. Norėdami modernizuoti savo valstybes, Įlankos Kooperacijos Tarybos šalių valdovai neatmeta „vakarietiškosios" civilizacijos technologinių, materialių bei dvasinių pasiekimų, bet stengiasi juos integruoti į savo visuomenes, vienaip ar kitaip „islamizuodami".

Paskutinį dešimtmetį vidaus politikoje vykstantys procesai parodo Persijos įlankos šalyse kilusį tapatybių konfliktą ir mėginimą jas sulieti: vykdoma reislamizacija yra prieštaringas fenomenas, sujungiantis tradiciją ir inovaciją, islamo principus ir sekuliariomis vertybėmis pagrįstos kultūros produktus.