How Regional Instability Impacts Kuwait: AUK University Student Perceptions

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Abstract

This study explores how regional instability since 2011 has impacted Kuwait from the perspective of university youth in Kuwait. Perhaps now more than ever, recent instabilities across the Middle East have demonstrated the interconnectedness of the region, yet the effects on Kuwait are often overlooked. Youth opinion in Kuwait is particularly relevant because Kuwait is considered one of the most democratic states within the Middle East and youth make up almost sixty percent of its population. To understand youth perceptions of how recent regional instability has impacted healthcare, politics, security, economy, and religion in Kuwait, this paper analyzes 458 surveys and 12 corresponding interviews from students of the American University of Kuwait. When discussing change in Kuwait, the majority of both survey and interview responses were pessimistic; change generally indicated negative change. Security and politics were aspects of society that respondents believed had changed the most, though all aspects were noted to have changed to some extent. Ultimately, it was clear that youth believed they were being impacted, rather than creating impact of their own.

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Introduction

Perhaps now more than ever, the interconnectedness of the Middle East is starkly evident. The emergence of the Arab Spring, ISIS, and staggering refugee flow demonstrates that crisis in the region does not occur as an isolated incident, but rather a regional phenomenon. Amidst this chaos and turmoil the focus of governments, international organizations, and scholars is regularly and necessarily placed on immediate crises. However, as a result, research often becomes myopic, focusing on the largest instances of instability. As such, countries within the Middle East that have less dramatic instances of strife are often ignored, or mentioned only briefly within the context of a larger regional crisis.

This reactionary approach to regional study poses serious risk to understanding the Middle East. By focusing research mainly on emergencies already known, emerging issues are often overlooked until they too become emergencies. Though it is of course impossible to foresee which subtle changes and impacts will develop into serious concerns, we simply cannot know what we do not study. In order to anticipate and better understand emerging issues in the Middle East, more effort must be devoted to diversifying research beyond emergencies.

Kuwait is one such country often overlooked by analysts despite its own recent instances of instability. Though perhaps less fiery than a civil war and less dire than a refugee crisis, unprecedented social unrest has shaken Kuwait's foundations. In 2012, over a quarter of Kuwait's voting population protested the dissolution of parliament in the largest protest of the country's history.[1] In 2013, Kuwait has its third election in two years (despite having four-year

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[1] Tétreault, "Looking for Revolution in Kuwait"; al-Nakib, "Public Space and Public Protest in Kuwait, 1938–2012.", Katzman, "Kuwait: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," 1.
High estimates put the number of protesters at a quarter of the Kuwaiti population.

terms for its deputies). In 2015, a suicide bomber destroyed a mosque in the first terrorist attack Kuwait experienced since its occupation by Iraq.

The simple answer to this sudden rise of instability in Kuwait would be to group it as just another country in the region undergoing the protests, political upheaval, and violence similar to other countries of the Middle East. Perhaps these events in modern Kuwait are another byproduct of regional upheaval. Yet as these events are recent and scholarship on Kuwait is limited, it is difficult to assess the impact of recent regional instability on Kuwait using the information currently available. Instead, this study focuses on those who experienced the impact: the people living in Kuwait.

This research assesses how educated youth believe Kuwait has been impacted by recent regional instability, and what their understanding of these events signifies for the future of Kuwait. Educated youth are often considered the future of the country, not only in a symbolic and patriotic sense, but also because they are those most likely to be empowered socially and intellectually in society. Youth opinion in Kuwait is particularly potent when compared to other countries of the region, as Kuwait is considered one of the most democratic states within the Middle East and therefore offers its youth more avenues to impact the government than surrounding countries. Youth additionally have the power of majority on their side; youth make up almost 60% of Kuwait's population.[2] In this way, educated youth elite awareness is a driving force of the future of Kuwait.

Therefore, this study examines how regional instability since 2011 has impacted Kuwait from the perspective of university youth in Kuwait. To evaluate this perception, 458 surveys and

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[2] "UNDP, Ministry of State for Youth Affairs celebrate International Youth Day."
This statistic was stated in 2014 by Kuwait's representative to the UNDP. However, as many other statistics regarding Kuwait, the exact percentage of youth varies between sources. This does not, however, significantly limit the importance of youth perceptions in Kuwait's future.

12 corresponding interviews were collected from students of the American University of Kuwait. Findings showed that from the perspective of the youth sampled, regional instability since 2011 has impacted Kuwait in an overwhelmingly negative manner. When discussing change in Kuwait, the majority of both survey and interview responses relating to all sectors of Kuwait's society –healthcare, politics, security, economy, and religion –were pessimistic. In this way, change generally indicated negative change. Security and politics were aspects of society that youth believed had changed the most, but all aspects were noted to have changed to some extent. It was clear that respondents believed they were being effected, rather than creating impact of their own. Results indicated that youth are well aware of the fact that their future needs to change, but do not feel empowered to enact change.

The following paper progresses in four sections. Section one provides brief background information on different aspects of Kuwait's society –healthcare, politics, security, economy, and religion –from 2011 through 2015. This offers a baseline of information to contextualize and understand student responses. Section two presents survey results, first using a quantitative approach to show general findings, then a qualitative approach to examine short responses within surveys. Section three discusses the interviews collected from survey participants, expanding upon why students answered as they did. Section four examines the findings of each previous section together to analyze and explain the potential significance of these youth opinions and extrapolate what they mean for Kuwait's future.

Background

Section one provides brief background information on different aspects of Kuwait's society –healthcare, politics, security, economy, and religion – through an overview of scholarly research and recent news on those topics from 2011 through 2015.

Healthcare

Healthcare in Kuwait is completely free for its citizens, who make up about 30% of Kuwait's population of four million.[3] Private health services are also available. Kuwait devotes serious efforts to expanding and improving its role as both a local and regional healthcare provider. Part of the reason Kuwait has developed into a regional leader for health is that Kuwait has a plethora of health related research and resulting recommendations. However, rapid modernization has induced rapid change in lifestyle in Kuwait, resulting in significant health problems. Kuwait's healthcare system struggles to address the recent onset of complex cancer, diabetes, and obesity cases. Obesity is so prevalent that it effects the majority of the Kuwaiti population across age groups. However, efforts are being made to increase public knowledge through various campaigns. Implementing the knowledge gained through Kuwait's extensive research is critical to improving the healthcare system of Kuwait.

Healthcare in Kuwait has been constantly expanding. In 2011, the Health Ministry announced that due to increasing demand and a growing population, it was renovating nine hospitals and the Public Works ministry approved plans for constructing eight more hospitals over the next five years.[4] This progress is also not just for sake of expanding healthcare, but also for bettering public perception of healthcare.[5] As part of improving public perception, Kuwait has forged both international and binational health partnerships.[6] Exemplifying its expanding collaborations is Kuwait University's Faculty of Dentistry, named in 2011 as a WHO Collaborating Centre for Primary Oral Health Care, which focuses not only on Kuwait but also

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[3] Central Intelligence Agency, "Kuwait."
[4] Roscoe, "State Tenders Three Hospital Projects: Health Ministry Is Renovating Nine Existing Hospitals in Kuwait to Meet Healthcare Demand."
[5] Al-Jafar, "Exploring Patient Satisfaction before and after Electronic Health Record (EHR) Implementation."
[6] Khodr, "A Preliminary Comparative Study of Policy Making in Two GCC Countries—Qatar and Kuwait: Processes, Politics, and Participants," 285.

on improving oral health across the Middle East.[7] Another partnership program is the Kuwait's

School Oral Health Program, "a joint venture between the Ministry of Health, Kuwait, and

Forsyth Institute, Cambridge, Mass., USA."[8] In 2012, Kuwait had more members in the

International Association for Dental Research than the any other country of the African and

Middle Eastern Region.[9]

Part of the reason Kuwait has developed into a regional leader for health is that Kuwait's

healthcare research has been phenomenal. Out of twenty-three nations in the Eastern

Mediterranean Region, Kuwait ranked first in epidemiological paper publications per population,

and despite its small population, came second in total number of publications from 1996-2012.[10]

In 2014, Kuwait was ranked first in the world on research on obesity, a serious problem in

Kuwait, after rankings were adjusted by population.[11] Kuwait also has admirable standings in

many global health statistics.[12] In 2012, life expectancy was 78, ranking Kuwait among the top

countries in the world.[13] Communicable diseases cause a mere 5% of deaths in Kuwait.[14] Even in

potentially controversial areas of health Kuwait's performance is admirable; there is little unmet

need for contraceptives in Kuwait, as they are commonly used (52% prevalence) and given free

at government health clinics and hospitals.[15] Research shows Kuwait's comparative dominance

in the health field in the region.

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[7] Behbehani, "Faculty of Dentistry, Kuwait University, Designated as a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Primary Oral Health Care."

[8] Ariga, Al-Mutawa, and Nazar, "School Oral Health Program in Kuwait."

[9] Behbehani, "Faculty of Dentistry, Kuwait University, Designated as a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Primary Oral Health Care."

[10] Mandil, Chaaya, and Saab, "Health Status, Epidemiological Profile and Prospects," 622.

[11] Sweileh et al., "Quantity and Quality of Obesity-Related Research in Arab Countries."

[12] Mandil, Chaaya, and Saab, "Health Status, Epidemiological Profile and Prospects," 617; Chibber et al., "Trends in Maternal Mortality over 29 Years in a Kuwait Tertiary Teaching Hospital"; World Health Organization, "World Health Statistics 2014."

[13] World Health Organization, "World Health Statistics 2014."

[14] Ministry of Health, "World Health Survey In Kuwait Summary Report 2013."

[15] Shaikh, Azmat, and Mazhar, "Family Planning and Contraception in Islamic Countries," 14–16.

However, rapid modernization has induced rapid change in lifestyle in Kuwait, resulting in significant health problems which the healthcare system is ill-equipped to handle. Obesity is perhaps Kuwait's most significant health issue, with multiple studies stressing the pervasive problem throughout age groups. A 2013 study showed that 70% of Kuwait's population was overweight.[16] A year later, another study found about 74% of Kuwaitis to be overweight.[17] This problem is not isolated to a particular age. One study showed that 50% of asymptomatic Kuwaiti adults were overweight or obese.[18] Kuwaiti children also have a high incidence of being overweight –Kuwait's Ministry of Health put the obesity rate among children at 50% in 2015 – and this increases with age.[19] Obesity is a massive problem in Kuwait, and seems to be only increasing.

As a result of obesity, Kuwait has high incidences of related problems such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Cardiovascular disease is the top cause of death in Kuwait; it currently causes almost half (46%) of all mortalities in the country.[20] There is also an alarming increase in incidences of diabetes in Kuwait, and with it, a strong need for doctors within Kuwait to better identify people who have it.[21] Cases of diabetes in Kuwait in 2015 ranked it among the top ten countries with the highest prevalence in the world.[22] One study showed that in two governorates in Kuwait, hypertension and diabetes in Kuwaitis above 50 years old was over fifty percent.[23] Type 2 diabetes is also a rising concern for youth in Kuwait. Kuwait physicians are ill-

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[16] Mandil, Chaaya, and Saab, "Health Status, Epidemiological Profile and Prospects," 621.
[17] Behbehani, "Kuwait National Programme for Healthy Living," 36.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Al-Refaee et al., "The Rising Tide of Overweight among Kuwaiti Children."; "Official Calls for Preparing Program to Treat Obesity Causing Diabetes," 5.
[20] World Health Organization, "World Health Statistics 2014"; Awad and Al-Nafisi, "Public Knowledge of Cardiovascular Disease and Its Risk Factors in Kuwait."
[21] Al-Taweel, Awad, and Johnson, "Evaluation of Adherence to International Guidelines for Treating Patients with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus in Kuwait."
[22] "Official Calls for Preparing Program to Treat Obesity Causing Diabetes," 5.
[23] Behbehani, "Kuwait National Programme for Healthy Living."

equipped to address these rising issues; one study found that "physicians in Kuwait gave inaccurate information regarding common problems in Kuwaitis such as obesity, hypertension and osteoporosis."[24] Cancer incidences, another major cause of death, are only expected to rise; from 2009-2020 cancer incidences throughout the Middle East are expected to increase by 50-70%.[25] Faced with rising health challenges that are more complex to address, Kuwait needs to alter its healthcare practices to better address its population's health needs.

Kuwait is taking significant steps. To address growing health concerns, Kuwait developed a National Program for Healthy Living, a five year plan for 2013-2017.[26] The program focuses on obesity and diabetes prevention, and outlines health promotion strategies to promote healthy changes in lifestyle.[27] In addition, the Ministry of Health recognizes the obesity and diabetes needs of the country and is involved in campaigns to address the issues.[28] Though it is still too early to see the impact of these efforts, such action signifies that Kuwait is taking a step in the right direction by identifying issues and attempting to address them.

Politics

Kuwait is the most politically liberal of the Gulf States. Its relatively recent free press and publication laws (enacted in 2006) combined with the pervasive spread of social media[29] has enabled unprecedented public expression of sentiment.[30] Yet despite such rights (or perhaps because of them) the political scene in Kuwait has been historically tumultuous, particularly in recent years. Protests, mainly focusing on fighting corruption in the government, have

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[24] Allafi, Alajmi, and Al-Haifi, "Survey of Nutrition Knowledge of Physicians in Kuwait."
[25] Brown et al., "Tackling Cancer Burden in the Middle East," 501–502; Ministry of Health, "World Health Survey In Kuwait Summary Report 2013."
[26] Behbehani, "Kuwait National Programme for Healthy Living."
[27] Ibid., 33–39.
[28] "Official Calls for Preparing Program to Treat Obesity Causing Diabetes," 5.
[29] Kuwait has almost triple the amount of cellphones in use as it does inhabitants.
[30] al-Nakib, "Public Space and Public Protest in Kuwait, 1938–2012"; Central Intelligence Agency, "Kuwait"; Selvik, "Elite Rivalry in a Semi-Democracy."

highlighted unrest throughout a variety of aspects of society and put in question the stability of Kuwait's current system of governance. Though protests have died down, a significant feel of disillusionment and unrest remains and continues to be expressed.

Kuwait is a constitutional monarchy. Though political parties are not allowed in Kuwait, affiliations (including *bedu*[31] and *hadar*, sectarian associations, merchant families, Islamist groups, and others) determine the position of candidates and parliament members. Yet more generally, politics is largely divided into two main groups: pro-government (who support the royal family) and opposition (who have recently called for less corruption and more parliamentary power). Only parliament members are elected; the royal family chooses the prime minister (a royal family member), who in turn chooses the cabinet.[32] Parliament operates in a unicameral system and has fifty members, whose powers include creating legislating, voting on legislation, and grilling[33] ministers. Though parliament has legislative power, most laws are proposed and passed by the Amir, whose family has been in power since the mid-1700s.

Research on Kuwait's current political situation is limited. This is partially due to the fact that new political developments have been so recent; however, it is also extremely risky to research politics in the Gulf without putting the researcher and others at risk. Criticism of the royal family is against the law, and the definition of criticism is widely interpreted in new Kuwaiti legislation. As a result, understanding recent developments in Kuwait's politics is currently largely dependent upon newspaper articles. Below, both academic analyses and newspaper articles are combined to provide a timeline of recent political developments.

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[31] The *bedu* in Kuwait are typically seen as being of tribal or nomadic class, and are looked down upon by the *hadar* who generally are seen as city dwellers and merchants. In modern times, such distinctions are more difficult to make by observation alone, as most people live in the city. However, such associations are still known by Kuwaitis through lineage and reputation.

[32] Camilla Hall, "Kuwait Opposition Storms to Election Victory."

[33] Subjecting a minister to harsh questioning

From 2011 to present, politics in Kuwait have been the most contentious in the country's history. In the middle of January 2011, when Arab Spring sentiment and related tumult were increasing both externally and internally, each Kuwaiti citizen was granted $3000 and free food staples for thirteen months.[34] Officially, the payoff was both to improve living conditions and to celebrate three national anniversaries in February.[35] Unofficially, Kuwait used payments to its citizens to preemptively address complaints that had resulted in protest across the region. About 5% of Kuwait's GDP went to payoffs to citizens for food, utilities, and wage increases.[36] Yet dissidents were not dissuaded and found inspiration from abroad. In January the opposition planned demonstrations for al-Safat square, reminiscent of similar protests in city centers of Egypt and Bahrain.[37]

Part of the reason protests occurred despite the Kuwaiti government's efforts was that its payments were directed at citizens only. In fact, this attempted solution exacerbated already high frustrations of the bidun. The bidun, the stateless class in Kuwait making up about 100,000 of the population, were again ignored by the state and denied both recognition and funds.[38] These bidun began protesting in early 2011 for citizenship rights, joining the wave of protests across the region for political change. In Kuwait, non-citizens (who make up approximately 70% of the population) are not allowed to take part in politics, giving reason for the domination of protests by migrants and bidun.[39] But officially, non-citizens also cannot be in a public gathering.[40] During protests, protesters fought with security forces, resulting in injuries and detentions,

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[34] James Calderwood, "Kuwait Gives Each Citizen Dh13,000 and Free Food."
[35] These anniversaries were the 50th anniversary of independence, the 20th anniversary of liberation from Iraqi occupation, and the 5th anniversary of the Amir's rule.
[36] Camilla Hall, "Kuwait Tense as Corruption Row Boils over."
[37] al-Nakib, "Public Space and Public Protest in Kuwait, 1938–2012," 733.
[38] Peel, "Stateless 'bidun' Fight for Rights in Kuwait."
[39] Tétreault, "The Winter of the Arab Spring in the Gulf Monarchies," 634.
[40] al-Nakib, "Public Space and Public Protest in Kuwait, 1938–2012," 733.

during which some bidun were abused, beaten, and tortured.[41] Though the bidun did not foster large public support, their protests continued and marked that vocal unrest was becoming more widespread in Kuwaiti society.

Kuwaiti citizen protests against corruption in the government continued.[42] Thousands of people from all aspects of society joined the protests, which followed the regional template of having protests on Fridays and holding protests in the county's main square: Safat Square.[43] This location was particularly politically charged, as the square had been used by Kuwait's first parliament to protest the former Amir's rule. The government did not take well to the new wave of protests, and in May closed the square. Instead, the government offered protesters an alternative space that was much less historically charged location: Irada Square, by the National Assembly building. Protests outside this venue were illegal. The opposition transformed Irada Square into its "official gathering place," and included people "from all class, religious, ideological, and political backgrounds" to unite against the government.[44] Irada was so completely accepted as the new space for protest that it also became the location for pro-government, bidun, and women's rights groups to protest.

Eventually, the protests seemed to have some effect. In September 2011, banks began purportedly preparing to refer fifteen to twenty parliament members for corruption.[45] During the investigation, many MPs were implicated, and the prime minister seemed to be part of the bribing. Soon, strikes joined the protests. Labor tensions worsened, causing banking, healthcare, and industrial strikes for better wages and working conditions to spread throughout Kuwait.[46]

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[41] Peel, "Stateless 'bidun' Fight for Rights in Kuwait."; Amnesty International, "The 'Withouts' of Kuwait: Nationality for Stateless Bidun Now."
[42] Tétreault, "Looking for Revolution in Kuwait."
[43] Ibid.
[44] al-Nakib, "Public Space and Public Protest in Kuwait, 1938–2012," 733.
[45] Tétreault, "Looking for Revolution in Kuwait."
[46] Gladstone, "Kuwait Tightens Security After Protest in Parliament."

October's strikes disrupted petroleum exports. Eventually, these strikes were calmed by an increase in wages. [47] Yet the political protests worsened.

On November 17, 2011, protesters entered the parliament building, calling for the prime minister's resignation. [48] Incriminating evidence had been found linking the prime minister to paying off members of parliament, a charge known as the "deposit scandal." A crowd estimated at 15,000, including young Kuwaitis, Islamists, *bedu*, and members of parliament aligned with the opposition and known as the Fifth Fence, stormed parliament. [49] In the process, the protesters injured five security personnel and damaged property. This event, named "black Wednesday," caused the prime minister to resign. The Amir accepted this resignation and appointed his replacement.[50] Yet protests still continued, pursuing claims of corruption against the new prime minister. Instead of having another vote against the prime minister, the Amir dissolved parliament in early December 2011 (for the fourth time in five years). New elections were to be held within the following two months. The following campaigns involved violence, mud-slinging, and racism. Politics had clearly become a heated topic in Kuwait.

When elections finally happened in February, two thirds of the fifty parliament seats were won by anti-government candidates.[51] The new parliament included tribal members who led the opposition and many Islamists (five seats went to the Muslim Brotherhood and five to Salafis). Islamists were not necessarily elected because of their religiousness, but instead due to their campaigns being vehemently against the former prime minister and cabinet, and the marketing of Islamists as being less corrupt. As the Kuwait University chair of political science, Abdullah al-

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[47] Tétreault, "Looking for Revolution in Kuwait."
[48] Gladstone, "Kuwait Tightens Security After Protest in Parliament"; Tétreault, "Looking for Revolution in Kuwait."
[49] Gladstone, "Kuwait Tightens Security After Protest in Parliament."; Katzman, "Kuwait: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," 3-4.
[50] Simeon Kerr, "Emir Dissolves Kuwait's Parliament"; Tétreault, "Looking for Revolution in Kuwait."
[51] Camilla Hall, "Kuwait Opposition Storms to Election Victory."

Shayji, explained, "the dominant issue is corruption, reforms, criticizing the dysfunctional government."[52] This new parliament ushered in the idea that not only should corruption end, but the constitution must be amended in order to end it.[53] Reform platforms emerged to outline what changes needed to be made and implemented in law. For example, the opposition wanted the prime minister to be an elected position instead of an appointment from the royal family. It seemed as if change could finally happen.

The new parliament had few liberal members and no women.[54] The Islamists wanted to adopt Sharia law, found a morality police force, and "mobilized a large majority in May to approve the second reading of a bill that set death as the maximum penalty for blasphemy."[55] The Amir did not sign the bill, and ignored the other Islamist desires. Yet the parliament was able to take some significant action; it interpolated not only various ministers, but the prime minister himself, making 2012 the first year a prime minister was questioned in an open session.

At the same time, tensions in political subgroups were increasing, exemplified by new youth movements. The Kuwait Charter 2012 movement formed to include more youth in politics.[56] Youth mobilized to demand the release of fellows held in relation to "black Wednesday," and threatened a sit-in. Remembering "black Wednesday," some Kuwaitis began to get nervous about the new rise of political youth. A split began between younger and older generations. This split was evident across many political organizations, and the generational gap became so divisive that some groups split into two different wings. In an attempt to control the rise in energy, the executive office of the Amir created the National Youth Project, a group of

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[52] Ibid.
[53] Tétreault, "Looking for Revolution in Kuwait."
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.

young Kuwaitis aged eighteen to thirty involved in various civil society organizations.[57] The mission for this group was to identify and address problems in Kuwaiti society. However, not all youth asked to join accepted, believing it was a government attempt to weaken the opposition.

With battles for change both inside parliament and within the populace, little progress was made in getting new laws passed or planned projects done.[58] In June, the Amir (constitutionally) suspended parliament for one month. Yet just days later, Kuwait's court ruled the recent election to be illegal, citing flaws in its authorization.[59] The court stated that the 2009 parliament was now the new parliament, a confusing situation that caused even members who were a part of both the 2009 and 2012 parliaments to threaten resignation. A quorum could not be gathered; nobody knew what parliament was actually legal.

Finally, in October the 2009 parliament was officially dismissed (after having never met).[60] The heated topic in upcoming elections was voting laws. Pro-government candidates wanted people to only vote for one representative (which would benefit their camp) while the opposition wanted the original rule of four votes to remain.[61] The opposition bloc in parliament threatened a boycott if the voting law was changed to just one vote. As part of their campaign, the opposition began mobilizing protests. Though one of these protests held in Irada Square resulted in a clash with security, another protest was called for just a week later.

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[57] Farah Al Nakib, "Towards an Urban Alternative for Kuwait," 113.
[58] Tétreault, "Looking for Revolution in Kuwait."
[59] Hall and Gara, "Kuwait Court Dissolves Parliament"; Tétreault, "Looking for Revolution in Kuwait."
The ruling came days after Egypt's court dismissed its own elected and Islamist dominated parliament.
[60] Tétreault, "Looking for Revolution in Kuwait"; Farah Al Nakib, "Towards an Urban Alternative for Kuwait."
[61] Kuwait uses a list system for voting. Before 2012, this meant voters ranked their top four candidates in their district when they voted. Now Kuwaitis only have one vote. The significance of protesting number of votes was not actually in response to limiting the number of votes, but rather in response to the belief that in the upcoming election, fewer votes would favor the royal family at expense of the opposition.

The resulting protest held on October 21, 2012 was the largest in Kuwait's history.[62] Though the protest began at Irada Square, the estimated 50,000-150,000 people soon began marching down the Arabian Gulf Road to the Kuwait Towers, aiming to end at Safat Square. This violated the protest permit; although the protesters were allowed in Irada Square, they did not have a permit for other locations. The government responded violently. Though the protesters were unarmed, police, Special Forces, and the Kuwait National Guard surrounded the crowd and began using tear gas, rubber bullets, and truncheons. An unaccounted number of protesters were injured and arrested. Allegedly all protesters were prosecuted, but considering both the huge numbers and the fact that even members of the royal family participated in the protest, complete prosecution is unlikely.

Tensions heightened; a special task was formed for reviewing social media and other venues of expression for speaking against the royal family.[63] A minister was arrested for insulting the Amir. The Interior Ministry banned groups larger than twenty (though later relented with U.S. pressure). And, ultimately, the Amir decreed only one candidate could be voted for in the upcoming December election.

With Sheikh Jaber AlMubarak AlSabah reappointed as prime minister and the vote being narrowed to one choice, the opposition boycotted the December election.[64] As a result, voter turnout was only about 30-40% (instead of the customary 60%) and only government-friendly candidates were elected to parliament. Clashes continued in various areas, particularly those with

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[62] Tétreault, "Looking for Revolution in Kuwait"; al-Nakib, "Public Space and Public Protest in Kuwait, 1938–2012."

[63] Tétreault, "Looking for Revolution in Kuwait."

[64] Camilla Hall, "Kuwait Emir Reappoints Prime Minister"; Wills, "Democratic Paradoxes," 184.

heavy opposition, though some protests were peaceful. Yet the government clearly discouraged protests and saw them not as an expression of opinion, but a detriment to the country.[65]

In June 2013, the court ruled that yet another election had to be held.[66] Though the Amir's limit to one vote per person was ruled as legal, a technicality required a new election. The election, held in July, resulted in another overwhelmingly pro-government assembly. However, well-known personalities had boycotted the election, resulting in largely unknown candidates being elected. In addition, as the third election in two years in a country where deputies are supposed to serve four-year terms, the election highlighted the disillusionment of Kuwaitis, particularly youth, with politics. As Amir adviser Yousef al Ebraheem said, "We have a new generation who are worried about their future; they do not trust the government or the parliament."[67] Protests, albeit smaller than those of October, continued in 2014, particularly surrounding the jailing of opposition leader Musallam al-Barrack.[68]

Yet using these outlets is becoming increasingly difficult under the recent government crackdown. Throughout 2014, the Kuwaiti government became far more stringent.[69] In July, Al-Youm, a pro-opposition newspaper and TV station, was shut down and the owners' citizenships were revoked. In August, ten more citizenships were revoked in the name of protecting "Kuwait's security, social order, or economy" from people ranging from activists to a cleric.[70] The international NGO Human Rights Watch denounced these revocations, claiming it was a political move against reformists. Yet eighteen more citizenships were revoked in September. A 2015 report by Amnesty International claimed Kuwait's strict laws targeted a wide range of

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[65] "Kuwait Warns against Incursion of Politics into Education."
[66] Katzman, "Kuwait: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," 5.
[67] Michael Peel and Abeer Allam, "Upheaval Increases as Kuwait's Economy Stagnates."
[68] Peel, "Kuwait Should Set an Example on Dissent"; Michael Peel and Abeer Allam, "Upheaval Increases as Kuwait's Economy Stagnates."; Katzman, "Kuwait: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," 5.
[69] Anonymous, "Chronology: Kuwait."
[70] Ibid.

dissenters, including "political activists… opposition figures, journalists, human rights defenders, …users of Twitter and other social media… senior members of the ruling family and foreign Ministers."[71] Similar actions continue; Al Watan, a major, pro-opposition Kuwaiti newspaper, was shut down in 2015. Such crackdown on dissents is publicized by newspapers and Amnesty International.[72] Speaking out against the Amir, God, Arab nations, Kuwait's government, and other board interpretations of putting Kuwait's security at risk are now punishable offenses in Kuwait.

Security

Kuwait has typically relied on international institutions and its U.S. military alliance to ensure its security, and the same has held true in recent years. However, recently Kuwait's concern has not only included external threats, but also internal threats. Increased attention and spending on security demonstrates that Kuwait has recently been on a continual push to improve its security. Yet as Kuwait tightens internal security, its crackdown on dissidents has become more pervasive and brutal.

Militarily, Kuwait has been bolstering its capabilities. Kuwait spends about 3.35% of its GDP on its military –which includes an army, navy, air force, and national guard –demonstrating a significant commitment to security. [73] Part of this spending has been on international purchases of weapons and supplies. In 2012 and 2013, Kuwait negotiated purchases of U.S. defense missile systems and combat aircraft. [74] In 2015, it sought the approval of parliament for funds to pay for U.S., French, and Russian sales of Eurofighter aircraft, Apache helicopters, naval vessels, light armored vehicles, missile systems, and heavy artillery.

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[71] Amnesty International, "The 'Iron Fist Policy": Criminalization of peaceful dissent in Kuwait," 17.
[72] Amnesty International, "The 'Iron Fist Policy": Criminalization of peaceful dissent in Kuwait."
[73] Central Intelligence Agency, "Kuwait."
[74] Katzman, "Kuwait: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," 13-14.

Within the region, Kuwait has deployed its military to both solidify international relations and promote regional stability. In 2011, Kuwait deployed a small naval force as part of the Joint Peninsula Shield to quell protests in Bahrain during its revolts March 2011.[75] As part of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Kuwait often takes part in Gulf endeavors, including the recent Saudi coalition in 2014 to send forces into Yemen.[76]

Kuwait also participates in close military relations with the U.S. The two countries are party to a Defense Cooperation Agreement, which, though classified, purportedly allows, "mutual discussions in the event of a crisis; joint military exercises; U.S. evaluation of, advice to, and training of Kuwaiti forces; U.S. arms sales; prepositioning of U.S. military equipment; and U.S. access to a range of Kuwaiti facilities."[77] Kuwait currently hosts over a third of U.S. forces in the Gulf, and is allowed to purchase the same U.S. equipment available to NATO.[78] Since 2014, it has been a part of the coalition against ISIS. Through military spending, regional deployment, and ongoing U.S. combat relations, Kuwait demonstrates that U.S.-Kuwait relations are a linchpin of its security.

However, Kuwait does not exclusively rely upon the U.S. In 2015, Kuwait's talks with Russia were widely publicized and resulted in the signing of several bilateral agreements.[79] As Russia is a rising power in the region, such action shows Kuwait's interest in balancing alliances with dominant international players. Kuwait also regularly publicizes its reception of and interaction with many foreign dignitaries; the second page of the *Kuwait Times* newspaper is often dedicated to large pictures and corresponding articles lauding the reception of dignitaries.[80]

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[75] Guzansky, "The Foreign-Policy Tools of Small Powers," 116.
[76] Katzman, "Kuwait: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy."
[77] Katzman, "Kuwait: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," 9.
[78] Katzman, "Kuwait: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," 9-12.
[79] "Kuwait, Russia Leaders Ink Agreements, MOUs," 1.
[80] "Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan Sign Cooperation Agreements," 2; "Crown Prince Visits Nicaraguan MP," 2.

Again, this demonstrates Kuwait's approach of allying with a plethora of different states, and celebrating those connections.

Kuwait's foreign donation strategy also protects its security. Though Kuwait's aid has historically not been transparent, what is known about Kuwait's donations shows that they are used as a tool to establish regional allies and promote policies it favors.[81] For example, in 2013 Kuwait pledged $4 billion to help the Egyptian economy, an offer that came at a time when the government was cracking down on Muslim Brotherhood officials. The aid could be interpreted as Kuwait's approval of the crackdown; Islamist movements (specifically in the opposition) were at the same time posing an internal threat to Kuwait's royal family. Kuwait also gave money in 2014 to the Egyptian government, which marked a large part of its rule through even harsher treatment of the Muslim Brotherhood.[82] However, though state donations have been used to combat extremist Islamist groups, Kuwait has been criticized for not regulating its citizen's private donations to extremists.[83] Though some efforts have been made, typically these are in reaction to U.S. views rather than Kuwait's own initiative. However, the Kuwaiti government is responsive to requests for international aid. Involvement in such efforts is not only a humanitarian response, but also a response that helps establish stability in the region and promote Kuwait in the international sphere. Kuwait has hosted three donor conferences for the Syrian refugee crisis, pledging over $1 billion towards the crisis.[84] In addition to establishing itself as a regional leader in aid, Kuwait also positions itself in the global sphere; during the Ebola crisis, Kuwait spent $5 million on Ebola and doubled donation to UN Central Emergency

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[81] Shushan and Marcoux, "Arab Aid Allocation in the Oil Era"; Heba Saleh and Michael Peel, "Kuwait Pledges $4bn to Prop up Egyptian Economy."
[82] Gause III, "Understanding the Gulf States."
[83] Katzman, "Kuwait: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," 19-20.
[84] Katzman, "Kuwait: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," 12.

Response Fund. [85] In Africa, Kuwait's foreign aid enhances various countries' economic development, building both political relations and donor prestige that can be levered for international respect. [86] Recently in 2014, the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said that 1.3% of Kuwait's GDP goes to humanitarian aid. [87]

Aid is not the only diplomatic tool Kuwait uses for its security; acting as a negotiator also plays an important role. Kuwait often places itself in the position of negotiator for the region. In June 2012, Kuwait mediated when Saudi Arabia and the UAE removed their ambassadors from Qatar for its support of the Muslim Brotherhood. [88] Less than a year later, an agreement was established between the two parties. Similarly, in June 2014 the Amir visited Tehran as a sign of his willingness to act as a mediator between Iran and Saudi Arabia. What is slightly peculiar about these two instances is that both seemingly contradict Kuwait's own foreign interests. The Kuwaiti government strongly dislikes Islamist groups and has had historically tense relations with Iran. Therefore, both of these instances show that Kuwait often puts its initial interests on hold in order to play the role of negotiator and therefore ensure its own security by having the power to be included in the conversation.

Internally, Kuwait has also taken stricter measures of security. Predominately, this has resulted in more stringent policies on speech. For example, in 2012 Kuwaiti authorities arrested Sheikh Meshal al-Malek al-Sabah, an extended member of the Amir's family, for a tweet accusing the current government officials of being corrupt. [89] In 2015, activists claimed 626

[85] "Kuwait Continuing Humanitarian Duties."
[86] Turki, "The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and Its Activities in African Countries, 1961-2010."
[87] "Kuwait Continuing Humanitarian Duties."
[88] Guzansky, "The Foreign-Policy Tools of Small Powers," 113–115.
[89] Camilla Hall and Abeer Allam, "Kuwait Graft Tweet Leads to Detention."

Kuwaitis had received criminal charges for peacefully expressing themselves.[90] The overall atmosphere of Kuwait since 2011 has gradually become more closed to those speaking out.

Yet despite increased measures, the largest security breach Kuwait's recent history happened that summer. In June 2015 a suicide bomber entered a Kuwaiti Shiite mosque, killing twenty-seven and wounded over two-hundred.[91] This was the first terrorist attack in Kuwait since Iraq's occupation. The bombing was claimed by ISIS, and was committed by a Saudi Arabian citizen. Kuwait's Amir responded by projecting the necessity of unity; though the mosque was Shiite and Kuwait (and its Amir) are majority Sunni, the Amir visited the destroyed mosque and called the wounded "my children."[92] The same year, Kuwait announced plans to create a mural for those who died for Kuwait, including a caption with the Amir's words, as a part of campaign to "invoke the spirit of unity amongst Kuwaitis amidst tension in the region." [93]

The mosque attack gave a blatant reason for continuing to increase security efforts in Kuwait. The media in Kuwait addressed the bombing, as well as aspects relating to security questions about the bombing, regularly. At the end of 2015 the Ministry of the Interior announced it had chosen locations for security cameras, and would start installing them in 2016, hoping to "cover all of Kuwait" by the end of the year.[94] Also, efforts to document illegal residents rose, and from 2011 to October 2015, over seven thousand people had their statuses adjusted.[95] The Kuwaiti military has also been practicing in joint training exercises with the U.S. that include combatting riots, security posts, and pursuing outlaws –tactics which can be applied

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[90] Fattahova, "Amnesty: Kuwait Sliding into Repression," 13.
[91] Hubbard, "Terrorist Attacks in France, Tunisia and Kuwait Kill Dozens"; Hubbard, "Mass Funeral Held in Kuwait for 27 Killed in Bombing"; Hubbard, "Kuwait Identifies Suicide Bomber in Mosque Attack."
[92] "Kuwait Launches Campaign to Immortalize Country's Martyrs," 4.
[93] "Kuwait Launches Campaign to Immortalize Country's Martyrs," 4.
[94] Saleh, "Security Cameras," 3.
[95] "Over 7,200 Illegal Residents Adjusted Their Status: Agency," 4.

to managing dissidents within the city.[96] However, despite increased measures, major security breaches still occur, including in 2015 someone sneaking onto the flight of an important ministry official.[97] Ultimately, despite crackdown, it is clear Kuwait's security is still wanting.

Economy

Kuwait's economic growth continued from 2011-2014 despite political upheaval, and it has consistently been among the top twenty richest countries in recent years.[98] This success is mainly due to the success of its oil market in recent years. About 50% of Kuwait's GDP, 95% of its export revenue, and 80% of the government's income comes from oil.[99] As it hosts the sixth largest oil reserves in the world, Kuwait is rather wealthy; in 2014 its GDP was $284 billion, putting GDP per capita at $71,000.[100] The government uses its wealth to provide for its citizens, (though does not extend services to non-Kuwaitis), offering services including free healthcare, education, housing, public utilities, employment, and a stipend. Kuwait's ties to oil underpin every aspect of its economy. Though Kuwait has recently made attempts to move away from its oil dependence, parliamentary disagreements with the government have stagnated diversification projects, and corruption issues continue to limit economic progress. In addition, the fall in oil prices since the middle of 2014 has significantly hurt Kuwait's financial future; in 2015, Kuwait experienced its first deficit in years.

The direct relationship between Kuwait's economy and oil is undeniable. Despite protests in 2011, the Kuwaiti economy grew 29% in nominal terms, its highest growth rate since 2005.[101] This flourishing in the face of unrest was attributed to high crude oil prices. In 2012, Kuwait's

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[96] "Kuwaiti Military Official Extols Cooperation with US Army," 3.
[97] "Minister Rocks Airport Security Following Flight Infiltration," 6.
[98] Tasch et al., "The 23 Richest Countries in the World."
[99] Ministry of Health, "World Health Survey In Kuwait Summary Report 2013."
[100] Gladstone, "Kuwait Tightens Security After Protest in Parliament"; Central Intelligence Agency, "Kuwait."
[101] "Kuwait Economy Sees Fastest Growth since 2005."

increase in oil production helped it though the political unrest which made the Kuwait Stock

Exchange (KSE) fall 3.6% in the month of October.[102] But the impact of protests could not be

completely overcome by gains in oil; Kuwait experienced only two percent growth in 2012 (far

less than that in other Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] states) as a result of negative economic

reporting on Kuwait.[103] In fact, some global rankings placed Kuwait as the least competitive

GCC country. (Though for over ten years prior Kuwait's budget has had a surplus, this is

partially due to the fact that it does not honor promised expenditures.) However, it is notable that

Kuwait experienced growth at all; again, a result mainly attributed to the success of the oil

market abroad despite pressures at home. The relationship between Kuwait and international

markets was exemplified in one study which demonstrated that in Oil-WTI, S&P 500 index, and

MSCI-World there was interdependence or spillover into Kuwait.[104] Unsurprisingly, another

study showed the close attachment of Kuwait to regional markets.[105] Because Kuwait's economy

is so tied to oil, it has been able to ride out recent the negative economic impacts of social and

political instabilities.

Kuwait's clear dependence on oil has driven its recent push to diversify its economy.

Since 2010, Kuwait has been implementing a $100 billion five year plan to invest in ports,

education, and hospitals towards this diversification.[106] In the third quarter of 2015 alone, $30

billion was awarded to projects in sectors ranging from oil and gas to transport.[107] Though the

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[102] Halim, "Politics Weighs on Kuwait's Stocks"; Salisbury, "Growth Plan Loses Momentum: Kuwait's Economy Is Growing at a Steady Pace due to Higher Oil Production and Prices, but a $110bn Development Plan Announced in 2010 Has Stalled due to Political Infighting." The same month, the central bank took direct action to curb harm to the banking sector by cutting its key discount rate, the first rate change since 2010 "Kuwait Economy Sees Fastest Growth since 2005."
[103] Anonymous, *KUWAIT ECONOMY*.
[104] Khalifa, Hammoudeh, and Otranto, "Patterns of Volatility Transmissions within Regime Switching across GCC and Global Markets."
[105] Alotaibi and Mishra, "Global and Regional Volatility Spillovers to GCC Stock Markets."
[106] Simeon Kerr, "Emir Dissolves Kuwait's Parliament."
[107] "$30BN Worth of Projects Awarded so far in Kuwait," 22.

desire to diversify is consistent, investment is lacking, as parliament deadlocks consistently

prevent any significant projects, reforms, or foreign investment. [108] The government is also

blamed for "frequent personnel changes, layers of bureaucracy, and general lack of dynamism"

which complicate the process.[109] Though Kuwait's economy continues its general growth,

political deadlock causes delays which make for "stagnant investments and [a] poor business

environment."[110] Major projects start and stop unpredictably.[111] Economically, Kuwait is

considered to be behind other GCC states.[112] The year 2013 was a landmark year in taken steps

towards foreign investment; the Kuwait Direct Investment Provisional Authority founded Law

116, which enabled foreign businesses to operate in Kuwait without a requirement of Kuwaiti

ownership.[113] Formerly, any business that wanted to operate in Kuwait had to have a majority

share owned by a Kuwaiti. Yet now, due to the desire to diversify,[114] opportunity has expanded.

The push to diversify was reemphasized again in 2014 after a fall in oil prices hurt the

economy.[115] The Kuwaiti government stated its new resource should be "its dynamic and

enterprising young people,"[116] and in one of his speeches to parliament, the Amir highlighted the

importance of diversification in the face of the current situation: "I have appealed from this

podium many times to... work to develop and build productive economic activities that provide

opportunities for the youth to work [to] diversify the state's sources of income and reduce the

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[108] Anonymous, "OIL PRICE FALL CALLS TO DIVERSIFY ECONOMY-KUWAIT EMIR"; Salisbury, "Growth Plan Loses Momentum: Kuwait's Economy Is Growing at a Steady Pace due to Higher Oil Production and Prices, but a $110bn Development Plan Announced in 2010 Has Stalled due to Political Infighting."

[109] Anonymous, "OIL PRICE FALL CALLS TO DIVERSIFY ECONOMY-KUWAIT EMIR."

[110] Anonymous, "KUWAIT - Diversification Is Key for Kuwaiti Banks."

[111] Dominic Dudley, "Kuwait's Economy Turns a Corner"; Anonymous, "KUWAIT - Diversification Is Key for Kuwaiti Banks."

[112] Michael Peel and Abeer Allam, "Upheaval Increases as Kuwait's Economy Stagnates."

[113] Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority, "Law No. 116 of 2013."

[114] This new law may have also been affected by the 2008 Kuwait scandal when the Kuwaiti government backed out of a signed contract with Dow Chemical, resulting in the company suing Kuwait and being paid a $2 billion fine by the Kuwaiti government.

[115] Anonymous, "KUWAIT: SMEs SMEs Underpin Kuwait's Future Economy."

[116] Ibid.

reliance of our economy on oil."[117] In 2015, the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor reiterating

this need, stating that Kuwait needed to move away from its "culture of totally depending on oil

and move toward a policy of diversifying income sources."[118] Though in time of internal crisis

oil helped Kuwait, as external crisis shakes global markets Kuwait's need to diversify becomes

more crucial.

Kuwait's call for entrepreneurship also shows underlying issues with maintaining its

generous social welfare system, which guarantees employment and provides free healthcare,

education, housing, public utilities, and monthly payments to all Kuwaiti citizens.[119] As the

decline in oil prices which began in 2014 continues, Kuwait has begun struggling with the

consequences.[120] Worries of a deficit arose. The International Monetary Fund found that Kuwait

"underinvested in capital infrastructure and overspent on public sector salaries and subsidies,"[121]

and its chief warned Kuwait to adjust its budget to the potential that low oil prices would

continue for years, making its oil dependence a sustained problem.[122] Though Kuwait's

sovereign wealth fund holds about $550 billion in reserves, its budget needs $75 per barrel to

break even, a far cry from the $52 per barrel average in 2015.[123] The Ministry of Finance

announced plans in 2015 to create a Kuwait's first unit to address government debts and finance

deficits.[124] In December, Kuwait's Finance Minister Undersecretary announced an expected

budget deficit of $17-20 billion.[125]

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[117] Anonymous, "OIL PRICE FALL CALLS TO DIVERSIFY ECONOMY-KUWAIT EMIR."
[118] "Labor Minister Calls for Diversifying Income," 2.
[119] Khodr, "A Preliminary Comparative Study of Policy Making in Two GCC Countries—Qatar and Kuwait: Processes, Politics, and Participants."
[120] Katzman, "Kuwait: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy."
[121] Katzman, "Kuwait: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," 21.
[122] "Adapt to Oil Price Drop, IMF Chief Urges Gulf: Lagarde Expects Crude Prices to Remain Low for Years," 21.
[123] Katzman, "Kuwait: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," 21; U.S. Department of Energy, "Short-term Energy Outlook."
[124] Saleh, A. "Saad Al-Abdullah Friend Slayer Sentenced to Death: Govt debts." 3.
[125] "Kuwait expects budget deficit between KD 5-6bn," 1.

To compensate, Kuwait is considering reducing subsidies, privatizing sectors of the economy, and introducing a value added tax.[126] However, analysts warn that current measures are not enough, and that the issue of low oil prices will continue to persist for years.[127] The low price of oil is not only hurting Kuwait's budget, but also its stock market. As 2015 drew to a close, "three stock market indicators [of the Kuwait Stock Exchange] closed in the red zone for the third consecutive week" due to investor worries about declining oil prices.[128] However, the banking sector of Kuwait has remained stable. In 2015 Fitch Ratings ranked the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) at AA-, the highest ranking in the Middle East and North Africa.[129] For the tenth time in a row, NBK was among the top fifty safest banks in the world. It is clear that Kuwait's current citizen services cannot be sustained indefinitely if it maintains its dependence on oil; a fact Kuwait recognizes but has yet to seriously attempt to rectify.

Perhaps part of the reason that the national assembly has not moved to take action on diversification, in addition to political inconsistency, is that the parliament is embroiled in tackling a more serious economic issue: corruption. Recent economic studies have not only supported bribery allegations, but also showed that corruption continues to be a pervasive problem. One 2013 study on bribery within public administration found that bribery "is widespread and increasing, [and] transcends nationality, gender, position, education level, and agencies in Kuwait."[130] Exemplifying this issue, in 2015 legal action was being pursued against 111 officials of Kuwait who did not disclose their financial assets.[131] Another study found that Kuwait has the second worst corporate government practices in the GCC.[132] In 2015, Kuwait

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[126] Katzman, "Kuwait: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," 21
[127] "Gulf Braces for Austerity as Oil Income Slump Bites," 1.
[128] "Kuwait Equities Remain Under Pressure," 24.
[129] "Fitch Affirms NBK's Long-Term ratings at AA-, Outlook Stable," 21.
[130] Al-Qarioti, "Bribery Problemin Kuwaiti Administration."
[131] "111 officials have failed to disclose their assets," 2.
[132] Al-Malkawi, Pillai, and Bhatti, "Corporate Governance Practices in Emerging Markets."

ranked last in the GCC on the ease of doing business index, demonstrating that such practices have a direct impact on the country's economic future.[133] Stricter regulation and accountability is necessary for Kuwait's economy to take advantage of its actual gains.

Religion

Religion plays a large role throughout Kuwaiti society, though lately has been particularly present in issues relating to politics and security. About 77% of Kuwait's population is Muslim.[134] Within the Kuwaiti citizenry, about one third are Shiite.[135] Though immediately post-suicide bombing Kuwait was united, sectarianism within the parliament has become increasingly evident in the winter 2015 session.

Perhaps the most obvious instance of religion manifesting in politics was Kuwait's 2012 parliament. Though Salafis have participated in the Kuwaiti parliament since 1992, in the February 2012 elections they were most successful, as five seats were taken by outwardly Islamic parliament members and "at least six independent MPs with a similar religio-political orientation also elected."[136] Though the success of these candidates likely had more to do with their willingness to speak out vocally against the government, the candidates did try to implement more religious laws (though the Amir rejected these attempts).[137]

In addition, due to Bahrain's Shiite protests, sectarian tensions within Kuwait increased.[138] Kuwait's 2012 protests further heightened sectarian tensions, and the government's oversight of sectarian media became stricter.[139] A Shiite newspaper was closed for two months and its editor fined "for inciting sectarian strife" after the editor called out media he believed was

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[133] Rof, "Quality of Regulation, the Spoke in the Gulf's Wheel", 26.
[134] Central Intelligence Agency, "Kuwait."
[135] Hubbard, "Mass Funeral Held in Kuwait for 27 Killed in Bombing."
[136] Utvik, "The Ikhwanization of the Salafis."
[137] Tétreault, "Looking for Revolution in Kuwait."
[138] Peel, "Comment."
[139] Tétreault, "Looking for Revolution in Kuwait."

defaming Kuwaiti Shiites.[140] The same year, one of Kuwait's ministries began monitoring Shiite

husseiniyas, or places of mourning, and funding Shiite mosques.[141] In addition, some Shiites in

Kuwait believe they are specifically targeted by the government as they "continue to report

official discrimination, including limited access to religious education and the perceived

government unwillingness to permit the building of new Shiite mosques."[142]

      The first terrorist attack Kuwait experienced since Iraq's occupation was directed at

Shiites. On June 6, 2015, a suicide bomber destroyed a Shiite mosque and killed twenty-seven

people.[143] Much like the ISIS bombings which targeted Saudi Arabia throughout 2015, this

bombing was also thought to be intended to sow sectarian strife. Yet the Kuwaiti response

showed unity, not division. Thousands of Sunnis and Shiites came together to march and shout,

"Sunnis and Shiites are brothers!" in an act of solidarity. [144] The Grand Mosque in Kuwait City,

a Sunni mosque, was open to all mourners regardless of sect.

      Calls for banding together and promoting religious tolerance also echo in Kuwait's

international affairs.[145] In 2012 Kuwait pressed the UN Human Rights Council to "issue an

international pledge to respect religions that will serve as a framework for international

relations," as it saw acceptance as a tool for promoting international understanding and

preventing radicalism.[146] Kuwait desired action to be taken by the UN to prevent desecration

and discrimination targeting religion. In fact, Kuwait's Ministry has a World Moderation Center

specifically to combat extremism in Muslim societies. In 2015, one of Kuwait's ministry's

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[140] Ibid.
[141] Katzman, "Kuwait: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," 8.
[142] Katzman, "Kuwait: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," 8.
[143] Hubbard, "Terrorist Attacks in France, Tunisia and Kuwait Kill Dozens"; Hubbard, "Mass Funeral Held in Kuwait for 27 Killed in Bombing."
[144] Hubbard, "Terrorist Attacks in France, Tunisia and Kuwait Kill Dozens"; Hubbard, "Mass Funeral Held in Kuwait for 27 Killed in Bombing."
[145] "Kuwait Calls for Global Religion Respect."
[146] Ibid.

announced plans to organize training courses for six hundred Islamic religion teachers to help them fight extremism.[147]

However, at a sub-national level, Kuwait has been struggling to maintain unity between sects. Parliament members have recently exchanged sectarian insults and accusations. A particularly heated topic was a recently busted terror cell connected to Iran, a touchy topic for Shiites in Kuwait. The *Kuwait Times* newspaper explained the situation: "Sectarian sparks again marred National Assembly debate yesterday over the Iran-linked cell. Sunni and Shiite MPs traded accusations… four months after manifesting solid national unity in the aftermath of the deadly suicide bombing."[148] Criticism of Iran, accusations against the Public Prosecution and Judiciary, allegations against MPs, and claims that MPs were spreading sectarianism were all involved in the argument.[149] Sectarianism in Kuwait is still clearly an issue, even at the governmental level.

Survey Results

University Demographics and Institutional Information

The academic year the survey was conducted, AUK had about 2600 students.[150] The majority of the student body (79%) consisted of full-time undergraduate students. The remaining 21% were either Intensive English Program participants or part-time undergraduate students. About 57% of the student population was female, and 43% male. Kuwaiti nationals made up the majority nationality at 64%, followed by non-GCC Arab countries at 26%, and a mix of others the remaining 10%.

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[147] "Islamic Teachers to be Trained to Fight Extremism," 1.
[148] "Sectarian Sparks Fly again in Debate over Terror Cell," 1.
[149] "MPs Clash over Iran Amid Heated Debate," 1; "Sectarian Sparks Fly again in Debate over Terror Cell," 1.
[150] "Fall 2015 AUK at a Glance."
This demographic information about AUK was provided by the university upon request in Fall 2015. Though it is the most recent report on AUK demographics, the specific numbers in the report come from 2013.

AUK is a liberal arts university taught by a predominantly American staff, and is known for being one of the more liberal universities in Kuwait. Its classes are gender integrated, unlike those at the largest university, Kuwait University.

Methodology

Surveys[151] were sent out to all AUK students via email[152] by the Gulf Studies department head on October 11, 2015. The email introduced the survey and myself as a researcher, then gave the option for students to take the survey in English or in Arabic by choosing the corresponding link. Google forms was used to collect survey information.

A reminder email to fill out the survey was sent on October 26th, and the survey was closed October 30th. While the survey was open, I personally visited classes asking students to spend five minutes taking the survey on their cellphones (I also had paper copies if preferred). Classes which I visited were those of professors I knew or those who had responded to my university-wide email explaining my project and requesting to visit classes. One student passed out the survey to friends.

Ultimately, 373 English surveys and 85 Arabic surveys were completed, or 458 surveys completed total, signifying that about 18% of the student population was sampled. Though not representative of Kuwait's entire youth population, the survey was proportionally representative of AUK's student body. This allows a confidence level of 98%, response distribution of 50%, and margin of error of 5%. A translator[153] was used to translate the short answers and additional comments of the Arabic surveys.

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[151] See the appendix for copies of the surveys.
[152] The email was sent out in English only, as all AUK emails are sent out in English.
[153] This translator was an assistant director of AUK Learning Support Services, which help with student writing and tutoring, and so was particularly suited to address the particular needs of this translation due to her extensive, close work with AUK students. However, interpretation also naturally played a role during translation of Arabic surveys, as many Arabic words or phrases do not directly translate into English.

To quantify responses which asked to what extent an aspect had changed due to regional instability, responses were assigned numerical values as follows:

Not at all   0

Very Little   1

Somewhat   2

A lot   3

Extremely   4

Some interpretation of quantitative responses was necessary. For example, for the survey question asking how many years students lived in Kuwait, many students responded with text such as, "since I was born, my whole life, I'm Kuwaiti," instead of a number. In such cases, it was assumed the student had lived over 15 years in Kuwait. Also, though in the online survey students could only choose one aspect of Kuwait that had changed the most for question six, on the paper version some students chose multiple aspects that had changed the most. In total, 3% of respondents gave multiple answers. In these cases, in analyzing results each respondent received one point, and this point was divided among the number of answers. For example, if a student responded both security and politics had changed the most in Kuwait, when calculating total percentages, the student's responses were each given 0.5 points. This was done to ensure a single student's multiple responses did not outweigh those of a student who gave a single response. On paper, some students also skipped questions (which wasn't allowed for the questions on the online version, or it wouldn't submit). Where questions were blank, the response was not counted in calculations.

When analyzing short responses, each respondent was referred to as "he." In addition, grammatical errors (misspellings, missing punctuation, etc.) were corrected in the quoted short

responses. Some answers had particularly difficult grammar and phrasing, so interpretation was sometimes necessary in order to extrapolate meaning in some responses.

In addition, respondents may have varied in how they interpreted survey questions. About 19% of respondents provided inconsistent responses about the degree of change in aspects of Kuwait, as the aspect they indicated as having "changed the most" was previously rated with a smaller degree of change than other aspects.

It is also important to note that surveys only represent the AUK students who chose to participate in the study. As participation was voluntary and respondents were self-selected, the data collected holds the potential for sampling bias.

Hard Data

The following section presents the quantitative findings of the survey. These findings are first presented as a summary of all responses, and then compared in groups: Arabic surveys vs English surveys, Kuwaiti surveys vs non-Kuwaiti surveys, and various times of length lived in Kuwait compared to each other. Both overall and in the groups designated above, on average respondents found that each aspect of Kuwait –healthcare, politics, security, economy, and religion –was impacted by regional instability at least a little.

When looking at respondents overall, the grand majority (99%) of respondents answered at least eight out of nine questions in the survey.[154] The survey population was relatively similar to that of AUK; 68% of survey respondents were Kuwaiti, compared to 64% being Kuwaiti in the larger AUK population. Length of time students lived in Kuwait ranged from 1-36 years.

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[154] As the 10th survey question asked about interview interest, it was not counted as a critical question. The question most typically skipped was the long-answer response.

Table 1: Overall Percentage of Which Aspects Changed Most due to Regional Instability

Aspect	Marked as Most Changed
Healthcare	2%
Politics	30%
Security	44%
Economy	9%
Religion	10%
Other	5%

Due to rounding to the nearest percentage, the sum of these percentages do not equal an exact 100%.

Table 1 shows a percentage breakdown of what aspect respondents marked as having changed the most in Kuwait due to regional instability (the answer to survey question six).[155] Almost half of respondents (44%) chose security as having changed the most. The second most popular response was politics (30%). The following categories –religion, economy, other, and healthcare –were chosen by 10% or less of respondents.

Clearly, security dominated respondent perspective of how regional instability impacted Kuwait. Politics was a less prevalent answer, but still an aspect which many respondents believed had changed the most when compared to others.

Table 2: Overall Average Impact of Regional Instability on Different Aspects in Kuwait (scaled 0-4)

Aspect	Healthcare	Politics	Security	Economy	Religion
Extent	1.09	2.37	2.39	1.81	1.64

The scale used was: 0 (not at all), 1 (very little), 2 (somewhat), 3 (a lot) and 4 (extremely).

Table 2 shows the average extent to which each aspect in Kuwait was seen to have changed overall on a scale of 0 (not at all) to 4 (extremely).[156] Security, politics, economy, and religion (in descending order) were all found to have changed somewhat, while healthcare was found to have only changed a little.

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[155] Since 2011, which aspect of Kuwait has changed the most due to regional instability?
[156] The scale used was: 0 (not at all), 1 (very little), 2 (somewhat), 3 (a lot) and 4 (extremely).

Table 2 demonstrates that both politics and security were seen to have changed the most in the eyes of Kuwaiti youth. On a scale with only four points, both security and politics were over half a point above any other aspect, designating that they were seen to have not only changed the most, but also changed to a far greater extent. What is particularly noteworthy about these averages is that security was found to have changed only 0.02 more than politics, despite Table 1 showing that almost half of respondents identified security as changing the most while only a third saw politics as changing the most. This suggests that the extent to which politics and security changed was seen as nearly the same, yet security was far more often selected as changing "the most," overall.

Table 1A: English vs Arabic Survey Percentages of Which Aspects Changed Most due to Regional Instability

Aspect	Healthcare	Politics	Security	Economy	Religion	Other
Overall	2%	30%	44%	9%	10%	5%
English	2%	28%	47%	8%	9%	5%
Arabic	4%	35%	33%	13%	12%	4%

Due to rounding to the nearest percentage, the sum of these percentages do not equal an exact 100%.

Table 1A compares a percentage breakdown between Arabic surveys (19%) and English surveys (81%) of what aspect respondents marked as having changed the most in Kuwait due to regional instability.[157] English and Arabic surveys ranked aspects somewhat differently; a third of Arabic surveys found that politics had changed the most, with security 2% behind, while almost half of English surveys found that security had changed the most, with politics almost

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[157] Since 2011, which aspect of Kuwait has changed the most due to regional instability?

20% behind. Security was the biggest percentage difference (14%) between the two. Outside of politics and security, responses were within five percentage points or less of each other.

A potential reason for Arabic survey concern being split more evenly between politics and security may be that politics and political outlets in Kuwait are conducted primarily in Arabic, perhaps isolating those who prefer English, or at least making it more difficult to follow Kuwaiti politics in English. However, survey preference for one language over another does not mean that the respondent cannot operate in both languages. It may suggest, however, that the comfortability of a respondent with English as opposed to Arabic, or vice versa, may have some impact on how they perceive change in Kuwait. Alternatively, language preference could also be a secondary characteristic of a larger influence –perhaps including public vs private school education, preferred news sources, or time spent abroad –that more directly impacts a respondent's perception of regional impacts on Kuwait.

Table 2A: English vs Arabic Survey Averages of Impact of Regional Instability on Different Aspects in Kuwait (scaled 0-4)

Aspect	Healthcare	Politics	Security	Economy	Religion
Overall	1.09	2.37	2.39	1.81	1.64
English	1.03	2.33	2.39	1.74	1.62
Arabic	1.34	2.54	2.40	2.09	1.74
Difference[158]	-0.31	-0.21	-0.01	-0.35	-0.12

The scale used was: 0 (not at all), 1 (very little), 2 (somewhat), 3 (a lot) and 4 (extremely).

Table 2A compares averages between English and Arabic surveys of the extent to which each aspect in Kuwait was seen to have changed overall on a scale of 0 (not at all) to 4

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[158] The difference between English and Arabic survey averages.

(extremely). [159] Both English and Arabic surveys found healthcare to have changed a little, and security, economy, and religion to have changed somewhat. However, Arabic surveys found politics to have changed a lot, whereas English surveys only marked it as changing somewhat. Healthcare and politics were aspects with the largest point gaps; Arabic surveys found that healthcare and politics had changed an average of 0.3 points more than English surveys. Politics was also seen as having changed more (0.2 points more) by Arabic surveys. Change in the other categories was found to be relatively similar; security was so close between English and Arabic surveys that there was only a 0.01 difference between averages. Ultimately, Arabic surveys found that regional instability had a larger impact on Kuwait across all aspects.

The averages demonstrate that the two types of surveys were far more similar on security than the percentages suggest. The extent to which security was impacted was almost identical between the two, whereas the categories that disagreed the most were lower percentage categories of healthcare and economy.

Table 1B: Kuwaiti vs Non-Kuwaiti Percentages[160] of Which Aspects Changed Most due to Regional Instability

Aspect	Healthcare	Politics	Security	Economy	Religion	Other
Overall	2%	30%	44%	9%	10%	5%
Kuwaiti	2%	32%	43%	7%	11%	5%
Non-Kuwaiti	3%	25%	46%	14%	7%	5%

Due to rounding to the nearest percentage, the sum of these percentages do not equal an exact 100%.

Table 1A compares a percentage breakdown between Kuwaiti surveys (67%) and non-Kuwaiti surveys (33%) of what aspect respondents marked as having changed the most in

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[159] The scale used was: 0 (not at all), 1 (very little), 2 (somewhat), 3 (a lot) and 4 (extremely).
[160] Due to rounding to the nearest percentage, the sum of these percentages do not equal an exact 100%.

Kuwait due to regional instability.[161] The rankings between the two categories agree except
economy and religion are flipped for third and fourth places. The largest percentage difference
between Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis in any aspect was 7%, seen in both economy and politics.
Proportionally, twice as many non-Kuwaitis see regional instability as impacting economy the
most. Overall, Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti responses are generally similar.

Table 2B: Kuwaiti vs Non-Kuwaiti Averages of Impact of Regional Instability on Different Aspects
in Kuwait (scaled 0-4)

Aspect	Healthcare	Politics	Security	Economy	Religion
Overall	1.09	2.37	2.39	1.81	1.64
Kuwaiti	1.11	2.45	2.46	1.83	1.71
Non-Kuwaiti	1.03	2.18	2.25	1.76	1.48
Difference[162]	0.08	0.27	0.21	0.07	0.23

The scale used was: 0 (not at all), 1 (very little), 2 (somewhat), 3 (a lot) and 4 (extremely).

Table 2B compares averages between Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti surveys of the extent to
which each aspect in Kuwait was seen to have changed overall on a scale of 0 (not at all) to 4
(extremely). [163] Both categories found that healthcare was impacted very little by regional
politics, while politics, security, and economy were impacted somewhat. Kuwaitis saw religion
as being impacted somewhat by regional politics, while non-Kuwaitis thought it was only
impacted a little. The largest differences in averages were between politics (0.27) and religion
(0.23). Kuwaitis found that regional instability had a larger impact on Kuwait across all aspects.

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[161] Since 2011, which aspect of Kuwait has changed the most due to regional instability?
[162] The difference between Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti survey averages.
[163] The scale used was: 0 (not at all), 1 (very little), 2 (somewhat), 3 (a lot) and 4 (extremely).

Table 1C: Impact of Number of Years Lived in Kuwait[164] on Percentages of Which Aspects Changed Most due to Regional Instability

Aspect	Healthcare	Politics	Security	Economy	Religion	Other
Overall	2%	30%	44%	9%	10%	5%
0-5 Years	7%	36%	36%	7%	7%	7%
6-15 Years	0%	46%	34%	10%	6%	3%
16+ Years	2%	28%	45%	9%	10%	5%

Due to rounding to the nearest percentage, the sum of these percentages do not equal an exact 100%.

Table 1C compares a percentage breakdown between respondents who lived in Kuwait from 0-5 years (3%), 6-15 years (7%), and over sixteen years (90%) of what aspect respondents marked as having changed the most in Kuwait due to regional instability.[165] These categories were chosen to represent those who had moved to Kuwait only recently, those who spent a majority of their life in Kuwait, and those who lived almost their entire lives in Kuwait. Though group 0-5 years is included in Table 1C, it is not included in the analyses because there are too few respondents in this category to generalize. Group 6-15 years does not have a high percentage of respondents, but enough to give an idea of what might differentiate it from group 16+ years.

When ranking responses in terms of which aspects were seen to be impacted most, group 6-15 years and group 16+ years flip places 1 and 2, and places 3 and 4. However, all aspects are within four percentage points of each other except politics and security. Those living in Kuwait for a shorter period of time believed politics had changed the most, whereas those who lived in Kuwait for sixteen years or more believed security had undergone more change. Group 6-15

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[164] These categories were chosen because students who spent less than 6 years in Kuwait likely just moved to Kuwait recently, compared to those who had been here for 6-15 years, therefore receiving the majority of their upper education in Kuwait, compared to those above fifteen years who likely were born in Kuwait and spent the majority of their lives here.

[165] Since 2011, which aspect of Kuwait has changed the most due to regional instability?

years found politics changed the most 18% more than group 16+ years, and group 16+ years found that security changed the most 11% more than group 6-15 years.

Because the spread of years was heavily weighted towards those who lived in Kuwait over sixteen years, data on the impact of length of time lived in Kuwait on answers is limited. But considering the data collected, length of time lived in Kuwait did not appear to show large differences in students choosing which aspect changed the most or the extent to which aspects changed.

Table 2C: Impact of Number of Years Lived in Kuwait on Impact of Regional Instability on Different Aspects in Kuwait (scaled 0-4)

	Healthcare	Politics	Security	Economy	Religion
Overall	1.09	2.37	2.39	1.81	1.64
0-5 years	0.93	2.14	2.36	1.86	1.50
6-15 years	1.13	2.40	2.27	1.77	1.70
16+ years	1.09	2.37	2.40	1.81	1.64
Difference[166]	0.04	0.03	-0.13	-0.04	0.06

The scale used was: 0 (not at all), 1 (very little), 2 (somewhat), 3 (a lot) and 4 (extremely).

Table 2C compares averages between respondents who lived in Kuwait from 0-5 years, 6-15 years, and over sixteen years of the extent to which each aspect in Kuwait was seen to have changed overall on a scale of 0 (not at all) to 4 (extremely). Again, group 0-5 years is included in Table 2C but not the analysis.

Out of all the previous sub-groups in this section, group 6-15 years and 16+ years have the most similar averages for how different aspects have changed. The largest difference is

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[166] This is the difference between group 6-15 years and group 16+ years.

security, which group 16+ found had changed more by 0.13 points, while all the other aspects are 0.06 points different or less. This demonstrates that though the aspects that changed the most were different in terms of absolute percentages between year groups, the extent to which the aspects have been impacted is extremely similar across all categories. Length of time lived in Kuwait appears to not impact the perception of how regional instability has impacted Kuwait.

Table 3B: Chi-Squared Test Results of the Impact of Nationality on Choosing Which Aspect of Kuwait Changed the Most

Aspect	p-value
Healthcare	0.784
Politics	0.151
Security	0.509
Economy	0.015
Religion	0.138
Other	0.936

Table 3B shows the results of a chi-squared test to test if nationality was associated with choosing a certain aspect in Kuwait that had changed the most. Testing at a significance of 0.05, economy had the only significant result, with a p-value of 0.015. Therefore, nationality was not a significant predictor of choosing healthcare, politics, security, religion, or other as having changed the most in Kuwaiti society. However, non-Kuwaitis were statistically significantly more likely than Kuwaitis to have chosen the economy as having changed the most. In other words, non-Kuwaiti respondents were associated with choosing the economy as having changed the most in Kuwaiti society.

Non-Kuwaitis' heightened concern about the economy may be due to the fact that expatriate jobs are more likely to be impacted by worsening economic conditions. As Kuwait's substantial social welfare programs for its citizens show, Kuwaitis are treated as a higher class in Kuwait, and are unlikely to bear the burden of economic change.

Short Responses

The following section summarizes the short responses in question seven of the survey, including any additional comments. In total, 421 short responses were collected, demonstrating that 92% of respondents wrote an explanation providing information about why they chose a specific aspect as having changed the most in Kuwait due to regional instability. Respondents who skipped the short response question were relatively proportionally spread throughout groups. When short responses were divided into categories relating to which aspect the respondent chose as having changed the most, the percentage of short responses about a certain aspect closely matched the percentage of total responses for that aspect. Though not all responses were informative (i.e. one student wrote a standalone "just because"), the majority of responses had some substance. As Table 4 demonstrates, the percentage of short responses relating to healthcare, economy, and other were identical to the percentage of total responses, while politics, security, and religion were within 2% or less of each other.

Table 4: Short Responses Compared to Total Responses of Percentages of Which Aspects Changed Most due to Regional Instability

	Healthcare	Politics	Security	Economy	Religion	Other
Total Responses	2%	30%	44%	9%	10%	5%
Short Responses	2%	28%	45%	9%	9%	5%

In the following sub-sections, short responses are first presented within their aspect category, and then thematically. Aspect categories progress in order from least popular aspect to the most popular aspect: healthcare, other, economy, religion, politics, and security. Those who marked multiple aspects as having changed the most had their short answers considered in each aspect category they marked.

Healthcare

The vast majority of respondents who chose healthcare as having changed the most in Kuwait due to regional instability focused on issues with health services in Kuwait. Complaints predominately focused on the poor quality and insufficient nature of Kuwait's healthcare. As one respondent remarked, "There is a decline in the health services offered in Kuwait. Doctors now have less experience and devote less attention to the patients." Though most comments focused on health issues and how services had recently degraded, a few respondents directly explained the link between healthcare limitations and regional pressures. For example, one comment seemed to imply that recent migrants into Kuwait caused the healthcare strain: "[Kuwait] has too many people and almost 80% of the people coming into Kuwait have health issues… Kuwait doesn't have that much hospitals to hold them, so Kuwaitis are not getting the benefits that they should from the government." Alternatively, another short response remarked that expat patients and Kuwaiti patients were not treated equally, implying that the Kuwaitis received better treatment.

Ultimately, respondents who believed healthcare changed the most in Kuwait due to regional instability thought that it changed for the worse, and that the quality and availability of healthcare was wanting in Kuwait.

Other

Respondents who marked "other" as having changed the most in Kuwait due to regional instability included various interpretations of what "other" meant, including none listed, multiple answers, social change, and no idea. The most common response explaining why "other" was the option chosen was the belief that none of the listed aspects had changed in Kuwait. Conversely, some respondents answered "other" because they could not settle on a single aspect that had changed the most; one explained "I was looking for an option that would say 'all of the above'…because these wars and regional instabilities taking place in neighboring countries affect all of the aspects." The same respondent went on to explain that the aspects were mixed and often interacted in a "domino effect" between each other. Another group of respondents remarked that Kuwait had changed socially; one said that, "Kuwaitis are closer to each other than before… in terms of Shiite and Sunna sects." Some wrote that they chose "other" because they simply didn't know which aspect to choose: "I have no idea about Kuwait, sorry."

Ultimately, respondents who did not choose any of the proffered aspects interpreted the "other" category in a variety of manners, the most popular of which was that none of the aspects listed had changed in Kuwait due to regional instability.

Economy

Respondents who chose Kuwait's economy as having changed the most due to regional instability were spread relatively evenly between commenting on the decreasing price of oil, inflation, international connections, and general pessimism. The price of oil played a major role in short responses; some respondents even knew specific statistics about oil prices: "The price of oil has decreased extremely…[it] was above 100 U.S. dollars per barrel now it less than 45 U.S. dollars." Inflation throughout Kuwait's economy was also named as a serious issue: "everything

has become more expensive, from little things such as grocery shopping all the way to big things such as house rent." Comments on how regional and international factors impacted Kuwait varied; responses ranged from believing instability limited export options to that Kuwait was spending too much on aid abroad. Most comments relating to oil prices, inflation, and international connections explained how Kuwait's economy had suffered, and comments outside of these categories were also typically negative. One respondent remarked pessimistically, "Kuwait's economy has been broken down from these problems."

Ultimately, respondents who believed the economy changed the most in Kuwait due to regional instability discussed the negative impact instability had caused, focusing on the drop in oil prices, inflation, and issues arising from international connections.

Religion

Respondents who chose religion in Kuwait as having changed the most due to regional instability often discussed relations between Sunnis and Shiites, religious extremism, and losing faith. The largest common group of comments related to Sunni and Shiite relations, mostly discussing conflict between the sects. One respondent said inter-sect relations had reached an all-time low in Kuwait: "Discrimination based on religious affiliation or sect has been very apparent now more than any other time before in Kuwait. There is a great injustice imposed upon Shiites. The media in Kuwait refuses to show the real picture. The voices of those who suffer need to be heard." However, there were also a number of comments discussing the recent unity between Sunnis and Shiites after the mosque bombing. For example, one respondent said that the mosque bombing, "made us all united. Different religions, but no differences."

Extremism in religion was also discussed often, particularly in relation to the 2015 mosque bombing in Kuwait and the fear of ISIS. This threat was not seen as only external, but

also internal. One respondent explained that regional instability's influence resulted in "polarization and extremism" in Kuwaiti society that caused people to put faith in corrupt religious leaders: "people tend to turn to their religious leaders more and those leaders usually have a political bias or may have become interested in politics as their power grew among the population." The same respondent continued that, "Polarization is caused by the delusion of external threat while really the threat is internal and our fears are self-manifesting." Similar comments regarding the threat of religious extremism were made by several others.

Mainly due to the recent association of religion with extremist groups, many comments noted how people in Kuwait were losing faith. One comment remarked, "Muslim extremists have either made people join them or hate religion," while another explained, "more people have begun to associate religion with people who represent it negatively (ISIS, etc) which led to many people losing faith in religion, God and hate for politics." Perhaps as a consequence of people relinquishing religion, other responses discussed the lack of morals in Kuwaiti society. For example, one respondent complained that, "Kuwaitis, or I should say Arabs in Kuwait, lived according to an Islamic lifestyle. [But] since they abandoned their religion things have started getting worse gradually. We have lost our identity; that's why it was easy to infiltrate us and create chaos." Religious extremism was not only seen as an external phenomenon that impacted community perceptions of religion in Kuwait, but also caused an internal, visceral, personal questioning of religion that caused people to lose faith.

Ultimately, respondents who believed that religion changed the most in Kuwait due to regional instability discussed the impacts of extremism, which included negativity between Sunnis and Shiites, unity between Sunnis and Shiites, the spread of violence stemming from extremism, and associating religion with extremism which caused a loss of faith.

Politics

Respondents who chose politics in Kuwait as having changed the most due to regional instability commented on political problems and resulting frustrations, the divide between Sunnis and Shiites, regional changes, new laws, immigrants and harsher entry regulations, and growing political awareness in Kuwait. Complaints about recent political developments in the government were one of the most commonly recurring responses. Disdain was repeatedly expressed at parliament's corruption and lack of cooperation: "In my opinion, I believe that Kuwaiti society is too fragmented politically and a lot of personal gains are behind it. People follow names and not principles." Some responses also mentioned the dissolution of parliament and its inability to take concrete action, often due to the belief that parliament members only act in their own interests: "The parliament's [members] are starting to care for themselves more and more instead of caring for the country's people." Complaints against parliament ranged from accusations that members were purposely causing instability to the idea that parliament was just overcomplicating issues.

Complaints against parliament also touched on arguments between Sunni and Shiite members. One respondent explained that Sunni and Shiite politicians had general problems with each other due to "some beef towards each other," while another portrayed the conflict between politicians more explicitly as resulting from "their alliance to religious organizations." Yet issues between Sunnis and Shiites was not only evident in comments regarding parliament, but also in those relating to larger society. One respondent explained that recently in his workplace each department was split into Sunni and Shiite sections because "many citizens started to talk and fight about politics in Kuwait. We don't trust each other nowadays." Another respondent widened the problem beyond a sectarian divide: "there is a lack of mutual respect to different religions or sects and also a lack of respect to different mentalities, beliefs, and orientations. And

that is with respect to citizens and expats of all religions." Due to splits in both the Kuwaiti parliament and citizenry, respondents saw sectarianism in Kuwait as a political issue impacting all of society.

Respondents also referenced to the impact of regional politics on Kuwaiti politics. Several respondents mentioned the Arab Spring; one explained that in Kuwait, "politics… [wasn't necessarily] affected, but it was more like co-opted, after people saw all [the] other countries speaking out and raising their anger to present their voice. I think people assumed that was what freedom was and that was how to 'activate' it." Respondents also specifically mentioned how shifting politics in Syria, Iran, and Egypt impacted Kuwait's international interactions regarding aid, relations, and security.

Respondents also discussed Kuwait's new laws. Most respondents expressed frustration when discussing what they saw as recent, harsher laws and regulations. One comment complained that, "new rules are showing up every other day, [and] these rules are not making life any easier for the people." Another respondent described the changes in law as "irrational and unjustified," and a third called the changes in policy "difficult and tiresome."

A category of changing law that was mentioned especially often was increasing immigrant regulations, particularly those limiting entry. One respondent explained that, "the rights of many [non-Kuwaiti] residents in Kuwait have been demolished. There has been an increase in fees and deportation." Most respondents felt negative about the recent changes in immigrant laws.

Despite these frustrations, responses demonstrated a positive change in Kuwait: that citizens exhibited a growing awareness of politics. More focus on politics and increasingly vocal involvement in politics were two often-repeated comments. One respondent explained that

politics appeared in daily conversation: "well, we can't live a day in Kuwait without arguing about politics and the way regional instability affected Kuwait," while another said politics was becoming more important in Kuwait as "people are taking it more seriously and care more." Some expressed that this increased awareness was a slight problem, "because those who are experts in politics and those who are not are now voicing their opinions. Many claim they know it all, and therefore it has become chaotic." Increased discussion of politics in Kuwait has developed it into a major topic.

Ultimately, respondents who believed that politics changed the most in Kuwait due to regional instability discussed the negative development of politics, including political problems and resulting frustrations, the divide between Sunnis and Shiites, spillover from regional politics, difficult new laws and regulations, and harsher immigrant treatment. Yet despite this negative attitude concerning politics, respondents believed people in Kuwait were also becoming more politically aware.

Security

Respondents who chose security in Kuwait as having changed the most due to regional instability commented on the 2015 mosque bombing, the increase in security, personal fear, crimes, regional change, and ISIS. The majority of respondents commented on the 2015 mosque bombing when explaining how security had changed. Though the bombing was often mentioned as part of the reason security had changed in Kuwait, others only described the bombing, implying that the attack alone had the most significant impact. As the attack was such an infamous event, some students did not feel the need to explain more than "because of the bombing."

Other respondents explained the bombing had caused an increase in security measures in Kuwait. The following exemplifies a typical response: "Especially after the bombing in the mosque, the security has raised significantly in Kuwait." Some respondents gave specific examples of security increases, such as that "the government assigned police officers on every main street and in housing areas." Other instances of increased security mentioned by respondents included the presence of checkpoints, cracking down on organizations, security campaigns, increased police presence, visa restrictions, increased security presence around mosques, and more security checks in hotels, malls, and religious gatherings. One respondent even explained that he was stopped for suspicious stickers: "I was stopped by police patrols many times. They ask me about the stickers I have on my car. And those stickers belong to clubs and organizations at the university. They thought that they belonged to unknown organizations which might pose a threat to Kuwait's security."

Yet despite this increase in security, fear in respondents was commonplace. While some respondents commented on the security threat from a removed standpoint, others described daily, visceral worry. One respondent explained, "I believe that the majority of the public in Kuwait think twice before they leave in the morning for Friday prayer or go to malls or public places since the Da'ash[167] attack," and another said that even when not in public people of Kuwait felt "a lot of fear, anxiety, and paranoia… People [have] started feeling fear, they don't feel safe even in their own homes." On a personal level, one respondent admitted, "I do not feel safe anymore. …This is sad and it hurts so bad. Humans are diminishing. This world has humans but I see no humanity." Responses portrayed a personal, pervasive nature of fear throughout Kuwait's population.

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[167] ISIS

Perhaps because this fear made people more sensitive to danger in Kuwait, crime was also a topic often commented upon by respondents. Crimes mentioned included corruption, theft, murder, drugs, fights, and stabbings. Though most respondents commented that crime was rising in general, some blamed specific perpetrators, including refugees, politicians, extremists, and teenagers. There was a sense in comments that this increase in crime had happened relatively recently, and that such instances were a sign that "Kuwait is starting to change a lot."

Change inside Kuwait was linked by respondents to change in the global sphere, particularly in the Middle Eastern region. Some respondents discussed wars in surrounding countries as effecting Kuwait: "The proximity of conflicts in the region have threatened the stability of the country and its security." Others referenced the Arab Spring: "A lot of countries have changed since 2011 whether in their policies or religions, and as long as Kuwait is included within the Arab world, for sure it'll be affected like these counties." The proximity of Iran was also repeatedly referenced, "Security has changed in Kuwait because it is highly threatened by Iran… security is the highest priority to most of Kuwaitis due to Iran's interferences." Regional spillover of instability into Kuwait was seen as a serious security issue.

Within this spillover, ISIS was seen by respondents as a major security problem that put Kuwait at serious risk. One respondent commented on the constant worry ISIS inspired in Kuwait's society: "Since the introduction of Da'ash[168] [the] security of Kuwait was jeopardized as we constantly hear in the news that Kuwait is awaiting the entrance of Da'ash which is effecting security." Another respondent said he thought Kuwait would be attacked by ISIS as the terrorist group fought its way to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, adding that "ISIS probably will invade Kuwait if no one stops them!... The only way as a citizen I can feel safe and feel that my country is secure is when ISIS is stopped." Though partially an external threat, ISIS's capabilities in

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[168] ISIS

Kuwait was also perceived as an internal issue due to Kuwaitis funding extremism: "if it wasn't for the financial and moral support for terrorist organizations from many prominent political idols in Kuwait, ISIS wouldn't have the capability to arm itself and to attack others." The idea that the threat of ISIS continues was not only found in respondent fear that a second bombing would occur, but also that ISIS members were still in Kuwait. Respondents saw ISIS as an ongoing issue for Kuwait's security.

Ultimately, respondents who believed that security changed the most in Kuwait due to regional instability focused on recent security threats, including the 2015 mosque bombing, increase in crimes, regional change, and ISIS. Due to these threats, respondents noted that Kuwait underwent an increase in security, yet despite stricter measures, fear is pervasive throughout Kuwait's society.

Common Themes

Though each short response was written to address the specific aspect a respondent marked as having changed the most in Kuwait, several common themes arose across aspects. In other words, regardless of the aspect a respondent chose, many discussed the same topics. The most commonly shared themes included personal impact, the 2015 mosque bombing, merging categories together, immigrants, Sunnis vs Shiites, ISIS, and Iran.

Oftentimes, respondents wrote that they had chosen a certain aspect as having changed the most because that aspect impacted them personally. For example, several respondents mentioned that because they were afraid they chose security as the aspect that had changed the most. Or, because person was experienced in economics, that respondent reasoned economics had changed the most: "I in particular am dealing mostly with the economic faction of Kuwait and I based my choices on personal experience." Impact was often defined through how close

and personal recent change had been; for example, one respondent chose healthcare specifically because it was most personal: "because it affects you the most, the internal, rather than the external." Regardless of which aspect respondents marked, oftentimes respondents marked which aspect changed the most in their personal life, which for them, defined how Kuwait's society had changed.

When looking at responses in terms of specific occurrences mentioned, the 2015 mosque bombing was a common incident, but its impact was categorized in different aspects. Respondents marking religion, security, politics, and economy as having changed the most all mentioned the bombing in some way. At times, the bombing was seen as a result of religious extremism, a threat to security, instigating political impact, and hurting the economy. Some respondents brought many of these impacts together in their responses; a respondent who marked religion as having changed the most justified his answer by explaining,

> "the bombing of the Imam Sadiq Mosque is an attempt to demolish unity among Kuwaitis and residents [non-Kuwaitis]. Kuwait has become even stronger after that event and even some of the Salafis became very wary of their discourse and their attempts to call Shiites not true Muslims or attacks on Christians living in Kuwait. Even the Ministry of Islamic Affairs is monitoring its impact on the countries and has restructured the ministers in the ministry. Many have been set to retire because of their controversial way of leaving their units and discourse."

Though this respondent marked religion as having changed the most, his short answer shows overlap into politics and security. This demonstrates that not only did respondents interpret the 2015 mosque bombing in different aspects, but some noted the overlap between aspects within their answers.

This merging of aspects together was common throughout responses. Though this naturally applied to the few respondents who marked multiple aspects as having changed the most, even those who only chose one aspect as having changed the most included overlap of aspects. In every aspect –healthcare, other, economy, religion, politics, and security – respondents spoke about multiple categories. For example, one respondent who marked that politics had changed the most additionally discussed security and healthcare: "The recent events have impacted the politics in the country. There is an outburst in the number of immigrants coming to Kuwait as a result of the conflicts in the region. They have come as a result of wars. It has resulted in the implementation of laws to regulate services social and security-wise." Which aspect a respondent chose as having changed the most in Kuwait often indicated how that aspect was believed to have impacted other aspects.

Immigrant issues were also commonly mentioned. Respondents who answered politics, economy, or healthcare as their main aspect all mentioned specifically how there had been a recent influx of immigrants into Kuwait, and how that had resulted in impacts across society. Several respondents answering security explained how Syrians are no longer able to enter Kuwait. A few respondents expressed frustration with immigrants, blaming them for security issues and lack of services. For example, one respondent claimed, "As many refuges have come here the people are getting scared and more careful of who is out on the streets."

Several other topics spanned aspects, but not more than three different categories. For example, Sunni and Shiite relations were sometimes identified as a religious issue, and other times categorized as a political issue. Or, in one instance, the sects showing unity after the 2015 mosque bombing was categorized as "other." ISIS was an issue in religion, politics, and security. Iran was an issue in politics and security. Syrian refugee aid and treatment was mentioned in

politics, economy, and security. Each of these topics was commonly referenced, but only appeared in a few of the aspects.

Ultimately, topics spanning a wide variety of aspects included personal impact, the 2015 mosque bombing, merging categories together, and immigrants. The topics of Sunni and Shiite relations, ISIS, and Iran did recur in different aspects, but did not exhibit as large of a spread.

Interview Results

Methodology

Interviews only represent the AUK students who chose to participate in the study. As participation was voluntary and respondents were self-selected, the data collected holds the potential for sampling bias. Among the 458 survey respondents, 71 marked an item indicating they would be willing to meet for an interview (53 from English surveys and 18 from Arabic surveys).[169] These respondents were contacted by email, and eleven scheduled an interview. Interviews took place privately in the interviewer's personal office.[170] Ten interviews were individual, with the remaining interview being with a respondent and a friend who, though not having taken part in the survey, requested a simultaneous interview. This request was respected to allow both individuals to feel more comfortable.

The resulting twelve interviews are discussed below. Eleven of the interviewees were Kuwaiti, and one was a national of a non-GCC Arab country. Interviews were conducted in English, and took approximately one hour. For security reasons, interviews were neither audio nor video recorded, and therefore rely upon notes taken as the interview progressed.

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[169] See the appendix for the interview questions.

[170] During interviews, the office door was closed and the office window was uncovered, enabling the interview to not be overheard while also allowing passersby to see into the office, protecting reputations.

To protect respondent confidentiality, each interviewee was assigned a label, and is referenced by that label in the analysis. Each label corresponds to the aspect in Kuwait which the interviewee believed had changed the most. Four interviewees[171] (labeled R1-R4) said that religion changed the most, three[172] (labeled P1-P3) chose politics, and five[173] (labeled S1-S5) chose security.

For analysis, the interviews were categorized into shared themes. These themes were not pre-determined, but rather arose after all interviews had been completed and were assessed together. The following analyses presents and evaluates these interviews through their common themes of disillusionment with government bodies, relations between Sunnis and Shiites, regional relations, increase in security, fear, learning from friends, and a bleak future.

Disillusionment with Government Bodies

Disillusionment with government bodies in Kuwait was a common theme within interviews. This disillusionment fell into three categories: the targeting of opposition members, desire for more democracy, and frustration at corruption.

Several interviewees commented on specific cases of officials being targeted for being part of the opposition. One interviewee said he was following the case of Abdullah al-Barghash, a member of the National Assembly whose nationality, along with those of his family members, had recently been revoked (P1). The student was upset because he believed the nationality had been taken because al-Barghash was a member of the opposition and had been specifically targeted. Two other students discussed the case of Musallam al-Barrack, a member of the National Assembly who had spoken out vehemently in public against perceived corruption in the government. One student who discussed al-Barrack was happy he was arrested; the interviewee

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[171] One respondent was male, three were female.
[172] All three respondents were male.
[173] Three respondents were male, two were female.

believed al-Barrack was a bully in attacking the government and picking on the Prime Minister, and that his outspokenness was a sign that Kuwait was a mess (P2). The second student believed al-Barrack had been sent to jail too late to prevent his impact; already al-Barrack's words had vocalized a frustrated sentiment that still existed (P3). The student was displeased with the fact al-Barrack had been arrested; he wanted true freedom of speech in Kuwait that would allow al-Barrack's criticisms. However, the interviewee explained he was happy with politics now because it was not currently on the extreme right.

The desire for more freedoms in Kuwait, including more open freedom of speech, was prevalent in several interviews. One student said he believed that nobody is satisfied with the government (P1). He said that recently, he lost his freedom and democracy because now he does not vote due to the fact that he "can't vote for people who represent me" (P1). In addition, the interviewee believed that the recent change in the voting law, which limited Kuwaiti votes from four to one, was illegal. The interviewee believed that there is an arising desire in Kuwait for more freedom and democracy, but despite this desire, obtaining such goals is impossible because the majority of Kuwaitis are unable to make this happen. A second student agreed with this sentiment, claiming the current politics in Kuwait had created the worst situation in Kuwait's history (P2). He said that Kuwait needs to allow its youth to express their feelings, or one day they are going to explode. He explained that youth have nothing to do and are "running from reality" through a sudden rise in drug and alcohol use (P2).

Widespread issues with corruption in the government further aggravate youth's frustrations. One student explained that after 2000, the ministries in Kuwait became corrupt, impacting aspects of society ranging from education to healthcare (P2). *Wasta*[174] is needed for

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[174] *Wasta* is the Arabic word meaning connections, often through friends or family members, needed to get things done. The concept is similar to that of nepotism or insider help.

everything. For example, the interviewee explained people need to pay bribes in order to receive their necessary papers, and are bounced around it they do not pay the bribe. Embezzlement is also a major issue; the interviewee said that some houses in Kuwait cost over a million and a half dollars, and that the only way to get that money was to steal it or become a member of parliament. Due to this corruption, he believed government plans and projects for Kuwait have been impacted because the government does not care about Kuwaitis like it did before. In his frustration, the student said that Kuwait is not a democracy, because once his rights impact the benefits someone else can get, Kuwait's democracy stops. He does not blame the government members stealing the money, but rather the Kuwaiti people for allowing it to happen. Ultimately, he believed parliament should be closed due to this corruption (P2). He wanted only the royal family to rule.

Another student also said he trusted the Amir but not parliament (S2). He extended the security threat of parliament even further, explaining that there had been some cases of politicians funding terrorists. Not only was this a security worry, but it also made him second-guess everything the politicians say. In general, he does not trust politicians; he believes ministers and representatives bribe citizens to vote for them, and he wonders if they are only bribing voters so they can help terrorists. Another worry of the student was that parliamentary members have started leaving Kuwait to start businesses outside the country. He joked that he was fine with parliament members stealing money if they used it inside Kuwait, but that using it outside Kuwait was pushing it too far. Yet despite these complaints, the student said he still wanted to work in the government, but explained it would be hard to get such a position without *wasta*. Another student commented on how Kuwait's internal government issues opened it up to

external threat (S5). He wanted ministries to be more consistent, because he saw parliament's inability to stay together and its lack of checks and balances as putting the country at risk.

Overall, interviews expressed a general displeasure with current politics, mainly stemming from frustrations with the current system's inability to get things done. Opposition members that try to make headway are targeted and punished by being jailed or having their citizenships revoked, creating an atmosphere of hopelessness in youth populations who feel their voices cannot be heard. This building youth resentment towards politics is only exacerbated by perceived corruption within the government, which not only prevents new projects from being implemented but also undercuts already planned projects by embezzling their allocated funds. This laundering in turn creates security concerns, as it is not clear how these funds are being challenged and highlights the impotence of the current system. Corruption is even evident on the smaller scale, as *wasta* is necessary for even simple processing of papers, demonstrating that introducing new change in Kuwait's government depends upon old systems and connections. Ultimately, the youth interviewed exemplified the anger and frustration towards politics that they described as being pervasive in their generation.

Relations between Sunnis and Shiites

Almost every interviewee commented on the recent relationship between Sunnis and Shiites in Kuwait. Impressions of these relations varied; some saw intolerance, others saw acceptance, and still others believed that the sects had united after the mosque bombing.

Many students gave examples demonstrating the extreme intolerance Shiites suffer in Kuwaiti society. One Shiite interviewee said that before 2011, differentiation was not clear between sects in Kuwait, but that now people are extremely intolerant and blame Shiites for everything (R4). If one Shiite does something bad, people blame the entire group. For example,

she said that though only a quarter of Shiites come from Iran, Shiites are always accused of being Iranian. (Another student claimed problems between Sunnis and Shiites are clear because Iran controls the parliament (P2)). Intolerance also manifests in hiring bias in favor of Sunnis; the interviewee believed that only 10% of positions in the Ministry of the Interior are allowed to Shiites, and that this was only a small example of widespread corruption throughout Kuwait's hiring practices (R4). On a personal note, she explained that, "I don't feel like I'm safe here" (R4). The interviewee said she had no future in Kuwait because anywhere else was better; there is no opportunity for youth like her to do business or have a family, because sectarianism impacts all aspects of society: marriage, jobs, social circles, etc. Even YouTube comments devolve into Sunni slurs against Shiites, even if the video topic is unrelated. She does not understand why people are making religion so political, and believes that though people have tried to address the intolerance, nothing has changed.

Another student agreed that religion had become political, explaining that the majority of Sunnis and Shiites took sides in politics based purely on sect instead of on actual campaign points (P1). Frustrated, the interviewee explained this division was because Kuwait is stuck in its tribes and "stuck in tradition" (P1). He said that ultimately opposition failed because of this tribalism and sectarianism: "People don't understand that they have to be with freedom, with democracy, they don't have to be with their people" (P1). Another interviewee explained that divisions attributed to religion extended beyond politics; she said that if people disagree over something, even if that thing is not related to religion, people blame religious differences for their disagreement (R1). She believes that there is much religious contention in Kuwait; Sunnis do not even want Shiites to take their holy days of seclusion. Yet the interviewee also explained that she does not blame one sect or the other for the conflict, as "it's just not one side, it's always

both" who suffer and are at fault for disagreements (R1). A Shiite interviewee agreed, explaining that people still do not trust each other well between sects, as often too much religion is taken too far (P3). For example, he offered that one member of the National Assembly said strong words against Shiites, including that they were the "protector of the Safavid [Persian] Empire" and allies with Iran (P3).

However, the same student said he and his friends were not affected by this strong religious talk in politics, and only joke about it (P3). Another student also said that the surrounding intolerance had not impacted her own perceptions of Shiites (S5). Though she said people thought it was an "insult being Shiite" and her father was extremely intolerant towards Shiites, the student said this dislike was really out of hand and just a result of people being misinformed (S5). Another student also explained that though his father was intolerant, personally he was not concerned about the sects (S4). To demonstrate his lack of concern, he explained a time when he had helped drive a religious-looking man who needed a lift without thinking twice; only later when he told his parents and they reacted fearfully did he realize their perspective (but he would still do it again). However, he recognized there were repercussions after the mosque bombing, and said those not aligned with Sunni or Shiite sects are caught between the two sides. He said sectarian clashes in the government need to end, because the inability to work with each other shows instability, which makes Kuwait more vulnerable.

Others believed that after the 2015 mosque bombing, Sunni and Shiite sects became more united. One student said that all of Kuwait united after the bombing (S1). Another explained that people are not speaking out against religious groups anymore in mosques (P3). A third said that before the bombing, on social media Sunnis and Shiites were arguing with each other about religion, but that now there is more crackdown on social media networks (S2). Also, he

explained that new rules caused people to be arrested and interrogated for staring "fire" between sects (S2). The same student also mentioned the Amir visiting the bombing site right after the attack, despite people fearing for his safety, because he saw the people harmed as his children. Another student also mentioned the Amir's visit, also portraying it as having minimal security and being at the ruler's own risk (R2). He also explained that the funerals for those Shiites killed by the attack were held in the grand Sunni mosque, *Mosjid al-Kabir*, at the behest of the Amir. In this way, the student believed, "their death brought the country together" (R2). This forwarded the idea of unity. The student agreed that there was always tension before the bombing, but people would never say anything too drastic. He said that anti-Shiite sentiment was not addressed until after the bombing, which stopped people from speaking out. In addition, the student explained that newspaper attacks on Shiites are now not as strong. Another student said that from the youth perspective, the sects are united (S5). He also pointed out that the mosque bomber was Saudi, not Kuwaiti, implying that sectarian issues were external to Kuwait, not internal problems.

Overall, the relationship between Sunnis and Shiites was seen by interviewees from multiple perspectives. Though often serious intolerance against Shiites was acknowledged, this was overwhelmingly seen as negative. Students did not agree with the treatment of Shiites, and personally appeared to believe the sects should be treated equally. This tolerance demonstrates the claimed change in Kuwaiti society arising from the mosque bombing, which enabled the Amir to make a gesture towards unity, inspired new crackdown that addressed intolerance, and brought the two sects closer together.

Regional Relations

The impact of regional relations on Kuwait was also evident throughout interviews. Regional relations were discussed in terms of alliances, the Arab Spring, and foreign investment.

Alliances with key regional players in the Middle East were commented upon by several interviewees. One student said that publically, Kuwait needed to stick with certain allies (including NATO, the GCC, and Bashar al-Assad) but that privately Kuwait as a state is against some of these members in favor of its own interests (R2). The student said, in short, "we're pragmatic" (R2). An example of this pragmatism the interviewee offered was that when Saudi Arabia bombed Yemen, Kuwait had no choice but to side with Saudi Arabia. Another student also agreed that Kuwait constantly feels the need to follow Saudi Arabia (R4). However, she thought this following was a mistake, because she saw Saudi Arabia as dangerous due to its intolerance towards Shiites. Another student spoke about past regional events, including the Iran-Iraq War and Iraqi invasion, explaining that because Kuwait is a small country it therefore often gets "swallowed" in regional politics (S4).

The Arab Spring was one such regional event that seemed to heavily impact Kuwait. An interviewee explained that the Arab Spring had restarted the protest movement in Kuwait, which had been dead since the 1980s (P1). The same student said that the Amir payed citizens a thousand Kuwaiti dinar in 2011 specifically due to regional protests, as an attempt to quell Kuwaiti anger. Another student explained that the recent revolution in Egypt had produced a dichotomy: Muslim Brotherhood vs secularism (R3). She said that now, Kuwaitis who are anti-government are considered secular, while those who are pro-government are seen as religious. A second student interpreted the impact of the Arab Spring more broadly, explaining that the

movement linked actions and reactions throughout countries and reflected upon Kuwait (P2). He said that now in Kuwait, nobody trusts anyone else, not even friends.

As a result of this instability, the flow of money in Kuwait has changed. One student complained that she does not understand why Kuwait donates money abroad to other countries like Egypt when "our interests are not secured" in Kuwait (S5). Another explained that rich people in Kuwait invest money in other Arab states, as opposed to Kuwait (P2). A third gave reason for this external investment, saying that instability such as the 2015 mosque bombing impacts the financial sector (S3). Though he thought investment in Kuwait was not impacted, he explained the handful of bombings in Saudi Arabia did hurt its economy. He believed that investment followed security.

Overall, interviewees discussed Kuwait's regional role as being closely linked to those of larger regional players such as Saudi Arabia. Due to regional linkages, the Arab Spring impacted Kuwait by altering its investments and changing societal perceptions. Ultimately, Kuwait was portrayed as a recipient of regional change and having little choice but to react to fluctuations rather than cause them.

Increase in Security

The recent increase in Kuwait's security was noted by the majority of interviewees. Interviewees discussed how this increase in security had impacted mosques and other religious gatherings, introduced new measures, and limited speaking out. Students felt differently about the increased security in Kuwait, but generally agreed measures should not become too extreme.

Much of Kuwait's increased security, according to interviewees, focused on mosques. An interviewee explained that after the 2015 mosque bombing was when this increased security around mosques began (S1). He explained police were often in front of mosques. Another

student said that police closed certain mosques after the Iman's sermon and during prayer, so that nobody can enter when people are in the middle of worship (S3). He said he does not know why this increased security is applied to some mosques and not others; the specific mosque he discussed being closed was Sunni, therefore different from the targeted Shiite mosque in the 2015 bombing. However, more interviewees commented specifically on increased security in Shiite settings. One student said that though the Shiite practice of religious seclusion used to end at midnight, it is now closed two hours earlier (R1). In addition, she said that intense security checks were required to enter Husseinias.[175] Another student agreed, saying that there were patrol cars around Husseinias during Ashura[176] (S5). A third interviewee described the layers of intense security for his Husseinia: all the parking lots around the building were blocked and three checkpoints were required to get inside the gathering (R2). He said women could not enter the Husseinia to pray because they count not find enough female security personnel to check women for weapons. He also described that at a Shiite funeral he attended, there were both plainclothes and uniformed police. During the first ten days of Muharram,[177] he explained that a whole field operations unit was in front of one mosque, and that army personnel and helicopters patrolled major mosques. Another student said that during Muharram, there was a patrol car in front of every practicing Shiite house (S2). He also said that fuel stations near mosques are closed during the hour of prayer. These insights demonstrate how clear security changes are to people in Kuwait, and how substantially the government committed to securing mosques and Shiite places of worship.

Places of worship, however, are not the only recipients of increased security. When touching upon security changes, most students listed several locations where security increased.

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[175] Shiite places of gathering typically held during Muharram, one of the holiest months in Shiite Islam.
[176] one of the holiest days for Shiites
[177] One of the holiest months for Shiites

One interviewee listed that security had increased in airports, streets, and border checks (S2). He explained guarding against illegal imports at the airport has been stepped up; even members of the royal family have been caught with contraband. In addition, he added that though Kuwait used to allow anyone at the border in, now fingerprints and a picture of one's face is required. Another student also commented on the increased security at the border (S1). She said that guards used to allow big families to go through without searching them, but in a recent trip to Saudi Arabia her whole family was taken into a room while their car was searched. Though she saw this security as more efficient now, she did not notice any increase or decrease of crimes in Kuwait. Despite this increased security at the border, another student wanted better regulation of people entering and leaving Kuwait so that Kuwait could better identify threats, particularly those that Saudi Arabians might bring (S4).

Increased police security was also commonly noted. Yet a student whose family is involved in security said that though there was more police presence, this increase is a bit confusing (S2). He said that members of his family discuss specific instances that happen to them, such as being asked to work longer hours or guard a specific location, but they are not given a reason for these orders. Because they cannot question orders, they are required to act without understanding, which makes them wonder what is going on. Another interviewee also touched upon the aspect of the unknown in increased security; he said that the police have asked the populace to help protect the population, but have not specified how the population is supposed to enact this protection (S3). The police have simply sent messages encouraging people to call the police to report anything suspicious. Messaging from the government was also mentioned by another student, who said that during the summer when there was a campaign to take away all unlicensed guns, the government reinforced the reminder by texting people (S4).

The student said that phones were often used as a platform to inform the population. However, informing Kuwaitis of rules is different from informing them of why the new rules are put in place, and could contribute to the environment of confusion relating to current security measures.

Another student explained that mechanisms of increasing security included both internal and external measures (S3). He said that after the 2015 mosque bombing, the Ministry of the Interior and the police worked hard inside the country, while GCC cooperation outside Kuwait prevented the transfer of explosives across Gulf boarders. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia also worked together to locate and prosecute perpetrators of the bombing. Another student did not differentiate between national and international measures, but said that changes had created a general increased prevalence of security throughout Kuwait (S5).

However, though most interviewees listed several aspects of security that changed, some saw little change. For example, one student said that they only change in security he noticed was that his fingerprints were collected when he renewed his permit (P3). A second student specifically said that the only place security changed was Husseinias, and that it had not changed in malls, airports, or other areas (R2). However, these students stood out; most interviewees noted several significant changes in the security of Kuwait, particularly after the 2015 mosque bombing.

However, not all security increases relate to physical security presence; at times security changes impact freedom of speech. One interviewee described that new rules had been put in place around the end of 2014 which limited protests (P1). He said these new regulations included that protests now could not use microphones, have signs, or be held on the street. He said that because protests should not have these kind of limitation, he believes Kuwait has no true freedom: "That is why I don't believe in democracy" (P1). Another student commented on the

closing of the news outlet Al Watan, saying that though it was closed legally, he could not believe that there was a legal way to close a news format in Kuwait (P2). A third student described that people in Kuwait used to be able to speak freely, but that now investigations are more intense (S1). He explained that social media accounts are monitored by the government, and a slight detail in these accounts can lead to interrogation.

Students held a variety of opinions about these increases in security. Several praised the increases and wanted more measures taken. For example, one student said that he wants police stations in every mall, and five policemen in every level of every mall (S3). He said that change in security was necessary, and though his own personal security has not changed, people should be punished for attacking Kuwait because "everyone should care about their society" (S3). Another interviewee also liked police presence, saying that it made him feel comfortable (S4). He also added that he would rather have safety than convenience, as safety is a priority above all else. However, he explained he would not want security to increase to the magnitude of surveillance, because this would allow leeway for other things to happen in Kuwait. He also did not want a change in lifestyle to be sacrificed for security i.e. he did not want to be searched in malls. A third student responded similarly, also liking police but wanting to limit extreme security checks (S2). He said that the increase in security was necessary for Kuwait's national interest, and should continue because he is concerned with protecting his family. In addition, he wants police presence to increase: he wishes police would patrol neighborhoods regularly (he explained now neighborhood patrols are illegal unless the police are called). Yet though he does not want security increases to be "just a phase" he also does not want security to ramp up to the level of searching houses, as he worries about his sisters (S2).

Others were more wary of the increase in security. One student said that though an increase was necessary, the current security levels are too much (R1). She also felt that despite these overly high levels of security, people still feel unsafe, and "instability is almost everywhere" (R1). Another student was more strongly opposed to the increases in security, because she believed they were not necessary, but rather just part of a pattern where security in Kuwait was increasing anyway (as it had in 1993, 2003, and other years) (R2). As an example, she offered that the campaign to collect weapons happened before the 2015 mosque bombing, and therefore not a security increase in reaction to the terrorist attack. Other students were upset by increased security because of specific measures taken. One student said she did not like the increased police presence because it was only for show; the presence offered only a "failed sense of security" as policemen were corrupt (S5). She also is frightened by the presence of large U.S. military bases because she does not want foreign intervention in Kuwait; though she likes U.S. security she does not want it in Kuwait. However, she did want some aspects of security to increase, such as background checks and more stringent checks for GCC members entering Kuwait. Another student spoke about future security worries, including a proposal of a DNA database law which would collect the DNA of anyone processed in booking (S5). He also spoke of plans for every public street to have cameras. Due to corruption, he said these would be terrible ideas, because such collection offers too much potential for abuse; he said corruption was already a serious enough problem without this data. He believed that the current increase in security was too severe; he does not want these changes, and eventually wants lesser increases such as Husseinia checkpoints to disappear. According to this student Kuwait is "a tiny country, but it's safe" (R2).

Overall, Kuwait's recent increase in security measures impacted various aspects of society. Perhaps the most obvious place security manifests is around mosques and places of worship, but borders, streets, airports, and other locations are also impacted. Oftentimes these increases in security mean checkpoints and police presence, though why this occurs in specific locations as opposed to others was unknown by interviewees. In other cases, increased monitoring of vocal outlets such as social media, news sources, and protests has resulted in limiting these outlets in the name of security. Student opinions on these security increases varied, but together conveyed a sense of need for improving the quality of security measures and a fear of such measures becoming too extreme.

Fear

Fear played a major role in interviewee comments and discussions. Fears touched upon included the repercussions of the 2015 mosque bombing, ISIS, and change in attitude.

Perhaps part of the reason the 2015 mosque bombing was so terrifying for interviewees was that it was the realization of pre-existing fears. Two students mentioned that they had wondered about the risk of Kuwait being bombed very near to the time it was bombed. The first said that the fear struck him when he himself was visiting his own mosque, where he randomly wondered about the possibility that someone might blow up the mosque (S4). He felt, as he described it, an "awareness of imminent danger" (S4). That same day, the bombing occurred. Another student said that a few months before the attack, he was discussing the threat of an outsider bombing Kuwait with one of his professors (R2). These two insights suggest the mosque bombing, though it may have shocked people in Kuwait, did not necessarily surprise them, as the potential was already a worry.

The 2015 mosque bombing was an event that directly altered how many interviewees lived their lives. One student said that after the bombing, she stayed home for two weeks (R1). When she ventured out in public again, she was scared of large groups, driving cars, and going to malls, because she saw each as a potential location for a terrorist attack. A second student also talked about malls, saying that when he goes to them they make him feel like something might happen (S4). However, he said he is not as worried as his parents, which makes sense because parents are more protective and paranoid. His parents are so disturbed with recent events that they are contemplating moving out of Kuwait, which is a very radical move for them. The bags are packed; they're all ready. His father is generally critical of Kuwait's current sense of security, because he believes it is false as it is based on oil, which will eventually run out. The student himself said he did not want to have to worry about random terrorist attacks: "I just don't wanna die" (S4). Another student said that people in Kuwait were more afraid in general, particularly on Fridays (the day of worship in Islam) (S3).

The fear instilled by the mosque bombing also altered traditions in Kuwait. One student described that in one of Kuwait's majority Shiite towns, people used to distribute soup and handouts during the first days of Muharram (R2). However, this changed after the mosque bombing; 2015 was the first year that the streets were empty. In addition, during Ashura, his cousin was afraid of going to Husseinia because he thought the large crowd might be a target for a terrorist attack. And when his grandfather hosted a celebration during the Muharram, his family called a squad car to guard the home, and the hosts preformed security checks on guests. A second interviewee also described that caution is even taken with close friends (S1). She said all Kuwaitis are more careful nowadays, even with other Kuwaitis. She explained that the bombing was a "major hit" and shock not only because of the attack itself but also because the bombers

were able to get in, smuggle weapons, and involve Gulf citizens (S1). As a result, her family is still scared due to the bombing, and is more skeptical about giving away information or saying anything that might provoke someone else. She also discussed the discovery of the Hezbollah cell as terrifying, and found the campaign to collect weapons scary; she said citizens were using the weapons for self-defense, and when security is not available they will need their weapons. Yet despite these cautions taken and Kuwait's increases in security, her family is still fearful because there is a sense that the bombing "makes everything possible" (S1). Another student extended this fear to the extreme, saying that the mosque bombing was a potential sign of Kuwait crumbling (P2). He said that perhaps gangs and tribes will start fighting each other so there will be an internal war and regression in Kuwait.

The existence of ISIS, which claimed credit for the bombing, was also a worry of interviewees. One explained that he saw ISIS as more terrorizing than Al-Qaeda because ISIS has no limit (S3). He said that the organization does not care about anyone and its members "just want to make problems in the area" (S3). In addition, it also worried him that ISIS is so close in proximity to Kuwait, which is small and rich, therefore making it a good target. Another student explained that the fear of ISIS was so great that if someone had a good friend in Kuwait, and that friend suddenly said he was with ISIS, the person would immediately get rid of their friend because ISIS takes over people's minds (P2). A third student discussed rumors of ISIS supporters in Kuwait which claimed several bidun had been found out as supporters of ISIS (S2). These comments portray the threat of ISIS as both immediate and near.

Others saw attitude changes within Kuwaiti society as a more significant security threat. One student said that those in Kuwait who are not paying attention do not care about security issues, which though is not necessarily bad, often comes as a result of the "consumerist demon"

in Kuwait which causes "cognitive dissonance" (S4). Due to this dissonance, people rationalize any instabilities they notice and are passive; he fears they will not be ready to stand against a challenging force. According to the interviewee, this "age of decadence" is out of tune with the reality of Kuwait's insecurity.

However, most interviewees discussed attitudes in Kuwait changing directly in response to Kuwait's security threats, and that these new attitudes were having a negative impact on Kuwait. One student said that fear for security was more acute in older generations, such as that of her parents, because they are more paranoid (S5). But her own generation is more scared of religion than insecurity. However, she said that the security presence makes people question what is going on. Personally, she believes something will happen, and that ultimately Kuwait will be invaded and totally destroyed in the future, like during the occupation of Iraq. She said that insecurity is not just recent history, but that "we were born with this sense of insecurity" (S5). She carries around a tazer, her family has property outside Kuwait just in case, and many Kuwaitis are investing abroad, all in preparation for Kuwait's potential collapse. She described the paranoia as being to the extreme, as the need to leave is in the back of every Kuwaiti's mind. She explained that they felt that the bombing "is not the end of it" (S5). Yet despite this preparation, ultimately she believes that society still cannot face the reality of insecurity, because this is a truth it cannot handle. Another student also described struggling with paranoia (R1). She said that though she is no longer afraid of problems in the region, she now fears enabling the growing "plant" of fear inside her (R1). A third student agreed, saying that "nobody feels secure" in Kuwait (P2). He said that though Kuwaitis used to trust American and European decisions, recently the U.S. has been inconsistent in its position on the Middle East, (such as its relations

with Iran) and this is confusing. This fear could undermine the comforts of U.S. and international protection gained after the Gulf War.

Another interviewee described his uncertainty relating to internal security (S2). Though he personally appreciates the recent increase in security because it has taken care of "mistakes" and makes him feel safer, it also carries an aspect of unease (S2). Though security makes people care more about Kuwait, the fact that the security increase was so drastic is concerning because it makes him feel "unsure," as if he is not being told what is happening (S2). The randomness of security is also disconcerting; for example, the interviewee said that he sees military vehicles gathered but does not know why. Due to this uncertainty, the student said people might second-guess authority.

However, there is little opportunity to address such questioning of authority, as people now also fear the government, according to one interviewee (P1). The student said that though he used to protest, but does not anymore because the government started taking citizenships. In addition, he added that though the government pretends there are no laws against freedom of speech, everyone knows criticizing the Amir is not allowed. He added that the protest movement never gained momentum because people were fired from their jobs for protesting, and now the government's newest weapon against the people is revoking their nationalities. He said his decision to no longer attend protests was not due to his own fear, because he is not afraid to speak out, but due to the fact that he feels he cannot speak out because his parents' fears stop him. He wants to do something, but he can only watch. He also said that many Kuwaitis are happy they are not holding high positions in the government, because they believe the recent crackdown would have placed them in prison. Ultimately, this shows that how people think about the government has changed; now, people are unwilling to take action to express

themselves because security threats have allowed the government to increase security in the name of protecting Kuwait, which has stifled dissenting voices.

Attitude changes due to security threats have not only altered people's plans for the future and political engagement, but also had a deeper impact: attitudes on religion have changed. One student described the attitude changes on religion by explaining that "people are hesitant to believe in what they used to believe" (R3) in modern Kuwait. She also explained that currently, there is a discussion in school concerning how to teach religion; some want the current religious education in Kuwait's public schools to be more secular and focus on the history of religion, because they believe religion in education leads to extremism. The student described that it is not religion in Kuwait that has changed, but people's attitudes towards religion. She said that people in Kuwait are not as tolerant now, as "religion has been forced into politics" and therefore interpreted in a different way (R3). People see her in a black hijab, abaya, and no makeup, and assume she is closeminded. People think being religious and open-minded are mutually exclusive. Some even stare. Now in Kuwait many see speaking out about Islam as bad, and she had needed to "defend religious choices" and "explain myself" more often (R3). However, she said there has been no change in the ability to worship in Kuwait, only change in the perception and attitude towards doing so. Such as negative reaction is predictable, according to the interviewee, but not necessary. She believed that of course people's initial, "visceral" reaction towards religion is negative, but that people should not "indulge" in that negativity (R3).

Overall, recent fear throughout Kuwait's society has impacted that society in a variety of different ways. Part of the reason fear has increased is due to specific events, such as the 2015 mosque bombing or the rise of ISIS, both of which have terrified people and directly caused them to introduce worry into everyday life. Part of the reason the bombing was so impactful was

that it built upon both previous fears in the older generation of another invasion and modern fears within the new generation of terrorist attacks and ISIS. As a result, fear has caused people to question where they go, who they associate with, and how they associate. In response, Kuwait's own increase in security is also instilling fear; people do not know why security acts in the way it does, are frightened by the recent government crackdown, and are too afraid to speak out or question government actions. Many interviewees also described attitude changes in Kuwait, including increased paranoia, doubts, and questioning, directed even at close topics such as friends and religion. Interviewees demonstrated that fear in Kuwaiti society was pervasive, impacting both fundamentals of daily action and how society operates.

Learning from Friends

One of the interview questions asked where interviewees had learned the most about recent change in Kuwaiti society, and the majority of responses referenced friends and family. Other students referenced learning through social media.

Many respondents explained that they learned through their family and friends. One student said he mostly learned from listening to his uncles talking (R2). Another said she learned most from her father, as he knows a lot about how security in Kuwait changed (S1). A second respondent agreed that he learned from his family the most, as many of them worked in security (S2). Students also reported learning the most from friends. One interviewee said that she mostly leaned for talking to people in her personal, everyday experience (R3). Another student mentioned he learns from his friends the most because they are "always near me," he sees them daily, and they work in security (S3). A common thread shared throughout these responses was that those who were experienced in the sector students were concerned with were the people students learned from the most. Though this makes sense, it also alludes to the potential that

students only chose a specific aspect as having changed because they personally were exposed to it more than other aspects.

Others chose social media as the method they used the most to find out information about Kuwait. One student said that Twitter specifically is his main source of learning (P1). Another included Twitter in a list of social media he uses to update himself on his phone (P2). A third said that he used social media in general to learn about changes in Kuwait (S4). Though separate from direct conversations with friends and family, because one is often linked to friends and family via social media, choosing social media as instead of conversations with friends and family could be a potentially similar exposure.

Interviewees also listed other references for information that they used that were not their primary means of learning about change in Kuwait. Rarely did interviewees say that they only learned from one source; often a list of sources was offered. Other sources included newspapers, students in class, reading, gatherings, famous personalities in Kuwait, television, and daily observations.

Overall, when selecting the method used most when learning about change in Kuwait, interviewees typically explained how their personal relationships influenced their opinions. The influence of surrounding opinions both via networking through social media and in-person through family and friends had the largest impact on how youth perceived regional changes. Youth tended to be concerned with issues that concerned those around them.

Bleak Future

When asked about what Kuwait's future would be like, pessimism dominated interviewee responses. Future issues predicted included security worries, religious intolerance, and a lack of caring about Kuwait.

Many interviewees discussed that security increases and overall insecurity would continue into Kuwait's future. One student said that security would "definitely" keep increasing (R2). Another agreed, explaining that she believes security increases will only worsen (R1). However, she offered small hope, saying that just because certain events now predict something might happen, that does not mean the thing will happen. An additional interviewee offered that security would continue to increase in Kuwait only in proportion to global attacks (S1). He said that if attacks decrease, security will decrease, but if they increase security will increase. Others were far more pessimistic. A student said that insecurity in Kuwaiti society would be so pervasive that Kuwaiti children would get used to the lack of security within Kuwait (S4). Another agreed, predicting that insecurity will become the norm in Kuwait (S5).

Others believed religious issues would pervade into the future. One student said that inter-religious tensions will only get worse, but hoped they would get better (R1). Another student agreed with the idea that religious intolerance would continue, saying that sectarianism would not only continue as an issue in Kuwait but also as an issue throughout the entire region (R4). One student said that negativity towards religion in general will continue and become mainstream, as evidenced by the fact that people in Kuwait now attempt to challenge her belief in God (R3).

Frustration was also expressed towards the Kuwaiti people for giving up on Kuwait. One student said he was defeated, and that the government has won because the people have been cowed in politics (P1). He said Kuwaitis cannot create a revolution because they have everything, but at the same time people still think their situations can better and desire more. In his opinion, however, Kuwaitis first need to change themselves because they can change the government. The only way he believes change can occur is if a crisis happens because "wealthy

people… don't do revolution" (P1). A second student also complained about Kuwaitis believing they deserved everything without needing to act (P2). He said that most Kuwaitis are rich people who treat Kuwait like "a piece of cake" in that everyone wants a share of it without working to improve it (P2). He said that Kuwait used to lead the region, but now has fallen behind all the other states. He also discussed the revolution, explaining it was without objectives because people are only concerned with money and power. His frustration was exemplified in his belief that the "new generation will do whatever it takes to use you" (P2). He believed that it was clear people wanted to change but that there was no chance to change.

Overall, through the eyes of these youth interviewees, Kuwait's future looks bleak. It is seen through the lens of constantly increasing security without creating stability, and also includes significant religious intolerance. These physical and social threats will only worsen, and there is little opportunity to address them, as youth in Kuwait believe their own generation is too greedy and self-indulgent to demand significant change. Youth believe their own generation only contributes to the problem.

Conclusion

From the perspective of the university youth sampled at the American University of Kuwait, regional instability since 2011 has impacted Kuwait in an overwhelmingly negative manner. When discussing change in Kuwait, the majority of both survey and interview responses relating to all aspects –healthcare, politics, security, economy, and religion –were pessimistic. In this way, responses relating to which aspects of Kuwait recently changed generally indicated negative change.[178]

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[178] Change was sometimes seen as positive in regards to increasing security and bettering relations between Sunnis and Shiites, but the majority even in these categories saw change as negative.

Security and politics were aspects of society that AUK youth believed had changed the most. Concern for these sectors follows recent events in Kuwait; considering Kuwait's recent political turmoil and 2015 mosque bombing, it follows that students focused on security and politics as having changed the most. Yet though security and politics were key concerns of youth, all aspects were noted to have changed to some extent. Both overall and when compared in subgroups (Arabic surveys vs English surveys, Kuwaiti surveys vs non-Kuwaiti surveys, and various lengths of time lived in Kuwait compared to each other), on average respondents found that each aspect of Kuwait exhibited at least 1 point of change on a scale of 0-4. Ranked from least changed aspect to the most changed aspect, the aspects impacted were healthcare, other, economy, religion, politics, and security.

When examining the group of surveys as a whole, almost half of respondents chose security as having changed the most. The second most popular response was politics, which was chosen by about a third of respondents. On a point scale of 0-4, both security and politics were over half a point above any other aspect, designating that they were seen to have not only changed the most, but also changed to a far greater extent. What is particularly noteworthy about these averages is that security was found to have changed only 0.02 more than politics, despite almost half of respondents identifying security as changing the most while only a third saw politics as changing the most. This suggests that though the extent to which politics and security changed was seen as nearly the same, security garnered more attention as changing the most overall.

Because the spread of years was heavily weighted towards survey respondents who lived in Kuwait over sixteen years, data is limited regarding the impact length of time lived in Kuwait had on answers. But considering the data collected, length of time lived in Kuwait did not appear

to result in large differences in choosing which aspect changed the most or the extent to which aspects changed.

Differences in ranking between English and Arabic surveys show a difference in emphasis between politics and security. A third of Arabic surveys found that politics had changed the most, with security 2% behind, while almost half of English surveys found that security had changed the most, with politics almost 20% behind. Outside of politics and security, responses were within five percentage points or less of each other. Arabic surveys found that healthcare and politics had changed to a larger extent than English surveys. Change in the other categories was found to be relatively similar; security was so close between English and Arabic surveys that there was only a 0.01 point difference between averages. The averages demonstrate that the two types of surveys agreed far more closely on security than the percentages suggest. Arabic surveys found that regional instability had a larger impact on Kuwait across all aspects.

Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti survey responses were generally similar. The largest differences in averages were between politics and religion. Kuwaitis found that regional instability had a larger impact on Kuwait across all aspects. When comparing Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis, nationality was not a significant predictor of choosing healthcare, politics, security, religion, or other as having changed the most in Kuwait society. However, non-Kuwaitis were statistically significantly more likely than Kuwaitis to have chosen the economy as having changed the most. In other words, non-Kuwaiti respondents were associated with choosing the economy as having changed the most in Kuwait society.

Short survey responses explaining the change seen in all aspects of society demonstrated that youth were unhappy with the sectors of society they discussed. Change meant negative change. Respondents who believed healthcare changed the most in Kuwait due to regional

instability thought that the quality and availability of healthcare was wanting in Kuwait. Respondents who did not choose any of the proffered aspects interpreted the "other" category in a variety of manners, the most popular of which was that none of the aspects listed had changed in Kuwait due to regional instability. Respondents who believed the economy changed the most focused on the drop in oil prices, inflation, and problems arising from international connections. Respondents who believed that religion changed the most in Kuwait due to regional instability discussed the impacts of extremism, which included negativity between Sunnis and Shiites, unity between Sunnis and Shiites, the spread of violence stemming from extremism, and associating religion with extremism which caused a loss of faith. Respondents who believed that politics changed the most discussed political problems and resulting frustrations, the divide between Sunnis and Shiites, spillover from regional politics, difficult new laws and regulations, and harsher immigrant treatment. Yet despite this negative attitude concerning politics, respondents believed people in Kuwait were also becoming more politically aware. Respondents who believed that security changed the most in Kuwait due to regional instability focused on recent security threats, including the 2015 mosque bombing, increase in crimes, regional change, and ISIS. Due to these threats, respondents noted that Kuwait underwent an increase in security, yet despite stricter measures, fear is pervasive throughout Kuwait's society.

Again, however, this study focused on the AUK university population; significant further research is needed in order to gain a broader and more in-depth view of youth opinion in Kuwait. Future studies could address the categories of age, gender, citizenship, year of study, major, countries previously lived in, and type of high school (private vs public) attended. Various youth populations could also be sampled, including different universities, youth organizations, and middle schools. Ideally, a nation-wide census would be used.

Yet when looking at the AUK youth responses, it is clear that they are dominated by negativity. Though some negativity is not surprising, as students were questioned about "instability" which is rarely viewed positively, the consistent negativity across categories demonstrates widespread pessimism. Specific changes students named as coming from regional instability, such as new laws or increases in security, had the potential to be seen positively, but rather were seen as negative by the majority. Common interview themes –disillusionment with government bodies, relations between Sunnis and Shiites, regional relations, increase in security, fear, learning from friends, and a bleak future –reinforce this negativity.

Interviews expressed a general displeasure with current politics, mainly stemming from frustrations with the current system's inability to get things done. Opposition members that try to make headway are targeted and punished by being jailed or having their citizenships revoked, creating an atmosphere of hopelessness in youth populations who feel their voices cannot be heard. This building youth resentment towards politics is only exacerbated by perceived corruption within the government, which not only prevents new projects from being implemented but also undercuts already planned projects by embezzling their allocated funds. This laundering in turn creates security concerns, as it is not clear how these funds are being challenged and highlights the impotence of the current system. Corruption is even evident on the smaller scale, as *wasta* is necessary for even simple processing of papers, demonstrating that introducing new change in Kuwait's government depends upon old systems and connections. Ultimately, the youth interviewed exemplified the anger and frustration towards politics that they described as being pervasive in their generation.

The relationship between Sunnis and Shiites was seen by interviewees from multiple perspectives. Though often serious intolerance against Shiites was acknowledged, this was

overwhelmingly seen as negative. Students did not agree with the treatment of Shiites, and personally appeared to believe the sects should be treated equally. This tolerance demonstrates the claimed change in Kuwaiti society arising from the mosque bombing, which enabled the Amir to make a gesture towards unity, inspired new crackdown that addressed intolerance, and brought the two sects closer together.

Interviewees discussed Kuwait's regional role as being closely linked to those of larger regional players such as Saudi Arabia. Due to regional linkages, the Arab Spring impacted Kuwait by altering its investments and changing societal perceptions. Ultimately, Kuwait was portrayed as a recipient of regional change and having little choice but to react to fluctuations rather than cause them.

Kuwait's recent increase in security measures were seen by interviewees to have impacted various aspects of society. Perhaps the most obvious place security manifests is around mosques and places of worship, but borders, streets, airports, and other locations are also impacted. Oftentimes these increases in security mean checkpoints and police presence, though why this occurs in specific locations as opposed to others was unknown by interviewees. In other cases, increased monitoring of vocal outlets such as social media, news sources, and protests has resulted in limiting these outlets in the name of security. Student opinions on these security increases varied, but together conveyed a sense of need for improving the quality of security measures and a fear of such measures becoming too extreme.

Interviewees expressed that recent fear throughout Kuwait's society has impacted that society in a variety of different ways. Part of the reason fear has increased is due to specific events, such as the 2015 mosque bombing or the rise of ISIS, both of which have terrified people and directly caused them to introduce worry into everyday life. Part of the reason the bombing

was so impactful was that it built upon both previous fears in the older generation of another invasion and modern fears within the new generation of terrorist attacks and ISIS. As a result, fear has caused people to question where they go, who they associate with, and how they associate. In response, Kuwait's own increase in security is also instilling fear; people do not know why security acts in the way it does, are frightened by the recent government crackdown, and are too afraid to speak out or question government actions. Many interviewees also described attitude changes in Kuwait, including increased paranoia, doubts, and questioning, directed even at close topics such as friends and religion. Interviewees demonstrated that fear in Kuwaiti society was pervasive, impacting both fundamentals of daily action and how society operates.

When selecting the method used most when learning about change in Kuwait, interviewees typically explained how their personal relationships influenced their opinions. The influence of surrounding opinions both via networking through social media and in-person through family and friends had the largest impact on how youth perceived regional changes. Youth tended to be concerned with issues that concerned those around them.

Through the eyes of these youth interviewees, Kuwait's future looks bleak. It is seen through the lens of constantly increasing security without creating stability, and also includes significant religious intolerance. These physical and social threats will only worsen, and there is little opportunity to address them, as youth in Kuwait believe their own generation is too greedy and self-indulgent to demand significant change. Youth believe their own generation only contributes to the problem.

Though such overwhelming negativity, especially as it is found in youth, is disappointing for the future of Kuwait, several factors offer that it may be expected. Respondents and

interviewees often described the 80s in Kuwait through terms such as, "I preferred those days… I liked that time… that was a better time…" despite they themselves not yet being born at that time. This phrasing may show the permeating nature of parental thoughts and opinions, and the internalization of these viewpoints. Kuwait is known to have a significant number of inhabitants suffering from PTSD or related mental distress, which can create similar distress in subsequent generations.[179] Fears of another invasion, like the one of Iraq in 1990, were clear in interview responses and highlighted this potential. Fears of the older generation could also contribute to the youth's idea of society's decline. If the present is worse, that means the past was better, perhaps explaining the poignant idea of the "golden days" as a theme in responses. In addition, such dissatisfaction may be partially attributed to the disillusionment many modern youth around the world show when growing up.[180]

Perhaps the most disheartening aspect of this disillusionment is the resulting passivity youth expressed. It was clear that respondents believed they were being effected, rather than creating impact of their own. In other words, youth saw change as something that happened to them, not for them. This research suggests that it is possible youth in Kuwait see change in a bleak way: change is not an impact of youth, but rather change is an impact on youth. This fosters the idea of helplessness and that Kuwait's perceived current and future role in the Middle East is not to impact others, but rather to struggle amidst a sea of impacts that alter all aspects of its society.

Yet, as one interviewee said, just because certain events predict something might happen does not mean it will happen (R1). Despite the expectations of the AUK professors I discussed

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[179] Al-Turkait and Ohaeri, "Psychopathological status, behavior problems, and family adjustment of Kuwaiti children whose fathers were involved in the first gulf war"; Nader et al., "A preliminary study of PTSD and grief among the children of Kuwait following the Gulf crisis."

[180] Mendes, "In U.S., Optimism about Future for Youth Reaches All-Time Low"; Gallup, "Outlook for the Future of Europe's Younger Generation."

my research with before starting, Kuwait's youth are aware of the changes around them. And they have various concerns. Youth recognize that healthcare needs to improve, violent extremism hurts society, bias based on sect is wrong, change in politics is needed, and fear throughout society is an issue. Amidst these concerns, youth exhibit increasing political awareness and seem to have a high level of influence and interconnectedness with each other. Altogether, these points culminate in the finding that youth are well aware of the fact that their future needs to change. The question, then, is how to make them feel that they are empowered to change Kuwait's future.

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Appendix

AUK Student Survey in English

This brief survey is part of my year-long research project to assess student opinions of how recent regional instability in the Middle East (war in Iraq, refugee flows, Arab Spring, war in Syria, rise of Da'ash, etc.) have affected Kuwait. Your responses will be anonymous and recorded for statistical research purposes only. The resulting information will be published in an academic journal and presented in an academic seminar.

This survey will take approximately 6 minutes. Please answer the survey independently, so that the opinions you express are your own opinions.

Thank you for your participation! ☺

Since 2011, has regional instability affected healthcare in Kuwait?

        Not at all   Very little   Somewhat   A lot   Extremely

Since 2011, has regional instability affected the politics of Kuwait?

        Not at all   Very little   Somewhat   A lot   Extremely

Since 2011, has regional instability affected the security of Kuwait?

        Not at all   Very little   Somewhat   A lot   Extremely

Since 2011, has regional instability affected the economy of Kuwait?

        Not at all   Very little   Somewhat   A lot   Extremely

Since 2011, has regional instability affected religion in Kuwait?

        Not at all   Very little   Somewhat   A lot   Extremely

Since 2011, which aspect of Kuwait has changed the most due to regional instability?

        health   politics   security   economy   religion   other

Please explain. (Why did you choose the aspect in #6 above?)

How many years have you lived in Kuwait?

Are you a Kuwaiti citizen?

        No   Yes

Would you be interested in being interviewed about the effects of regional instability on Kuwait?
(your responses will still be anonymous)

     No   Yes

If yes, please provide your email here:

Thank you! If you have any additional comments, please provide them here:

AUK Student Survey in Arabic

هذا الاستطلاع للرأي هو جزء صغير من بحثي الذي استغرق سنة و لا زال في طور التكوين لتقييم آراء الطلاب عن الأزمات

الأخيرة في منطقة الشرق الأوسط (الحرب في العراق وانتقال اللاجئين و الربيع العربي والحرب في سوريا و تنظيم داعش

إلى آخرة) وكيف اثرت هذه الاحداث المذكورة على الاحوال السياسية والاجتماعية في الكويت. ستبقى الإجابات سرية

وتسجيلها سيتم لأغراض البحوث الإحصائية فقط. سوف تنشر المعلومات الناتجة من الإستطلاع في مجلة أكاديمية و تقدم في

ندوة أكاديمية ايضا.

هذا الاستطلاع للرأي يستغرف حوالي 6 دقائق. الرجاء الإجابة على الأسئلة بانفراد للتعبير عن الآراء بشكل شخصي و ليس

جماعي.

أشكركم على مشاركتكم! ☺

منذ عام 2011 هل أثرت الازمات في المنطقة على الرعاية الصحية في الكويت؟

كثيراً جدا   كثيراً   بعض   قليلاً جدا   لا ابدا

منذ عام 2011 هل أثرت الازمات في المنطقة على السياسة العامة من الكويت؟

كثيراً جدا   كثيراً   بعض   قليلاً جدا   لا ابدا

منذ عام 2011 هل أثرت الازمات في المنطقة على أمن الكويت؟

كثيراً جدا   كثيراً   بعض   قليلاً جدا   لا ابدا

منذ عام 2011 هل أثرت الازمات في المنطقة على اقتصاد الكويت؟

كثيراً جدا   كثيراً   بعض   قليلاً جدا   لا ابدا

منذ عام 2011 هل أثرت الازمات في المنطقة على الدين في الكويت؟

كثيراً جدا   كثيراً   بعض   قليلاً جدا   لا ابدا

منذ عام 2011، ما هو المجال الاكثر تاثرا في الكويت من ازمات المنطقة؟

مجال آخر   الدين   الأمن   الاقتصاد   السياسة   الرعاية الصحية

7) إشرح من فضلك. (لماذا اخترت الإجابة في رقم 6 أعلاه)؟

8)منذ كم سنة سكنت في الكويت؟

9) هل أنت كويتي الجنسية؟

نعم   لا

10) هل أنت مهتم في المشاركة في مقابلة حول آثار الازمات في المنطقة على الكويت؟ (ردودكم ستظل مجهولة)

نعم   لا

إذا كانت إجابتك نعم، فالرجاء كتابة بريدك الإلكتروني هنا:

شكرا! إذا كان لديك أي تعليقات إضافية، يرجى كتابتها هنا:

Interview Questions

1. Could you explain in more detail why you chose X[181] as having changed the most due to regional instability since 2011?

2. Did this impact Kuwaiti society as a whole?

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[181] Whatever aspect they chose for #6 in the survey

3. How/why not?

4. How has X changed for you on a personal level?

5. Do you think change in X was necessary?

6. What are changes you would be happy to see/afraid of seeing in this sector now?

7. What do you think this change means for the future?

8. How did you learn that X was changing Kuwait?

9. Do you have anything else to add?

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