

**PERSISTENT AUTHORITARIANISM IN PERSIAN GULF  
MONARCHIES**

**How Rentier States and Sunni Ulama Coalesced With Each Other**

**By**

**Saeideh Adampira**

**THESIS**

Submitted to

KDI School of Public Policy and Management

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

**MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY**

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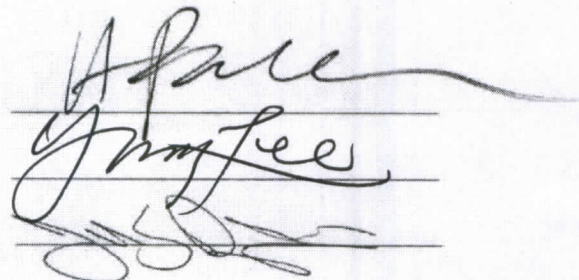
**MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY**

Committee in charge:

Professor Hun Joo PARK, Supervisor

Professor Yong S. LEE

Professor Jeffrey Scott ROBERTSON



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## ABSTRACT

### PERSISTENT AUTHORITARIANISM IN PERSIAN GULF MONARCHIES

How Rentier States and Sunni Ulama Coalesced With Each Other

By

Saeideh Adampira

Stable system of Persian Gulf Monarchies after Arab Spring brought more questions to scholars who have been working on non-democratization in the Middle-East. When it comes to non-democratization of these countries one element should be considered as one of the major elements and it is Petrodollars. The rentier nature of these countries has enabled the monarchs to build a neo-patrimonial system of governments which works properly with Sunni Ulama. What has caused this system runs by now is financial structure of Sunni Ulama. Sunni Ulama as opposed to Shiite ones don't enjoy financial independency which stems from lack of Hidden Imam doctrine in Sunni's system of beliefs. The result of such a coalition for Persian Gulf monarchies has been more political stability.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

PGM	Persian Gulf Monarchies
RS	Rentier State
RST	Rentier State Theory
UAE	United Arab Emirates

Figure 1. Political map of Persian Gulf Monarchies



Source: Map courtesy of University of Texas Libraries, Accessed May 02, 2014, [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/txu-oclc-192062619-middle\\_east\\_pol\\_2008.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/txu-oclc-192062619-middle_east_pol_2008.jpg).

## INTRODUCTION

The Persian Gulf Monarchies (PGM) - Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE) -“...account for 37 percent of all known crude oil reserves, [and] 25 percent of all known natural gas reserves”<sup>1</sup> which make them so crucial to the world economy. But their anachronistic political system has made them a controversial matter in world politics.

After the “third wave” of democratization<sup>2</sup> that everybody expected democratization would spread over the Middle-East as well, the stable autocratic regimes of the region made many scholars to carry research projects on the reasons of non-democratization in the Middle-East. A group of scholars like Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington believe that the region’s peculiarities, Islam in particular, are the main constraints to democracy<sup>3</sup>.

Another group of scholars like Giacomo Luciani and Michael Ross argue that the problem stems from oil.<sup>4</sup> According to them, since the region’s states have access to petrodollars, they are able to “buy off” people in exchange for democracy by distributing oil wealth. During Arab Spring, some taken financial policies by PGM, brought back all those discussions on the role of oil. Saudi Arabia rulers (Feb/Mar 2011) ensured spending \$130

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Davidson, *After the Sheikhs: the coming collapse of the Gulf monarchies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 42.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel P. Huntington categorizes the world democratization process into three waves. The first wave refers to democratization in North America and Europe which happened in the 1880. The second wave happened between 1945 and 1970, and the third wave began around 1975 in Latin America and Eastern European countries. See Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The end of history and the last man* (New York: Avon Book, 1993); and Samuel P. Huntington, “The clash of civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22.

<sup>4</sup> Giacomo Luciani, “Allocation vs. Production States: A Theoretical Framework” in *The Arab State*, ed. Giacomo Luciani (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 65. ; Michael Ross, “Does Oil Hinder Democracy?” *World Politics* 53, no. 3 (2001): 325.

billion on their citizens throughout next years<sup>5</sup> which was larger than its total budget in 2007.<sup>6</sup> Bahrain provided \$2,660 for each family and Kuwait issued \$3,500 in cash for each citizens.<sup>7</sup> “The UAE government has...committed to spending \$1.6 billion on infrastructure in the poorer...emirates.”<sup>8</sup> Sultan Qaboos (king of Oman) promised a \$2.6 billion package of benefits to his people.<sup>9</sup> But Arab spring initiated a new phase in the region’s studies: understanding why these monarchies are resilient.

F. Gregory Gause III and Sean L. Yom introduce an interesting method to answer this question. They believe that PGM could have survived over the years by taking different strategies.<sup>10</sup> These strategies are “cross-cutting coalitions”. These coalitions enable incumbent regime to have a better control over the system. They change these coalitions from time to time and in different conditions, subsequently, provide this opportunity for themselves to pass crisis.

Different coalitions have been mentioned by scholars, from military coalitions to religious ones. Surprisingly, when it comes to religious coalitions, they simply mention that PGM have subdued the religious clerics and made them the state’s employees in exchange for religious legitimacy. What has been remained vague here is that how they could do that? And

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<sup>5</sup> F. Gregory Gause III, *Saudi Arabia in the New Middle East*, No. 63 (USA: Council on Foreign Relations, 2011), 6.

<sup>6</sup> Steffen Hertog, “The costs of counter-revolution in the GCC” *Foreign Policy*, May 31, 2011, [http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/05/31/the\\_costs\\_of\\_counter\\_revolution\\_in\\_the\\_gcc](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/05/31/the_costs_of_counter_revolution_in_the_gcc).

<sup>7</sup> Mohammed El-Katiri, *The future of the Arab Gulf monarchies in the age of uncertainties* (report, ARMY WAR COLLEGE CARLISLE BARRACKS PA STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE, 2013), 8, <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA583955> (accessed May 02, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Steffen Hertog, “The costs of counter-revolution in the GCC”.

<sup>9</sup> Marina Ottaway and Marwan Muasher, *Arab Monarchies: Chance for Reform, Yet Unmet* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011), 18, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/arab\\_monarchies1.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/arab_monarchies1.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Sean L. Yom and F. Gregory Gause III, “Resilient royals: How Arab monarchies hang on.” *Journal of Democracy* 23, no. 4 (2012): 74.

why the Shah of Iran couldn't take the same strategy to prevent Islamic revolution in 1979(knowing he had access to petrodollars as well)? Answering to these questions is the main purpose of this thesis. This thesis, by comparing Shiite doctrine (the branch of Islam exercising in Iran) with Sunni doctrine (the branch of Islam exercising in PGM), identifies differences between these two branches of Islam (emphasizing on different financial structure of Ulama<sup>11</sup>) and will provide an extra explanation for resilient autocratic regimes in PGM.

The first part is a critical review of the literature on reasons of non-democratization in the Middle-East. This part presents a gap in the literature that this thesis is going to bridge. The second part first, compares Sunni doctrine with Shiite one to identify those differences impacting resiliency of the monarchs. Then it bridges the existing gap in the literature which is the main argument of this thesis. The final part as usual is the conclusion part which here renders more questions for the next researches.

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<sup>11</sup> Ulama is the term used for calling religious scholars in Islam who are in charge of interpreting Islamic rules, this term is plural and its singular form is Alim.

# **PART I. A Critical Review of Literature on the Resilience of the Persian Gulf Monarchies**

## **I.1. Introduction**

Non-democratization in the Middle-East has been a long debate over years especially after the “third wave” of democratization in the world. Different approaches have been taken to address the problem, from time-series data analysis emphasizing the role of oil, to comparative analysis with other regions showing cultural deficits.

Theoretical jobs in the field could be classified into two approaches: political economy approach and political culture approach. The former group believe that the problem stems from oil, for example Thomas L. Friedman in his article “The First Law of Petropolitics”<sup>12</sup> published in foreign policy, says “The price of oil and the pace of freedom always move in opposite directions”.<sup>13</sup> The latter group attributes the problem to the region’s peculiarities such as religion, traditions and social structure. For instance, Francis Fukuyama mentions “Islam has stood as a major barrier to democratization”.<sup>14</sup>

When it comes to the Middle-East democratization, there is no consensus among scholars on causes of the problem. There is a large number of scholarly works on the issue both in terms of argument and counter argument. The first section of this part is on a critical review of the political economy approach toward non-democratization in the Middle-East in which Rentier State Theory (RST) is the main argument, and the second section goes through a critical review of the political culture approach. The last section is about a gap in the body of literature which this thesis is going to bridge.

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, “The first law of Petropolitics.” *Foreign Policy* 154, no. 3 (2006): 28. Also available at this link: [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2006/04/25/the\\_first\\_law\\_of\\_petropolitics](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2006/04/25/the_first_law_of_petropolitics)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The end of history and the last man*, 347.

## I.2. Political Economy Approach

The first economist talked about Rentier State (RS) in a way we understand the concept today and use it, was Hussain Mahdavy<sup>15</sup> who discussed this concept in the pre-revolutionary Iran's context. He showed how nationalization of oil industry had affected the structure of Iran's economy and its growth. But RST became a benchmark for study Arab countries and authoritarianism in the Middle-East after publishing two articles by Giacomo Luciani and Hazem Beblawi<sup>16</sup> in which they argued those states earn a huge share of their revenues-called rents-directly from abroad, have different political dynamic comparing to those ones earn their revenues domestically (possessing productive economy).

Beblawi defines rent as "the income derived from gift of nature"<sup>17</sup> which in the Middle-East context usually refers to income from exporting oil and gas. There is another kind of rents called "strategic rents" which are in the form of foreign aids' payments. These payments usually are paid as military or development assistant.<sup>18</sup> All these revenues accrue directly to the state and "free the state from the need of raising income domestically"<sup>19</sup>.

Consequently, "the predominant function of the state"<sup>20</sup> changes from a redistributive state into a distributive one. In a redistributive state -"production state"-, the state collects

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<sup>15</sup> Hussein Mahdavy, "Patterns and Problems of Economic Development in Rentier States: The Case of Iran," in *Studies in Economic History of the Middle East: from the rise of Islam to the present Day*, ed. M. A. Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 428.

<sup>16</sup> Hazem Beblawi, "The Rentier State in the Arab World" in *The Arab State*, ed. Giacomo Luciani (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 85. ;and Giacomo Luciani, "Allocation vs. Production States: A Theoretical Framework".

<sup>17</sup> Hazem Beblawi, "The Rentier State in the Arab World", 85.

<sup>18</sup> For example: USA payments to Egypt's army or those aids which are paid to Jordan and Lebanon for developing economic programs by Persian Gulf Monarchies.

<sup>19</sup> Giacomo Luciani "Allocation vs. Production States: A Theoretical Framework", 71.

<sup>20</sup> Giacomo Luciani, "Allocation vs. Production States: A Theoretical Framework", 71.

taxes from society, redistributes it, and in return has to be responsive to the society. On the contrary, a distributive state -“allocation state”- doesn’t need to be responsive to the society because it earns its required income directly from abroad and “buy[s] off” the nation in exchange for a portion of the rents at the expense of democracy: no representation without taxation. In other words, the end product of such a political dynamic - Rentierism - is an undemocratic system like those ones in the Middle-East especially PGM. Jill Cristal (1990) investigates the effect of oil in Kuwait and Qatar (the way it has changed political system and state institutions). He argues authoritarianism is the result of Rentierism.<sup>21</sup> Camilla Sandbakken (2006) and Robert J. Barro (1999) both argue in the same way.<sup>22</sup>

According to Luciani, as far as the state has access to that much financial resources to run such a “welfare” system, there is no demand for change on the part of citizens except for those groups which have not received enough benefits or those ones didn’t accept such a system in general whom usually are repressed by repression apparatus available to the state. The problem emerges when the state doesn’t have access to that much rents to run the system as before. In this condition the probability of regime change into democracy will increase.<sup>23</sup> Rex Brynen (1992)<sup>24</sup>, Roger Owen, Abdelbaki Hermassi, and Volker Porthes (1994)<sup>25</sup> all in

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<sup>21</sup> Jill Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>22</sup> Camilla Sandbakken, “The Limits to Democracy Posed by Oil Rentier States: The Cases of Algeria, Nigeria and Libya,” *Democratization* 13, No. 1 (2006): 135. ; Robert J. Barro, “Determinants of Democracy,” *Journal of Political Economy* 107, No. 6 (1999): S158.

<sup>23</sup> Giacomo Luciani, “The Oil Rent, the Fiscal Crisis of the State and Democratization,” in *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*, ed. Ghassan Salame (London: I. B. Taurus, 1994), 130.; Giacomo Luciani, “Economic foundations of democracy and authoritarianism: the Arab world in comparative perspective.” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 10, No. 4 (1988): 457. ; Giacomo Luciani, “Oil and Political Economy in the International Relations of the Middle East.” In *International Relations of the Middle East*, ed. Louise Fawcett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 103.

<sup>24</sup> Rex Brynen, “Economic Crisis and Post-Rentier Democratization in the Arab World: The Case of Jordan.” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 25, No. 01 (1992): 69.

<sup>25</sup> Roger Owen, “Socio-economic Change and Political Mobilization: the case of Egypt.” in *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*, ed. Ghassan Salamé (London: I. B. Taurus, 1994):183. ; Abdelbaki Hermassi, “Socio-economic change and political implications: The Maghreb.” in



separate case studies of the region mention that fiscal crisis would start political liberalization process. This argument is confirmed by Limongi et al. (1997).<sup>26</sup> They argue that economic crisis will lead to regime change in both democratic and autocratic systems. According to Kaufman and Haggard (1997)<sup>27</sup>, financial crisis increases the probability of regime change because it reduces available resources to elites to survive.

Michael Ross (2001)<sup>28</sup> opens another line of argument in the literature. He asks whether there is any relation between natural resources and regime type. He deploys a time-series cross-national data set from 113 countries (1971-1997) and argues there is a strong positive correlation between being oil exporter and having autocratic regime which is not restricted to Middle-East. He examines three mechanisms (“Rentier effect”, “Repression effect”, “Modernization effect”)<sup>29</sup> by which oil affects the political system and prevents democratization.<sup>30</sup> Wantchekon (2004), Hegre and Sambanis (2006), Papaioannou and Siourounis (2008), Goldberg et al. (2008), Teorell (2010), Aslaksen (2010), and Ramsay (2011) all confirm the argument by Ross. They maintain that natural resources not only work as an impediment to democratization but also fuel authoritarianism.<sup>31</sup> Wright et al. (2012)

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*Democracy without Democrats?*, ed. Ghassan Salamé (London: I. B. Taurus, 1994): 227. ; Volker Perthes, “The private sector, economic liberalization, and the prospects of democratization: The case of Syria and some other Arab countries.” in *Democracy without democrats?*, ed. Ghassan Salamé (London: I. B. Taurus, 1994): 243.

<sup>26</sup> Neto Limongi, Fernando Papaterra, and Adam Przeworski, “Modernization: Theories and facts.” *World politics* 49, No. 2 (1997): 155.

<sup>27</sup> Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman, “The political economy of democratic transitions.” *Comparative Politics* no. 3 (1997): 263.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Ross, “Does Oil Hinder Democracy?” *World Politics* 53, No. 3, (2001): 325.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> “Rentier effect” already discussed in this section. Ross defines the rest two effects as follow: Repression effect refers to a situation in which the state spends oil revenue on security and repression forces and by them suppresses any objection; Modernization effect is slow pace of required social changes for having democracy in oil exporting countries.

<sup>31</sup> Nathan Jensen and Leonard Wantchekon, “Resource wealth and political regimes in Africa” *Comparative political studies* 37, No. 7 (2004): 816. ; Havard Hegre and Nicholas Sambanis, “Sensitivity analysis of empirical results on civil war onset.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, No. 4 (2006): 508. ; Elias

indicate that oil wealth helps autocrats to stay in office by reducing the risk of being ejected by rivals. Dictators by increasing military spending, discourage hidden partnerships conducive to regime breakdown.<sup>32</sup> Smith (2004) by using a “cross-sectional time-series data [set] from 107 developing states between 1960 and 1999”<sup>33</sup>, argues oil wealth enhances the longevity of regimes in general but it doesn’t affect regime type.<sup>34</sup> Here is where the problem regarding all the above arguments arises.

Countries such as Norway, USA, and UK are democratic despite being oil rich. In addition to these countries which had democratic system in the time of oil exploration, there are countries such as Botswana, Indonesia, and Mexico which turned into democracy in spite of having natural resources. Dunning (2008) criticizes Ross and argues natural resources’ impact is conditional and other effective factors such as religion, social structure, traditions, system of beliefs, and previous democracy experience should be considered. He takes Venezuela, Bolivia, Botswana, and Chile as case studies and by using time-series data set shows oil is positively correlated to democracy in Latin America.<sup>35</sup> Even Michael Ross (2009) in a revised unpublished paper shows that the relation between oil and autocracy stay cogent in the Middle-East contrary to other regions like Latin America. He says those who blame

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Papaioannou and Gregorios Siourounis, “Economic and social factors driving the third wave of democratization.” *Journal of Comparative Economics* 36, No. 3 (2008): 365. ; Ellis Goldberg, Erik Wibbels, and Eric Mvukiyehe, “Lessons from Strange Cases Democracy, Development, and the Resource Curse in the US States.” *Comparative Political Studies* 41, No. 4-5 (2008): 477. ; Jan Teorell, *Determinants of democratization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Silje Aslaksen, “Oil and democracy: More than a cross-country correlation?” *Journal of Peace Research* 47, No. 4 (2010): 421. ; Kristopher W Ramsay, “Revisiting the Resource Curse: Natural Disasters, the Price of Oil, and Democracy.” *International Organization* 65, No. 3 (2011): 507.

<sup>32</sup> Joseph Wright, Erica Frantz, and Barbara Geddes, “Oil and Autocratic Regime Survival.”(Working paper, Pennsylvania State University, 2013). Preliminary version downloadable from: <http://www.personal.psu.edu/jgw12/blogs/josephwright/OilStability9.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> Benjamin Smith, “Oil wealth and regime survival in the developing world, 1960–1999.” *American Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 2 (2004): 232.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Thad Dunning, *Crude democracy: Natural resource wealth and political regimes* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Islam as the major barrier to democracy should know that the problem is oil not Islam<sup>36</sup> and to some extent confirms Dunning's argument on conditionality of oil effect. Smith and Kraus (2005) carry a case study on Congo, Ecuador, Nigeria, Trinidad, and Venezuela. They discuss there are mechanisms through which oil affects democratization. These mechanisms themselves are affected by democratic social requisites and historical traditions. According to them, changing regime into democracy in Trinidad, Venezuela, and Ecuador is a good reason for inferiority of oil role compared to other involving factors in different contexts.<sup>37</sup> In the same line, Michael Herb in a paper published in 2005 mentions presence of democracy in Latin America and Caribbean resource rich countries is a confirmation to the importance of other factors working beside oil in other regions.<sup>38</sup> Finally, Haber and Menaldo (2011) in a disputable research paper argue being highly resource dependent is disassociated with authoritarianism. They go further and mention there is resource blessing which has been neglected by other scholars.<sup>39</sup>

Consequently, attributing oil to non-democratization in the Middle-East without considering other factors is controversial. The role of oil in the region is undeniable, but it should be analyzed with other effective elements. What should be done is finding channels through which oil and other impacting factors work together to impede democracy, something which is the main purpose of this thesis.

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<sup>36</sup> Michael Ross, "Oil and Democracy Revisited" (Unpublished paper, Department of Political Science UCLA, 2009). Preliminary draft paper downloadable from: <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/ross/Oil%20and%20Democracy%20Revisited.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> Benjamin Smith and Joseph Kraus, "Democracy despite Oil: Transition and Consolidation in Latin America and Africa." (Manuscript, Department of Political Science, University of Florida, 2005) quoted in Thad Dunning, *Crude democracy: Natural resource wealth and political regimes* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 59.

<sup>38</sup> Michael Herb, "No representation without taxation? Rents, development, and democracy." *Comparative Politics* (2005): 297.

<sup>39</sup> Stephan Haber and Victor Menaldo, "Do natural resources fuel authoritarianism? A reappraisal of the resource curse." *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 01 (2011): 1.

### I.3. Political Culture Approach

A considerable number of scholars argue lack of democratization in the Middle-East refers to the region's culture, religion, history, and social structures. The first and the most important matter of debate is Islam.

Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis believe that Islam is not compatible with democracy. Huntington in his famous article "The Clash of Civilization" published in *Foreign Affairs* (1993), asserts "Islam has bloody borders".<sup>40</sup> The advocates of this idea predominantly see the Islamic system of law (Sharia) as the main problem. Sharia combines the daily life of Muslims with religion. It does it by a series of rules and regulations which Muslims have to live with. These scholars argue Sharia law doesn't encompass some concepts, and subsequently it makes problem in practice. According to Bernard Lewis the problem refers to the absence of individual rights concept in Islam.<sup>41</sup> He explains western democracy originally derives from Roman law of legal person<sup>42</sup>, and Islamic law suffers from lack of such a concept.<sup>43</sup>

Elie Kedourie is in the same boat. According to Kedourie (1994), western traditions include representational government and some concepts like state for nation which are structural.<sup>44</sup> On the contrary, there are no such concepts and conventions in Islam. He argues since Arabs tried many times and they couldn't achieve democracy, it shows they are unable

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<sup>40</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "The clash of civilizations?".

<sup>41</sup> Bernard Lewis, *Islam in history: Ideas, people, and events in the Middle East* (Peru: Open Court Publishing, 1993).

<sup>42</sup> Legal person is defined as "an individual, company, or other entity that has legal rights and is subject to obligations." *Oxforddictionaries.com*, s.v. "legal person" accessed May 02, 2014, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/>

<sup>43</sup> Bernard Lewis, *Islam in history: Ideas, People, and events in the Middle East*.

<sup>44</sup> Elie Kedourie, *Democracy and Arab political culture* (London: FRANK CASS & CO.LTD., 1994).

to understand democracy because “democracy is quite alien to the mind-set of Islam”.<sup>45</sup> This argument set generally maintains Islamic principles are opposed to “the separation of religion and state”, freedom, and civil rights.

All of these arguments could be put under one umbrella: “Orientalism”. Edward Said states, this title first used by Europeans and then by Americans to explain and investigate the Middle-Eastern people.<sup>46</sup> This argument set tries to categorize the Middle-Eastern people under a certain concept: “other”. The “other” is used for an imaginary person or group. Civilized people (westerns) should scare this group (“other”) and consider them principally dissimilar to the rest of the people. Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis use this concept when they say these people shouldn’t be involved political issues because they are not worth it.<sup>47</sup>

A group of scholars like Nadav Safran tried to test the argument and confirm it by giving real case studies. He analyzes cultural change in Egypt and argues if the Egyptian cultural elites were rational, the country’s liberal experiment between 1919 and 1939 would have been successful.<sup>48</sup> He argues rationalism was a necessity for the change and when the elites discarded it in favor of Islam, the outcome was disappointing for Egypt. He concludes the problem is Islam which is not compatible with liberal politics.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>46</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

<sup>47</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, “The clash of civilizations?”; Bernard Lewis, “The roots of Muslim rage.” *The Atlantic Monthly* 266, no. 3 (1990): 47.

<sup>48</sup> Nadav Safran, *Egypt in search of political community: an analysis of the intellectual and political evolution of Egypt, 1804-1952*. No. 5. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), <http://books.google.com/books>.

<sup>49</sup> Nadav Safran, *Egypt in search of political community: an analysis of the intellectual and political evolution of Egypt, 1804-1952*.

Steven Fish mentions “Muslim countries are democratic underachiever”<sup>50</sup> and argues the problem stems from subordination of women. According to him there is a positive correlation between women’s status and “democratic deficits”.<sup>51</sup> Daniela Donno and Bruce M Russett in order to reexamine Fish’s reasoning, do a cross-national quantitative analysis and reach to a little bit different conclusion.<sup>52</sup> According to them, Islamic countries are less susceptible to democracy and this impact is more robust in Arab countries than in non-Arab ones. They go further and explain there is a negative correlation between women equality and Islam particularly in Arab countries but they can’t find a relation between gender equality and regime type.<sup>53</sup>

The “Arab exception” has been tested by Alfred C. Stepan and Graeme B. Robertson.<sup>54</sup> Using a data set between 1972 and 2000, they compare relation between “competitive elections and levels of economic development”. This comparison is between “Arab Muslim countries and non-Arab Muslim majority” ones. They conclude the problem is Arabs not Islam because non-Arab Muslim majority countries are “greatly over-achieving”.<sup>55</sup> Mustapha K. Al-sayyid also sees the problem more Arab connected and believes the problem doesn’t refer to ordinary people but to Arabs’ elites as well, and this is a general problem

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<sup>50</sup> M. Steven Fish, “Islam and authoritarianism” *World politics* 55, no. 1 (2002): 4.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Daniela Donno and Bruce M. Russett, “Islam, authoritarianism, and female empowerment.” *World Politics* 56, no. 4 (2004): 582.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Alfred C. Stepan and Graeme B. Robertson, “An “Arab” More Than a “Muslim” Democracy Gap” *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 3 (2003): 30.

<sup>55</sup> Alfred C. Stepan and Graeme B. Robertson, “An “Arab” More Than a “Muslim”.

among Arabs.<sup>56</sup> He investigates the reaction by Arabs' elites to Saddam Hussein invasion to Kuwait, and discusses the Arabs' nature of politics is undemocratic.<sup>57</sup>

In addition to these arguments, a set of scholars sees the problem structural. John D. Sullivan discusses that the bourgeoisie and civil society are not strong enough in the region.<sup>58</sup> Donald L. Horowitz argues tribalism in the region is an impediment to democracy because for ethnically diverse societies settling conflicts and achieving consensus is not easy.<sup>59</sup>

Some scholars focus on the region's monarchies and argue these monarchies enjoy their cultural legitimacy. According to these scholars, since these monarchies have a prolonged history in their territory, they have all those tools and elements that remain unchanged over time such as Islamic values, tribal form of organization, and inherited principles. Michael Hudson (1977), Jean-Pierre Filiu (2011), Marina Ottaway and Marwan Muasher (2011) all belong to this category.<sup>60</sup> Elliot Abrams (2011) argues since these monarchies have not experienced "bloody repression" in their history, it is an indication of being legitimate.<sup>61</sup> The other group argue that practical supremacy of the monarchs makes them not only have control over ongoing issues, but also have a proper and in time reaction to them. For instance, the monarch puts his family members in key posts and by spreading his relatives over governing system, controls the system and keeps it safe from any potential

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<sup>56</sup> Mustapha K Al-Sayyid, "Slow Thaw in the Arab World" *World Policy Journal* (1991): 711.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> John D Sullivan, "Democracy and global economic growth." *Washington Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (1992): 173.

<sup>59</sup> Donald L. Horowitz, "Democracy in divided societies." *Journal of democracy* 4, no. 4 (1993): 18.

<sup>60</sup> Michael C. Hudson, *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy* (USA: Yale University Press, 1977) <http://books.google.com/books> ; Jean-Pierre Filiu, *The Arab Revolution: Ten Lessons from the Democratic Uprising* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Marina Ottaway and Marwan Muasher, *Arab Monarchies: Chance for Reform, Yet Unmet*.

<sup>61</sup> Elliot Abrams, "The Arab Spring" *National Review Online*, March 29, 2011, accessed May 02, 2014, <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/263248/arab-spring-elliott-abrams> .

threat. Or by offering concessions to opponents in time, the monarch prevents any public demonstration. So by being “above the fray of everyday politics” they have strong maneuvering power.<sup>62</sup> Michael Herb (1999), Lisa Anderson (1991), and Zoltan Barany (2013) fall in this category.<sup>63</sup>

But F. Gregory Gause III and Seal L. Yom (2012) argue those protests (online/on streets) seen over Arab spring in PGM show that monarchs doesn't enjoy guaranteed legitimacy. Moreover, putting family members in key posts make any reform policy more difficult because they resist any change could affect their position.<sup>64</sup>

There are enough critiques of all above arguments as well. One of the most interesting ones is an argument by Malcom H Kerr. He argues,

...the doctrine of Caliphate failed to provide a procedure of identifying, choosing, installing, and if necessary, deposing, the caliph. Nor did the doctrine of jurisprudence offer the means of officially ascertaining the consensus on a given point of law. This lack of procedural rules in Islam, not abstract theological ideas about individual rights and responsibilities, is thus considered the source of the Muslim inability to replace an authoritarian ruler and to arrive at a parliamentary democracy.<sup>65</sup>

John L Esposito and James Piscatory argue a different point of view. They explain fundamental concepts such as consultation (Shura)<sup>66</sup>, Political accountability, and equality

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<sup>62</sup> Sean L Yom and F. Gregory Gause III, “Resilient royals: How Arab monarchies hang on.” *Journal of Democracy* 23, no. 4 (2012): 74.

<sup>63</sup> Michael Herb, *All in the Family: Revolution, Absolutism and Democracy in Middle East Monarchies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999); Lisa Anderson, “Absolutism and the Resilience of Monarchy in the Middle East,” *Political Science Quarterly (Academy Of Political Science)* 106, no.1 (Spring 1991): 1. ; Zoltan Barany, “Revolt and Resilience in the Arab Kingdoms.” *Parameters: U.S. Army War College* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 89.

<sup>64</sup> Sean L.Yom and F. Gregory Gause III, “Resilient royals: How Arab monarchies hang on.”.

<sup>65</sup> Malcom H Kerr, *Islamic Reform: The Political and Legal Theories of Muhammad ‘Abduh and Rashid Rida* (Berkeley, CA: University California Press, 1966) Quoted in Mansoor Moaddel, “The study of Islamic culture and politics: An overview and assessment.” *Annual Review of Sociology* (2002): 365.

<sup>66</sup> Arabic term means consultation in English language.



exist in Islam<sup>67</sup> and the problem is, not applying them by Muslims. Gran<sup>68</sup> and Torrey<sup>69</sup> by investigating Islamic roles and Koran give good hints on compatibility of Islam with rationalism. For instance, Torrey shows there are enough words in Koran which are used in trade and business activities which confirms that Islamic mind is familiar with rational choice.<sup>70</sup>

Mark Tessler takes a step forward and tries to give factual evidences by conducting a survey based on world values survey data from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco.<sup>71</sup> He asks public opinions about whether their Islamic orientation affect their attitude toward democracy. The results which are homogenous in all surveyed countries display “Islamic orientations and attachments have, at most, a very limited impact on views about democracy.”<sup>72</sup> Fares Al-Braizat runs an empirical research to test Fukuyama’s claim. He conducts a comparative analysis using data accessible from World Survey Value and European Survey Value.<sup>73</sup> He argues there is a negative and insignificant correlation between religiosity and “support for democracy” in all religions. He includes other variables and contends there is a strong negative correlation between “Human Development” and authoritarianism. Moreover, there is a significant negative correlation between religiosity and

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<sup>67</sup> John L. Esposito and James P. Piscatori, “Democratization and Islam.” *Middle East Journal* no. 3 (1991): 427.

<sup>68</sup> Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760-1840* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998).

<sup>69</sup> Charles Cutler Torrey, *The commercial-theological terms in the Koran* (Leyden: EJ Brill, 1892), <http://books.google.com/books>.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Mark Tessler, “Do Islamic orientations influence attitudes toward democracy in the Arab world? Evidence from Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Algeria.” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 43, no. 3-5 (2002): 229.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 240.

<sup>73</sup> Fares Al-Braizat, “Muslims and Democracy-an Empirical Critique of Fukuyama’s Culturalist Approach.” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 43, no. 3-5 (2002): 269.

“Human Development”. He concludes that only taking Islam to explain authoritarianism is misleading and we need to find phenomenon could explain it.<sup>74</sup>

Furthermore, there are good examples among Islamic countries which have achieved striking degree of development and reasonably democratic way of governing such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Turkey. Finally, Tunisia’s new constitution “which enshrines freedom of religion and women's rights” put all those arguments on Arabic/Islamic element into question.<sup>75</sup> Finding effective variables and mechanisms by which they work, could contribute to better understanding of the region.

#### **I.4. The Literature’s Gap**

In all above arguments, there is a gap: separating the oil/gas factor from other impacting factors. While these factors are intertwined in PGM and work hand in hand. The oil/gas or it’s better to say Rentierism is an important factor and must be considered in study of PGM because of two reasons: First, certain peculiarities of RS which make it different from other governing system and second, the long history of Rentierism in the region which has had a deep effect on social and political dynamics of the region.

Since a small group of society are engaged in rent production, the channels by them these rents are distributed in society have a key role in social and political dynamics of these countries. Rentier States have neo-patriarchal<sup>76</sup> structure through which they distribute rents. Neo-patrimonial theory explains how “allocation state” uses petrodollars to handle elite’s

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> “Tunisia signs new constitution” *The Guardian*, January 27 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/27/tunisia-signs-new-constitution-progressive>

<sup>76</sup> This concept first time used by Hisham Sharabi to explain the governing mechanism in Arab states. For more information see: Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

relationship in particular and the whole society in general.<sup>77</sup> As it is said in Mathew Gray's paper,

... neopatrimonial theory argues for a particular style of leadership where a sovereign—a monarch or president—is at the center of an elite web, with subordinate elites that are submissive to the leader but between which the leader encourages competition. This arrangement suits a leader anxious to keep any potential rivals for power in check. These elites build their own patron-client webs further down the neopatrimonial system and into institutions and social units, and are a medium through which resources and political order are dispensed centrally to various groups and forces, and through which political information and requests for favors pass upwards to the higher elites and the sovereign. The neopatrimonial leader will, as necessary, foster a cult of personality and a public image of strong leadership to build a message of charisma and popularity, while usually conducting elite relations in an opaque, personal fashion that obscures and informalizes the political process.<sup>78</sup>

All regimes are made up a small group of major elites who negotiate with others to broaden elites' networks. They do this to keep the regime and to strengthen the conventional structure of benefits. But what makes the RS different is the unique role of the sovereign on the one hand, and his access to a huge amount of financial resources on the other hand. The sovereign decides how to distribute rents which leads to “polarization of society into a variety of interest groups”<sup>79</sup>.

For different interest groups, government has different distributional plan. The end product of such an unequally distribution system is creation a context for growing Rentier

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<sup>77</sup> Matthew Gray, “A theory of late Rentierism in the Arab States of the Gulf” *Center for International and Regional Studies*, Occasional paper no.7 (Doha: Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, 2011). <http://www12.georgetown.edu/sfs/qatar/cirs/MatthewGrayOccasionalPaper.pdf>

<sup>78</sup> A. Bill and Robert Springborg, *Politics in the Middle East*, 3rd ed. (Glenview: Scott, Foresman/Little, Brown, 1990), quoted in Matthey Gray, “A theory of late Rentierism in the Arab States of the Gulf” *Center for International and Regional Studies*, Occasional paper no.7 (Doha: Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, 2011), 7.

<sup>79</sup> Giacomo Luciani, “Allocation vs. Production States: A Theoretical Framework”, 71.

mind<sup>80</sup>. Contrary to a productive economy in which an individual's earning is a function of his contribution to the job, in a Rentier system the individual by "maneuvering...within the existing setup... [without need to] seeking an alliance with others in similar conditions"<sup>81</sup>, has this chance to earn what he doesn't deserve. Therefore the social, political, and economic policies notwithstanding their similarity to global norms, act completely different in these countries.

The second reason which makes Rentierism an important factor in political and social dynamics of the region is the long history of Rentierism in PGM which doesn't refer to the time of oil/gas exploration. As seen in Figure 2, rulers of the region enjoyed external income (rents) when they signed antipiracy treaties with Great Britain. Great Britain after colonizing India followed two goals in the region: First, keeping India safe from other European competitors; second, keeping the region's seashores secure enough to follow its own economic purposes. By signing these treaties, Britain impeded local rulers to get involved with foreigners without its permission and it also controlled those tribes could making problem.<sup>82</sup> Signing treaty with Britain and then exploring oil, changed the power equation in favor of the region's rulers.<sup>83</sup>

Figure 2. First time treaties were signed with Britain by Gulf rulers

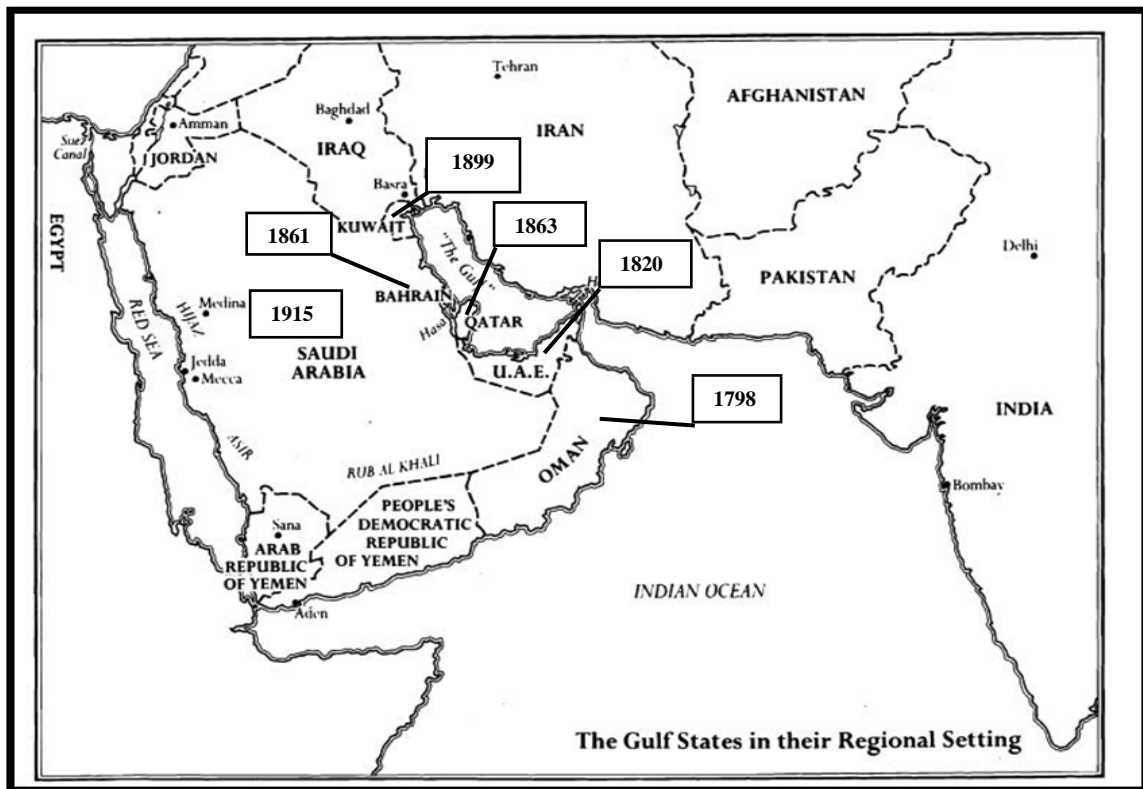
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<sup>80</sup> For better understanding of the phenomenon see Fahad Al-Zumai, "Kuwait's political impasse and rent-seeking behavior: a call for institutional reform." *Kuwait program on Development, Governance and Globalization in the Gulf States*, 29 (London: London School of Economics and Political science, 2013). <http://eprints.Lse.ac.uk/55014/>

<sup>81</sup> Giacomo Luciani. "Allocation vs. Production States: A Theoretical Framework", 76.

<sup>82</sup> Sami Atallah, "6 The Gulf region: beyond oil and wars." in *Democracy in the Arab World: Explaining the Deficit*, ed. Samir A. Makdisi and Ibrahim Elbadawi (New York: Routledge, 2011), 179-186.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.



Source: Rosemary Said Zahlan and Roger Owen, “*The Making of the Modern Gulf States: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman*”, (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1998), quoted in Sami Atallah, “6 The Gulf region: beyond oil and wars.” in *Democracy in the Arab World: Explaining the Deficit*, eds. Samir A. Makdisi, and Ibrahim Elbadawi, (New York: Routledge, 2011): 180.

Saudi Arabia before signing these treaties for a long time enjoyed Zakat (pilgrimage taxes) which made the rulers financially independent.

This is why study non-democratization in PGM without including the Rentierism effect (separating the role of oil) would suffer from deficiency of reasoning. The job by Michael Ross notwithstanding critiques to it, have a strong point. At least, he introduces three channels (effects) by which oil impacts these countries, the same as Luciani and Beblawi. The jobs by Steven Fish and Malcom H. Kerr are interesting as well. They both try to find those cultural particularities could explain democratization deficiency in the region. But both groups fall into two extreme points of taken approaches in Middle-East studies. This thesis is going to bridge this gap by introducing those cultural peculiarities which cause oil performs differently in various contexts.

This thesis takes the argument introduced by F. Gregory Gause III and Seal L Yom as starting point to bridge the gap. They argue monarchies by making different “cross-cutting coalitions” have

stayed resilient.<sup>84</sup> Having access to huge “hydrocarbon rents”, monarchies have enough financial resources to pay for these coalitions. But these “coalitions do not maintain themselves. Autocrats must constantly nurture their alliances with material patronage.”<sup>85</sup> This is an important key in this thesis and in the next part I will discuss how this nurturing action works in PGM. Three of those coalitions which are related to this thesis’ argument (channels by which oil and other impacting factors work with each other) are: Military coalitions, Regional coalitions, Religious coalitions.

Monarchies’ relation with military forces is more sophisticated than it seems at first glance. First of all, military forces are highly paid thanks to petrodollars. Secondly, PGM usually hire their security forces from abroad who don’t ponder to repress protests.<sup>86</sup> It is understandable because “in divided societies, where the regime represents an ethnic, sectarian, or regional minority and has built an officer corps dominated by that overrepresented minority, the armies have thus far backed their regimes.”<sup>87</sup> They have tried to increase the cost of regime change for these forces: changing regime equals to being substituted by new forces and loosing that much financial resources. So they work at their best.

The most important regional coalition is establishing Gulf Cooperation Council in May 1981. GCC provides enough means for PGM to support each other in needed times. For instance, Oman and Bahrain which don’t have enough financial resources to “buy off” protests, got \$20 billion fund from the wealthier members,<sup>88</sup> or this coalition allowed UAE and Saudi Arabia to send 5000 troops to Bahrain in March 2011 to suppress protests.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Sean L Yom, and F. Gregory Gause III, “Resilient royals: How Arab monarchies hang on.”

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>86</sup> Daniel L Byman and Jerrold D. Green, “The enigma of political stability in the Persian Gulf monarchies.” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no. 3 (1999): 20.

<sup>87</sup> F. Gregory Gause III, “Why Middle East Studies missed the Arab spring: The myth of authoritarian stability.” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 4 (2011): 84.

<sup>88</sup> Mehran Kamrava, “The Arab Spring and the Saudi-led counterrevolution.” *Orbis* 56, no. 1 (2012): 98.

<sup>89</sup> Mary Ann Tetreault, “The Winter of the Arab Spring in the Gulf Monarchies.” *Globalizations* 8, no. 5 (2011): 632.

Finally, the religious coalition which is the main debate of this thesis. Regarding this coalition, they simply mention that PGM made the religious clerics employees of the state. In this way, PGM brought religious clerics under control of the system and subsequently gained their religious support (religious legitimacy). Surprisingly, they don't consider what happened in Iran in 1979. At that time the Shah was as rentier as PGM and had access to that much Petrodollars. Why the Shiite Ulama could revolt against the Shah? And why such an Islamic revolution didn't happen in PGM? Why Shah didn't subdue the Shiite Ulama as PGM subdued Sunni ones? Of course there are many social, institutional, and cultural factors engaging any revolution, but why such a revolution happened in their northern neighbor while they have been able to prevent the same movement? Answering to these questions helps to bridge mentioned gap. There is a difference between Sunni doctrine and Shiite one which causes oil acts differently in PGM as opposed to Iran.

The next part is on difference between financial structure of religious clerics in Iran (Shiite Muslims) and in PGM (Sunni Muslims) which led these countries go through two divergent paths. This difference has caused the neo-patriarchy works better in PGM than in Iran (in 1979). The outcome of this difference has been resilient system in PGM and regime change in Iran.

## **PART II. How RS and Sunni Ulama Coalesced With Each Other**

### **II.1. Introduction**

This part is the heart of this thesis. It argues how financial structure of Sunni Ulama affects their interactions with RS. Shiite Ulama enjoy religious taxes directly paid to them by people which makes them financially independent. On the contrary, Sunni Ulama don't benefit such religious taxes. This difference has caused states of Sunni majority countries could subdue Sunni Ulama over time.

The outcome of this difference could be seen in Islamic Revolution happened in Iran. Shiite Ulama could revolt against the regime because they had that much required financial resources to lead that massive movement. Of course there are many factors involving revolutions in each society but this factor has been discussed by scholars as one of the major factors of Islamic revolution in Iran. Knowing the difference between Shiite system and Sunni one, gives us a mean to understand how oil factor performs differently in PGM and why Sunni Ulama have been acted as a preventive lever to potential protests in these countries.

Explaining why Sunni Ulama and Shiite ones went through such divergent paths (having completely different financial structure) is beyond this thesis but the outcome of all those phenomena is distinct systems which are discussed later in this part.

The first section of this part discusses on differences between Sunni doctrine and Shiite one. These two different doctrines cause financial structure of Ulama goes through two divergent paths. The second section bridges the gap between political economy approach and political culture approach toward resilient regimes in PGM. It does it by explaining how these two different financial structures of Ulama affect the oil factor and cause shaping a different relation between Rentier states and religious institutions.

## **II.2. Shiite doctrine V.S Sunni doctrine**

The conflict between Shiite and Sunni stems from the death of Prophet Mohammad in 632 C.E. and the struggle for his successor. The Sunni Muslims believe

...that the first four caliphs --Mohammed's successors--rightfully took his place as the leaders of Muslims. They recognize the heirs of the four caliphs (Ali is one of those four caliphs) as legitimate religious leaders. These heirs



ruled continuously in the Arab world until the break-up of the Ottoman Empire following the end of the First World War.<sup>90</sup>

On the contrary, Shiite Muslims believe Ali (the Prophet Mohammad's cousin and son in law) in addition to the next eleven Imams<sup>91</sup> (these eleven Imams all were Ali's descendants) were the right successors of Prophet Mohammad. According to Shiite beliefs, it is a "historic injustice done to the house of Ali".<sup>92</sup> Apart from this, the main difference between Sunnis and Shiites related to this thesis' argument stems from another issue. According to Shiite doctrine the twelfth Imam (Hidden Imam: Mahdi) disappeared in 941 C.E. and until his reappearance, Twelver-Shiite believers have certain duties.

"In the absence of the Hidden Imam sovereignty lies in the hand of ...Ulama"<sup>93</sup> till his reappearance and they are in charge of reinterpreting the will of Hidden Imam. There is a hierarchical system among Shiite Ulama in which Marjaiya (Mujtahid)<sup>94</sup> is posited at its top. It is possible that several persons (Ulama) take this title simultaneously. The Shiite believer has this duty to identify a living Mujtahid to follow. Then she must pay her religious taxes directly to her selected Mujtahid. Here is where the economic strength of Shiite Ulama comes.

Joseph Eliash explains it very well:

In the absence of the Hidden Imam, the legitimacy of any Muslim political regime, even that of a Twelver-Shi'i government, was denied. A significant development with far-reaching political consequences follows from this, namely, the duty of the Twelver-Shi'i believer to pay a tenth of his yearly income directly to the Mujtahids and not to the Twelver-Shi'i government, and another tenth to the poor among the descendants of Ali who practices

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<sup>90</sup> "What Is the Difference Between Sunni and Shiite Muslims--and Why Does It Matter?" *George Mason University History News Network*, October 05, 2005, Accessed May 02, 2014, <http://hmn.us/article/934>

<sup>91</sup> In the Shiite language the Imam is the title used for Ali's descendants.

<sup>92</sup> Emmanuel Sivan, "Islamic Radicalism: Sunni and Shiite" in *Religious radicalism and politics in the Middle East*, eds. Emmanuel Sivan and Menachem Friedman (Albany: State University of New York, 1990), 44.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>94</sup> Both names are used for calling the most knowledgeable person among Shiite Ulama.

Twelver-Shi'ism, which also may be paid through the Mujtahids. In modern Persia, the payment of Khums gives the Twelver-Shi'i devines economic independence from the political ruler and thus enables them to exercise political power in addition to their direct religious influence among the masses.<sup>95</sup>

So Shiite Ulama “always enjoyed a charismatic status by virtue of their attachment to the Hidden Imam”<sup>96</sup> in addition to such financial resources arising from this doctrine. According to Shiite doctrine, the ruler who is not from Ali's descendant is not legitimate and there are “salient symbolic resources to justify resistance against unjust authority, and to legitimate religious leaders as competitors to the state.”<sup>97</sup> The most important symbolic resource is Imam Hussain (son of Ali) who was killed by Yazid Umayyad caliph. On the contrary, according to Sunni tradition “an existing Muslim regime [is] as legitimate [,] as long as the ruler doesn't publicly reject Islam.”<sup>98</sup> So over the years, the Sunni Ulama usually have had the rubber stamp role for protesting movements instead of initiating it.

Sunnis have Messianic belief as well, but it differs from Shiite ones (in Shiite beliefs the Messiah is from house of Ali: the Hidden Imam). Lack of such a doctrine in Sunni branch of Islam has caused Sunni Ulama don't enjoy the same independent financial system as Shiite ones do because Sunnis don't pay for supporting the “Sayyids”<sup>99</sup> or don't pay “Sahme Imam”<sup>100</sup>.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, in Sunni doctrine a follower doesn't have to follow a certain

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<sup>95</sup> Joseph Eliash, “Ali b. Abi Talib in Ithna –Ashari Shi'i belief” (unpublished PhD thesis, university of London, 1966) quoted in Nikki R Keddie, “The roots of the ulama's power in modern Iran.” *Studia Islamica* (1969): 48-49.

<sup>96</sup> Emmanuel Sivan, “Islamic Radicalism: Sunni and Shiite”, 50.

<sup>97</sup> Theda Skocpol, “Rentier state and Shi'a Islam in the Iranian Revolution.” *Theory and society* 11, no. 3 (1982): 273.

<sup>98</sup> Emmanuel Sivan, “Islamic Radicalism: Sunni and Shiite”, 49.

<sup>99</sup> “Sayyid” is a title used for the ones who belong to house of Ali and are his descendants.

<sup>100</sup> “Sahme Imam” is the money (one tenth of their yearly income) that the Shiites pay to Mujtahid as the Hidden Imam representative.

Mujtahid. But on the contrary, a Shiite follower must “pick[s] a living Mujtahid to follow and abide his judgment”.<sup>102</sup> According to those Sunni schools exercising in PGM “all human beings are under an obligation, to the measure of their individual capacity, to choose among the differing opinions offered by Ulama according to their detailed proofs. This position does not forbid Taqlid<sup>103</sup>, but seeks to restrict it to a minimum.”<sup>104</sup> This is where the Shiite and Sunni Ulama’s source of power goes through two divergent paths.

In Shiite system, a follower chooses a Living Mujtahid to follow and to pay him directly her own religious taxes. But a Sunni follower could switch among different Ulama and she is not obliged to pay those taxes. Over the years of bureaucratization in both Sunni and Shiite societies, the states have put “Awgaf” (religious trust) and religious institutes like mosques and schools, under their own control; but they couldn’t make Shiite Ulama totally dependent upon states. This is due to “Sahme Imam” religious tax. This tax is a holy issue and states are unable to cancel it (like Zakat) till the return of the Hidden Imam (e.g. in Saudi Arabia Zakat was cancelled in 1972, although before that it was paid to government not to Ulama). This difference has caused that Sunni Ulama “usually acting as tools or minor allies of more powerful classes.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> The money Shiites pay for supporting Ali’s descendants could be paid to Mujtahid as well and the he pays it to “Sayyids” he knows.

<sup>102</sup> The bases of traditional politics: Islam and tribalism. p:45

<sup>103</sup> “Taqlid literally means to confer a badge of authority on someone; technically it means to adopt someone’s opinion... as correct without knowing the proofs for that opinion.” in Frank E. Vogel, *Islamic Law and Legal System: studying of Saudi Arabia* (Leiden: Koninklyke Brill, 2000), 57.

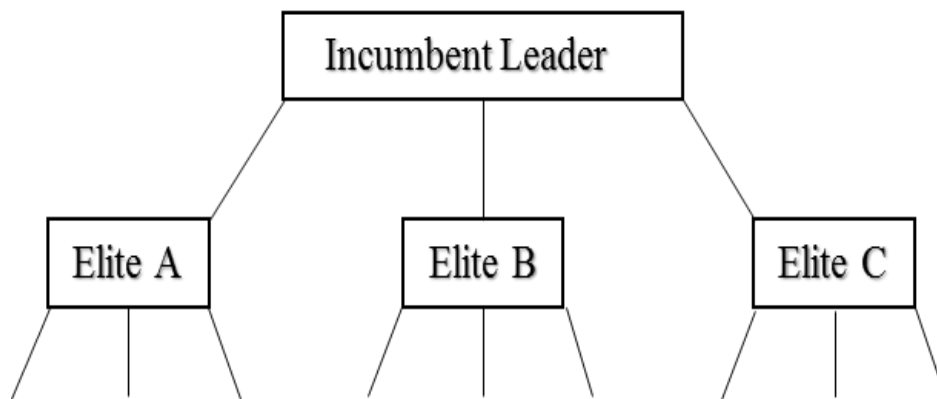
<sup>104</sup> Frank E. Vogel, *Islamic Law and Legal System: studying of Saudi Arabia* (Leiden: Koninklyke Brill, 2000), 68.

<sup>105</sup> F. Gregory Gause III, “The bases of traditional politics: Islam and tribalism” in *Oil monarchies: domestic and security challenges in the Arab Gulf states* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1994), 33.

### II.3. Bridging the Gap: How RS and Sunni Ulama Coalesced with Each Other

The neo-patrimonial structure of RS is the starting point of this section analysis. As already explained, neo-patrimonial system of leadership has a hierarchical structure in which an incumbent leader is posited at top and elites are subordinate to him in different levels. Here the incumbent leader has access to a huge amount of financial resources from abroad which enable him to exercise power first, by dividing the society into different interest groups, and then by distributing oil wealth -rent- proportionally among them. The following figure shows this process.

Figure 3. Neo-patrimonial system



Source: drawn by author

A group of these elites are religious elites: Ulama. This structure is like the PGM's system and shows the nature of relation between Sunni Ulama and RS.

The Sunni Ulama's relation with RS is the same as the above figure: a direct relation in which RS is positioned above the religious system because the religious system is paid by RS directly.<sup>106</sup> Consequently they become subdued to the rentier incumbent or as Gregory Gause says the employees of the state. Each of those above elites – Elite A, Elite B- could be

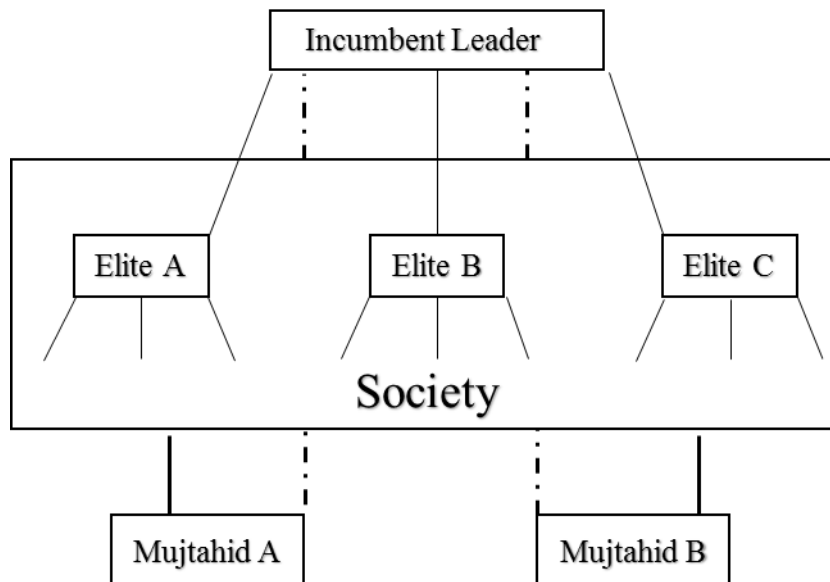
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<sup>106</sup> Sunni Ulama don't enjoy independent financial resources.

a different group of Ulama and thanks to patrimonial nature of the system, the rentier incumbent could pay them proportionally based on its own certain goals.

The relation between RS and Shiite Ulama is different as the following figure shows. In the Shiite system, the RS distributes oil rents in the society through different social and economic policies. The followers of the Shiite Ulama belonging to this society, subsequently, pay a part of those earned oil benefits as their religious taxes directly to the Shiite Ulama. So contrary to Sunni Ulama, the Shiite ones have a direct relation with people but an indirect relation with the RS thanks to their financial structure.

Figure 4. Shiite Ulama relation with RS



Source: drawn by author

These systems (in both Shiite and Sunni societies) run until the both sides respect rules of the game, what the Shah of Iran didn't.

The Shah which had access to huge financial resources due to oil price increase, started modernization plan in Iran. He attempted to bring all traditional sectors of the society such as production sectors, merchants, and bazaar under the state's control. His industrialization plan passed and squeezed many sectors of the society. But the most

aggressive action by him was “the Shah’s steady efforts to exclude the Islamic clergy, the Ulama, from educational, legal, and welfare activities that historically had been theirs to perform.”<sup>107</sup> He tried to wipe religion (Islam) out of the society knowing Iranians’ sensitivity to the Islamic rules. He broke rules of the game. All people who had offended by his modernization policies and were against those policies, gathered under the Shiite Ulama’s umbrella. Here the oil rents went against him and outcome of injecting petrodollars into the society was catastrophic for his regime. The more petrodollars he injected into the society, the more money went to the Shiite Ulama as religious taxes. The outcome of oil price increase, was gaining power on the part of Shiite Ulama who led people to revolt.<sup>108</sup>

PGM took another strategy. They have included religious clerics in the governing system. In all of these countries the legal system is based on Sharia law. “Religious court system in all of these countries have been placed under the control of the ministries of justice, with judges appointed by state authorities from among religious scholars.”<sup>109</sup> So, on the one hand the RS pays the Ulama, on the other hand, it has their “Institutional support and ideological legitimation”: a direct, mutual relationship as we see in figure 3. Several facts should be considered here.

First, what enabled PGM to exercise such a system is the financial structure of Sunni Ulama which has provided enough ground for running this type of governing system. The Shah of Iran was unable to make the Shiite Ulama employees of the state. Even after Islamic revolution in Iran which religious clerics have merged into the governing system, one thing has not changed: the financial independency of Ulama resulted from Twelver-Imam doctrine. Today Shiite followers could pay their religious taxes by credit cards from all over the world.

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<sup>107</sup> Theda Skocpol, “Rentier state and Shi’a Islam in the Iranian Revolution.”, 272.

<sup>108</sup> Shahrough Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran* (Albany: State university of New York Press, 1980), <http://books.google.com/books> .

<sup>109</sup> F. Gregory Gause III, “The bases of traditional politics: Islam and tribalism”, 14.

So, the coalition between the system and religious institutions in PGM is the outcome of a mutual need.

Second, the neo-patrimonial structure of the system has played an important role in keeping religious groups quiet and preventing broad objections by them. PGM have divided the Ulama into different groups and have put them in different posts based on their system's needs. This strategy has enabled the RS to have different payments to different groups. This is justifiable and doesn't leave any room for objections (different salary for different duties). The rentier mind knows that by maneuvering over the existing system could earn more, then a series of competitions would start within the system and the incumbent leader at top enjoys the end product of that: more stability. Petrodollars play an important role here. The incumbent leader has that much required financial resources to run such a system. The Mubarak's regime in Egypt was rentier as well, but it didn't have that much money to build such a sophisticated structure. The Sunni Ulama in Egypt didn't publish Fatwa<sup>110</sup> to support Mubarak, but for example "...in Saudi Arabia...Sheikh Abd al-Aziz Al al-Sheikh, the grand mufti, the highest religious official in the country, condemned the marches and demonstrations occurring in Arab countries as "destructive acts of chaos" plotted by the enemies of Islam..."<sup>111</sup> and at the same time the Council of Senior Clerics (religious institute) declared that any demonstration is prohibited.<sup>112</sup> Here we could see how the Sunni doctrine works in this system. Two different religious clerics issue their own statements to make sure providing a situation for a follower (whom could switch over different ideas) to take their desired order. Further, in rentier system they tried to play the traditional game to keep their position within the system. In return, by the patrimonial RS,

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<sup>110</sup> Islamic order that make follower to take a certain actions in certain situations.

<sup>111</sup> F. Gregory Gause III, *Saudi Arabia in the New Middle East*. No. 63. (USA: Council on Foreign Relations, 2011), 8.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

About \$53 million was allocated to establish a bureau for the General Presidency for Religious Research and Ifta, including the creation of 300 jobs; \$133.32 million for the renovation of mosques; \$53 million to support the country's Holy Quran Memorization Associations; \$80 million for the Bureau of Call and Guidance at the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Call and Guidance; and \$53 million to complete regional headquarters for the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. Funding has also been provided to establish a *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) complex.<sup>113</sup>

Here is what Gregory Gause argues: nurturing these coalitions from time to time by changing the available benefits to each group.

As a result, religious coalition in PGM is the byproduct of two elements. First, oil which gives PGM enough financial resources. Second, the financial structure of Sunni Ulama. They both together enabled PGM to build this sophisticated structure. These two impacting factors work together and the absence of one of them would result in different outcome. Mubarak who didn't have that much financial resources to build such a patronage structure, was unable to survive despite of having Sunni system, and Shah of Iran despite of having access to huge amounts of petrodollars couldn't survive Shiite Islamic revolution.

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<sup>113</sup> Marina Ottaway and Marwan Muasher, *Arab Monarchies: Chance for Reform, Yet Unmet* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011), 17.



### **PART III. CONCLUSION**

This thesis presents an explanation to persistent authoritarianism in the Persian Gulf Monarchies. It bridges existing gap in the literature. For a long time, scholars have discussed about oil/gas factor and cultural peculiarities (like Islam) as main barriers to democratization in the Middle-East. Surprisingly, they rarely assessed how these two major factors (oil and cultural peculiarities) work with each other and affect resiliency of the monarchs. This thesis, does this by investigating how the financial dependency of Sunni Ulama and neo-patrimonial structure of Rentier states has led to a strong coalition between the states and the Sunni Ulama. This Coalition has led to stable regimes in the Persian Gulf Monarchies.

Lack of Hidden Imam doctrine in Sunni branch of Islam has caused Sunni Ulama don't enjoy financial independency as Shiite ones do. Sunni Ulama are directly dependent on the states but Shiite ones are directly dependent on people instead of the states. The outcome of this difference has been regime change for Iran (1979) and stability for the Persian Gulf Monarchies. The injected petrodollars by the Shah of Iran into the society went as religious taxes to the Shiite Ulama and empowered them to revolt against the regime. On the contrary, petrodollars in Persian Gulf Monarchies empowered the states to run a proportional system of benefits conducive to subordination of religious system. This diverse situation is end product of financial structure of Shiite Ulama versus Sunni ones.

As this thesis shows, on the one hand, putting all Islamic countries in a bowl and discussing "Islam as a major barrier to democratization" is not a true way of analysis. On the other hand, Rentier State Theory alone could not explain what actually is going on in the region. In the region studies, what should be considered is finding channels through which these two important factors work with each other. The Persian Gulf Monarchies interestingly, have used one of the region's peculiarities (The financial dependency of Sunni Ulama) to design a system in which religious clerics being under control. This strategy has helped them to survive oppositions by religious groups till now.

But this strategy is a double-edged sword. Although this coalition has worked successfully by now but the question is that for how long they will be able to run such a system. In these monarchies the legal system still is based on Sharia, but entering into global context and implementing development policies requires changing the rules. The simplest and basic issue is the situation of women in these countries.

Still in these countries women are considered as second class citizens. In Saudi Arabia for example they are deprived of simple activities like driving car. The women Issue is the

most challenging issue in Islamic countries. These monarchs have been able to handle their relation with the Ulama by exercising Islamic law but what would happen if they have to change these rules? If they cross the red lines of Ulama, they would experience the same challenge as the Shah of Iran did? Knowing that they already have included religious clerics in the governing system and have put them in some key posts. To top it all, they have defined themselves as Islamic countries and have made it a part of their identity. Many Islamist groups within these countries still see them as protectors of Islam. The signs of such challenges have already emerged. For example in UAE “A growing number of Emiratis are unsatisfied with the indecent behavior of expatriate residents and tourists in public.”<sup>114</sup>

In addition to the above problem, the instability of oil price is going to be another challenge. These countries even now suffer from incompatibility of real oil price with the price they need to run their system for a guaranteed time.<sup>115</sup> While USA is getting ready to enter the oil market by extracting oil sands, the prospect of the market is not promising enough for these countries. When they don't have that much financial resources to pay for these patronages, could they still keep these coalitions?

This thesis showed these countries have been able to survive religious oppositions by now through taking discussed strategies. We see that how different Islamic doctrines could provide different challenges to incumbent regimes. Comparative analysis, the used method in this thesis, would be an appropriate method to analyze the region's countries in order to find explanatory differences conducive to a better understanding of the region.

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<sup>114</sup> Mohammad El-Katiri, *The future of the Arab Gulf monarchies in the age of uncertainties*, 12.

<sup>115</sup> Cristopher Davidson, *After the Sheikhs: the coming collapse of the Gulf monarchies*.

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