ICTs AND THE GCC: ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND POLICY CONTROL

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Abstract

The six monarchies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have the advantage of a robust economic structure that assists in shaping policy and state governance. Post Arab Spring, the existence of wealth, patronage networks, and rentierism maintain information and communication technologies (ICTs) in ways that protect the state. The endurance of Arab monarchies has little to do with regional exceptionalism and is instead cemented in legacies of economic growth and privilege. To dispute exceptionality arguments and analyze the endurance of GCC states, this research examines how the economic structure of the region shapes ICT policy. By employing statistical analysis this research showcases the overlap between economic infrastructures and ICT policies in the GCC. Data demonstrates that the two are heavily intertwined, with political and economic liberalization developing alongside one another.
"الي النخيل التي تنبت فوق الظما وشراءة الملح"
علي عبد الله خليفة
DEDICATION

In everything I do, I am nowhere near success or peace without those who have helped me along the way.

Before I begin anything in life, my eternal gratitude belongs to my parents who have supported me in every way. Yoma and Baba you are the biggest part of me. I am thankful, blessed, and lucky to have you in every single day I live. You’ve let me grow, and I can never repay the favor. Thank you for being my world. Thank you for being my lifeline. I love you always. Thank you to my brother Ali. You make me want to be better every day, simply by being you.

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Sincerely,
Mariam Ismail Karimi
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CHAPTER 1
Introduction

Is the Middle East exceptional? This question remains at the start of all Arab scholarship that examines the Middle East. Area studies and trying times have put Middle Eastern affairs in the spotlight, with the literature surrounding the region centering around the durability of authoritarianism. Scholars seemingly argue that Arab leaders are here to stay. Several of the arguments offered often believe that the exceptionality of authoritarianism pertains to the presence of cultural or religious factors that endure the leaders. Is it God or is it the people? Surely there must be a reason why these leaders seem to stay.

The Arab region is no more exceptional than any other part of the world in its endurance. The lag in ‘democratization’ is not an inherent characteristic of Middle East. Debates on its inevitability for failure do not dictate the growth or the outcome of the region. The Middle East, as any comparative political scientist will find, contains the markers prevalent of any developing or developed nation. Its Arab-ness does not box it in or belittle its sustainability. The fortitude of these regimes is derivative of their adaptability in turbulent times. No more is endurance of regimes recognizable than in the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states.

Founded in 1981, the six countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia created an alliance that is cemented in the history of the region. These six states, despite the downfall of those around them, or turbulent times within them, are strong standing. Regardless of the polarities that may emerge, the GCC states have proven that with the right policy and resources, governments can maintain themselves.
The economic substructure of the GCC, multiplied by the historical underpinnings of the region, endure these regimes. The coagulation of these factors has created a system of power, that once dispersed, keeps its leaders in place. The ability to structure agenda and policy in ways that protect the interests of governing parties indicates that the exceptionality of the Middle East has little to do with the religion or culture, and more so the durability of monarchs to shape their world in a way they see fit to sustain themselves. There is no limit to their reach, and no field untouched by their prowess. The power dynamics of this region have seeped even into all fields of governance, and their latest pick is technology. Arab power and endurance now grows simultaneously alongside technological development.

Information Communication Technologies (ICT) were a big component of the 2011 Arab Spring. Many writers attributed the downfall of dictators as an impact of social media. While technology may have had some role to play, it must not be perceived as the primary factor in the downfall of Arab authoritarianism. The overly emphasized aspect of social media misplaces other factors conducive to maintaining or eroding a regime. The binary role ICTs within a regime, are equally telling of the dynamics that take place within a state. It is essential to recognize that ICTs, and ICT policy, all function within the scope of a regime, aligning themselves, as seen in the cases of the GCC, with the powers at play. Despite occasions of dissonance, power and ICTs resonate with those in charge.

The relevance of ICT policy in the GCC will continue to be a growing issue within the region. Throughout this research, ICTs will be dispelled as standalone actors, and seen as branches of the state. The subsuming of ICT regulation by these six leaders and their governments sets forward precedents unbeknownst to technological developments. This research sets forwards the
critical questions of how GCC regimes will maintain ICTs in the future. In a technical world that now outflanks Moore’s law, Arab leaders will be placed in situations that require them to utilize old resources as a means to place outdated policy on future technology.

This research begins with the question of: how does the economic infrastructure of the GCC shape ICT policy? This research will investigate the relationship between economics and ICTs in the GCC. It disputes the exceptionalism and durability of Middle Eastern authoritarianism by examining the impact economic legacy has on the political sphere. The six monarchies of the Middle East and the GCC have the advantage of a robust economic structure that assists in shaping policy and state governance. Post Arab Spring, the existence of wealth, patronage networks, and rentier-ism endure ICTs which protect the state. This thesis investigates how the economies of the GCC are resistant to transition by examining ICT policy that protects the regime and restricts its citizens. An examination of the economic infrastructure elucidates how policy has entered the technical realm. Through this evaluation of ICT policy, we are able to note that GCC regimes no longer endure through finance alone, but through an evolution of financial success that seeps into policy and technology.

This work develops on current extensive content surrounding authoritarianism, ICT, and the GCC. This research takes on theories like those of Eva Belin, and develops them in more nuanced terms that then pertain to technology. In her 2004 article, Eva Bellin disputes cultural, historical, and religious explanations around Middle Eastern exceptionalism. She believes that the conditions that endure the state are highly aligned with the robustness of the coercive apparatus. Following the 2011 Arab Spring, Bellin reconsidered her thesis to include the legitimization of force, threat deterrence, and social media. Through Bellin’s work, social media can be included as
an apparatus of the state. States, in addition to their reliance on coercion as a means of survival, can manipulate legislation to upgrade authoritarianism.

Many of the Arab republics witnessed change, but the monarchies managed to endure. Coupled with a spark in the region, the underlying factors that caused the mobilization against the regime and the occurrence of the Spring can be reduced to economic dissatisfaction with the state. The six monarchies of the GCC have the benefit of remedying said dissatisfaction with financial incentives, even in cases where dissonance is ever-growing and violent.

Mobilization, or lack thereof, can be attributed to legacies that advantage the regime over its citizens. States, in effort to manage demands for political change, begin to economically or politically liberalize to quiet dissatisfaction. These liberalization efforts do not lead to democratization, but advantage the state in ways allowing them to endure. Citizens, must then wait on an exogenous shock or crisis to witness change. In situations where states are financially stable, these shocks are less likely to cause upheaval, bringing us to the conundrum of the GCC.

Authoritarian regimes, have the ability (capacity) and desire (will) to maintain. The ability to maintain derives from financial wealth, which GCC states do not lack. The legacies of economic success have managed to endure the regimes, and in that they can alter policy in ways that protect themselves. This economical advantage is even more present in the use of ICTs. Many positivists, post Arab Spring, viewed ICTs as a means for liberalization. Years after the event however, many attribute other factors as the cause of the Spring, stating that ICTs are only a tool and not a cause of revolution.

ICTs can be successful, but can also be manipulated by the state. This manipulation derives from the economic capacity of the state which drives the financial will. ICTs are beneficial, but as
made evident by the GCC, can become a tool that aid rather disrupt the regime. It is necessary to understand that the link between ICTs and the state often derive from economic legacies. This research therefore considers previous literature and exploration regarding ICTs, economics, policy, and authoritarianism in the GCC, expanding it to examine how civil society can be coerced and regulated by the regime.

This paper is broken down into six accompanying chapters that examine the relationship between ICTs and the GCC. It firstly begins by considering literature around the issue, creating a theoretical framework to organize the content. Chapter two therefore examines three areas to define the scope of the thesis:

1. Literature of authoritarianism in the Middle East
   a. Middle Eastern development is in no way exceptional
   b. Distinction between Arab monarchies and republics
      i. Role of the party, security services, cult of personality, and the family

2. Literature on economic development in the Middle East
   a. Similarities with Latin America, USSR, and Asian Tigers
   b. Exogenous shock, crises, and development

3. Literature on ICT policy and authoritarian regimes
   a. ICTs can be beneficial and hurtful to a regime
   b. ICTs are representative of the architecture and infrastructure already existing in the state

The third chapter will assess the role of historical legacy in the monarchies and how it cultivated the GCC countries into their current state. This is best understood through theories of
path dependency. The GCC is impacted by theories of economic and political liberalization that cyclically engage with one another. Moreover, the role of state formation, through legacies of colonization, heavily established networks (GCC formation, allies, and threats) that benefit regimes. Additionally, this chapter will unpack legacies of economic development throughout the state in terms of oil and oil treaties. The chapter will then conclude with a history of mobilization in the region. It will examine histories of protests, torture, and imprisonment, as well as the Arab Spring (2011 onwards).

Chapter four sets the framework for data to be analyzed in chapter five. Chapter four begins by setting a rationalization for why numerical analysis is conducted in this matter. Chapter four also contains a broad overview of the terms being statistically analyzed. Chapter five delves into the finding of tech policy in the region. The compilation of this work justifies the grouping of these council members, while simultaneously cross examining areas of divergence to include outlier scenarios. This chapter will compile a data set from 2000-2016 to demonstrate changes pre, during, and post Arab Spring, highlighting factors that influence the state. The data cross examines areas of divergence and commonality between the six GCC states. Data will be compiled from variety of sources including World Bank, UNDP, POMED, CSIS, Freedom House, Carnegie Endowment, and MEI. Characteristics of examination include:

- Tech policy – censorship, legislation, freedoms, access to content, digital divide, etc.
- Accessibility and Infrastructure – physical and civil
- Liberties – civil, political, freedom of speech, etc.
- Economic indicators - GDP, GINI, GNP, growth
- Demographics
With the details from the corresponding data set, chapter five further examines how the amalgamation of these factors explains the use of ICTs in the region. Through the literature and the data set, it is evident that ICTs assist GCC regimes in enduring. These tools have become a method for the regime to maintain its legacy; succeeding or failing only under the conditions prescribed to them by the state.

The concluding sixth chapter seeks to provide insight on how future shifts in technology may impact policy in the GCC. These six countries may have to retroactively create policy that would restrict digital freedoms to maintain legitimacy or control. This chapter acknowledges the limitations of the research but puts forward suggestions for change. This chapter also examines economic forecasts and poses questions of economic failure as threats to the regime.

Essentially this work does not try to belittle or allocate blame in the region. This work provides an understanding that the economy highly shapes and impacts the success of ICT policies. This theory can be prescribed to any part of the world that faces policy changes in turbulent times. Capital is both a driver and derivative of evolving technology policy, and states are constantly molded and shaped by these mechanisms. However, what must be done is to excavate these ideas from culturally or religiously deterministic theories and beliefs. As ideas of democratization are prescribed to the Gulf, they are often done through lenses of democratization. These band aids of development are not entirely successful because they lack the foresight and depth to understanding regional development. The relationship between capital and ICT development is crucial to augmenting a more peaceful and productive future for the Arab world. Ignoring the historical implications of colonial involvement and the impact it has on leverage creates a misunderstanding that is destructive to Arab development.
The Arab world is the Arab world, demanding more or less of the region is a hindrance to its success. This research demonstrates that what characterizes the region is emblematic of everywhere else. The added advantage of oil changes the game. Unpacking Arab development must therefore be tethered to theory rather than the culture.
CHAPTER 2
Literature Overview and Theoretical Framework

The Arab region is often understood as a cumulative work on authoritarianism and dictatorship (See Joseph Sassoon, Eva Bellin, Oliver Schlumberger, etc.). Studies in the Arab world focus on religion, oil, culture, and enduring governance. While these factors are true and relevant to the region, the Arab world is unique and ubiquitous in its endurance. The means that govern the region are the same as those that shape policy around the world. This chapter of the thesis examines popular literature on the Arab world to study how different narratives on the Arab world can examine the interlock of GCC ICT policy with the economic substructure of the region.

How are ICTs formed in the GCC? One way to examine the endurance and longevity of Arab regimes is to study how policy is shaped in the region. With escalating tensions post Arab Spring, the development of technology has taken a primary role in how communication is managed and sustained. Transition in the GCC is sustainable because history has made it the way. Legacies are in place that allow sustainability.

This chapter examines the endurance of regimes through a study of three areas to assist in defining the scope of the thesis. This chapter will first examine literature on authoritarianism, second the economic development of the Middle East, and will conclude with literature on ICT policy in authoritarian regimes.

Section 1 – The Authoritarian Middle East

To best avoid exceptionalism and cultural arguments, it is crucial to note that development and endurance of regimes in the Middle East is by no means unique. However, development in the
region varies when comparing monarchies to republics. This section examines literature on Arab authoritarianism with a furthered comparison between Arab monarchies and republics. This section firstly begins by redefining the exceptionality to examine the characteristics of the state and the means at which it was formed. Understanding the exceptionality, or lack thereof, positions the region, and the monarchies specifically, in a context that examines the factors which eradicate cultural and religious arguments marking the region. The further separation between monarchy and republic is utilized to explain how cultural markers are flawed at grouping the Arab world. While comparative work is successful in parsing out general themes plaguing any developing or transitory nation, it is essential to examine in further detail how these markers differ regionally and even internally within the GCC. Understanding the differences between the monarchies and republics, and furthermore Gulf monarchies from Arab monarchies, identifies the factors that allow sustainability or promote failure.

**Section 1.1 – Disputing the Exceptionalism**

Much of the work conducted by Middle Eastern scholars disputes the exceptionality of Arab leaders. While a lot of scholarship on the region may belittle the endurance of the regimes to cultural or religious development, it is crucial to note that the region is by no means special. The endurance of regimes is largely due to the advantages states can have in maintaining. Eva Bellin’s 2004 work builds on Theda Skocpol’s primary thesis of state capacity.

Prior to eradicating the theory of Arab exceptionalism, it must be defined. This term became popular at explaining why Arab regimes seemed unlikely to democratize. It was often believed that economic and political liberalization drew a path towards democratization. Yet, for
many of these scholars, the Arab world seemed impenetrable to change. Few authors such as Iliya Harik, Stephen Haggard, Robert Kaufman, Guillermo O'Donnell and Daniel Brumberg, began to explain why despite ‘openings’, the Arab leaders endured. Through the literature of these authors, Arab endurance was then understood, not as an inability to democratize, but a culmination of factors such as exogenous shock, path dependency, institutional reform, and foreign actors or institutions. Exceptionalism, or exceptionality, therefore centered around Arab inability to democratize, with leaders remaining in power for prolonged periods of time despite foreign intervention demanding liberalization and change.

Capacity is a large benefactor to the success of the Middle Eastern state. Charles Tilly, Theda Skocpol, and Eva Bellin all argue that success of Arab regimes is due to the capacity of the state to maintain. While Tilly’s 1992 book focuses mainly on the development of European states, broad ideas of capacity and capital can be parsed out to examine Arab endurance. Tilly, in the European context, moves towards an argument that examines how war is the motivator of change. Tilly moves beyond theories of state formation and structure to state that coercion ‘works’¹. While state formation is essential to unpacking the current conditions in the Middle East, Tilly’s argument is parsed out to better understand why capacity is the main driver of authoritarianism in the region. Capacity, best understood as a two-sided coin of capital and coercion, explains why Arab regimes can endure. Capital is defined as “tangible mobile resources, and enforceable claims on such resources”². Tilly defines coercion as “concerted application, threatened or actual, of action that commonly causes loss or damage to the persons or possessions of individuals or groups who are aware of both the action and the potential damage”³.
Tilly’s belief that coercion works, is seen through all power structures in the GCC. These six states use both hard punishment and financial endowment to restrict and satisfy their citizens. Capacity (finance) was used by several states such as Oman and Kuwait, post Arab Spring, to quiet down dissatisfaction. Coercion (violence) was used in eastern parts of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, to stop rioters from gathering. This theory of coercion is further noted in Theda Skocpol’s theory of capacity (1979) that Bellin later develops in her 2005 work. According to Skocpol, the strength of the state is confined to its ability to “maintain a monopoly on coercion”\(^4\). Skocpol’s work on revolutionary theory examines the previously flawed and structuralist approaches to unpacking the phenomena by examining the role of the state in enduring\(^5\). For Skocpol, the state’s capacity to respond is crucial, because in that capacity power is distributed. Lastly, Bellin’s work on the coercive apparatus sets the precedent of why monarchies, more than any Arab states can endure. Bellin states, that Middle Eastern exceptionalism lies in the capacity and willingness of the state; Arab strength is primarily due to its conflated and robust coercive apparatus\(^6\). The modem operandi of the Middle East and the six monarchies of the Gulf largely derives from these wealth networks that can maintain the state. The ‘fiscal health’ of these Arab states, even at times when economically weakened, remains comparatively strong and enduring. In that health lies the primary capacity that can enact policy and hamper dissonance; it is the privilege of this wealth that formulates and maintains the Arab world. Capacity is the root of all Arab cause and success. The availability of capacity maintains authoritarianism, and in that capacity policy maintained.

Coercion and capital are necessary in examining the endurance of any regime. Through the work of the aforementioned authors, it becomes evident that not only is the Arab world unexceptional, it is also unexceptional in its use of violence, capacity, and coercion. What highly
The work on Arab authoritarianism is expansive and dense. Scholars have spent years unpacking and examining why authoritarianism seems to be a characteristic emblematic of the region. Yet, where much of the work becomes divisive is in the examination of legacies differing between the monarchies and the republics. In a region marked with a history of coups and instability, the Arab monarchies seem likely to stay. Are monarchies fundamentally different from republics? Are monarchies the exception to the rule?

The differing structures of power play a role in why Arab monarchies may seem exceptional, but this divinity is not deterministic. The later chapters will examine in further detail...
the historical and economic relationships explaining why monarchies maintain, but it is important to note that the structural differences between monarchies and republics have an impact on why truncated solutions for the region are not multi-fitting. The difference in Arab monarchy structure from a republic’s shapes states differently, allowing authoritarianism to function differently. The role of the party, security services, cult of personality, and the family all function differently within each state, but differ significantly between monarchies and republics.

The role of the family, while prominent in both republics and monarchies, makes a much larger impact on Arab monarchies. In both instances, the family is a significant factor on the success of the state and its development. The absorption of the family unit into the monarchy seemed to create more sustainable systems than it did in Arab republics. For both regime types, the family is a source of contention, but seemingly more sustainable in monarchies.

Monarchies have the advantage of a wealth/patron network both internally and domestically, the relative advantage of size, of resources, and smaller populations, in comparison to republics. These factors all coagulate to create a system that is easier to maintain. It is therefore important to distinguish monarchies from republics because the two do not function on similar trajectories.

Where do the regimes differ in times of crisis? Much of the literature enforcing the endurance of the monarchies pertains to the existence of oil reserves. Oil in the region has played a significant role in the success of the state (see Gregory Gause, Sean Yom, and Eva Bellin), but cannot be deemed the sole beneficiary of endurance. According to Robert Snyder’s 2015 article, Arab republics had an ideological disadvantage. It is important to situate Snyder’s work in context of revolution and leader downfall; however, theories of endurance and longevity can be pulled
from this literature to examine the endurance of monarchs. The “constitutional embrace of revolutionary nationalism made them [Arab Republics] vulnerable in time to the uprising”\textsuperscript{8}, a sentiment that seemed less prevalent in monarchies. Snyder explains the rise of revolution in republics as a “counter-revolution against revolutionary nationalism”\textsuperscript{9}. Oil still plays a significant role in the success of the state, and the ability to ‘buy off’ citizens was crucial for the stability of the monarchies during the 2011 crises\textsuperscript{10}, however, Snyder’s perspective of an ideological crises, cements these attitudes in a historical framework that cumulatively examines the region, beyond the availability of oil.

Monarchies are open to reform; in that openmess, they mitigate the crises that fall on republics. Republics were marked as being monolithic, homogenous, socialist, and anti-west\textsuperscript{11}. Monarchies, however, became increasingly open to western intervention, and even highly dependent on their western allies to curb crisis. Monarchies are successful at state building\textsuperscript{12}, at successfully integrating the family into positions of leadership and power\textsuperscript{13}, and maintaining the security apparatus\textsuperscript{14}. Additionally, monarchies avoided mobilizing national identity as a revolutionary measure, they instead provided security and national stability even enacting militant Islam as an additional perceived threat\textsuperscript{15}. It is important to further note that in the absence of ‘revolutionary nationalism’, monarchies chose ‘traditionalism’, a “distinct alternative to revolutionism, with emphasis on custom, kinship and religion”\textsuperscript{16}. Monarchies, as opposed to the republic socialist agenda, promoted capitalism. In that promotion, and despite oil, they protected rights to property and law\textsuperscript{17}. These capitalist agendas allowed a diversification of portfolios beyond oil providing monarchies endured and well sustained financial repertories\textsuperscript{18}. 
The structural differences, the role of the party, the family, and the cult of personality surrounding rulers all strategically play into why Arab regimes can endure. These differences between the monarchies and republics explain why policy in the region differs and develops. These structural factors, the lack of networks in the republics, the abundance of oil, and the diversified portfolios, make the GCC monarchies seemingly impenetrable. Republics and monarchs, while similar, cannot be assessed as a cohesive unit.

**Section 2 – Economic Development in the Middle East**

Arab regimes are not immune to change. The waves of democratization and transition that characterize the 1970s are emblematic of the Arab world as well. Development in the Middle East took paths similar to South America and East Asia with economic and political liberalization at the helm of dissatisfaction. These three regions were highly characterized with shifts towards bureaucratic authoritarianism. This section of the chapter examines the literature surrounding economic development of the GCC. These literatures situate the GCC in a broader Middle Eastern and global context. In addition to disputing the exceptionality of the Arab gulf, this section explains the economic shape and current state of the GCC and Arab monarchies. Through an examination of literature and theory, the exceptionality is disputed, but more importantly, the economic conditions of the monarchies are explained to demonstrate the creation of the infrastructure.

**Section 2.1 – Global Consensus**

Economic development throughout the world, and significantly within authoritarian regimes, follows similar trajectories. Much of the democratization efforts surrounding
authoritarian regimes deals with the balances between economic and political liberalization. Chile under Pinochet, Egypt under Saddat, Russia under Gorbachev, and the GCC all exhibit instances where democratization was done to appease dissatisfaction. Regions begin to liberalize either economically or politically when there is a weakening in structures. What economic theory begins to inform us moreover, is that these characteristics of liberalization in pursuit of democratization, are emblematic of less developed countries (LDC).

Development in authoritarian regimes all over the world is similar. In addition to these shared characteristic disputing exceptionality, they also situate the Middle East into a global context that examines the impact of how world affairs have a collective and comprehensive impact on the way the market is shaped. Issues of path dependency will be better examined in the third chapter, but for theoretical purposes, it is fundamental to note that (1) the Middle East shares similarities with other developing and colonized countries; (2) there is global impact on the ways in which the market is shaped and formed; and (3) economic structures, and their development, better explain the architectures and infrastructures under which ICTs reside.

Post World War II, Arab states – and the world – went through similar economic cycles. From the mid 1960s until the early 1980s, Arab states had periods of economic boom. Periods of fiscal success firstly provided leaders with an abundance of wealth incurred to protect and sustain them. Equally as important to note however is how these periods of economic boom were significant to the creation of what are now seemingly endured and sustained infrastructures. These periods of elevated oil prices provided growth in the state and leverage to the rulers. During this boom and development, nationalized wealth, enterprise, and goods became a fundamental characteristic of the region that truncated resource. Peter Moore’s 2010 piece on the Arab political
economy showcases the development of state owned enterprises (SOEs) and nationalization in arenas that rarely had to compete with external markets. With oil as the primary leverage, many Arab countries shaped land reform policies, attempting to alleviate the struggles on the rural sector. For the GCC however, these conditions of the rural sector were less problematic. GCC populations mostly resided in urban areas and their economic policies largely centered around securing support.

The boom period provided states the ability to enact policies that were crucial to the success of the state and its rulers. While other Arab states had to abide by the regulations of the party, the GCC monarchies could govern and control civil society in a freer manner. In that governance, the public sector and the military began to rapidly expand. “Economic control translated into political patronage,” and patronage seeped into all other aspects of the state. The Arab world endures on patronage systems that also built legacies of coalitions and bureaucracies with no room for the private sector. The existence of these massive coalitions did not necessitate the failure of the state. The heavy involvement by the regime was not detrimental; development was present, regardless of intervention, and state policies still lead to growth. Economic development and expansion during these times was achievable and met with little resistance. GDP growth, for both the Middle East in 1979 out preformed all regions except East Asia. The high periods of GDP growth per capita that lead to the “construction of urban infrastructure, expanded road networks, new power grids, and port facility modernization. Expansion of public education succeed in boosting literacy, and increased employment allowed women into the workforce in large numbers for the first time. Unfortunately, these were gains that could stagnate.”
By the 1980s stability and economic development began to fluctuate in the region. There were sharp periods of instability in the Middle East. The blurred lines between public and private ownership meant that capital was often transferred overseas or unemployment increased. The periods of economic decline were not only felt in the Middle East, however, the legacies of nationalization, SOEs, and declining public asset meant that these Arab states were likely to feel vulnerability in rule. Additionally, legacies of patronage and elite networks meant that SOEs were less likely to wane off the regimes support or privatize. This is then the ‘resource curse’ of the region and resource rich states. Similar to the ‘Dutch disease’, rentier theory describes states as being built on distribution rather than extraction, with the state earning its income through rent. Rentier theory therefore describes the lack of political representation, and thus the lack of democracy, not as a cause of “religion or culture but by economic factors [...] (namely) oil profits”. Rent, and the extrapolation of rent by leaders meant that in places like Kuwait, parliament legislative powers are circumscribed in times where oil prices are in decline (1980s and 1990s) and political liberalization is offered.

These times of economic decline and growth, are highly influential to economic reform. States, Arab or not, all bear witness to the dichotomy of economic and political liberalization. Policy and its relation to economic reform, is indicative of narratives grander than oil. Iliya Harik’s discussion of the privatization of the patron state, while mostly examined from the Egyptian context showcases the role foreign influence on the market economy. According to Harik, to correct for centrally controlled economies, deregulation must occur. Yet it is difficult to achieve decentralization of SOEs, especially when they are used by the public sector for political purposes. Decentralization in places like Turkey, Senegal, Poland, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Peru was
easier to achieve because there was regime change.

The politics of economic reform is therefore more a global issue than an Arab issue. The 1980s were a perverse era in economic relations. Gross national product gains remained slow for years due to downward trends in economy prices and shifts to import and domestic investment. Several international agreements and adaptive measures on individual nations meant a universal focus on reform. Demands for stabilization and structural change were lead to the creation of the 1985 Baker Plan, the 1985-1986 World Bank and IMF structural adjustment facilities, and the Brady Plan. Almost all developing nations, such as Argentina, Brazil, Peru, and Mexico began to adopt stabilization packages to restrain public and private demand. We therefore see, the economic conditions of the GCC are similar to the conditions of many developing countries. Liberalization, in purist of democratization, through economic reform has both short and long term impact on the state, and that is emblematic of any region seeking security.

Section 2.2 – A Connected Network

Exogenous shock, crises, and development all affect the Middle East. These outcomes are components of a well-connected and globalized network of events that show how economic instability is transnational. Periods of economic downtown have serious ramifications in an age where reach is global. The bust years of the 1980s and 2000s highlight the impact of foreign events on a region. From this we realize that what endures GCC monarchs, is less arguments of divinity and tribalism, but more so the strength to endure times of global contention.

The 1980 crisis was triggered by quadrupled oil prices in 1974 and doubled prices in 1979. International finance markets began to changes, and soon increases in flow of commercial bank
credit, debt in developing countries, and US/advanced nations tightened macroeconomic policies, meant that debt services devoured export earnings while demand and exports for prices declined. These periods of economic strain lead to increases in unemployment, rural debt, importation of food products, and a flow of capitals overseas. Certain states, such as South Korea and Taiwan were able to produce cars and electronics to alleviate the glut, but Arab states did not upgrade as easily; they remained “wedded to industries with low worker skills or sectors of economic activity that required low little fixed investment.” This created international market economies that were highly competitive and dependent on foreign institutions. So, Arab states such as Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia signed onto these IMF loan agreements, but Gulf states were able to escape the struggle through oil production. Gulf states such as Kuwait therefore began to offer political liberalization, with “press freedoms relaxed in a number of countries as new forms of media made their appearance in the 1990s. Liberalization [however] remained limited and genuine political decentralization rarely occurred.”

The 2008-2009 global financial crisis, the 2001 war on terror, and the 2003 invasion of Iraq, all led to a brazen set of economic challenges that demonstrate the shared impact of economic turbulence. Three trends were then underway: “increased international and bilateral pressures to liberalize economies, deepening socioeconomic decay and inequality in a number of countries, and tremendous capital inflows from rising oil prices followed by a new price collapse.” This shared impact of events lead to a separation of economic characteristics in the Arab region. Gulf exporters, to manage these threats, created sovereign wealth funds that insured a future lacking in oil reserves. The impact of external actors, international lending agencies, multinational corporations, and world trade organizations all contributed to the growth of the GCC states. Foreign involvement
meant a cementing of the state and its monarchies, but also a dependency on aid and foreign direct investment.

These global networks work in times of success and crisis. The shared interconnectivity amongst states may exemplify neo-liberalist beliefs of achieved peace through cooperation. However, the shared dependency reduces agency and means that countries share the burden of the crises. The 2008 housing crisis portrays the impact of shared network and the negative outcome it may have on the state. Increases in unemployment, decreased social welfare, reduced subsidies, and an overall general decline in social welfare became the impetus for the 2011 Arab Spring. Interconnectivity means that states share the burden of the crisis, but regional and domestic impacts alter the outcome. These shared crises show us that the world is highly interconnected, and GCC growth in cities like Dubai are highly reliant on their trading partners, both domestic and foreign. Liberalization and strides towards democratization are therefore attached to global economic conditions as opposed to culturalist arguments. These strides are contextualized in grander economic narratives that alter the outcome of the state and its policy. ICTs therefore exist within conditions of the state, tied to the positive and negative growths that occur and shape the infrastructure and legislation.

**Section 3 – ICTs and Authoritarianism**

The definition surrounding ICT/ICTs remains ambiguous and open ended, however, for this research, ICTs are “an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing: radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems and so on, as well as the various services and applications associated with them, such as videoconferencing and distance learning”[^34]. Essentially, ICTs should be understood as
communicative platforms that link technology to human beings, regardless of whether communication is unilateral or multilateral, the term ICT is wide enough to encompass physical and digital structures that enable conversation. ICT definitions continuously evolve, there is no one static definition of the term. ICTs vary across fields, and the ambiguity of the definition and utilization stands to benefit governments.

In much of the Arab world, several parts of technology and technology development are tied to government bodies therefore, development of technology is often linked to the state. Because all branches are tied to the government, all ambiguity in the terminology belongs to the government.

**Section 3.1 – The Duality of ICTs**

Post 2011 Arab Spring, an extensive amount of literature emerged that highly valued the role ICTs played in liberating the region from authoritarian forces. Yet, as time passed, and many Arab citizens remained at a stalemate with their rulers, the hindrances of the technology became obvious. Positivist tech sentiments remain in the region, they are however shrouded amongst even more expansive work indicating that technology is yet another tool co-opted by regimes.

The 2011 Arab Spring made it apparent that technology mattered; it had a significant role in the success or failure of Arab leaders. Technology existed in the downfall of three Arab republic leaders (Husni Mubarak of Egypt, Muamar Gaddafi of Libya, and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia) and the endurance of several monarchies (King Hamad of Bahrain and King Abdulla of Saudi Arabia). Technology was a ‘spark’ that transformed feelings of discontent and bereavement. Technology became the place where middle class citizens were asked to mobilize.
Technology remains the platform for citizen during and post Arab Spring to articulate dissatisfaction. Many authors have taken tech positivist approaches in how the spread of information assisted in toppling regimes. Clay Shirky’s piece articulates how digital tools enhance democracy in the long run, becoming coordinating tools for political movements, with “dramatic effects in states where a public sphere already constrains the actions of the government”\(^{38}\). Shirky views the internet as a mechanism that can shift the balance of power, but must be accompanied by a ‘literate and densely connected’\(^{39}\) civil society to illuminate these issues. Shirky, like Mona Eltahawy\(^{40}\), does not dispute the restrictions of technology, but “what such optimists have in common is a sense of the irresistible (if unpredictable) force of broad societal-level changes in the way that information is produced, consumed, and shared”\(^{41}\).

Evgeny Morozov is one of the more vocal technology abhorrent. In his 2010 book, he goes into great depth arguing the contradictions of the internet. The belief of the internet as a modernization tool leading to emancipation, for Morozov, seems to be lackluster. His critical work not only dives in to explain the faults of this belief from a domestic policy perspective, but the fault-hood in western intervention at enticing political change through digital freedoms. Morozov states how a “commitment to Internet freedom […] by the West must also understand that a freer Internet, by its very nature, may significantly change the rest of the agenda, creating new problems and entrenching old ones”\(^{42}\). Morozov’s continuous binary of technology and a ‘freer world’ highlights both the macro and micro impacts of tech freedom. For Morozov, strides towards internet freedom will be intertwined with devastating hindrances.

Technology eventually belongs to the state that manages it. Whether through infrastructure or policy, the state and the institutions it works with ultimately end up deciding how technology
functions within the state. This is the GCC and its relationship with Facebook, Twitter, and all of social media. In the UAE for example, one of the highly-utilized forms of communication is What’s App. However following developments in encryption that state was unable to monitor calls conducted through the app. The state therefore restricted the call feature that could be performed through the technology. The same restrictions also applied to Tango and Viber. There have been instances where Bahrain has removed content off of social media platforms. June 2014 saw the removal of a satirical account by the name of ‘@Takrooz’. July 2014, a YouTube video condemning Bahrain’s chief of public police was removed but later reinstated by YouTube’s parent company Google⁴³. In “September 2014 Ghada Jamasheer, another Twitter user” had her tweets and blog blocked and was later arrested⁴⁴. The state therefore determines the conditions under which technologies and devices function.

Section 3.2 – ICTs in the Real World

The Arab world however, does not exist in a chasm of binaries with either love or hate for technology and tech freedom. The introduction of technology has brought forward change in the region, but it is vital to note that these freedoms do not exist in an emancipatory realm. Technology, as demonstrated by Steven Heydemann and Marc Lynch, is a multifaceted tool that belongs as equally to the public as it does the regime. Steven Heydemann’s notorious 2007 argument on upgraded authoritarianism demonstrates the impact of regime’s tech co-optation and evolving governmental powers. Heydemann defines upgraded authoritarianism as the adaption of Arab regimes through the implementation of policies “that are explicitly designed to stabilize and preserve authoritarian rule in the context of ongoing demands for political change” and
This ‘hybrid form of authoritarianism’ does not eliminate political freedom. According to Heydemann (2007) there is still evidence of active dissonance online, and internet penetration has significantly (see World Bank 2017 internet user data) increased from the time Heydemann’s piece has been published, with government control grown linearly alongside it. Open internet penetration has shown these Arab regimes as democratic, providing both ‘social and political benefits’\(^46\), but the openness also provides risk. One way for these regimes to mitigate the risks was the introduction of extensive systems of regulation and surveillance\(^47\). Governments across the Middle East have put in place several forms of legislation that regulate how the internet can be used and implemented. Additionally, internet usage and then regulation exists within a framework that works for the government. The internet is part of the system in place, and the system belongs to the government; no matter how much accessibility it may provide, it still operates within the state, and that abides it to the grander framework in place. Marc Lynch’s 2014 work provides similar examinations of the duplicate impact of technology in more closed regimes.

“Social media seem to be a useful tool in the hands of protest organizers, an accelerant to the impact of specific protest actions, a vital platform for the spread of movement ideas and images, and part of a broad environmental change in the flow of information. But that does not make it the cause of any specific uprising or the essential determinant of their outcomes”\(^48\). In his 2014 work, Lynch demonstrates several markers by which new and old media function. One of the more prominent ideas to come from his work is the development of old and new media technologies into tools of repression. Lynch does not negate the benefits of technology, and the more positive aspects will be included in the following paragraphs. However, it is important to firstly note how the positive aspects follow the more negatively noted legislation. Lynch’s 2011 article on net
challenges for authoritarian regimes takes similar strides in arguing the impact of new technology on a region. Lynch begins by stating the positive impact ICTs may have on increasing domestic issues to an international arena but goes on to state how flawed these tools may be at democratization. Technology is not inherently good or bad, and Lynch’s tech neutral approach acknowledges both the tech positivist and negativist constructs that exist, but urges for an analysis that sees beyond the freedom or control technology can offer a state. In highlighting how technology is a tool for: contentious collective action, repression, international attention and alliance, and mobilization, Lynch situates the upcoming difficulties of tech growth.

What can be understood regarding ICTs is that technology and the web, while having a lot of potential in eliciting strides towards democratization, still operate within the structure of the state, and structure matters more than the technology. Technology belongs to the regime it operates under. Attempting to parse it out of the regulation of the state leads to failure and mismanagement.
CHAPTER 3
Historical Legacy

To best understand the success of ICT control in the region, it is crucial to draw upon the circumstances that enabled the success of the rulers. Studying the historical legacy of the region enables an analysis of the conditions that cement the current monarchs. Arab exceptionalism, as mentioned previously, is disputable through historical assessments. The perseverance of monarchs is therefore embedded in this historical assessment that portray the faults of exceptionality theory through assessments of economic infrastructures.

This chapter presents the factors that assisted in the creation of the GCC and the maintenance of its monarchs. Through historical analysis, arguments of path dependency, state formation, economic development, and mobilization all become crucial markers that explain why GCC leaders can maintain their power and then reformulate into the digital sphere. This chapter on historical legacy becomes the underpinning that explains why ICTs are a tool of the state. Economic growth and state formation are two realms, heavily intertwined, that demonstrate how leaders endure.

Section 1 - Path Dependency

Understanding the conditions that shaped the GCC can be viewed through a path dependent lens. Primarily analyzed through Douglass North’s 1990 theory, the basis of this chapter primarily notes why history matters in the creation and maintenance of the Gulf States. However, following his now infamous work, this thesis also provides a counter narrative to that argument. While
history does matter, an approach that primarily rests on historical legacy lacks the foresight in acknowledging the impact exogenous or endogenous shock have on economic development.

**Section 1.1 – Political or Economic Liberalization?**

What comes first: economic or political liberalization? Many economic reformists study the incongruences between political and economic liberalization. A lot of what reform literature argues is when and how states enact liberalization policies. Yet, at the core of these cyclical argument is the impact history has on how policy is shaped. Do states economically liberalize in times of strife? Or do they politically liberalize in times of economic downfall? All these reformist measures are viewed from lenses of democratization, that eventually begin to explain how and why regimes transition. This literature however, while descriptive and essential to understanding how several authoritarian regimes transform into bureaucratic authoritarian, are not applicable to the Gulf. What is then the case for the GCC monarchs, who do not seek transition measures, but still enact democratization policy?

Path dependency is examined under two conditions. The first is in the grander narrative that the region, and the Gulf particularly cannot be parsed out from the history of colonization and development that formulated the states into their current situation. The second argument under the theory of path dependency relates more to economic conditions that shape the region.

There are many factors that influence shifts towards democratization. Democratization is largely understood as a loosening of political constraints. The six GCC states enacted liberalization measures, however they were often done within the capacity of reducing dissonance and ensuring power. Therefore, studies that liberalization lead to democratic transition become harder to
administer on the Gulf. However, even within in this difficulty, it is imperative to include arguments that explain path dependency. In his work 1990 work, Douglass North, takes a theory often ascribed to technological development to argues that “history matters” in shaping policy. Primarily viewed from an institutional lens, North claims that the way the state is structured has long term impact.

Technological and economic growth are key components to societal and economic development. Long term economic changes are constrained by short run policies and decisions. The role of actors is therefore more important in institutional change than technological development, because they could become a hindrance. Here ideological beliefs influence the “subjective construction of the models that determine choice”52. Institutions are crucial to altering outcome and return. Markets need to be competitive to approximate the zero-transactional cost and within the GCC that is markets and institutions are made problematic.

Much of the GCC is shaped along lines of crony capitalism, elite networks, political leverage, and linkage53. All of that then transcends into the private sector. In GCC monarchies, “insulation and performance incentives are generated on the basis of informal political patronage by senior regime players and the creation of regulatory enclaves and privileges that exist in parallel to the rest of the state apparatus”54. Private goods often derive from public welfare. The merging of public and private in monarchies cements their longevity because success and opportunity are always tied to the family. The GCC then is the prime example of a patron state, or a state that is a “business entrepreneur and provider at one and the same time”55. Economic reform in purist of liberalization does not follow similar orders as it would in Egypt post Infitah56. This is because GCC monarchies do not need to ascribe to similar sentiments of appeasement. Liberalization
policies in the Gulf therefore often followed erratic paths that were reasoned by leaders for leaders. “The robustness of the coercive apparatus is inversely related to its level of institutionalization. The less institutionalized a security establishment is, the less amenable it will be to reform”.

Institutions in the GCC are heavily lined by patrimonial positions in governing and militant roles. Militaries in the GCC are often shaped by the monarchies’ own family members, legacies of second families pledging allegiance to the monarchs, and Sunnis. The genetic makeup of GCC state institutions often mirror the structure of the state. Businesses and militaries follow the hierarchy set by governing actors. Accountability is harder to administer, and deregulation is at times pointless. The GCC in its authoritarianism is not unusual, however, these levels of institutionalization marked by sectarianism and skillful will, only continue to increase the robust will and capacity of the state.

Path dependency therefore explains that certain policies enacted by GCC leaders are a reaction to historical outcomes. The creation of Shurah councils and representative bodies while there to appease citizens, are often not a grand necessity in rentier states. Therefore, arguments around civil in the Gulf may be perceived as weak, but their creation goes on to demonstrate the role of state in its creation of legislature. Putnam (1993) argues that the increase in civic engagement is likely to bring forward democratization. Social capital can mobilize the public and hold the government accountable, igniting change through trust. Yet, the development of civil society in many Arab states was a form of political liberalization introduced during a period of prolonged economic crisis. The lack of plausibility therefore, has little to do with religious or cultural exceptionalism of the Middle East, and is largely related to the regulatory nature of authoritarianism. Regimes, in an attempt to soothe economic unrest, begin to offer citizens
alternatives to democratic freedom, assisting in the development of civil society for their own benefit.

The growth of civil society in many Middle Eastern states is often a top down approach enacted by regimes. Many Middle Eastern governments are characterized with participation in civil society. These regimes co-opt groups through policy and reform. Following the 1980 political openings in the region, regimes began to strategize to address the growth of activism. With these political openings, Middle Eastern states saw the emergence of several groups established to hold regimes accountable for issues such as electoral reform or harassment. They were however, quickly eliminated through processes of legal reform. Policies were enacted by regimes to disrupt the growth of civil society. This ‘defensive democratization’ was the primary strategy for regimes to survive instability. Regimes enacted counter terrorism laws to disarm civil groups.

Lastly, one primary example to cement the idea that ‘history matters’ is the creation of the Kuwaiti constitution and legislature. Post British independence, and a looming Iraqi threat, Kuwait began to establish a constitution that forever cemented its ruler as a male, Al-Sabah member, accountable for any elected body. However, with the economic boom in the early 70s, a new merchant class emerged that made the state more independent from society.

The historical transformation that has been most central to shaping Kuwaiti politics in the twentieth century has been the breakdown of the ruling coalition binding the ruler and the trading families and the relegation of the trading families to a bounded, primarily economic role in the private sector, leaving the political arena to the ruler, the ruling family, and shifting allies.
This dynamic however, was then again with the aftermath from the 1979 Iranian Revolution. The Amir of Kuwait then opened up what was the then suspended National Assembly, in order to maintain the Shia minority.

Section 1.2 – Exogenous Shock vs. History

Path dependent arguments should not reign supreme. It is crucial to acknowledge the historical impetus that shaped and formed the state into its current conditions, but path dependency should not become a deterministic characterization of the region. The belief that the state is bound to play out antiquated ideas of economic legacy, sectarianism, or conflict characterizes the region and the monarchies as unamenable to change, which is incorrect. The GCC proved itself as a sustainable group amidst times of turmoil. Its ability to contend in a global market and develop alongside market demands indicates that there are grander narratives than path dependency.

Endogenous and exogenous shocks have an equally large impact in determining the outcome of the state and its policy. Similar to Timur Kuran’s (1989) argument that a spark ignites the region and mobilizes change, Barba Geddes’ article argues the impact of exogenous shock in transition. Shocks firstly relate to global challenges. Energy crises of 1970s for example, created changes in Middle Eastern policy and international relations. Because the world is interconnected, and oil remained a primary export resource for the GCC, changes impacted how states dealt with their citizens. Exogenous and endogenous shocks create situations where states are unable to function, eventually becoming ‘captured’. A captured state is one where private interests override states’ decision making capabilities. As mentioned earlier however, this is less
problematic for the GCC where institutions and external actors all coincide in managing similar interests, and maintaining the monarchy.

But what do shocks tell us and how does that inform our opinions on the Gulf? According to Geddes and her work examining states 20 years post turmoil, economic crises elicit change and democratization. Geddes’ (1994) earlier work challenges the unconventional wisdom that nondemocratic regimes are unable to carry out programs of structural and economic adjustments. Geddes states that “with the second oil crisis in the late 1970s and worsened by the debt crisis, changes in the international economy made it increasingly difficult for governments to supply passable economic performance.” This caused 14 of the military regimes in Latin America and Africa, as well as consumption in communist Europe, to decline. As economic crises increased, conditions decreased, and IMF induced economic reforms worsened conditions alongside market changes. These characteristics are highly indicative of military regimes. Geddes’ work on the assumption that worsening economic conditions often lead to democratization is rational. However, as she goes on to point out personalist regimes, that do not face coups, often withstand the troubles. Additionally, policy in this region cannot be excused from 1980’s structural reforms such as Import Substitution Industrialization, Structural Adjustment Programs/Loans, and the Washington Consensus. This therefore showcasing the tremendous role international institutions and actors have on the outcome of liberalization policy.

To build on previous Kuwaiti dynamics, the decline in oil revenues mid 1980s and post 1990 Iraqi invasion, the state found a way to liberalize. The 1980s-crisis created the reemergence of elites into political life, because their “de-politicization had been contingent on a continuing supply of money from the rulers.” The furthered effect of the Iraqi invasion and a weakened
economy meant “he population was more adamant than ever that from that point on it should be involved in the shaping of the country’s future. The Kuwaiti public wanted the unconditional reinstatement of the national assembly” 73. To appease this, the rulers reopened the national assembly. However, the Kuwaiti National Assembly should not be equated to western standards of strong and over looming civil society. The National Assembly “functioned as an important forum for public debate and was always a source of criticism of the government on important policy issues,” with members of Al-Sabah as participants of the forum 74.

GCC monarchs have learned to endure and maintain endogenous and exogenous shock. Political or economic liberalization are often presented at times when hardship may occur, and these rulers learn to sustain themselves.

Section 2 - State Formation

State formation, like many historical sociologist, IR scholars, and Middle East political scientist will argue, is crucial to understanding why the Arab world is the way it is. Unpacking the impact colonization has had on state formation assists in examining why the monarchs are able to manage their economy in its current way, maintain/establish alliances, and enact ICT policy. State formation, while overly path dependent in its argument, is the crucial precursor to understanding why the management of the region, and the impetuses placed on it legacies of inequality.

Section 2.1 – Colonization

“By and large, both the existence and the character of the monarchies of the Middle East reflect imperial policy in the region”. 75 Aside from Saudi Arabia, the entire Gulf was colonized
by western powers. The influence British rule had on the region is tremendous to understanding the outcome of the state.

Disputing the exceptionality of the Middle East firstly begins with an examination of colonial legacy and state formation. Middle Eastern ‘exceptionality’ – if a narrative desired to be employed – is simultaneously understood and disputed through an understanding of path dependency and leverage. Eugene Rogan\textsuperscript{76} sets out a comprehensive linear history of Middle Eastern emergence into modern statehood. His 2013 work elucidates the mechanisms that set the region in its formative state, while thoroughly explaining the legacies and circumstances that have led Arabs to their current outcome. Starting with Ottomans rule, all the way to the Arabs at the Versailles Peace Conference, Rogan inspects how the presence of foreign sovereignty impacted the Middle East. Whether English or French, the Middle East’s current legacy is cemented in colonization that left Arab leaders with arbitrarily drawn lines of statehood, enduring monarchs, and a Palestinian-Israeli crisis\textsuperscript{77}. Whether the King-Crane Commission, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the Balfour Declaration, or the mandate system, the Middle East was impacted by western presence and involvement. Colonization in the Arab world and post war settlements created Arab states that were “insulated from foreign affairs by their colonial masters. Politics were overwhelmingly domestic, and domestic politics were dominated by the search for national independence”\textsuperscript{78}. Western involvement left Arab states warring within themselves and with others, creating a region characterized by conflict, ‘rivalry’, and ‘factionalism’. According to Hasan Khaldoun Al-Naqeeb, “the purpose of the grand imperial design was not at all to give the area self-rule or constitutional government or unification in any form as political structures to be treated on an equal footing as independent states”\textsuperscript{79}. What Rogan, and other scholars of the Middle East
manage to do is distance Arab exceptionalism from cultural or religious work by situating it instead in a deep history that explains its current conditions. Understanding the impact of history allows for the critiquing of Arab studies scholars who favor exceptionality.

History explains why Arab states are indentured; all other arguments add to misconceptions around exceptionality. An indentured region meant the unequal distribution of power, wealth, and resource. Historical factors create legacies of patronage, linking capital to individuals. What shapes the Arab region, whether monarchy or republic, has little to do with cultural exceptionality as Samuel Huntington, Hisham Sharabi, or Michael Hudson’s work may suggest. The writing of these three scholars viewed Arab endurance, or the endurance of authoritarianism, as religious or cultural traits exceptional to the Middle East. Yet, both Lisa Anderson and Eva Bellin view the endurance of powers in the Middle East as branches of state strength. Anderson explains the endurance of Arab regimes, primarily monarchies, as rulers who have “taken advantage of the ideological and structural dictates of modernization to rid themselves of an independent religious establishment”. Anderson notes that monarchs are like European nation builders in their ability to consolidate central control through ‘coercion and extraction’. This personifies Saudi endurance. The Arab monarchy has managed to cement itself through the creation of systems that sustain its power. Bellin also explains the endurance of Arab leaders, or the lack of democratization, as capacity, which is “state’s capacity to maintain a monopoly on the means of coercion” and willingness, which is the desire to “crush reform initiatives”, within the state.

These legacies of state formation and colonialism explain the particularly of the GCC. Despite the sectarian conflicts, crony capitalism, or tribal networks the six states still have ‘modernist’ ambitions. Education and literacy are high these monarchies, more than the Arab
republics, technology is accessible to around 90% of the citizens, and there are high rates of urbanization\textsuperscript{89}. According to Seymour Lipset’s theory on modernization, which states that “the various aspects of economic development — industrialization, urbanization, wealth and education — are so closely interrelated as to form one major factor which has the political correlate of democracy”\textsuperscript{90}, the Arab states, according to three factors mentioned above should exhibit democratic convergence. However, that is not the case. The colonial and post-colonial state was the driver of socio-economic change as opposed to the citizens and this is largely derived from the impact the British colonization and stipends had on the state and the administrative bodies\textsuperscript{91}.

This shared legacy of colonization – sans Saudi – and identity, meant that the establishment of a joint network was logical for the six monarchies of the Gulf. Officially, the grander reason why this council was created, was to ensure stability and security in these monarchies post 1979 Iranian revolution\textsuperscript{92}. The Gulf Corporation Council was established May 26, 1981. “The GCC was primarily designed to protect the stability, security, and progress of the region”\textsuperscript{93}. The six member states of the GCC are all “Arab Muslim with a tribal core and strong family loyalties that extend between the various Sheikhdoms, whose leading families look upon each other as cousins”\textsuperscript{94}. “In the Gulf Cooperation Council states, it is extended families that govern; the monarchs are part of a larger corporate ruling body and their power depends on political balances within their families”\textsuperscript{95}.

The creation of the council heavily relies on security and protection of the shared borders. “In 1984, the GCC defense ministers agreed on the creation of a two-brigade (10,000-man) Peninsula Shield Force”\textsuperscript{96}. The main aim of the force is to “be able to provide a solution anywhere on [GCC] territory in case of attack by an enemy”\textsuperscript{97}. 

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The council is marked with high influx of foreign labor, significant oil reserves, and a large public sector\textsuperscript{98} \textit{(See figure 1A in appendix A)}. Shared history, economics, exaggerated roles of kinship, ally networks\textsuperscript{99}, and the Peninsula Shield Force establish the GCC as coalition with joint objectives. While many of these characteristics are expandable to Arab republics, it is the relative advantage of resources, allies, coalition, and sovereignty that merit the success of the council and its longevity. These factors then tie into the economic health of the state. The coagulation of these factors evolves state powers into mechanisms of control often found in authoritarian regimes.

\textit{Section 2.2 – Networks}

The GCC reigns advantageous in its ally network. The early creation of the council meant that an integrated network with similar objectives could coexist and govern. Despite the turbulent relationship GCC states may have with one another\textsuperscript{100}, the council still forms a strong coalition during the perception of external or internal threat. These strong bonds have little to do with altruistic motives and are tactical forms of threat deterrence. GCC states safeguard the stability of their council members in order to protect their interests. This is demonstrated in the Bahrain scenario below. The GCC’s network is further coagulated to dissipate external threats – namely Iran. Strong Saudi involvement in the region “is part of a larger scheme to isolate Iran, including fighting a proxy conflict in Syria”\textsuperscript{101}. GCC states desire religious steadiness in the region, thus, struggling with Iran to tame sectarian catalysts\textsuperscript{102}.

Even with the existence of the Arab League\textsuperscript{103} and the African Union\textsuperscript{104}, Arab republics still lack supportive networks. Monarchy intervention in republics can signal the establishment of strong state ties but monarchy intervention in republics are often strategic maneuvers that do not
directly benefit leadership or prolong Arab republics. Saudi Arabia’s intervention in Yemen, for example, is an attempt at securing its state’s borders and hampering the growth of Houthi, Shia rebel, parties\textsuperscript{105}. Saudi Arabia, while may be perceived as an ally to the state, also has costly incentives in assuring how the crises in Yemen pans out.

Principally, the party system in Arab republics proves troublesome for MENA unification. The lack of party system, while possibly detrimental to internal democracy, proves advantageous for GCC states, but is not palpable to Arab republics. The many parties and ideologies\textsuperscript{106} existent in Arab republics makes unification amongst North African states relatively difficult. “Party institutions determine the durability of authoritarianism\textsuperscript{107},” and in the republics, multiple parties play a significant role in the management of the state. The multiparty system diminishes a state’s capacity for control and could alter leader longevity. The clashing ‘wills’ of parties within and between Arab republics reduces chances for unification and strong ally networks.

Non-regional alliances networks are vital to the stabilization of authoritarianism in monarchies. GCC states have strong support networks from Western allies. “Arab authoritarian regimes are deeply embedded within a unipolar but rapidly shifting international system, and depend on international, primarily American, support for their survival”\textsuperscript{108}. The Arab Spring in “Gulf states was even more threatening to American hegemony than the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt because the states bordering the Gulf contain about two-thirds of the world’s proven oil reserves and a third of the proven natural gas reserves (see figure 19A in appendix A). They are also home to major U.S. army bases, are key buyers of Western arms, and are increasingly important trading partners with significant investments in Western economies.”\textsuperscript{109}
The Arab Spring in “Gulf states were even more threatening to American hegemony than the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt because the states bordering the Gulf contain about two-thirds of the world’s proven oil reserves and a third of the proven natural gas reserves. They are also home to major U.S. army bases, key buyers of Western arms and increasingly important trading partners with significant investments in Western economies”\textsuperscript{110}.

The US highly values the stability of the GCC, and GCC states are aware that in times of perceived threat, these grand allies will align with their interests\textsuperscript{111}. EU and GCC relations further fuel the patronage of the current monarchies. Trade amongst the two regions is notably high (\textit{see figure 14A in appendix A})\textsuperscript{112} making EU states strong supporters of monarchs. Western allies strongly support GCC stability because it assures a reliable oil supply, and is an attempt at minimizing Islamist threat\textsuperscript{113}.

What then merits western support and why are Arab republics lacking? Ties between the west and the republics has not dissipated. The Obama administration and congress are supportive of the transitions occurring in Tunisia\textsuperscript{114}. “U.S. economic assistance to Egypt is increasingly uncertain, and changes to military aid are underway. An extremely difficult period in Egypt, marked by brutal repression, economic deterioration, and escalating violence, has contributed to difficulties in U.S.-Egypt relations and challenges in implementing some assistance programs”\textsuperscript{115}; and yet despite that, the Obama administration continued to provide assistance to Egypt. Western support to republics is relatively lacking largely due to the resource that can be extrapolated from GCC states at lower social\textsuperscript{116} costs. These monarchies are less troublesome than republics and western allies feel assured that cash flow will remain even in times of crisis.
GCC countries have the collective will and capacity to remain authoritarian. This super PAC of monarchies manages to form a mutually beneficial relationship where states not only support each other, but ensure stability amongst their allies for self-interest. Western states also have a legacy of maintaining stability in the region. They have formed strong alliances with these monarchs that directly benefit their state interests. The coercive powers of international support networks generate an image that stability overrides democratic freedom and attempts against the regime can be quickly annihilated with regional and international shows of force.

Section 2.3 – The Bahraini Example

One of the primary reasons why the Arab Spring was unsuccessful in Bahrain is due to regional dynamics. The location and history that surrounds the GCC region have made it a pawn for many actors. Three primary states affect the outcome of Bahrain’s political formations. The vested interests of Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United States make it difficult for Bahrain to yield the same results as Egypt.

When protest broke out in Bahrain, GCC states rallied behind their council member in order to ensure stability. “GCC countries, operating under the Peninsula Security Shield, entered Bahrain. They were made of 1,000 Saudis, 500 Emiratis, and a small number of Qatars”. The armed entrance into Bahrain was crucial to Saudi Arabia’s stability as it discouraged rebellion by Shia majorities in provinces close to Bahraini borders. Saudi Arabia has much to lose if political instability erupts in Bahrain. “Fears of follow up protests in the Eastern Province made Saudi Arabia send troops to Bahrain”. Additionally, majority of Shiite Saudis reside in the eastern provinces of Al Qatif and Al Hasa, which are some
of the closest provinces to Bahrain. Saudi’s attempts to maintain stability in Bahrain also comes at
the expense of maintaining stability within their own country\textsuperscript{120}.

There are also strong economic ties that govern the bond between the two states. It is
historically known that Bahrain is extremely dependent on revenue from Saudi Arabia.

Bahrain derives most of its oil production from the shared Abu Safa offshore field, from
which Riyadh grants 50 percent of revenues to Manama. Bahraini refineries are supplied
with Saudi crude oil at discounted prices. This amounts to a direct Saudi subsidization of
the Bahraini budget. The Bahraini tourism and banking sectors largely depend on Saudi
visitors and deposits, and do so even more after the uprising in Bahrain since 2011 led to
the departure of many Western banks and a drop-in tourist numbers. The sixteen-mile
causeway that links Bahrain to the Saudi mainland facilitates mutual trade and travel and
is crossed by eighteen million every year\textsuperscript{121}. Inaugurated in 1986, the causeway has become
a vital lifeline for both sides, but one of the purposes of the causeway has always been to
enable Saudi troops to roll over in case of a perceived emergency\textsuperscript{122}.

Primarily, Saudi intervention exists to keep what it deems as political stability, in the region\textsuperscript{123}. Saudi Arabia does not want to tip the tides in favor of Iranian agenda.

Historically, there have been many documented incidents with Iran and Bahrain. In
addition to Iran claiming that Bahraini is one of its former provinces\textsuperscript{124}, there have been numerous
cases that state protestors’ alliances to Iranian agendas. According to the BICI\textsuperscript{125} there have been
several allegations made by the government of Bahrain against Iran. The 2011 BICI report states:

The Government of Bahrain (GoB) has asserted that the Islamic Republic of Iran
intervened in the domestic affairs of Bahrain during the events of February and March
2011. The GoB’s position on this matter has been articulated publicly on numerous occasions by various high-level Bahraini officials. The GoB has reiterated its position during meetings held with the Commission.

The GoB has contended that the Iranian Government employed a variety of media outlets to influence the progression of demonstrations in Bahrain during the events of February and March 2011 and to broadcast what is described as false information about developments in Bahrain. Claims have also been made that Iranian operatives launched websites and pages on internet social media platforms, such as Facebook, calling for the removal of the political system of Bahrain and inciting protesters to resort to violence.

Bahrain and neighboring GCC states have taken very public anti-Iran views, claiming the country had multiple forms of involvement in the events that occurred. This perceived threat of Iranian intrusion lead to the interference of GCC troops.¹²⁶

“Fast-forwarding into the present, Iran and the Gulf monarchies, especially Saudi Arabia, still struggle for power and influence in the region”¹²⁷. Bahrain has become the playing ground for Iran and Saudi Arabia to express their desires of maintaining regional control. Each actor has vested interest in the outcome of the protests, making Bahrain a pawn for sectarianism conflict.¹²⁸

The Obama administration has taken a low-profile stance on the protests occurring in Bahrain. President Obama only spoke of the human rights incidents occurring in Bahrain on few occasions. The rhetoric used to describe action made by the Bahraini government has been polite and nonexistent. Despite the numerous human rights violations that have been noted by the BICI, the Obama administration continued to arms sales to Bahrain¹²⁹. Essentially, the Obama
administration will not be as critical of the violations in Bahrain as it is of Egypt because of the regional and naval interests it has in the state.

The formation and presence of these alliances make ICTs tools somewhat useless. “Internet freedom will be shaped by pre-Internet policies and alliances”\textsuperscript{130}. Third party actors such as GCC countries, Britain\textsuperscript{131}, US, and Saudi Arabia specifically, will portray Bahraini protest news in ways that are in their interests. “A widespread perception among critics of Western policy in the region is that not only governments but also the international media (including, in this case, Al Jazeera) have applied a double standard in Bahrain,” and this because Bahrain is a crucial ally to these states and it is in their best interest to keep Bahrain stable and anti-Iran\textsuperscript{132}. Iranian news outlets portrayed the events in Bahrain as atrocious acts because it is in their benefit to have pro-Iranian discourse govern. Media coverage will fluctuate or falter depending on what is crucial to the interest of the state. ICTs are therefore just a tool that plays part in preexisting alliances and political conditions. ICTs are not a tool of disruption or deregulation. ICTs can only function in the policies that govern the state and its allies.

United States benefits in the case of Bahrain taking a stance in favor of the monarchy. Sectarianism is not an issue for the US. The US’ main concern is maintaining stability in the region and ensuring the success of its own agenda. “This is part of a larger scheme to isolate Iran, including fighting a proxy conflict in Syria, and the United States and the EU therefore do not heavily pressure their allies in the Gulf to tame sectarianism”\textsuperscript{133}. US have further interest in Bahrain due to the country’s hosting of the Navy’s Fifth Fleet. Additionally, the political balance on Bahrain was a fundamental concern to US politics because of the oil reserves.
**Section 3 - Economic Development**

Economic development in the region, the abundance of oil, the establishment of business, and plethora of factors related resource, strengthened the GCC monarchs. The states developed their economies in ways that sustain social welfare and manage citizens. The region is far from perfection, however the ability to provide certain goods enables the state to endure. The utilization of oil as a primary resource, creates strong fiscal health. This fiscal health provides GCC monarchies with the capacity to maintain themselves. Economic development is the largest underpinning to explaining why the region can endure. Through oil and rentier-ism the state is able to shape policy in ways that protect it.

**Section 3.1 - Oil and Treaties**

GCC states have the advantage of decreasing democratic desires by exerting their fiscal powers. “Gulf monarchies are important to the world economy. They produce a little over 20 percent of the world’s oil and possess about 30 percent of its oil reserves. Moreover, they hold most of the world’s spare oil-production capacity—that is, they have the ability to raise production quickly”\(^{134}\). A substantial portion of GCC wealth derives from natural gas and oil reserves (see figure 2A and 19A in appendix A).

With revenues derived from these resources monarchies have diversified their portfolios, expanding their reach and power, enlarging their coercive apparatus. “Gulf states have advanced a dynamic capitalism that not only transformed the Middle East but played a large role in globalization”\(^{135}\). “Saudi Arabia, for example, has nearly $700 billion in foreign assets under government control”\(^{136}\), making them less dependent on oil revenues for future security. Even with
increases in oil ‘breakeven’ price, “oil monarchies will not face a serious economic crisis over the next five years. While there are real economic concerns, the problems are not nearly as daunting as those of the transitional Arab states.”

GCC monarachies are further characterized with numerous state owned enterprises (SOE). These enterprises function as apparatuses of the state, and continue to exist due to the large amounts of capital in the region. “These initiatives were necessary for the initial growth of the state, however “boards are recruited on the basis of seniority from a fairly small circle of elites, and are staffed with directors who often have little spare time and, despite wide general experience, limited specialized expertise” . These high levels of institutionalization can cause dissatisfaction with the regime. Yet, due to the relatively smaller population size of GCC monarchies, allocation of wealth, large numbers of public employees, low levels of unemployment (see figure 17A and 18A in appendix A), and strong fiscal health, GCC monarchies enjoy larger capacities in maintaining power and weaker resilience.

Arab republics do not lack resources. Though their reserves might not be as large as some monarchies, they still have tremendous wealth (see figure 19A in appendix A). Republics often rank close behind monarchies in terms of competitiveness and productivity (see figure 15A and 16A in appendix A). Despite these abundance of natural resources, Arab republics mismanaged their wealth. “Libya’s Muammar al-Qaddafi lost power despite sitting atop large oil fields. Leaders must not only have these resources, but also expend them wisely by pacifying sectors of potential opposition and mobilizing public support. For this task of coalition-building, monarchies wield no intrinsic advantage. Oil-rich kingships in Iraq (1958) and Iran (1979) suffered deposal by
committing the same violent repression and corrupt personalism as did the Arab Spring’s republican victims”\(^{142}\).

Fiscal health further means that states deriving their wealth from resources have the capacity to sustain “robust expenditures on their security apparatuses”\(^{143}\). Even in incidents where states face times of economic downturn, the security apparatus can remain loyal to the regime and become the physical presence of state stability. A state’s inability to keep the security apparatus satisfied could then cause it to lose the capacity of control, despite the willingness to hold onto power. The fiscal health tied with the satisfied militaries ensures regime longevity.

The robustness of fiscal health as its use a coercive power was apparent in Iraq under the 1990 sanctions. “The UN Security Council imposed comprehensive economic sanctions against Iraq on August 6, 1990, after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. When the coalition war had ousted Iraq from Kuwait the following year, the Council did not lift the sanctions, keeping them in place as leverage to press for Iraqi disarmament and other goals. The sanctions remained in place thereafter, despite a harsh impact on innocent Iraqi civilians”\(^{144}\). The severity of the events ought to have mobilized domestic and international pressure to dispose of the regime. However, the regime maintained its power and crony capitalism continued. The state in this instance was aware of the added importance of maintaining fiscal health through the security apparatus. Therefore, in authoritarian regimes, military expenditure often encompasses a large part of the state’s budget (\textit{see figure 11A-13A in appendix A}) while “government spending on education and welfare remain flat”\(^{145}\). Insuring the capacity of the military is a financial strain on states. The grip Arab republics had on their militaries was gradually declining, and the Arab Spring then became the breaking point that ended military ties in some republics. Arab monarchies however, can sustain the fiscal
demands longer than republics due to their larger capacity threshold. The larger wealth reserves ensure militaries in these states by creating docile employees.

Fiscal health is further tied to other development indicators. GCC states have higher rates of literacy and lower rates of unemployment compared to other states in the region (see figure 3A, 4A, 17A, and 18A in appendix A). These conditions attribute to the successful fiscal health of the state, which in turn increase state capacity. Elevated standards of living can be utilized as a means of subduing the public, trading democratic freedoms as opportunity costs of good economic conditions (see figure 7A in appendix A). “Since 2011, Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf kingdoms — and for that matter, non-monarchical Algeria — have spent hundreds of billions of dollars for programs ranging from cash grants and salary increases to developmental projects and job creation. The logic is simple: well-fed citizens with well-paying jobs do not revolt. Those that do can be effectively branded by regime spinsters as radicals and terrorists”\textsuperscript{146}. Essentially, the robust amounts of wealth attained by these states, due to historical advantages and access to resources, allow them to guide the outcome of state life and procedure. The fiscal health buys the military thus buying support.

**Section 4 – Mobilization**

The Arab world is not impenetrable to change. The region, and its monarchies, have had expansive histories of mobilization and civil disobedience. The monarchies, unlike the republics, did not witness their rulers depart. The ability to quiet down dissent is a characteristic strongly emblematic of the six states. Whether carrot or stick, the Arab monarchies chose to maintain, and exert all means necessary to do so.
Section 4.1 – Legacies of Protest

The region is not new mobilization and discontent. The Arab Spring, while the more publicized and visible forms of political decent, is only one incident that characterizes public dissatisfaction. The Arab world, and the GCC specifically, have had several incidences that showcase government dissatisfaction. Within these mobilized efforts however, the monarchs cemented. Incidents of protest, torture, violence, and unlawful imprisonment are highly emblematic of the Arab world and the GCC. However, what the Arab monarchs are able to do, is quell and cover up dissent through economic wealth.

Bahrain has had a tumultuous history of political uprising, not only by the Shia majority in the eighties, but by leftist liberals as well. “In December 1981, a group baptized al-Jabha al-Islamiyya li Tahrir al-Bahrain [The Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain] unsuccessfully attempted to carry out a coup d'état in Bahrain”\textsuperscript{147}. There was also a “period of sustained popular mobilization from 1994 onwards that did not stop until 2000–2001, when then new King Hamad reached out to the opposition groups, brought them back from exile, and promised profound political reforms, which were supposed to follow a National Action Charter”.

There has long been a governing rhetoric in Bahrain that expresses displeasure with the monarchy and the state of affairs. Bahrain has always been a state of contentious politics. The subjugation inflicted on the different subsets of Shiite and Sunni Muslims in Bahrain, by the government, lead to a string of political protests every 10 years. The protests that had occurred often had “urban Sunnis and urban Shia unite above ethnic and religious differences”. The main goals of several of these protests were political and economic liberalization and reform\textsuperscript{148}. The
conditions that took place February 2011 however, were much different than the events that unfolded previously in Bahrain.

Section 4.2 – The 2011 Arab Spring

It is in the public sphere where “state control might be fundamentally challenged”\textsuperscript{149}. The MENA region does have a record with mobilization and challenges to the regime\textsuperscript{150}. Historically, the majority of protests that occurred called for and yielded reformation instead of regime change. Dissatisfaction with regimes in the region is well documented, but up until the 2011 Arab Spring, nothing equated to the magnitude of human mobilization and demand for regime upheaval. Mobilization in the region was kept under control because states firstly had the capacity to exercise military force in order to stop protestors. Secondly, states had the additional will of passing legislation that would prohibit antigovernment sentiments. The Arab spring proved to be exceptional because some republics lost the capacity and will to hamper mobilization, while the monarchies showcased continued resilience.

The use of physical force is a capacity employed by regimes in order to quell protests. During the Arab Spring, some states resorted to the use of force, while others did not. Military response towards these protests largely relates to levels of institutionalization within the military. The decision to use force differed in the MENA region. “In Syria and Bahrain, the officer corps remained untied and did the regimes’ bidding; in Libya and Yemen the troops splintered and some units defected the opposition”\textsuperscript{151}. In Tunis and Egypt militaries chose not to shoot and assisted in the departure of regimes\textsuperscript{152}.
Aside from Libya, and the growing crisis in Syria, the Arab republics of Egypt and Tunisia did not utilize military capacity to quiet reform. This decision not to use violence in these two states reflected military institutional interest rather than state interest. In Tunisia and Egypt “the levels of social mobilization are high, and the costs of repression will be high as well, since using lethal force against large numbers of civilians will come across as illegitimate slaughter”. Lines of patrimony between Tunisian and Egyptian military to the heads of states are relatively weaker than those of the monarchs. Military personnel in these two states did not perform in a way beneficial to the regime, but under internal protocol which assured self-safety. In Bahrain however, ties between militants and the monarch are organized across patrimonial lines, therefore the state legitimized the use of force because the military willingly operated under the guidance of the regime.

GCC monarchies during the Arab Spring did not garner much attention. While states such as Saudi Arabia and Oman saw few instances of protests, UAE and Qatar remained peaceful, and Kuwaiti protests “stemmed from long-running tensions between parliamentary factions and the ruling family rather than any new political demands. Only Bahrain has seen large-scale unrest, but the ruling al-Khalifa clan weathered it, aided by the armed intervention of the Saudi-led Gulf Cooperation Council”. Protest movements were often marked as sectarian agendas (see figure 21A in appendix A) in the GCC, argued to be the doing of Iran, and labeled unlawful. These movements were quickly dispelled by military personnel, who in Bahrain are “patrimonially linked to the monarch (by family and sect), and primordially distinct from the protesters (the lion's share of protesters were Shi'a as was the majority of the population of Bahrain; the military was composed of Bahrainis who were Sunni, as was the king, and the military was bolstered by
mercenaries from abroad who were largely Sunni as well)\textsuperscript{156}. Patrimonial lines in monarchies are significant to the state, especially when protests are marked as ethnic conflicts, and military padding of similar individuals ensure the protection of the state and council. Patrimonial lines, in the instance of the GCC, make militant groups willing parties in the expansion of the state’s capacity because the safety of the state is the safety of the group. The strong institutional ties and characteristics of cronyism and ethnic identity enhance the coercive apparatus. Thus, the more similar the military is to the state, and the stronger the patrimonial lines, the more likely it is to be a tool and an inflictor of coercive power.

Authoritarian regimes further have the willingness to silence opposition. Due to high levels of institutionalization in regimes, states can pass legislation that restricts freedom of speech. States have the added capacity to control how and what content is disseminated. While the entire MENA region lacks political freedoms, Kuwait and Tunisia are partially free (see figure 7A and 8A in appendix A). “Tunisia maintains a broader margin for political speech than many countries in the region. Tunisians can now criticize their government, if not entirely free of the risk of reprisal, far more freely than they could under Ben Ali”\textsuperscript{157}. Monarchies such as Bahrain for instance, have implemented Article 19 of the press law specifying that “it is possible to prohibit the circulation of publication instigating hatred of the political regime, encroaching on the state’s official religion, breaching ethics, encroaching on religions and jeopardizing public peace or raising issues whose publications is prohibited by the provisions of this law”\textsuperscript{158}. States have the institutional capacity to restrict calls for mobilization. Through policy manipulation, states can quell mobilization and deem it unlawful.
Monarchies further attempted to impede mobilization by offering monetary incentives to their citizens. “During the first months of 2011, governments responded to the spread of popular discontent by spending lavishly on pay rises for the public sector, subsidies, and food handouts”\textsuperscript{159}. Financial incentives were a coercive method utilized by the state to disband mobilization and appease citizens. Protests in monarchies were also met with pro-government protests in favor of the monarchy\textsuperscript{160}. Thus, the state, while heavily reliant on the military capacity to quell defection, also has the added advantage of fiscal rewards and pro-government mobilization. The fiscal health of the state directly correlates to restrictions on mobilization; since monarchies enjoy more fiscal health, they can then enforce restrictions on mobilization.

“The severe repressiveness of Arab states long made it extremely costly for individuals to engage in political contestation of any sort.”\textsuperscript{161} Mobilization in authoritarian regimes, specifically Arab states is difficult. Yet, with the Arab Spring the region witnessed mobilization and outward dissatisfaction on unprecedented levels. This mass mobilization was unexpected and can only be defined as a spark\textsuperscript{162} that took over the region. Yet, despite the unruliness of this event, certain regimes managed to weather the strife and survive. “Unlike ruling parties, monarchs can tolerate a wide range of political expression and mediate among various factions without fear of losing their jobs. The people do not vote for kings, kings can, in effect, tolerate them voting for lesser offices”\textsuperscript{163}.
CHAPTER 4
Methodology

Where do ICTs and authoritarianism intercept? As previously noted much of the literature surrounding the Gulf examines the abundance of oil and the impact it has on the management of the state. Literature that goes on to discourage culturalism or religious arguments, analyzes the impact of economic and political reform as tools of liberalization. Thus, literature mainly examines how Gulf states endure and coerce through finance. The aforementioned work is crucial to understanding the characteristics of the six Gulf countries, and is imperative to disputing Arab exceptionalism. This scholarship provides insight into the region and offer analysis into economic development. However, the focus of said scholarly work often overlooks the burgeoning tech systems that are enveloping the Arab world. The literature on the Gulf lacks the examination of ICTs and how they endure regimes. Even literature on ICTs often views these technologies as emancipatory or regulatory tools. Little is therefore said about how ICTs are shaped, and shape, infrastructures of a country. Technology, economics, and policy are highly interwoven to shape regimes and governance.

In the GCC, the impact of the economic substructure and historical legacy of the state has had tremendous impact on the way the state functions. Gulf monarchies are not unique in their absorption of all sectors into the state. The ability to manage civil liberties through the abundance of wealth and resources showcases direct and linear relationships between the availability of resources and state policy. If all sectors are intertwined, and economics shapes ICTs, how can this be studied in context of the Gulf? This research examines said interlock by assessing the relationship between economics and ICTs. This research analyzes policy data in the region and
investigates its outcome. This work builds on scholarly literature that either examined ICTs in the Arab world or authoritarianism. This chapter lays out the methods of research that interlock these two broad areas by studying economic infrastructure that shapes ICT policy. This research becomes the space in between these two broad narratives. *(See Figure 4.1 for a demonstration on how the research was created.)*

*Figure 4.1: Formation of research question and areas of examination*
Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

The abundance of wealth and resources work in favor of the Gulf state. This research hypothesizes that there is an evident relationship between the success of the monarchical regimes and their ability to mobilize wealth, through ICT policy, in order to deter threat or instability. To thoroughly investigate this relationship, this thesis conducts a statistical study cross examining tech policy against factors that could yield change in political openness and freedom. From the data generated, this thesis articulates grander conclusions on the relationship between economics and ICTs in the Gulf.

Concepts

Concepts introduced in this research center around policy, political openness, economic liberalization, political liberalization, and technological freedom. These are not to be confused with the operational definitions later mentioned and utilized to study the data. These conceptual definitions provide an overview that explains how data is gathered, organized, and assessed.

Policy:

Policy in this context is primarily examined with a technical focus. However, policy can be largely understood as the laws and regulations that govern the state and its citizens. This is an examination of how each state manages tech usability, censorship, constitution, penal code, and political landscape (See: Doha Center for Media Freedom, POMED.)

Liberalization:

Liberalization can be best understood as either economic or political liberalization. This subsumes studies of privatization, patron states, government regulation, and reform. Liberalization mostly ascribes to liberalist theory (See Kenneth Walt, Raymond
Hinnesbusch, and Fred Halliday) of openness and deregulation, which view liberalization as a producer of democratization.

- Economic liberalization is best characterized by the removal of controls to generate economic development (See: Ilya Harik, Daniel Brumberg, and Kiren Aziz Chaudhary). This includes privatization, external investment, and labor market flexibility.

- Political liberalization entails openness trickled down from above, allowing citizens the ability to freely express themselves without fear or threat and of punishment. It further includes freedoms of expression and speech (see Adam Przeworski).

**Technology:**

For the context of this research technology is interchangeable with ICTs. As noted previously ICTs encompass areas such as telephones, broadcast media, and all types of audio and video processing and transmission. With the advances in technology ICTs also include social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. Alongside ICTs, there is also the assumption that more tech accessibility will inevitably lead to political freedom and openness. Through these mediums, new avenues exist to articulate discontentment and mobilization.

**Hypotheses**

The main research question of this thesis is:

**RQ:** How does the economic infrastructure of the GCC shape ICT policy?

*Hypothesis include:
\( H_1 \): Economic downturn yields periods of political liberalization and openness.

\( H_0 \): Changes in economic conditions have no impact on monarchy ICT liberalization.

\( H_2 \): The Arab Spring, and its economic baseline of frustration, caused tightening in ICT regulation and control.

\( H_0 \): The Arab Spring was not a driver of change in tech policy.

\( H_3 \): Developments in ICT do not yield change in political openness and are often met with harsher restrictions.

\( H_0 \): The introduction of newly formed ICTs creates sustained periods of political openness.

**Building and Organizing the Sample**

Data is compiled from 2000-2016 to demonstrate changes pre, during, and post Arab Spring, highlighting factors that influence state. The data cross examines areas of divergence and commonality between the six GCC states. Characteristics of examination include:

- **Tech policy** – censorship, legislation, freedoms, access to content, digital divide, etc.
- **Accessibility and Infrastructure** – physical and civil
- **Liberties** – civil, political, freedom of speech, etc.
- **Economic indicators** - GDP, GINI, GNP, growth
- **Demographics**.

Data was gathered from multiple sources in order to cross examine the accuracy of information provided. To examine the relationship within Arab states, this research employs secondary analysis gathered from a variety of sources including CIA fact book, World Bank, UNDP, POMED, CSIS, Freedom House, Carnegie Endowment, MEI, and the Doha Center for
Media Freedom. This research utilizes second party work as it provides stronger measures of development in the GCC. This data is best characterized as ordinal and aggregate statistics of regional figures.

This researcher firstly collected data from Freedom House by accessing archival figures. Data provided by Freedom House rated countries based on political rights, civil liberties, and status. This researcher than compiled data on GCC states through the World Bank, but then cross examined the figures with data from The Global Economy. Data was gathered to provide a holistic view of GCC states overtime. Post data collection, details were used to demonstrate change over time. This research, prior to processing, organized data by the aforementioned categories.

**Processing and Operational Variables**

Through statistical research, this research takes a single method approach to examine the impact of economic growth on ICTs. Data was processed and examined through SPSS statistics. Through time pool series and correlation matrices, the relationship between ICT policy and economics is analyzed.

Operational variables for this data are categorized into independent and dependent variables. Freedom House’s metrics for changes in openness largely remain the dependent variable studied. All other factors are categorized as independent variables that alter net freedom.

*Operational Variables – Independent*

**GDP (current US$) [GDP]:**
“GDP at purchaser’s prices is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or for depletion and degradation of natural resources”. (World Bank, 2017)

**Mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people) [MobilePhoneSubsPer100]:**

“Mobile cellular telephone subscriptions are subscriptions to a public mobile telephone service that provide access to the PSTN using cellular technology. The indicator applies to all mobile cellular subscriptions that offer voice communications. It excludes subscriptions via data cards or USB modems, subscriptions to public mobile data services, private trunked mobile radio, tele-point, radio paging and telemetry services”. (International Telecomm Union, 2017)

**Internet users (per 100 people) [InternetUserPer100]:**

“Internet users are individuals who have used the Internet (from any location) in the last 3 months. Internet can be used via a computer, mobile phone, personal digital assistant, games machine, digital TV etc.”. (International Telecomm Union, 2017)

**High-technology exports (% of manufactured exports) [HighTechExport]:**

“High-technology exports are products with high R&D intensity, such as in aerospace, computers, pharmaceuticals, scientific instruments, and electrical machinery”. (International Telecomm Union, 2017)

**ICT goods exports (% of total goods exports) [ICTGoodsExported]:**

“Information and communication technology goods exports include computers and peripheral equipment, communication equipment, consumer electronic equipment,
electronic components, and other information and technology goods (miscellaneous)”.

(UNCTAD, 2017)

ICT goods imports (% total goods imports) [ICTGoodsImported]:

“Information and communication technology goods imports include computers and peripheral equipment, communication equipment, consumer electronic equipment, electronic components, and other information and technology goods (miscellaneous)”.

(UNCTAD, 2017)

Arab Spring [ArabSpring]:

Coded for the years post Arab Spring when protests/mobilization against regimes occurred.

2008 Market Crash [HousingCrisis]:

Investigated over a five-year period (2009-2013), this marker measures the effect of the 2008 market crash that trickled into the GCC from the US housing bubble.

Death of Leaders [Leaders]:

Coded for years where Arab rulers had passed away.

Overall Globalization [Globalization]:


Unemployment [Unemployment]:

“The share of the labor force that is without work but available for and seeking employment.” (TheGlobalEconomy, 2017)

Youth Unemployment, ages 15-24 [YouthUnemployment]:

**Voice and Accountability index (-2.5 weak; 2.5 strong) [VoiceAcct]:**

“This captures perceptions of the extent to which the citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media.” (TheGlobalEconomy, 2017)

**Political Stability index (-2.5 weak; 2.5 strong) [PolStability]:**

The stability of the political conditions (TheGlobalEconomy, 2017)

**Government Effectiveness index (-2.5 weak; 2.5 strong) [GovtEffectiveness]:**

“Captures perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies.” (TheGlobalEconomy, 2017)

**Control of Corruption (-2.5 weak; 2.5 strong) [ControlOfCorruption]:**

“The index for Control of Corruption captures perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as capture of the state by elites and private interests.” (TheGlobalEconomy, 2017)

**Oil Production, thousand barrels per day [OilProd]:**

“Includes the production of crude oil (including lease condensate), natural gas plant liquids, and other liquids, and refinery processing gain. Negative values indicate a net refinery processing loss.” (TheGlobalEconomy, 2017)

**Oil Consumption, thousand barrels per day [OilConsume]:**
“Oil consumption (Total petroleum consumption) includes internal consumption, refinery fuel and loss, and bunkering. Also, included, where available, is direct combustion of crude oil.” (TheGlobalEconomy, 2017)

**Oil Reserves, billion barrels [OilReserves]:**

“Proved reserves of crude oil are the estimated quantities of all liquids defined as crude oil, which geological and engineering data demonstrate with reasonable certainty to be recoverable in future years from reservoirs under existing economic and operating conditions.” (TheGlobalEconomy, 2017)

**Foreign Direct Investment (% of GDP) [FDI]:**

“Foreign direct investment are the net inflows of investment to acquire a lasting management interest (10 percent or more of voting stock) in an enterprise operating in an economy other than that of the investor. It is the sum of equity capital, reinvestment of earnings, other long-term capital, and short-term capital as shown in the balance of payments. This series shows net inflows (new investment inflows less disinvestment) in the reporting economy from foreign investors, and is divided by GDP.” (TheGlobalEconomy, 2017)

**War Risk, (1=low, 7=high) [WarRisk]:**

“War risk covers the risks of external conflicts and the risks of domestic political violence. Domestic political violence includes terrorism, civil unrest, socio-economic conflicts, racial and ethnic tension and the extreme case of civil war. Countries are classified into seven categories (from 1-low risk to 7-high risk) reflecting the intensity of war risk.” (TheGlobalEconomy, 2017)
Economic Freedom Overall Index (0-100) [EconomicFreedom]:

“The Overall index of economic freedom has ten components grouped into four broad categories: Rule of Law; Limited Government; Regulatory Efficiency and Open Markets. The overall economic freedom is scored on a scale of 0 to 100, where 100 represents the maximum freedom.” (TheGlobalEconomy, 2017)

Operational Variables – Dependent

Freedom House Score (1 = best, 7 = worst) [FreedomRtg]:

“PR stands for Political Rights, CL stands for Civil Liberties, and Status refers to the Freedom Status. Political Rights and Civil Liberties are measured on a one-to-seven scale, with one representing the highest degree of Freedom and seven the lowest. F, PF, and NF, stand for Free, Partly Free, and Not Free”.

Freedom house scores regarding political and net freedom are measured on the basis of:

- “Obstacles to Access details infrastructural and economic barriers to access, legal and ownership control over internet service providers, and independence of regulatory bodies;
- Limits on Content analyzes legal regulations on content, technical filtering and blocking of websites, self-censorship, the vibrancy/diversity of online news media, and the use of digital tools for civic mobilization;
- Violations of User Rights tackles surveillance, privacy, and repercussions for online speech and activities, such as imprisonment, extralegal harassment, or cyberattacks.” (Freedom House, 2017)
Analysis

Research will therefore be conducted on an aggregate of outputted data. Because these measures do not account for linear progression, the following chapter on data analysis will organize findings alongside the author’s own conducted research as well as reports from Freedom House, the World Bank, and other sources to provide as comprehensive an overview on how events unfolded in the region and policy altered alongside developments.

Data gathered is organized across categories researched. Data organization is based on theoretical and analytical findings. The following chapter will therefore be formatted to state whether the research conducted demonstrates or refutes the hypothesis. Data categorization is largely centered around the examination and development of the dependent variable. Through the research, ICT policy and economic substructures will be cross examined.

Acknowledgements

This author is fully responsible for mistakes in data collection and reporting. Inaccuracies in the analysis are the author’s own and are indicative of reporting failures.
CHAPTER 5  
Data Analysis

Through data collected, the relationship between the economic infrastructures of the GCC and ICT policy are demonstrated. This chapter cross examines numerical analyses alongside legislation provided by Freedom House and the Doha Center for Media, to note where policy and economics evolve simultaneously. This chapter pins infrastructure with ICTs, showing how regimes are able to upgrade authoritarianism through the digital realm. Through statistical analysis, this research demonstrates the relationship between economics and ICTs in correlation tables and linear regression models. Statistical data is therefore utilized to dispel cultural myths through quantifiable evidence.

As noted earlier, the main research question and hypotheses in this work concerns the relationship between ICTs and economic infrastructure.

The main research question of this thesis is:

**RQ:** How does the economic infrastructure of the GCC shape ICT policy?

**Hypothesis include:**

**H₁:** Economic downtown yields periods of political liberalization and openness.

**H₀:** Changes in economic conditions have no impact on monarchy ICT liberalization.

**H₂:** The Arab Spring, and its economic baseline of frustration, caused tightening in ICT regulation and control.

**H₀:** The Arab Spring was not a driver of change in tech policy.

**H₃:** Developments in ICT do not yield change in political openness and are often met with harsher restrictions.
**H₀:** The introduction of newly formed ICTs creates sustained periods of political openness.

Prior to the analysis of the data, this research lines out key events that took place in the region. Throughout these historical markers, fluctuation in data indicators such as GDP, FDI, unemployment, etc., can be better contextualized. The figure below shows the time line of key events that took place in the region, and are major markers for linear regression and correlation tables. The events highlighted in blue represent the specific cases studied within this research. Additionally, prior to the analysis of this data, the Sultanate of Oman must be noted as an outlier. Freedom House’s rating from 2000-2016 has Oman at a stagnant 5.5 score on the freedom scale (7 is the worst). The lack of fluctuations in this ranking, mean that Oman is perceived as a non-developing state. However, over the years Oman had instances of gradual loosening and parliamentary elections. This lack of change speaks more to the limitations of Freedom House’s ranking and its lack of complexity rather than Oman’s inability to evolve. These limitations of Freedom House’s scale, amongst other markers, are discussed in greater deal in the concluding chapter.
Linear Data Analysis

The overall findings demonstrate the relationship between ICTs and economic infrastructures in the Gulf and support the hypothesis. This research began by conducting linear regressions of several variables over time. Through pool times series analysis, the relationship between the Freedom House rating (dependent variable) and death of leaders, the 2008 market crash, and the Arab Spring (independent variables) is evident.

The loss of leaders was an index measured to assess whether or not leaders had a direct impact on the formation of policy. This research was conducted to primarily investigate how do sole actors impact political freedom. In Bahrain following the death of Sheikh Isa Al Khalifa in 1999, his heir and son King Hamad took power and transformed the island into a monarchy,
enacted liberalization policies, and released political prisoners. The Durbin Watson statistic of 1.424 approaches the optimum of 2, indicating that this measure does a good job detrending the time series. The adjusted r squared is also statistically significant at 0.848, indicating that there is a strong relationship and a statistically significant predictor. In the UAE however, the Durbin Watson statistic was at 0.670 with a low adjusted r square of 0.067 that did not have much of an impact. This result might not bear as much significance as Bahrain, because the death of Sheikh Zayed Al Nahyan in 2004 was largely felt in his emirate of Abu Dhabi, despite his 33-year presidency. Lastly in Saudi Arabia, two deaths occurred in 2005 and 2015. Saudi kings in both years had passed away. The Durbin Watson statistic was at 0.548 with an adjusted r square of 0.20. The overall impact of leaders passing in these three states over a 16-year time span showcases that individual actors carry some weight in impacting the state.

Table 1: Linear Regression of Leader Loss

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>R Square Change</th>
<th>Durbin Watson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Cases</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>0.339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>0.825</td>
<td>0.848</td>
<td>1.424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.086</td>
<td>0.548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another event that’s reach expanded and impacted the world was the 2008 market crash. Following the burst of the housing bubble in the United States, and the 2007 crisis in the subprime mortgage market, the GCC economies took a hit. In the 2008 summit, GCC leaders gathered\textsuperscript{165} to discuss the impact of the financial crisis on the region. Figure 5.2 below shows the impact of the
2008 financial crisis on the markets of the GCC, specifically the hit Kuwait and UAE GDP had taken. The collective Durbin Watson score for all states was 0.260, but when evaluating each country on its own, Bahrain had a score of 0.393 with an adjusted r squared of 0.031, Kuwait a score of 1.00 with an adjusted r squared of 0.096, Saudi Arabia a score of 1.03 with an adjusted r square of 0.556, and UAE of 0.958 with an adjusted r squared of 0.333. The UAE market, took a big hit following the economic crisis, but through diversification of portfolios, the seven emirates managed to rally and persevere, with projects continuing to develop.

Table 2: Linear Regression of Housing Crisis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Crisis</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>R Square Change</th>
<th>Durbin Watson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Cases</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>0.393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.375</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.111</td>
<td>0.458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>0.556</td>
<td>0.556</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>0.286</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>0.958</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One of the last metrics investigated through time pool series analysis is the impact of the Arab Spring on ICT policy. The 2011 protests that began with the self-immolation of one Tunisian young man, set off a ‘spark’ in the region, whose aftermath is still felt today. The current crisis in Syria, the removal of three Arab leaders (Ben Ali, Mubarak, and Gadhafi), and the weekly protests in Bahrain indicate that the outcomes of these events heavily reverberated throughout the region. The underlying cause of economic dissatisfaction, decreased social wealth, increases in unemployment (see figure 5.3 for progression over time) and youth unemployment set up a tumultuous climate. Aside from Oman, the Durbin Watson statistic indicates that Bahrain (1.424, R² of 0.848), Kuwait (1.301, R² of 0.582), and UAE (0.951, R² of 0.455), had the highest visible impact of change post Arab Spring. Qatar (0.445 R² of 0.152) and Saudi Arabia (0.442 R² of 0.273), remained relatively low. This however, is not surprising, especially in the case for Saudi Arabia.
The Arab kingdom has always been strict on net freedom. Therefore, post Arab Spring while change did occur, (a return to 7 on the rating scale, from 6.5, *see figure 5.4 for changes over time*), the Kingdom has always been strict. In Saudi Arabia,

The 2007 Anti-Cyber Crime Law criminalizes “producing something that harms public order, religious values, public morals, the sanctity of private life, or authoring, sending, or storing it via an information network,” and imposes penalties of up to five years in prison and a fine of up to SAR three million (US$800,000). (Freedom House Net Freedom Report 2016 and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Royal Decree No. M/17, Anti-Cyber Crime Law, March 2007).

Post Arab Spring however, the state began to register citizen finger prints when purchasing SIM cards, arrested journalist, bloggers, and online activists, and regularly monitors online activity (Freedom House Net Freedom 2016 Report).

Moreover, Qatar, post and prior to the Spring has had a series of legislations that contain civil and political liberties. The privately owned but royal family included creation of Al-Jazeera television in 1996 saw the self-censorship and possibility of jail sentence of many journalists. Post Spring, “a 2014 law on cybercrimes prescribes up to three years in prison for a range of vaguely worded offenses, including online dissemination of “false news” or content that undermines general order” (Freedom House Net Freedom 2016 Report).

Kuwait, post Arab Spring, in 2014 saw “the National Assembly pass a new telecommunications law allowing authorities to monitor, block, and censor online material through a new body, the Commission for Mass Communications and Information Technology” (Freedom House Net Freedom 2016 Report).
Bahrain, where the majority of Arab Spring activities occurred began tightly restricting internet freedoms. “In August 2014, the prime minister renewed calls to take immediate measures to control the usage of social media and to hold the “abusers” of these networks accountable. This was followed by similar directives from the king to fight the “wrongful use” of social media by legal means” (Freedom House Net Freedom 2016 Report). In both figures on civil liberties and political rights, Bahrain data shows to have sharp increases in a negative direction (see figures 5.5 and 5.6).

The UAE has similarly taken strict measure to quell dissonance. “There were no known government orders to shut down ICT connectivity over the coverage period. However, internet service providers (ISPs) in the UAE are either fully or partially owned by the state, allowing for authorities to exert control over the flow of information in the country” (Freedom House Net Freedom 2016 Report). Oman too, despite the Freedom House rating, has a 2008 government oversight and decree that regulates electronic communication, including blogs (Freedom House Net Freedom 2016 Report).

### Table 3: Linear Regression of Arab Spring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arab Spring</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>R Square Change</th>
<th>Durbin Watson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Cases</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>0.825</td>
<td>0.848</td>
<td>1.424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>0.552</td>
<td>0.582</td>
<td>1.301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>0.091</td>
<td>0.152</td>
<td>0.445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>0.221</td>
<td>0.273</td>
<td>0.442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>0.416</td>
<td>0.455</td>
<td>0.951</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5.3: Timeline of GCC Unemployment
Correlation Data Analysis

Correlation tabs conducted to analyze the relationship between economic indicators and the tech policy in the Gulf support the hypotheses. As noted from the work above, the Arab Spring did have an impact on the way policy was formed in the region. However, while tech policy and stricter controls may have been aggravated by the Arab Spring, there are precursory conditions that showcase the relationship between the economic infrastructure and ICT policy. Correlations between other indicators over a 16-year period further demonstrate the impact historical underpinnings have on the GCC. Appendix B contains the correlation of all indices measured over time that demonstrate the relationship between the markers. In it data is highlighted red if Pearson’s correlation is significant at 0.01 level, and green if correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.
From the data collected, the markers that exhibited strong correlation impact are youth unemployment, general unemployment, political instability, control of corruption, oil: consumption, reserves, and production, economic freedom, and ICTs imported. Other factors demonstrate correlation, but the aforementioned markers exhibit higher frequencies of impact. Unsurprisingly the role of oil had a large impact on metrics ($H_1$). For all three markers of oil: production (0.644), consumption (0.657), and reserves (0.517), there was strong Pearson’s correlation with Freedom House’s ratings of political freedom. This therefore demonstrates and supports the hypothesis above the abundance of resources and the economic infrastructure shape policy in the region. All three oil indicators further had strong relationship with youth unemployment (0.701, 0.717, 0.645), voice and accountability (-0.730, -0.777, -0.621), government effectiveness (-0.524, -0.479, -0.538), control of corruption (-0.461, -0.475, -0.538), political rights, and civil liberties.

Additionally, the impact youth unemployment, which was a heavy characteristic of the Arab Spring ($H_2$), supports the hypothesis of the Arab Spring on ICT policy. Youth unemployment correlated with declines in voice and accountability (-0.487), in government effectiveness (-0.287), in civil liberties (0.453), and political rights (0.485). Unemployment, and more specifically youth unemployment, showcase strong correlations with dissatisfaction and perceptions in government ability. These beliefs often led to stricter governments.

Lastly, the impact of ICTs imported and globalization support the belief that developments in technology elicit openness and harsher regulation ($H_3$). ICT goods imported increased over the 16 years. GCC monarchies relied on external support to have these developed technologies. The importation of tech goods showcases strong relationships with civil liberties (0.410) and political
rights (0.299). It also has impact on the three markers of oil, (as mentioned above), unemployment (-0.303) and economic freedom (-0.512). Moreover, globalization correlates with mobile subscriptions (0.480), internet users (0.688), unemployment (-0.526), economic freedom (0.277), and the Arab Spring (0.316).

**Overall Analysis**

This data then supports the general hypothesis presented in this research. There is a strong relationship between economic growth in the region and ICT policy. Arab monarchies organize their policy around and through their economic infrastructures. The GCC sets the standards for how technology functions in the state. Beliefs that social media, technology, external actors and institutions, or tech innovators can lead to an increase in democratization is erroneous. Technology and the tech sector are operators of the state. When external organization such as Facebook, Google, or WhatsApp enter a country, they function under the privacy and censorship laws of the state. Technology as a driver of democratization inanities change, however, these changes are often restricted under the control of the regime.

Technology is difficult to predict, but the ability to forecast technology and its drivers allows both the state and its citizens power in eliciting change. Technology is not a lone actor, it is neither emancipatory or enslaving. Technology is a tool, succeeding or failing at the hands of the humans that utilize it. The added benefit of wealth and legacy that provide certain actors leverage, then means that the hope to find freedom through online dissonance does not hold true. Technology in the GCC belongs to the monarchs. Post Arab Spring, it is evident that mobilization enacted change in the regimes, but six years later and states have regressed to their old habits of
controlling ICT avenues. Technology is therefore another tool manipulated by the state. This does not deter mobility of the public, but it does go on to showcase how Arab regimes are able to endure, sustain, and upgrade. Economic infrastructures and secured economic health, through social welfare, networks, and allies, enable the inaction of policy that preserves and cements the Gulf regimes.

*Figure 5.5: Timeline of GCC Political Rights by Freedom House*
Figure 5.6: Timeline of GCC Civil Liberties by Freedom House
For years, people have been predicting the downfall of Arab leaders. Yet, despite the histories of war, protest, oil, and technological advancement, the monarchs of the Gulf Cooperation Council remain seated and comfortable. In no way is the GCC therefore exceptional; it is not unique, and it is not stagnant. The conditions that plague the Gulf are emblematic of many authoritarian and democratic states. The GCC remains withstanding in light of these struggles due to a series of tactical approaches and policies built on legacies that advantage its kings, sheikhs, and sultans. The abundance of wealth, oil, and resource, developed economic infrastructures that transform and ‘upgrade’ power in the state. This transformation now takes place in a different arena: Information and Communication Technologies.

The economic infrastructure of the GCC allows the state to consume ICTs and enact policies in ways that protect the monarchs. It is undeniable that ICTs alter the way by which political events unfold. The overlying belief that Arab Spring events largely succeed due to the use of ICTs however is erroneous. These ICT tools exist within a “context shaped by older media, such as al-Jazeera, by political anger over heavily manipulated elections, and by material changes, such as a rapidly deteriorating economic situation”166. Yes, social media did facilitate democracy in a way unusual to authoritarian regimes, but “the Internet is only a set of connections between computers; it can have no impact apart from its use by human beings”167.

In conducting this research, the relationship between the economic infrastructures of the state and ICT policies are demonstrated. Assessing data compiled over a 16-year period, showcases that economic infrastructures have an impact on the way the region and ICT policy are shaped.
Fluctuations in political openness, net freedom, and civil liberties demonstrate that monarchy leaders manage tech policy in ways that align with their interests. This statistical research showcases the ties between the economic indicators, accessibility, and technology in ways that create direct changes to policy. This research is therefore a demonstration on how economic infrastructures maintain ICT policies in ways that allow the regimes to endure.

There are limitations to the production of this research. Data provided on the political openness of the region is not comprehensive enough of a scale to showcase changes in civil and political liberties over time. While Freedom House’s measure remains the strongest contender of data, its measurements do not provide a comprehensive enough view of the monarchs. Additionally, information on policy provided by the states themselves is often outdated and skewed in an attempt to showcase the regime favorably. The data and outcome of this research is limited to external sources and information that may not provide the most accurate representation of the region. Despite these setbacks however, a relationship between economics and ICT policy to maintain leaders remains apparent.

What does the future hold for these regimes? With the ever-changing oil prices, depleting reserves, and decreasing subsidies, the future may seem bleak for these regimes\textsuperscript{168}. But, troubles in nearby states and the continued financial rewards seem to tie over these monarchs, at least for the time being. Technological developments place Arab leaders in a predicament. Arab leaders will be plagued to retroactively enact policies that protect the regime when technological advancements supersede that avenues previously restricted. A gradual opening up of policy may alleviate concerns and provide citizens with new avenues to engage productively and civically. To a certain degree, the GCC states run themselves a business. The gradual loosening of ICT laws
will not propel the state to chaos, but will enable the regime to maintain by providing liberalization policies in an age of technological democratization. Loosened tech policies will enable the development of the GCC, strengthening its role as a global tech contender. The disposal, or longevity, of leaders therefore may just be as obscure and unimaginable as the spark that lit up the Arab republics. The future remains unknown, but well managed.

This thesis should not be perceived entirely as an examination of oil and money in the Arab world. Yes, the monarchs are rich in resource, but as this research demonstrates, not all Gulf countries have as extensive wealth networks as their allies. A look at only oil and wealth is a simplification of the GCC and the ability of the monarchs to diversify their portfolios. The Arab monarchs are successful at managing provisions, alliances, and social welfare. Oil, and natural resources, may have be the baseline of their success, but the Arab monarchs know what success entails, and have learned to manage it to endure.

Work that analyzes the region as more than oil gluts and antiquated wealth is therefore necessary. Studies of Arab growth and development through technological lenses provides assessments on democratization in the region. Through the investigation of these intercepted fields, we begin to understand how economic legacies privilege regimes and allow them to endure. The overlap between economic wealth and ICT policy describes how physical restrictions of power and freedom seep into the nonphysical realm. In a Foucauldian sense, concepts of power are articulated into a new avenue through the management of ICTs that restrict freedoms and accessibility. This inevitable lead to regulation and self-surveillance is problematic to the success and development of the state. This non-violent, but sustained repression causes hindrances to social
welfare, economic growth, development, and all other aspects of free markets and democratization that could thrust the GCC into new strata.

By no means is this work dismissive of the region and its governing parties. On the contrary, this work takes a critical approach at examining the region and the possible hindrances to its development. The aim of this research is not to be dismissive of the monarchs and the affordances they have provided their citizens. These leaders have sustained their public and provided a level of social welfare, that while contested, remains relatively better off than the rest of the region or world. This work therefore exists in order to illuminate future hardships that may face the Arab world and these Gulf monarchs.

As a citizen of Bahrain, and student in the United States, I see the necessity of scholarly work that views Arab growth as more than narratives of God and oil. There are tremendous amounts of potential and growth that characterize the Gulf. Impediments to this growth and development will cause more harm than good. The Arab world is remarkable, not because it is Arabic, but because despite the hardship, history, and setbacks, art, life, and culture continue to blossom.
This infographic displays GCC demographics with population estimates and percentages showcasing the number for foreigners residing in the state.

Data represents GCC fiscal consolidation, with details of financial reserves and breakeven oil prices.
This figure shows unemployment rates in the MENA region and future predictions of those percentages. The graph demonstrates the increased unemployment rates for Saudi Arabia and Bahrain during the 15 year period of 2000 – 2015.

According to World Bank sources with sporadically updated data, GCC states have relatively high literacy rates in comparison with the MENA region and the globe. Bahrain, UAE, and Qatar display highest literacy rates in proportion to their population growth.
From 1997 to 2015 Saudi Arabia and UAE, two GCC states have had significant growth in GDP. The dip in Saudi Arabia’s growth could be correlated to the 2008 financial crisis. Despite the dip, it still remained one of the higher contenders.

This figures ranks the GDP growth of MENA states. It also displays increases and decreases in growth.

The average Freedom Rating for the GCC countries is significantly worse than those for every region and the world.

In the MENA region, only Tunisia and Kuwait are marked partly free. The other Arab states all rank as not free. (Freedom House, 2016)
This graph demonstrates the architecture of government employees in the MENA. From this, it is evident that Saudi Arabia has the highest percentage of government employees.
The graph created from World Bank data source indicates regional comparison of armed forces personnel.

Up to October 2014, Saudi Arabia has the highest estimate on military spending. This may be due to the parallel relationship between Saudi and US oil trade and arms dealing.
As of 2012 Saudi Arabia has highest ratio of military expenditure to GDP. Oman has seen decline in their shares of figures, with Qatar having the largest decrease.

Military expenditure in the MENA region is highest among Oman and Saudi Arabia, the followed by Egypt. The Egypt 2013 peak may be in relation to the after math of the Arab Spring.
Exports between the EU and GCC are rapidly inclining with low levels of balance and relatively stable imports.
GCC states rank higher than Arab republics in terms of competitiveness. “Competitiveness is defined as the set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country” (World Economic Forum, 2016).

World Economic Forum ranks MENA countries in terms of their competitiveness, and only two Arab republics enter the rank, but rankly relatively low.
The two graphs above demonstrate the percentages of youth unemployment of MENA countries in respect to global figures and to themselves. World development indicators showcase the MENA unemployment is higher than world unemployment by 15.7%.
Unemployment in the Arab republics and Bahrain high. The high rate of unemployment in Bahrain are especially troublesome due to the size of the state, which is exponentially smaller than the Arab republics; averaging a population of roughly 1.2 million.
Infographics above represent oil and gas production and reserves in the MENA region. Cumulatively the monarchies rank higher, however certain republics such as Algeria are rich in gas reserves, and Iraq in oil reserves.

This graph shows the value of projects planned in the Middle East. UAE and Saudi remain high on the list. UAE due to foreign investments and Saudi to oil reserves. “Yearbook 2016”. Middle East Business Intelligence, 2016. http://www.meed.com/editorial-calendar/meed-yearbook-2016/3211776.fullarticle
These images provide a side by side comparison of the sectarian make-up of the MENA region. It presents the areas that states that are majority Shia and Sunni.
## APPENDIX B

Figure 1B: Correlation – All Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Group</th>
<th>Cobb</th>
<th>Manufacturing</th>
<th>Wholesale Trade</th>
<th>Retail Trade</th>
<th>FICA Taxes</th>
<th>Total Payrolls</th>
<th>Total Payroll Growth</th>
<th>Total Income</th>
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<td>Region</td>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Foreign Direct Investment</td>
<td>Total Exports</td>
<td>Total Imports</td>
<td>Trade Balance</td>
<td>FDI Inflows</td>
<td>FDI Outflows</td>
<td>Portfolio Investment</td>
<td>Other Investment</td>
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*Correlations in square brackets are significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).*

*Correlations in italics are significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).*
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ENDNOTES

2 Tilly, 1992. p. 17
3 Tilly, 1992. p. 19
6 Bellin, 2005.
8 Snyder, Robert S. 2015. The Arab uprising and the persistence of monarchy. *International Affairs* 91 (5): 1028
9 Ibid, p. 1030.
11 Snyder, p. 1033.
14 Bellin 2005 and Menaldo 2012
15 Snyder, p. 1038-1039.
16 Snyder, p. 1040.
18 “Saudi Arabia, for example, has nearly $700 billion in foreign assets under government control”, making them less dependent on oil revenues for future security. Gause, F. Gregory. 2013. “Kings for All Seasons: How the Middle East’s Monarchies Survived the Arab Spring.” *Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper*, no. 8, pp. 6.
20 Ibid, p. 77
21 “Egypt, Syria, and Iraq had inherited significantly unequal and improvised rural areas from colonial rule”. Moore, p. 77.
22 Moore, p. 77
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
See Giacomo Luciani and Peter Evans.  

Moore, p 79.  


Increased financing by international institutions and long run structural reforms.  


Ibid.  

Ibid, p. 82.  

Ibid, p. 85.  

Ibid.  


There are several definitions to ICTs and literature on this has no hard rule on what ICTs are or should be. For more history on the technology term see (Murray 2011)  

See Colrain M. Zupro (2012) for an expansive example on how ICT definitions vary based on sector, such as education, economics, business, etc.  


Ibid.  


Lynch, After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State 2011  


Ibid, p. 20.  

Ibid, p. 21  


Lynch, After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State 2011  

Ibid  

Ibid, pg. 304.  


Geddes, 1999. p. 138


Crystal and Al-Shayed. p. 195.


Ibid.


Ibid.


Ibid, p 12.


Ibid, p 27.


Matthiesen, Toby. 2013


Alsharekh, Alanoud, and London Middle East Institute. 2007.*The gulf family: Kinship policies and modernity*. London: Saqi in association with London Middle East Institute, SOAS.

“Oman somewhat straddles this dichotomy, with Sultan Qaboos monopolizing power, but theoretically in the name of the extended Al Said family.” (Gause, 2013) pp. 3.


Ibid.

In March, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain made the shock decision to withdraw their ambassadors from Qatar, accusing Doha of meddling in the internal affairs of other GCC countries, a reference widely interpreted as a reference to Qatar’s backing of the Muslim Brotherhood, which Saudi Arabia classifies as a terrorist organization. “Profile: What Is the GCC?” 2015. Middle East Eye. http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/profile-what-gcc-18030284.

Matthiesen, Toby. 2013. “As a consequence of the new sectarianism, sectarian violence is increasing across the region, and the social fabric between Sunni and Shia has broken down in many Middle Eastern states. While the West has not directly taken up the sectarian rhetoric, it has accepted the sectarian logic of marginalizing the Shia and by default Iran.”

“The GCC is the EU’s fifth largest export market (€95 bn of exports in 2013), and the EU is the grouping's biggest trading partner, with trade flows totaling €152 billion, or 13% of the GCC’s global trade” (European Commission, 2015).

Social costs refer to humanitarian crises. Western allies have been vocal about human rights violations in republics, but less so in monarchies.
In “March 2011, Saudi Arabia reaffirmed the ban on protests after several took place in the capital, Riyadh, and in Eastern Province, home to a Shia majority that complains of discrimination at the hands of the Sunni ruling family. Since then, hundreds of people have been arrested and dozens reportedly remain in custody. Specialized Criminal Courts, set up for terrorism cases, have been used to try opposition and human rights activists on various charges including "disobeying the ruler”” (BBC, 2013).


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The King Fahad causeway was constructed after the Iranian Revolution and was financed mostly by Saudi Arabia.

Matthiesen, Toby. 2013

“At the start, reform-minded Sunnis could accept most of the demands of the Pearl Roundabout protesters. And it was this early potential for cross-sectarian mobilization around basic values and demands that seemed most dangerous to the ruling family and indeed the other Gulf monarchies. (Matthiesen, 2013).

“Bahrain, which is historically and demographically part of the Arab world, gained independence from British rule in 1971. At the time, Iran’s last Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi called for the annexation of this strategic Gulf island, yet stopped the calls after a sweeping majority of its residents voted for independence in a U.N. supervised referendum. (Al-Zahed and Jazaeri, 2012)”

The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (the Commission) was established by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa (HM King Hamad) in Royal Order No. 28 of 2011, which was issued on 1 July 2011, with immediate force of law. The Commission’s mandate, contained in Article 9, is to report on the events in question on the basis of international human rights norms. (BICI, 2011)

“On March 14, 2011, troops from the GCC countries, operating under an agreement called Peninsula Security Shield, entered Bahrain. They were made of 1,000 Saudis, 500 Emiratis, and a small number of Qatars. The overall situation in the country was securitized and the King imposed extraordinary measures. He declared a national emergency state with partial curfew, the banning of protests and the expansion of military power. This was accompanied by an increase in violence and the imprisonment of opposition (Pinto, 2014)

Pinto, Vânia Carvalho. 2014. “Exploring the Interplay between Framing and Securitization Theory: The Case of the Arab Spring Protests in Bahrain.” *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* 57 (1).

WikiLeaks releases showcase Saudi Arabian fears over Iran gaining regional control. “Saudi Arabia suspects Iran of stirring up the Shiite minority in its eastern provinces. (Smoltczyk and Zand, 2010)
In 2012, when Congress objected to arms sales to Bahrain because of the repression there, the Obama administration used a loophole to continue the sales. The administration divided up an arms sales package into multiple sales, each of which was less than $1 million — thereby dodging congressional oversight. (Abrams, 2015)


In the early stages, some BBC reports failed to explain the specific context of the uprising in Bahrain, they did report the severe crackdown on protestors between 14 and 19 February 2011, and again on 14-18 March, but almost completely ignored the period in between when the security forces were more restrained and the Crown Prince sought an agreement with the opposition” (BBC Trust, 2012).

As a consequence of the new sectarianism, sectarian violence is increasing across the region, and the social fabric between Sunni and Shia has broken down in many Middle Eastern states. While the West has not directly taken up the sectarian rhetoric, it has accepted the sectarian logic of marginalizing the Shia and by default Iran.” (Matthiesen, 2013)


Besides Bahrain, GCC monarchies have low levels of unemployment in comparison to Arab republics.

“Competitiveness is defined as the set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country” (World Economic Forum, 2016).


The group published newsletters and books in which it described its attempts to overthrow the Al Khalifa ruling family and install Iranian-style Islamic rule instead (Alhassan, 2011).

Bahrainis were highly influenced by Pan Arab ideologies pertaining to socialism, communism, and nationalism (Karolak, 2014)
For example, the Egyptian bread riots of 1977 “When President Sadat cut public subsidies for flour, cooking oil, and other staples, people took to the streets in two days of violent protest” (CBS News, 2011) and Bahrain’s “period of sustained popular mobilization from 1994 onwards that did not stop until 2000–2001, when then new King Hamad reached out to the opposition groups, brought them back from exile.” (Matthiesen, 2013)


Yom and Gause, 2012, pp. 74.


Pro government demonstrations took place in Bahrain at Al Fateh Mosque, opposing the protests and supporting the monarchy. (Karolak, 2014)


“A privately hated regime may enjoy widespread public support because of people's reluctance to take the lead in publicizing their opposition. The regime may, therefore, seem unshakeable, even if its support would crumble at the most minor shock. A suitable shock would put in motion a bandwagon process that exposes a panoply of social conflicts, until then largely hidden.” Kuran, Timur. 1989. Sparks and prairie fires: A theory of unanticipated political revolution. Public Choice 61 (1): pp. 42

Ottoway and Muasher, 2011.


As oil prices continue to plummet, Gulf states have been forced to re-think how they fund their governments and spend money. On the revenue side—and after a debate that spanned over a decade—countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have finally decided to introduce a value-added tax (VAT) in 2018,” (Abdul Ghafar, 2016).