The Arab Gulf States
Institute in Washington

Building bridges of understanding

Gulf Societies in Transition:
National Identity and National Projects in the Arab Gulf States

Workshop Report

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June 10, 2016

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The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington (AGSIW), established in 2014, is an independent, non-profit institution dedicated to increasing the understanding and appreciation of the social, economic, and political diversity of the Arab Gulf states. Through expert research, analysis, exchanges, and public discussion, the institute seeks to encourage thoughtful debate and inform decision makers shaping U.S. policy regarding this critical geo-strategic region.

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About This Report

This report was compiled by Kristin Smith Diwan with assistance from Samyah Alfoory capturing the discussion from the AGSIW workshop "National Identity and National Projects in the Arab Gulf States" held on February 29, 2016. The workshop was the first in the series *Gulf Societies in Transition*. It brought together practitioners and scholars with representation from all of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries to discuss the strengthening of national identity in the Arab Gulf states and its impact on Gulf societies and politics.

The workshop was held under the Chatham House Rule and the views expressed here are those voiced by the participants. Every effort has been made to provide a fair representation of the discussion, although it may not fully represent individual opinions and analysis. The following is intended as a reminder for those who took part in the workshop, and as a summary of the proceedings for those who did not.

Kristin Smith Diwan is a senior resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. She works in both comparative politics and international relations and specializes in Arab and Islamist politics. Her current projects concern Gulf political economy, the politics of sectarianism, generational change, and the evolution of Islamism in the GCC. Her analyses of Gulf affairs have appeared in many publications, among them Geopolitics, Middle East Report, Financial Times, Foreign Affairs, and Foreign Policy. Diwan received her PhD in political science from Harvard University, and holds an MA in international affairs from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS).

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Welcome Letter

Kristin Smith Diwan, AGSIW Senior Resident Scholar

Dear Colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to present the final report of the workshop, "National Identity and National Projects in the Arab Gulf States."

Hosted at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington (AGSIW) on February 29, 2016, this workshop brought together practitioners and scholars with representation from all of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries to discuss the strengthening of national identity in the Arab Gulf states and its impact on Gulf societies and politics. Workshop sessions focused on the conditions driving projects of national identity, the state-adopted measures to promote nationalism, as well as the trans- and sub-national identities competing with the nation.

This workshop represents the first in a series at AGSIW on *Gulf Societies in Transition*. The expansion of the media and information landscape and the deepening of wealth and education within society have yielded a more confident and engaged Gulf public. Today's Gulf societies, nurtured by state investments and led by a young networked generation, exhibit a new dynamism in many fields: entrepreneurship, volunteerism, urban development, and the arts. *Gulf Societies in Transition* provides a forum for discussing these myriad changes and exploring their implications for politics and international relations. It also provides an opportunity to engage and learn from prominent and thoughtful voices from across the GCC.

The workshop was held under the Chatham House rule, allowing for an open and critical discussion of national identity formation. The diversity in viewpoints, nationalities, and experiences of the participants contributed to a nuanced examination of the complex building blocks of national identity through topics as varied as national days, museums, military interventions, and cuisine. Over the course of the day it became clear that what distinguishes the "new nationalism" from what came before it is its participatory nature, making the subject a very apt inaugural session for a series on Gulf societies.

I hope you find this report illuminating, and that it contributes to your understanding of the evolving nature of Gulf states and the people that inhabit them.

Sincerely,

Kristin Smith Diwan
Senior Resident Scholar, Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington

Executive Summary

In recent years, Gulf states have undertaken steps to promote national identity and inculcate a stronger sense of national belonging that ties citizens to the state and its leadership. This represents a shift in policy for these Arab monarchies that had previously viewed national mobilization as more of a threat than an asset. It also represents a marked change in Gulf societies that have been organized politically on the basis of tribe, or religious sect, and mobilized along Islamic and Arab identity.

A complex nexus of economic, political, and geopolitical forces is driving these projects of national identity, which vary in scope and content across the Gulf. The mechanisms that shape this emerging identity are varied and include national days, national dialogues, and national service; foreign policy and foreign wars; and heritage projects, arts, museums, and archives. Social dynamics and social communications, such as social media, also interact to reinforce or reimagine the emerging nationalism.

Key points that emerged from the workshop include:

- Gulf states are promoting a "new nationalism" in response to a confluence of factors: demographic pressures; fiscal challenges; the rising threat of transnational ideologies and movements; and regional unrest.

- The high percentage of expatriates and foreign workers relative to Gulf nationals is generating cultural anxieties and engendering a defensive nativism. Gulf states pursuing strategies of global integration are redefining nationalism to embrace cultural pluralism and global engagement in a way that supports their economic and political ambitions.

- Gulf interventions in civil wars in Yemen, Libya, and Syria both reflect national ambition and rally nationalist sentiment. But national identity may also be strengthened by refusal to intervene, as seen in the case of Oman.

- The new nationalism is distinguished by its participatory nature, mobilizing citizens in support of the country and its leadership. Yet it remains unclear whether this mobilization will be accompanied by greater political representation, although many workshop participants thought this would be necessary.

- Individual citizens may differ in the degree to which they find a place within the new nationalisms, which vary across Gulf states in their ideational content and degree of inclusivity:

    - Identity in the Gulf is shaped by "tribal" modes of governance, where power and wealth are distributed, in part, on the basis of kinship. Yet, ironically, this system has resulted in the relative marginalization of bedouin, or more recently settled populations.

    - Islamic identity and political mobilization may compete with national identity or augment state power, depending on specific state policies as well as regional and global political context. Today Gulf states are actively intervening in the Islamic political field, sometimes in contradictory ways, to orchestrate support for national projects or to ameliorate the deleterious impact on women and minorities.

- Some of the smaller Gulf states have promoted women into positions of authority, making women's advancement part of the national project. Yet restrictive marriage and citizenship laws continue to place the burden of national preservation on women.

Introduction

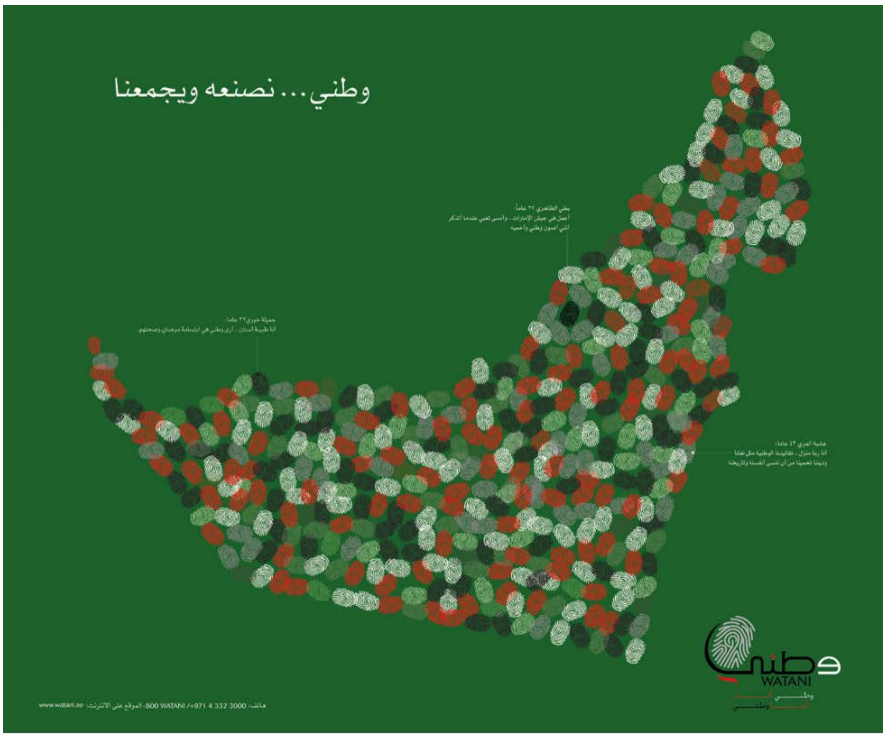
The past five years have been momentous for the Arab Gulf states; full of promise, and now more than ever, challenges. The regional insecurity, characterized by civil wars and shifting Western involvement in the region, has invited more independent and assertive foreign policies on the part of Gulf states. Political competition within the Gulf Cooperation Council and between regional heavyweights Saudi Arabia and Iran has contributed to the empowerment of transnational movements: especially Islamist movements, but also tribes. The revolution in information technology, especially social media, has greatly expanded information sharing and political mobilization in ways that are difficult for states to control. Economic challenges, driven by sharply falling oil prices and growing populations, are undermining the social contract based on welfare benefits. And a new generation is eager to play a more substantial role in building its countries.

In light of all of these challenges, the Arab Gulf states have been eager to explore new means for strengthening the connection between Gulf citizens and the nation as represented by its political leadership. This workshop will allow for a closer examination of this "new nationalism": the factors contributing to it, the means of constructing it, an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses, and its competitors.

The Economic, Political, and Geopolitical Factors

The opening session of the workshop set out some general themes for discussion of Gulf nationalism, highlighting key economic, political, and geopolitical factors animating the new drive toward national identity projects. The demographic imbalances generated by labor policies; the prevalence of both trans-and sub-national identities and their perceived threat to states in the GCC; and the impact of Gulf state involvement in regional wars were important touchstones of the discussion.

One participant shared the experiences of the United Arab Emirates, which has probably been the most intentional in reformulating the idea of national belonging. The UAE is contending with two existential challenges: demographic risks linked with the extremely high percentage of expatriates and foreign workers in the country and security risks linked to the strengthening of transnational identities – often sectarian – that compete with national belonging. Both of these challenges are inherent to the overall strategic positioning of the UAE as an international transport hub and global city situated between Europe and Asia. This creates a dynamic in which Emirati nationals fear loss of cultural heritage and status, and respond by emphasizing their exclusivity and amplifying their sense of entitlement. The openness of borders and fragmentation of society due to the lack of a unifying identity can generate strong subnational identities as well as transnational networks linked by sect or ideology. This is a source of insecurity.



United Arab Emirates "Watani" thumbprint campaign

To address these risks and challenges, nonstate institutions developed a National Identity Program – *Watani* (my nation) – in an effort to strengthen national belonging and to build an identity more inclusive of all residents. The projects launched by Watani worked to reconceptualize national identity through shared *values* rather than shared language, religion, or dress, which are exclusive to Emirati citizens. They also tried to shift the idea of national identity from a retrospective approach grounded in folklore and lineage, to a more forward-looking identity that emphasizes what people do: their active engagement with and for the nation. These efforts encourage Emirati youth, especially, to embrace the great potential inherent in globalization and cultural pluralism.

Some projects that have been implemented to achieve this shift in outlook include a thumbprint campaign and Flag Day, both of which stress an individual's unique contributions to the nation

over lineage; comic books that show a hero from the past who uses his values to navigate modern urban life; and petition campaigns that teach citizens to advocate international causes through legitimate and peaceful means.

Workshop attendees questioned the credibility of generating shared values among all Emirati residents when enormous economic benefits attend exclusively to Emirati citizens. There were also questions about the varying commitment to this national project and levels of participation of different governmental entities within the various emirates and at the federal level.

Contributors to the discussion noted the effects of geopolitics – and especially wars – on the strengthening of national identity. The Saudi participation in the war in Yemen has brought urgency to questions of nationalism and national identity in the kingdom. The Saudi leadership has presented the Yemen intervention as a war of necessity, not choice. The atmosphere of patriotism is tangible as the state has rallied support for the war and encouraged demonstrations of support for the troops. Citizens have used social media campaigns to "send your message to the troops" and to honor those making the "ultimate sacrifice." The war is thus reshaping the state's expectation of its citizens as now they are called upon to fight for the country, and if not, to express support for the troops. In light of these new expectations, Saudis are now asking what it means to be a Saudi citizen and questioning the traditional definition of citizenship.

Contributors to the discussion noted the effects of geopolitics – and especially wars – on the strengthening of national identity.

At the same time, the national identity is shaped by Saudi Arabia's mobilization of a broader Arab and Islamic coalition. There is self-affirmation in Saudi Arabia not being content to follow; this leadership role is central to the evolving Saudi identity. There is also anxiety as to Saudi Arabia's entanglement in regional unrest and any post-conflict arrangement or nation building. Yet on the whole national identity and authority is enhanced by the contrast between Saudi determination and the collapse of national cohesion in Yemen and Syria.

This discussion provided a fascinating contrast in the experience of Oman, where the decision to *forego* participation in the Yemen war has worked to rally Omanis behind the nation. One participant outlined the basis of Omani exceptionalism, grounded in a national narrative that stresses the early and peaceful conversion to Islam and praise from the Prophet Muhammad, as well as its long history (in a Gulf context) of independence and empire.

The idea of passivism and tri-sectarian harmony among Sunni, Shia, and Ibadhi sects is central to this evolving national consciousness. Omanis have been urged to cherish these elements that have helped them to avoid domestic turmoil and not to take that stability for granted. This narrative is not all state directed, but has been absorbed and increasingly promoted by Omani citizens. This has worked to insulate Oman from regional sectarian tensions between Shia and Sunni. Indeed, it was argued that the theme and practice of tri-sectarian harmony has strengthened *because* of the dire regional situation.

This position has put the Omani state and society at odds with trends across the Gulf, where the Saudi-led Yemen war has strengthened Gulf identity. While cultural ties with other Gulf states will remain, Oman does not want a part in Gulf military actions and, it was argued, does

not see its political future with the GCC. Increasingly Oman looks at the GCC as Britain looks at the European Union. One participant characterized the Omani view as: "We have taken as much as we can get from the Gulf; we don't need any more."

Indeed, today Gulf states are often seen as a threat to Omani security and identity. Oman genuinely fears incitement and punishment from Saudi Arabia for its political stance. Omanis on social media have been forced to pushback against Gulf detractors. And on the cultural level, Omanis resent the perceived Emirati appropriation of Omani cuisine and traditions as its own, and work to emphasize their difference from their wealthy and powerful neighbor to the north.

Economic austerity is raising different questions about the role of national identity and citizenship across the Gulf. In Saudi Arabia there has been a popular backlash against the lifting of subsidies from low- and middle-class citizens, and emerging public commentary on government corruption. In 2013 the Twitter hashtag *#the salary doesn't meet the needs* went viral, demonstrating the anxiety over the decline in state support. Workshop participants voiced their expectation that the political role of Saudis will have to increase as greater attention is paid to issues of accountability. Most agreed that political culture in the kingdom is changing, albeit slowly. One participant stressed the importance of empowering institutions to achieve accountability, dismissing the role of the appointed Shura Council as "a venue to advance careers." Others thought the Shura Council played an important role in bringing issues to public attention, but agreed that it needs "more teeth."

Economic austerity is raising different questions about the role of national identity and citizenship across the Gulf.

Overall, there was agreement that the social contract, and with it national identity, is in a state of flux, and that regional wars abroad and steps toward greater privatization and cutbacks in entitlements at home will profoundly affect Saudi and other Gulf societies.

Institutions and Mechanisms for Constructing National Identity

The second session explored how state-led development and social and cultural institutions are shaping the evolution of national identity in the Gulf states. Participants drew upon examples of urban expansion in the UAE, museums in Qatar, and the King Abdullah Center for National Dialogue in Saudi Arabia to inform the broader discussion about how national identity is evolving over time and being intentionally shaped by states.

The radical spatial transformation of Gulf states in a period of rapid oil-based urbanization made possible the idea of a unified national space and provided a formative collective experience that unites Gulf citizens of different backgrounds. Early signs of collective political consciousness in the UAE in the form of political petitions were focused on urban dilemmas – transportation, housing – as well as on demands for more equitable distribution across the various emirates. It was only after these economic transformations that visible signs of national imagination could be seen: in national dress and other forms of differentiation from foreigners who flooded the states to construct the new urban environment. Other

infrastructure projects such as national universities brought people from different emirates together for the first time, and united them in standing against the foreign – mostly Egyptian – professors.

The Emirati leadership also undertook more intentional steps to promote national identity in top-down projects. The veneration of the founder, Sheikh Zayed al-Nahyan, established the predominance of Abu Dhabi and tribal heritage in the national imagination, despite the diversity of the Emirati population. Over time formal, controlled national celebrations – national days, heritage villages – became more interactive and uncontrolled. UAE National Day parades, which were military marches in the 1970s, have become enormous and chaotic parades of residents in cars decorated with the images of sheikhs, the colors of the Emirati flag, and sometimes the flags of other residents' countries of origin. Heritage villages, which used to be directed at foreigners and display static objects representing pre-oil life, have become participatory heritage festivals, popular with Emiratis.

National Day parade in Doha, Qatar

The invocation of Sheikh Zayed sparked a broader discussion about the implications of national identity being built around prominent personalities or "founders of the nation." What happens when the founder passes? In the UAE the cult of personality surrounding Sheikh Zayed has strengthened with Emiratis all claiming to be "the sons of Zayed" and looking to his wisdom in fields far from politics. Nonetheless, one participant observed that invoking the shared loyalty to Sheikh Zayed in a conversation actually opens up space for critique, again echoing the transition of authoritative national emblems into more "participatory" uses. The UAE experience was mined to think about the future of Oman after Sultan Qaboos bin Said, who has played a similarly foundational role in the development of that country.

National museums are an important indicator of how state institutions define national identity. The upcoming National Museum of Qatar provides an interesting opportunity to measure the impact of these cultural institutions on national consciousness. It is often assumed that the wealth of Gulf states grants them enormous power to direct their societies toward the leadership's social and political goals. One distinctive aspect of the National Museum of Qatar, still under construction, is its intentional effort to meld narratives of both the settled populations, hadhar, with those of the formerly nomadic populations, or bedouin. This appreciation of the composite identity of the Qatari nation stands in contrast to the very oppositional hadhar or bedouin identification that Qataris themselves tend to use.

But to what degree are such projects important markers of national identity, directed at domestic as opposed to foreign audiences? And how influential are they at shaping identity, in the face of other influencers much less under the control of the state? Social media was discussed as one arena that has enormous impact on identity in the Gulf states and is not fully under state control, often allowing for the introduction of ideas and imagery considered taboo.

The Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar

The particular social context is also important to consider when evaluating state projects to shape national identity. In Saudi Arabia these include the Jenadriyah Heritage and Cultural Festival, youth sports clubs, cultural and literary clubs, art spaces, historical sites, and national museums.

The King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue was set up by the late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz in 2003 in the wake of the September 11 attacks, whose perpetrators were majority Saudi, and in response to petition campaigns calling for change within the kingdom. The KACND fosters dialogue among different sectors of the Saudi population, and indeed promotes a "culture of dialogue" to mediate sociopolitical differences. Its goals center on countering extremism, fostering social inclusion, and building national unity.

The center works from a "cultural map" of the kingdom and seeks to draw upon representatives from all groups, including tribes, intellectuals, businessmen, and religious leaders from different legal traditions, or sects. Achieving greater socioeconomic and representational parity across regions is also a primary goal of the center, and it illustrates this concern symbolically by holding its annual National Dialogue Meeting in a different region every year. More concretely, KACND works with government ministries to pave the road for policies to be implemented equitably across regions. Youth are of special importance, in anti-extremist programs and as influential agents of social change.

Emirati Minister of Cabinet Affairs Mohammed Al Gergawi, 2nd right, talks about the "Museum of the Future," standing next to architect Shaun Killa on March 4, 2015. (AP Photo/Kamran Jebreili)

Participants voiced questions about the practical impact of the KACND. An independent evaluation commissioned by the center found that more than 60 percent of the KACND's recommendations are implemented by the kingdom's ministries and agencies. Yet other participants argued that its work is largely unknown among Saudi citizens. One participant remarked on the outsize influence of the Saudi formal educational institutions, and questioned the ability to change social perspectives without fundamental education reform. There were

also concerns about the state commitment to the KACND after the death of King Abdullah.

A discussion ensued on the limits of national identity in a monarchy so associated with the founders that the state bears its name. May full social inclusion be achieved in a state named after a ruling family, the Al Saud? Others thought that over time Saudi citizens have reached a level of comfort in referring to themselves as "Saudis."

Critical Perspectives on State-Driven Identity Formation

The processes of economic development, state building, and identity formation have not been successful in integrating all citizens in the same way and to the same degree. Some citizens – because of religious sect, gender, or national origin – have not fully achieved national belonging.

While the basis of tribes in economic scarcity and nomadism have been eliminated by policies of sedentarization, urbanization, and state building, "political tribalism" – a concept first outlined by the Kuwaiti sociologist Khaldoun al-Naqeeb – is very much a reality. Indeed, one participant argued that leadership in the Gulf is an extension of tribalism in modes of governance, providing a mentality and set of relations where political roles and resources are distributed, in part, on the basis of kinship. In Saudi Arabia, religious identity also colors both the internal and foreign policies of the state.

These tribal and religious identities affect each individual's sense of national belonging. In Saudi Arabia, it was argued, those unrecognized in the state's identity are marked as outsiders. The marginalization of communities due to lack of tribal affinity or Salafi affiliation has produced a reaction: in the case of the Shia, the politicization of their sectarian identity, especially since the Iranian Revolution of 1979. There have also been Wahhabist competitors to the state such as the Juhayman movement in 1979, al-Qaeda, and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant today. The regional competition with Iran sharpens these "pre-modern" identities and hinders national integration. Arab identity could be used to bridge these sectarian divisions.

Some citizens – because of religious sect, gender, or national origin – have not fully achieved national belonging.

Discussion about the theorized crisis of identity in Saudi Arabia brought up the issue of Saudi expansion in the region. Would the Saudi state extend political control beyond borders if not checked by Western powers? What are the implications of Saudi intervention in Bahrain? Will this act to shore up Bahrain, or undermine it by strengthening sectarian identities and linkages across the two states?

National identities can be exclusionary or inclusionary in regard to gender. Qatari women find the strategic direction of the country, as represented in the 2030 National Vision, attractive. It presents a modern view of economy, social relations, and environmental preservation, but grounded in conservative values. Women such as the wife of the former emir, Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, and the former president of Qatar University, Sheikha Abdulla Al-Misnad, have played leading roles in the contemporary Qatari identity formation. However, women are

reluctant to challenge male-dominant discourse, or to appear disloyal to the state. There is no independent women's activism in the country. Other states with less women's empowerment, such as Saudi Arabia, have seen a more vigorous women's movement.

Issues that affect and animate women are questions of personal status and citizenship: Who can pass citizenship and all of its economic and political benefits to their spouses, and to their children? Personal status laws regulating marriage and family are a construct of the nation-state – not God – and reflect power in these societies. Restrictive marriage practices and citizenship laws place the burden on women to protect national identity, and prove a huge disincentive to marrying foreigners. The new generation may find this harder to accept, however, as they have more extensive networks outside of the home and with non-nationals.

The overwhelming presence of non-nationals within Gulf states is an important catalyst to national identity formation. Anxieties over cultural marginalization and economic competition spur nationalism, and discourage consideration of residency and political rights for expatriates and foreign workers. Gulf societies do not make space for "hyphenated identities."

There are clear social and political hierarchies within Gulf societies based on national origins and level of citizenship. Naturalized citizens remain vulnerable to loss of rights. There are also social differences between first- and second-generation migrants. First-generation migrants to the Gulf often believe they will return to their home countries. Second-generation migrants are more detached from their parents' home country and consider the host country to be their home. Still, due to geographic segregation and the predominance of "privatized identities," these migrants do not have opportunities for cultural – much less political – integration in the host country, even in a more open environment such as that found in Bahrain. There are nodes of social interaction in shopping malls, work places, and through social media, but legal structures, especially laws that deny transfer of citizenship to children of women marrying non-nationals, deter relationships. Some flexibility remains; in Saudi Arabia, for instance, the Ministry of Interior considers citizenship in individual cases of foreign marriage.

The overwhelming presence of non-nationals within Gulf states is an important catalyst to national identity formation.

Still, there is no question that expatriates have a huge impact on Gulf societies and economies. This was even more true prior to the 1970s when most expatriates arrived with the intention of remaining. The contributions of expatriates to both cultural life and economic well-being are often underappreciated. The cultural and economic loss to Kuwait with the expulsion of Palestinian and other Arab expatriates upon liberation from Iraqi occupation in 1990 was dramatic and is still being felt.

Competitors to the Nation and the Future of the Gulf States

The state inculcation of patriotism and national belonging faces competition from other strong religious, familial, and ideological loyalties in the Gulf states. Islamism, tribal identity, and Arab nationalism all have had extensive appeal within Gulf societies, rising and falling in accordance with regional and international political contexts.

The history of many Gulf countries has been shaped by sociopolitical competition between nationalist, sometimes Arab nationalist, and Islamist forces. Before independence there was cooperation in the struggle against colonialism, at least in Kuwait and Bahrain. After independence Arab nationalism gained ascendancy in these two states, but fell out of favor due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the "Baathist invasion" of Kuwait by Iraq. Islamist groups of different ideological and sectarian orientations flourished in the 1990s, bringing greater social conservatism to Gulf societies. However, concerns over global jihadism and terrorism, especially after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in the United States, brought new constraints on Islamist movements.

In the current era, Sunni Islamists are looking to leadership from the Saudi state. Today concerns about Iranian expansionism, and the political outcome of the civil wars in Syria and Yemen, has garnered Saudi Arabia the genuine support of most Sunni Islamists. This has generated the re-emergence of state-Islamist cooperation in foreign policy last seen in the war in Afghanistan.

Yet further discussion among participants revealed greater variation in the nature of state-Islamist cooperation and competition over time. A participant argued that the Kuwaiti experience is unique due to the U.S. role in the liberation of Kuwait, which made Kuwaiti Islamists more reticent to stand against the United States. This was not the case in Saudi Arabia, where anti-Americanism was a powerful force in the 1990s. Also, the Saudi states' historic alliance with Salafi revivalism makes it a less "neutral" arbiter in the mediation of Islamist and liberal popular agendas, and hobbles its outreach to Shia communities.

Tribes are also often perceived as competitors to the nation. In Kuwait, the term "bedouin" is a social discourse used by the early settled urban – "hadhar" – population to denote the dangers emerging from the empowerment of their late arriving – and equally settled – compatriots. In the 1970s Kuwait saw the resurgence of public rhetoric among hadhar accusing the bedouin of hindering economic and cultural development of the state. Bedouin are also routinely accused of loyalty to the tribe over the state and denounced for encouraging sectarian and ethnic tendencies that undermine national unity. These condemnations persist regardless of the political positioning of tribes: They were dismissed as government loyalists in the 1970s, and branded as anti-modern as many now enter the political opposition.

The question remains: Why does tribal identity persist?

The question remains: Why does tribal identity persist? Participants noted that the political integration of tribes in Kuwait did not end their social marginalization. The inferior infrastructure and continued urban segregation of tribal populations illustrate concrete ways

in which their access to the full benefits of citizenship have not been achieved. This lack of integration generates practical reasons to fall back upon the "subordinate" identity.

This subordinate tribal identity does share some similarities with Islamist identities, despite the fact that historically tribes have been less culturally conservative on many issues. Tribes display a deeper history of transnationalism that pre-dates the nation-states. These economic and cultural networks predispose tribes to focus their identity toward transnationalism, despite the clear reorientations that have occurred with state dominance.

Further discussion fleshed out the point that while tribal experience varies from one Gulf state to another, in general, tribes have been disempowered across the region. Contrary to Western stereotypes, the Saudi state has in fact supported the interests of the hadhar and worked *against* tribal interests. Even today, segregation persists, and access to state benefits through certain channels, the National Guard and other security services, predominates. Saudis of tribal origin make up the vast majority of the ground forces fighting and dying in the Yemen war today.

In the Gulf region, Arab, Islamic, and territorial identities are supported through different instruments and public institutions.

In the Gulf region, Arab, Islamic, and territorial identities are supported through different instruments and public institutions. Media, the mosque, and schools all play a part in reinforcing these identities. Yet certain movement identities display a preference for different instruments: Islamists prefer the mosque and universities while Arab nationalists today, the media. This popular mobilization receives some reinforcement – with some contradictions – from state-led promotion of Arab identity, as the state redefines the meaning of Arabism to thwart its external and internal enemies. While Zionists were once the greatest threat to the Arab nation, today it is Iran.

As a consequence, the Gulf states' policies often reveal inherent contradictions toward Arabism. For example, they support Arab causes on the international stage, but often fail to promote or protect Arab *people*. The limited acceptance of Syrian refugees marks one example of this, as does the willingness to sacrifice non-Gulf Arabs within the private sector for the sake of national employees. Finally, while some highlight civilizational differences between *Khaleejis* (Gulf nationals) and other Arabs, it is possible, and a political project in fact exists, to redefine Khaleeji identity through Arab nationalism.

Today's Arab nationalism within the Gulf has been heavily influenced by the Palestinian media personality Azmi Bishara, who has repositioned Arab nationalism as a liberal, democratic, capitalist project, as opposed to the leftist project it represented in an earlier era. The appeal of the Arab nation and protection of the Arab people also forms one aspect of the multifaceted appeal of Saudi regional leadership.

These examples show how the different identities under consideration – Islamist, tribal, and Arab nationalist – may coexist with national identity in complex ways, not always as direct competitor, and often serving to augment national power.

Conclusion

The rise of the "new nationalism" in the Gulf reflects the decline of the power of the welfare state to engender gratitude and loyalty. It also reflects the elevated demands by and on citizens: for a framework that allows for a more active contribution to public life, and for a better-trained and more enterprising citizenry. The military interventions of some of the Gulf states – especially Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia – likewise amplify both the demands on citizens, as some are expected to risk their lives for the nation, and the room for involvement, as Gulf populations mobilize in support of their national leadership. As Gulf states enter a period of greater austerity and international assertiveness, these demands will only grow, as will the aptitude Gulf leaderships will need to direct their more activist publics.

Still, the degree of national cohesion will be limited by the content of national identity. Is it inclusive? Does it make room for women, tribes, outer regions, religious minorities? The answer to these questions and the nationalist dynamic they engender will vary state by state, depending on history and national strategy. Political outcomes will thus vary as well. But in all cases, analysts will need to consider the implications of the more participatory turn that Gulf states are adopting, and to take state-society relations more into account.