

# MERIA

## ALL I WANT IS EQUALITY WITH GIRLS: GENDER AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY GULF

By Sean Foley\*

*This article explains how women in the Gulf states have harnessed political and socioeconomic changes over the last decade to alter their standing at home and abroad. It argues that Gulf women have benefited from investments made by Gulf governments in higher education since the 1970s, the war on terrorism, the ever higher costs of employing expatriate workers, and the inability of their male colleagues to fill either skilled or unskilled positions. It also argues that the position of women today is consistent with their position historically in Gulf society, and that questions of gender are not limited to women.*

### INTRODUCTION

In January 2004, Lubna Olayan stepped up to the lectern to deliver a speech to the Jeddah Economic Summit. She was a natural choice to be the first woman to address the forum in the Saudi port city because she headed one of Saudi Arabia's best-known conglomerates, the Olayan Financing Group. Lubna was a daughter of Sulayman Olayan, who had risen from humble circumstances to become one of Saudi Arabia's most successful businessmen. Yet the organizers of the conference might have rethought their decision to let her speak had they known what she would say and the controversy it would spawn. Throughout her speech, entitled "A Saudi Vision for Growth," Olayan outlined a vision of a Saudi Arabia that was at odds with what the kingdom's religious elites sought (and still seek) to project to the outside world. For nearly twenty years, they had rigidly enforced social norms that aimed to exclude women from virtually all public settings and to create a workforce that was overwhelmingly male, even if that meant importing thousands of expatriate workers. Instead, Olayan argued that any Saudi, "irrespective of gender," who was serious about working should have the opportunity to "find a job in the field for which he or she is best qualified."<sup>1</sup> The reaction of the audience, which was composed of Saudi and foreign men and women, was enthusiastic and electric.

Olayan did not wear the full *hijab* (headscarf) and covering traditionally worn by women in Saudi Arabia in public settings. Pictures of her and other businesswomen, many of whom wore no veils and freely interacted with men in public, appeared on the front pages of Saudi newspapers. Olayan and her colleagues had broken social taboos and challenged the authority of Saudi religious elites.

It is not surprising that the reaction of these elites was one of profound shock and anger. The highest religious figure in the kingdom, Grand Mufti Shaykh Abd al-Aziz bin Abdullah al-Shaykh, immediately released a statement in which he condemned the summit, especially the public mixing of men and women. He argued that such behavior was the "root" of every evil and catastrophe, along with the sins of decadence and adultery. He also expressed his bewilderment and sorrow that "such shameful behavior" could have ever taken place in Saudi Arabia. Although he did not mention Olayan or the conference organizers by name, he nonetheless made it clear that he felt that they should be reprimanded. The mixing of men and women, he said, "is highly punishable" and "prohibited for all."<sup>2</sup>

These were not idle threats. Fourteen years earlier, in November 1990, the government delivered swift retribution against 45 elite educated women who deliberately dismissed their drivers and drove through the streets of Riyadh—an act that at the time was legal un-

der Saudi law but frowned upon by the religious establishment. The government immediately dismissed the women from their jobs, confiscated their passports, and sought to shame them and their families by labeling them infidels. Some were even forced into exile. It took years for the 45 women to regain their rights and privileges in Saudi life. To make clear how seriously the government had taken the act, it formally outlawed women from driving in the kingdom. Those women who contemplated driving would now face the wrath of both the state and the religious authorities.<sup>3</sup>

Because Olayan had violated social taboos and challenged religious elites in the same way as the 45 female drivers, one would have expected the grand mufti's words to bring a swift retribution against her. Quite the opposite occurred: the Saudi government did not take action against Olayan, who has continued to this day to advocate for women's rights and to appear at home and abroad without the traditional Saudi covering and hijab.

This article seeks to explain how Ms. Olayan and other women in the Arab Gulf states have harnessed political, economic, and social changes since 2000 to alter their standing at home and abroad. It contends that women are well-positioned to take advantage of these changes, owing to their advanced educations, the ever-higher social and financial costs of employing expatriate workers, and the inability of their male colleagues to fill either skilled or unskilled positions. It also argues that questions of gender are not limited to women. Just as women are expected to dress and act according to established social norms and obligations, men are also expected to adhere to social expectations. It is ironic that as women gain a greater role in Gulf life in coming years, they will attain a position that will be closer to that of their grandmothers and great-grandmothers in the 1920s than to that of their mothers in the 1970s and 1980s.

#### **MEN AND WOMEN IN THE GULF BEFORE 1970**

To understand contemporary Gulf society and the gender relations that will shape it in the future, one must start in the period before the 1930s. During that time, women, like men, lived in very poor societies, in which pearling was the chief means of livelihood. Within that milieu, the tribal, clan, or socioeconomic status of the women's husbands or male relatives defined their freedoms and horizons. Women had limited social freedoms everywhere in the Gulf. They could not choose their husbands and were generally expected to wear the veil and the long cloak (*abaya*). Significantly, the use of the veil in coastal communities reflected the presence of Iranian and South Asian merchants, both of whom saw the veil as a symbol of female decency and propriety.<sup>4</sup> (Veiling was far less common in rural and other areas of the Gulf, where these groups did not exist in large numbers.) Male relatives had considerable power over women and were allowed to use capital punishment if one sufficiently dishonored her family.<sup>5</sup> Dowries were modest and it was not unheard of for families to limit women's inheritances, thereby violating a chief tenet of Islamic law.

Yet the wives of wholesale or retail merchants from the Iranian side of the Gulf, where social mores regarding gender were more relaxed, did not face the same social restrictions and often received some education. The wives of pearl divers, fishermen, grocers, blacksmiths, carpenters, and other skilled traders had even more freedom. From Unayzah in the Najd to Dubai in the Trucial Coast, women bought and sold a host of products with men and women.<sup>6</sup> The central role of women in the Gulf economy is well-illustrated by the public reaction to a decision by the Dubai legislative council in 1931 to ban women from selling fish.<sup>7</sup> Much to the surprise of the legislators, male fishermen, who presumably would have benefited the most from the new law, called for it to be repealed. Male fishermen argued that they could not simultaneously catch fish and sell their goods in markets—a clear indication of the importance of women in the local economic life. The law was repealed, but as Fatima al-Sayegh notes, the fishermen's protests had little to do with time and everything

to do with money, because women could sell fish at far higher prices than their male colleagues.<sup>8</sup> They simply had a better understanding of the market than did their husbands. Since fishermen would want to strive to get the best price for their fish, they understood that the best people for the job were their women.

Throughout the Gulf, women also worked as seamstresses, shop keepers, and Koranic instructors. There had been schools and tutors, known as *mutuwah*, for both boys and girls in Gulf communities since the 1890s,<sup>9</sup> while daughters of merchants in the Hijaz studied in elite British schools in Egypt.<sup>10</sup> Older women were midwives, folk healers, or senior practitioners of Zar, a religious tradition akin to voodoo. By contrast, rural women worked in agriculture and animal husbandry. Bedouin women often wove clothing and produced small-scale craft goods. Many of them were the chief commercial agents for their tribes or managed tribal or family life for extended periods.<sup>11</sup> Some women, such as Dubai's Shaykha Husa, wielded political power, owned land, were leading merchants, and hosted their own weekly *majleses* (councils in which politicians field requests from ordinary citizens).<sup>12</sup>

The collapse of the Gulf's pearl industry and the rise of Saudi Arabia in the 1930s transformed the position of many women (and men) for the worse. Almost overnight, a chief source of foreign exchange dried up, export earnings plummeted, boats were laid ashore, and divers returned home permanently. Within this environment, many individuals lost their savings, investments, businesses, and social status. Following the establishment of Saudi Arabia in 1932, the elites of the newly formed kingdom sought to eliminate ethnic differences in their new state by imposing strict social, religious, and sartorial regimes on men and women. Saudi Arabia's first king, Abd al-Aziz al-Saud, decreed in 1932 that all Saudi men serving in government must wear the Najdi Bedouin *thob* or *dishdasha* (a full-length, usually white, garment), which is the attire still seen widely in the kingdom today.<sup>13</sup> Old regional and more colorful male dress disappeared. Over time, women's freedoms to prac-

tice Zar and other similar traditions were severely curtailed, and the abaya emerged as the national Saudi female equivalent of the thob.<sup>14</sup>

Besides the sheer size of Saudi Arabia vis-à-vis its neighbors, a significant factor in the kingdom's ability to shape the culture and politics of peoples beyond its borders was the discovery of massive oil deposits in the 1930s. This discovery brought wealth into the kingdom, especially after the international price of oil quadrupled in 1973. Flush with unprecedented revenues, the Saudi state came to dominate the socioeconomic and political structures of the kingdom as never before via infrastructure projects, direct cash payments, and social services. As large oil deposits were discovered in the Gulf, Saudi Arabia's neighbors from Kuwait to Oman adopted very similar development strategies.

## AN ISLAMIC FACADE

For men and women of the Gulf, the events of the 1970s marked a transition as important as the disappearance of the pearling industry decades earlier. Gulf states invested the proceeds from their newfound wealth in infrastructure, including education, and sought to build robust modern economies. Gulf women and men lived in cities and steadily gained access to every level of education. Women, for the first time, began to surpass men in school enrollment, literacy, and even educational achievement. Yet they were also encouraged to have large families in order to swell the indigenous workforce—which was still tiny, compared to the expatriate workforces from Europe and Asia that were transforming the Gulf states into modern societies.<sup>15</sup>

These new policies reflected the desire of Gulf governments to check the ability of socialist, Marxist, religious, and Arab nationalists from influencing the indigenous national populations and to appeal to Islamic groups.<sup>16</sup> Islamist groups had gained influence in Gulf societies after Egypt's defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, and the events of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, where the Shah's secular government could not check a mass popular movement headed by a Muslim cleric,

Ayatollah Khomeini. The seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in November 1979 and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan a month later reinforced the position of Islamic groups in Gulf society. By 1980, many Sunni Gulf Arabs had come to believe that their fellow Muslims were under assault and that Islam offered the best hope to address the challenges of late-twentieth-century life in the Gulf and the rest of the Islamic world.

No state in the Gulf was more acutely aware of these trends than Saudi Arabia. At the heart of the Saudi program in the 1970s was a vision of a society that was technologically advanced but that rigidly upheld conservative Islamic values. This vision was without precedent in either Saudi history in particular or in Islamic history in general. A critical benchmark for the success of this new society was the absence of women in public settings. Banning women from public places allowed the government to provide tangible proof that it was addressing the concerns of many conservative Saudis. To reinforce its commitment to these values, the Saudi government gave wide latitude to the religious police to enforce Muslim morality regarding women in all public settings.<sup>17</sup>

Under this new arrangement, once gender-integrated institutions, such as buses, offices, and recreational areas, were rigidly segregated. A whole set of parallel buildings and sections of communities arose just for women. Pictures of Western women in newspapers and other publications, as well as on public signs, were edited to conform to Islamic norms. In 1982, the Saudi government curtailed opportunities for single Saudi women to study abroad.<sup>18</sup> The Saudi state also rigidly enforced the *mahram* regulation, by which women could not travel abroad without a close male relative. A royal decree in 1985 forbade women from working in all sectors of the economy outside of education and health. Nor could women manage businesses even if they owned them. In such cases, they had to prove that they had a male guardian or administrator. In addition, the Saudi *ulama* issued a *fatwa* announcing that a Saudi woman had to be ac-

companied by a male guardian to travel anywhere.<sup>19</sup>

Now confined to both private and gender-specific places, women focused on what the state saw as their two primary tasks: having very large families and helping to educate Saudis to replace foreign workers. Because salaries in the Gulf were far higher than those in India, Pakistan, the Philippines, and the other states that provided expatriate labor to the kingdom, Riyadh could easily keep those foreigners until its own population had produced enough educated technicians to run the kingdom's modern society on their own.

These changes in Saudi Arabia were especially important because they coincided with the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981—an alliance of six Arab Gulf states: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. This new organization, based in Riyadh, helped to create a new pan-Gulf social identity modeled on the social mores of the council's largest member state, Saudi Arabia. Personal status laws in various Gulf states began to mirror those of Saudi Arabia. Expatriate laborers dominated the economies of other GCC states—just as they did in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the tensions from the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, which pitted an Arab-Sunni government in Baghdad against a revolutionary Shi'a government in Tehran, further intensified conservative Sunni sensibilities throughout the Gulf. Many GCC states supported Iraq and used the war as an excuse to tighten controls over their Shi'a populations.

The example of Bahrain is instructive. Starting in the 1950s, Bahrainis of all ages began to wear Western clothing, and Bahraini men, as a Christian missionary noted at the time, “left the Arab gown” for “foreign clothes.”<sup>20</sup> However, when Bahrain joined the GCC in 1981, Bahraini men switched back, adopting the *thobs* worn by their fathers and grandfathers. It was now important for Bahrainis to look a certain way and to signal that they had joined the community of Gulf Arabs.<sup>21</sup>

Bahraini women were no exception to this trend. In the early 1980s, close to 95 percent

of the female students at Bahrain's National University wore the veil, and those who chose not to were under constant pressure to do so.<sup>22</sup> Bahrain's government announced in the mid-1980s that it would regulate all aspects of women's work. Furthermore, the island's government established a semiofficial policy of blocking the hiring and promotion of professional women, even if they were better qualified and had more experience than men or expatriate workers.<sup>23</sup>

From the start, the Islamic facade had important and tangible limits. Wealthy Gulf Arabs of both genders often wore Western-style clothing behind closed doors at home or at embassies, and men and women mixed freely. At the ARAMCO complex in Dhahran, Saudi women often worked side by side with Western women (and men) and wore Western-style clothing. Saudi women regularly drove on the compound as well (although without licenses), and the Saudi government issued official driver's licenses to both male and female drivers from Western nations. Furthermore, the female drivers on ARAMCO compounds were not the only women who drove in Saudi Arabia: Bedouin women drove trucks and other farm equipment. There were so many female Bedouin truck drivers in the 1970s that a Saudi prince, Bandar bin Sultan, half jokingly predicted to the *Washington Post* in 1978 that the "spearhead of the Saudi women's movement will come from the Bedouins of the desert."<sup>24</sup>

The restrictions on unmarried Saudi women's traveling abroad for education arose at the same time that the Saudi government offered to pay the college tuition of any Saudi wife who married before she traveled abroad. Such incentives were meant, in part, to control the behavior of Saudi men abroad by encouraging them to marry Saudi women instead of foreigners. However, the government would never have extended its tuition offer if officials did not believe that many Saudi men wanted to marry educated women; that many Saudi women wanted to be educated abroad; and that many Saudi families viewed the higher education of their daughters as a viable reason for marriage.<sup>25</sup>

These insights take on greater importance when one bears in mind that Saudi society looks at marriage as a socioeconomic alliance between families or between tribes. Within this arrangement, brides have substantial say in marriages and wide latitude to reject potential spouses. Furthermore, when it comes to picking marital partners, families expect young men to defer to the judgment of others in their family, including their mothers and other female family members. The comparative weakness of Saudi men of all ages appears in Saudi novelist's Raja'a al-Sanea's 2006 work, *The Girls of Riyadh*. Throughout the novel, the male characters, including the most powerful and educated, cannot overcome their families' various objections to their desire to marry the Saudi and non-Saudi women they love. Commenting on the state of Saudi men, one female character notes that they are "passive and weak...just pawns their families move around the chessboard."<sup>26</sup> Even in the most conservative of Gulf societies, Saudi Arabia, Islamic patriarchy clearly can have limits.<sup>27</sup>

Other states more directly exposed the limits of patriarchy and retained their commitment to Western notions of equality and female education. In Kuwait, for example, Islamists discovered that their influence had significant limits in the 1980s, especially in regard to women. An excellent example of this occurred in 1986, when Islamist deputies sought to establish an authority to enforce Islamic law in Kuwait, including severe restrictions on women's liberties. The government responded to this initiative first by indirectly hindering or ignoring it and then by dissolving the government. Although Islamists and liberal and secular groups often found common ground to oppose repeated government efforts to check parliamentary power, the two groups parted ways on many social and political issues. To divide the opposition, the Kuwaiti government sometimes forged alliances with secularists and at other times with Islamists.<sup>28</sup>

## THE GULF WAR AND THE 1990s

In August 1990, Kuwait became the centerpiece of a debate regarding women's rights in Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf when Iraq invaded the tiny Gulf state. In response, the Saudi government invited the United States to deploy military forces to defend the kingdom and its strategic oil fields. Riyadh then expelled nearly 1 million Arab expatriates from Yemen and other countries that supported Iraq and also sought to free up Saudi men for military service. In September of that year, the Saudi government issued an edict that encouraged government agencies to accept female volunteers for social and medical positions. The significance of the edict was reinforced by the presence in Saudi Arabia of female U.S. and Kuwaiti soldiers, many of whom drove their vehicles openly in public. In one widely told story, a member of the Saudi religious police used his stick to taunt a U.S. female soldier, who had just driven her car to a store in the kingdom's Eastern Province. In response, she drew her pistol and forced him to flee for his life.<sup>29</sup>

The 1990 edict and the presence of armed foreign soldiers renewed the public debate about the role of women in Saudi life and may have prompted one of the most audacious challenges ever to the kingdom's separation of genders: the incident alluded to above, when 45 women drove through the streets of Riyadh. No one in Saudi Arabia had ever seen anything quite like that, and the protest generated headlines around the world. Iraqi propagandists sought to frame this event, as well as the offer to allow women to volunteer in government agencies, as proof that the Saudi government was really an agent of the West and Israel.

For a government already worried about its Islamic credentials after it had invited tens of thousands of U.S. soldiers into the kingdom, the only response was swift retribution.<sup>30</sup> Aside from losing their jobs and being publicly humiliated, some of these women received harassing phone calls accusing them of sexual immorality and promoting Western vices and goals. The Saudi government then produced a children's television show to emphasize the point. Set to a chorus of singing children, the

show contrasted correct Islamic behavior with the infidelity of women who wish to drive cars. Again and again, the girls sang, "I am a Saudi woman, and I don't drive a car."<sup>31</sup>

In Kuwait, the picture was quite different. Kuwaiti women's efforts in the war, both at home and abroad, were welcomed (at least until the war was over). During the occupation, Kuwaiti women outside the country mobilized support against Iraq, and some of them received military training at Fort Dix in the United States alongside their male Kuwaiti colleagues.<sup>32</sup> Women inside Kuwait launched the first mass public protests against the occupation, some of them paying for their actions with their lives. By the end of the Iraqi occupation in February 1991, women were such an important aspect of civil society in Kuwait that the country earned the nickname "the city-state of women."<sup>33</sup> Kuwait's women had seemingly come of age. Many expected that they would achieve full political rights after liberation.

However, as Mary Ann Tétreault has pointed out, their hopes were soon dashed. Wartime female activism had taken place within occupied Kuwait but faded from view shortly after the war. In the struggle for who would define the memory of the war between insiders and outsiders—that is, between those who had remained in Kuwait and those who had fled—the outsiders emerged victorious. In particular, Kuwait's Islamists framed the invasion and war to fit their own agenda, contending that the events signaled God's displeasure with the Kuwaitis' lavish lifestyle. Only by returning to Islam (including the control of women), they argued, could Kuwaitis guard against further divine retribution. This argument resonated with the people and won government support. Consequently, Kuwaiti Islamists performed well in parliamentary elections in the 1990s, successfully segregated Kuwait University by gender, and intimidated professors there who did not share their views.<sup>34</sup>

The success of the Islamists in the 1990s also significantly reflected technological and political changes in the Gulf. Among the most important of these changes were the rise of

Arab satellite news networks, the seemingly permanent deployment of Western military forces in the region, a steep decline in oil prices, the rise of opposition groups at home and abroad, and the erosion of the societal benefit from petroleum income due to population growth. All of these factors raised questions about the ability of governments and societies in the region to maintain their values and traditions. Within this transitional environment, women, like other elements in Gulf society, suddenly found new political and socioeconomic opportunities.

Among the earliest signs of the increasing tensions involving women in the Arab Gulf states were the large antigovernment protests in Bahrain, where the U.S. military's presence was especially visible. Starting in 1994, violent street protests accompanied ever bolder religious and political challenges to the monarchy's authority. Women from both the Sunni minority and the Shi'a majority actively participated in all phases of these protests. They formed professional, charitable, and other organizations that forwarded the opposition's agenda and resisted government crackdowns. These women made up a quarter of the 25,000 signatories to a national charter, issued in October 1994, that outlined the chief demands of the opposition, particularly the restoration of democratic institutions on the island. The petition also demanded that women be integrated into Bahrain's political life and that the island reduce its dependence on expatriate workers.<sup>35</sup>

Yet the most cogent opposition to the status quo in the Gulf came in Saudi Arabia and from a very different direction. Two organizations were especially important in this. The first, al-Qa'ida, was composed of former soldiers who had fought in Afghanistan under the leadership of Usama bin Ladin, who framed his arguments in a Salafi tradition in which women's social role was to uphold the dignity of Muslim families. This theme was central to an al-Qa'ida-produced video that was widely distributed in the Middle East shortly before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Throughout the tape, graphic images of sickly children, demolished homes, battles, and sol-

diers beating elderly women are juxtaposed with calls to uphold male Arab-Muslim honor.<sup>36</sup>

The second organization, the Committee for Defense of Legitimate Rights, shared al-Qa'ida's view of women and their place in society. The CDLR's founder, Muhammad al-Mas'ari, issued a statement in 1996 in which he argued that granting equal rights to women violated Islamic law and that his group opposed any diminution of laws that governed women's Islamic dress or lessened patriarchal power.<sup>37</sup>

One of the key factors contributing to the rise of opposition groups throughout the Gulf was Arab satellite television, especially al-Jazeera. Not only did unveiled female anchors and journalists appear on air, but Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi and other religious scholars used the networks as platforms to present their views on issues long repressed in the Gulf and other parts of the Arab world, including gender.<sup>38</sup>

## SETTING THE AGENDA

These debates had a tangible and immediate impact on Gulf society. In 1999, Crown Prince (later King) Abdullah, asserted that "we will leave no door...closed to women...as long as it involves no violation of our religion and ethics."<sup>39</sup> Hinting at a new future for Saudi women, Abdullah added, "Issues like driving cars by women, and women [obtaining] ID cards are comparatively simple. The most important thing is their full participation in the life of the society."<sup>40</sup> Two years later, Saudi women were issued their own identification cards, so no longer would they be listed as dependents of their male relatives on family cards. The new identification cards for Saudi women included pictures of their uncovered faces.<sup>41</sup> In 2006, Saudi information minister Iyad Madani encouraged women to apply for driver's licenses when he observed that there was "nothing in the Saudi legislation that forbids Saudi women to apply for a driving license."<sup>42</sup> The minister's comments hinted that urban Saudi women could look forward to driving in much the same way that rural and

Bedouin Saudi women had driven for years. And there was a financial logic to Madani's argument: women held half of all car loans in the kingdom, but females accounted for only 46 percent of the total population in 2004.<sup>43</sup>

Other Gulf rulers were even bolder than those in Saudi Arabia. In 2002, Bahrain's emir drafted and helped win passage of a new constitution, which allowed women, who make up 43 percent of the total population, to vote and run for office in national elections.<sup>44</sup> The percentage of women in the Bahraini legislature's upper house, or Shura Council, was higher than that of the U.S. Senate by 2010. Qatar approved a new constitution in late April 2002 and held elections in 2007 for a Central Municipal Council, in which all Qataris—men and women—were allowed to vote.<sup>45</sup> In 2003, Oman's government extended the franchise to all Omanis, regardless of gender.<sup>46</sup> Kuwait permitted women to vote in 2006. Since the election in 2007 in the UAE, nine women have been serving in its 40-seat mixed (elected and appointed) Federal Legislature, a percentage of 22.5 percent, which is slightly lower than the percentage of females in the UAE's population (32 percent).<sup>47</sup>

This trend has already had an impact on politics in the Gulf. Although Kuwaiti Islamists opposed extending the franchise to women, their candidates courted female voters during the 2006 elections. They provided materials geared especially toward women, including cassette tapes of candidates' speeches for women unwilling to travel to public rallies or other campaign events. These materials and strategies were critical, given that more than 50 percent of the eligible Kuwaiti voters were women. The fact that Islamists polled well in elections and have won the support of many Kuwaiti women bodes well for their continued political success.<sup>48</sup>

Since 2003, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia have appointed women to cabinet-level positions.<sup>49</sup> Among the most noteworthy of these new ministers is Lubna al-Qasimi, who founded Tejari.net, a successful UAE technology company. She has also regulated Emirati stock markets and has regularly dined with such leading high-tech

figures as Oracle's Larry Ellison and Hewlett-Packard's former chief executive officer (CEO), Carly Fiorina. In Qatar, Kuwait, and the UAE, women work as police and customs officers.<sup>50</sup> In Saudi Arabia, thousands of women serve as security guards in banks, hospitals, and women's prisons.<sup>51</sup> Kuwaiti, Bahraini, and Qatari women have been senior diplomats. For example, in 2008, Bahrain's government appointed a Jewish woman, Houda Nonoo, as ambassador to the United States. Nonoo was, in fact, the third woman to become a Bahraini ambassador, the others being Shaykha Haya al-Khalifa to France and Bibi Alawi to China.<sup>52</sup>

Women have also assumed leading roles in education and other cultural fields in the Gulf. Several Western-trained female members of Gulf ruling families have important social, religious, and cultural roles in the Gulf and represent their nations at international forums. These include Shaykha Moza of Qatar, a graduate of Texas A&M University and Shaykha Latifa, the wife of the former Kuwaiti emir, who heads an official women's organization, the Islamic Care Society, and speaks frequently at global conferences related to women.<sup>53</sup>

In business, the presence of women is even more pervasive. Here women have benefited from family connections, their own wealth (Saudi women own much of the real estate in Jeddah and Riyadh),<sup>54</sup> and a work environment that generally stresses merit and competence. Again, Lubna Olayan heads one of Saudi Arabia's largest businesses, the Olayan Group. Another Saudi, Nahed Taher, directs Bahrain's Gulf One Investments, which has \$10 billion in assets. Vidya Chabria oversees the Jumbo Group, a \$2 billion Emirati multinational company that operates in 50 countries. Raja'a Easa Saleh al-Gurg manages the al-Gurg group, an Emirati conglomerate with 29 manufacturing and trading companies and an annual revenue of \$2 billion. Maha al-Ghunaim founded Global Investment House, a Kuwaiti investment firm with \$7 billion of assets. Shaykha al-Bahar directs the Corporate Banking Arm of the National Bank of Kuwait. Mohsin Haider Darwish holds senior man-

agement posts in more than half of the ten major trading houses in Oman.<sup>55</sup>

Even more impressive has been the ability of women to transform their prominence into a type of sociocultural power far more significant than either the right to vote or the right to drive. Olayan and her colleagues are increasingly setting the socioeconomic agenda for their societies, outshining figures who have long promoted religious and patriarchal worldviews. Despite the grand mufti's vocal protests against Olayan's Jeddah speech (itself a sign of his desire to make up for his diminished power), she has continued to promote her ideas at home and abroad, encouraged other women in her company to promote women's rights, and has been photographed unveiled in public settings with men.

The power of Olayan and other women reflects a conscious decision on the part of Gulf decision-makers to form an implicit alliance with educated Gulf women and to reduce the influence of groups that wish to preserve the patriarchal structures established in the 1970s and 1980s. Gulf monarchies and their politics are interconnected sets of communities, federations, and coalitions that are constantly in motion. Although there is little doubt that King Abdullah and other Gulf leaders are idealistically committed to promoting equality between the genders, the decision to ally with women also serves the political and socioeconomic needs of Gulf rulers.

Women are a natural political base of support for regimes in their ongoing struggle with violent Islamic opposition groups, many of which voice their grievances in patriarchal terms, seeking to impose strict controls on women. Educated women in particular also provide the regimes with a more cosmopolitan, softer, and less austere vision of the Gulf to the outside world. This is not a minor issue for the Gulf states politically or economically. Usama bin Ladin is a Saudi, and all but two of the hijackers who perpetrated the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks were from the Gulf.<sup>56</sup> Citizens of Gulf states stand accused of financing and participating in extremist violence in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, and other areas around the world. Because of the close

ties of Gulf governments to the international economy, and because of their desire to win foreign investment, these governments care more than ever about how investors in London, New York, Tokyo, and elsewhere look at their states. This explains, in part, why Nahed Taher was chosen in 2005 to lead a Saudi Arabian trade delegation to the United States to obtain more foreign investment in the kingdom.<sup>57</sup>

## ARE WOMEN THE SOLUTION?

Because of critical changes in the economies and population dynamics of the Arab Gulf states, Taher and other educated women are positioned to solve two problems far greater than terrorism: expatriate labor and the dearth of qualified indigenous male workers. Both problems originate in failed policies and in changes within the global economy. Despite decades of programs promoting male indigenous workers in every sector of the economy, such workers have been unable to obtain the skills necessary to compete with expatriate workers, who fill as much as 90 percent of the workforce in some sectors of the Gulf economy.<sup>58</sup> The numbers of expatriate workers rose sharply in the Gulf in the 2000s, as the region's economy boomed. The new workers contributed to population growth rates of 3 percent or higher in the UAE, Oman, and Kuwait in the 2000s—growth rates that put enormous pressure on the region's already limited natural resources.<sup>59</sup> By 2008, nine out of ten residents in Dubai were foreigners.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the presence of the foreign workers has led some Gulf Arabs to fear that their culture may be overrun and eventually disappear from the region.<sup>61</sup>

If these problems were not serious enough, expatriates send much of their incomes home and are increasingly expensive to employ. As the U.S. dollar has depreciated since 2003, Gulf currencies, which are closely tied to the dollar, have declined relative to the value of the home currencies of many expatriate workers.<sup>62</sup> For the first time, salaries and wages in India and other regions of Asia have been competitive with those in the Gulf and forced

GCC employers to raise wages in order to retain foreign workers.<sup>63</sup>

By contrast, indigenous Arab Gulf women offer an alternative solution to employing expatriates, especially those with skills. In Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait, female enrollment in higher education significantly exceeds that of men, sometimes by as much as 24 percent.<sup>64</sup> Women dominate a variety of disciplines in the liberal arts and journalism, in which they represent as much as 90 percent of the students.<sup>65</sup> Female students work far harder than their male counterparts and regularly outperform them in secondary and postsecondary institutions. In Kuwait, women's success at the college level has been a political issue, with Islamist politicians claiming that it is unfair and demoralizing for Kuwaiti men to have to compete with female students.<sup>66</sup> In Bahrain, female high school students have a long tradition of outperforming their male counterparts. In 2007, for example, the girls graduated at a rate of 74.36 percent, compared to only 53.37 percent for the boys.<sup>67</sup>

Nor is this situation likely to change anytime soon. Even though, in 2007, equal numbers of girls and boys attended middle school in Bahrain, 828 girls achieved a score of at least 90 percent on their middle school exams, compared to the 263 boys who made the mark.<sup>68</sup> The World Bank reported in 2004 "that for every Qatari man aged 25 and graduating from university, there are two women graduates of the same age."<sup>69</sup> In Qatar and other Gulf states, the school dropout rate of males is double that of females.<sup>70</sup> By 2007, the literacy rate of women between the ages of 15 and 24 in the Gulf states was consistent with that of women in developed nations.<sup>71</sup> This is an especially remarkable achievement when one remembers that there were no schools for women in some Gulf states as recently as 1970.

The question still remains: Can women dominate the professions and even the working classes of the Gulf states? In the UAE and Qatar, in particular, there are already reasons to believe this might occur. For example, in the UAE, women's share of the labor market jumped from just 9.6 percent in 1985 to 13.0

percent in 1995, and up to 22.4 percent in 2004.<sup>72</sup> In 2007, Emirati women became pilots for Bahrain-based Gulf Air and other regional carriers.<sup>73</sup> By that time, they had become as much as 60 percent of the employees of the government workforce in the UAE and Saudi Arabia.<sup>74</sup> In Qatar, it is commonly accepted that it is now an economic necessity for both spouses to work.<sup>75</sup> Qatari men have also largely accepted the fact that they may play the role of junior income earners.<sup>76</sup> Qatar is an important test case because it and Saudi Arabia are the only states in the world in which Wahhabism is the official interpretation of Islam and because Qatar is facing many of the same financial challenges as Saudi Arabia. An average middle-class woman in Saudi Arabia will pay nearly half her salary to a male driver (invariably an expatriate) to get her to and from work.<sup>77</sup>

At the same time, one must bear in mind that there are significant barriers to women's filling the future labor needs of the Gulf states. Although it is true that women dominate higher education, they are often not earning the types of technical degrees desired by employers—that is, in engineering, math, and various sciences. In part, this discrepancy reflects a broad preference among Gulf nationals of both genders to earn degrees in the humanities, religion, and social sciences. It is also indicative, however, of the scarcity of technical and vocational institutions and instructors for women in several of the Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia, where the top jobs desired by employers in 2001 were in medicine and computer technology. Thus, in 2001, there were nearly 50,000 Saudi women looking for work; and in 2007, the Saudi government estimated that unemployment among Saudi women stood at 37 percent.<sup>78</sup>

Even those women who have the right sets of skills and experiences face two additional constraints. First, strong cultural and familial pressures for women to remain close to their families can limit their ability to travel to regions in which jobs are available or to assume positions for which they would otherwise be qualified. Second, Gulf employers do not nec-

essarily perceive indigenous women as workers. For instance, when social critics repeatedly warned about the dangers to public morality from allowing expatriate males to work in lingerie stores, the Saudi government announced in April 2006 that it would ban expatriate men from working in those stores and that Saudi women would take their place by June. At that point, nearly 10,000 women applied for the new positions, forcing the Saudi government to announce, on June 1, 2006, that it would extend the deadline for changing over to female workers indefinitely.<sup>79</sup>

### WHEN MEN ARE THE “GENDER” PROBLEM

However Saudi Arabia eventually resolves the question of workers in lingerie stores, it remains clear that many indigenous men cannot play a tangible role addressing the Gulf’s private sector labor needs. Although this is not a new problem, it has taken on greater social significance in recent years. With bleak career prospects and ample time on their hands, young men (and even some older ones) have gravitated toward antisocial behavior, including truancy, petty crime, drug abuse, religious extremism, and “drifting,” a form of car racing in which drivers perform complex and dangerous maneuvers at extremely high speeds. Drifters throughout the Gulf post their performances on YouTube, where they are celebrities who are said to have their pick of young male sexual partners. Drifting has become so popular that Chevrolet and the energy drink Red Bull have begun to sponsor “drifting” races in Middle Eastern cities.<sup>80</sup>

Yet the dangers of drifting to Gulf society have been clear for many years. In 2005, three young boys died in Jeddah in the car crash of a Saudi naval officer, Faysal al-Utabi—better known as Abu Kab (or the One Who Wears a [Baseball] Cap)—who wrecked his car while attempting to perform a stunt-driving maneuver. Abu Kab’s trial caused considerable public outcry, especially after it was revealed that he had more than 60 speeding tickets. There have been similar deadly accidents in Jeddah and other cities in the Gulf. One of the most dan-

gerous of terrorists was a drifter: Yusuf al-Ayyeri headed al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula until he died in a shootout with Saudi security forces in 2003.<sup>81</sup> Al-Ayyeri’s successors continue to train terrorists, including Umar Faruk Abd al-Mutallab, who attempted to detonate a bomb on a U.S. jetliner on December 25, 2009.

Nor are drifting and a dearth of educational and work opportunities the only things holding men back. Many Arab Gulf men, like women, face class, ethnic, religious, and familial barriers in education, employment, marriage, and sociopolitical freedoms. In some states, Shi’as and expatriates of both genders have substantially fewer rights than some Sunni women. Even some Arab Sunni men face barriers that do not hold back indigenous women. A Saudi college dropout told the *Washington Post* in 2007 that young Saudi men yearn to be equal with young Saudi women and many face severe restrictions: “Young men are oppressed here [in Saudi Arabia]...All I want is equality with girls.”<sup>82</sup>

Drifting, especially when linked to other dangerous antisocial problems and resentments of young men, suggests that future “gender questions” in the Gulf will no longer focus exclusively on women, the veil, and other related issues—as they have for generations. Instead, they will revolve around how to integrate young men (including those in their twenties and thirties) into society and make them productive individuals before they engage in behavior that is dangerous to themselves and others.

Finally, it is significant that the problems of men in Gulf societies are analogous to those faced by men in the United States and elsewhere during the current economic downturn. A white paper produced by the Georgia Department of Labor in July 2009 called for the state radically to alter how it delivers social services to men, a significant percentage of whom are in grave danger of becoming “structurally unemployed.” The report noted that men in Georgia and in other parts of the United States—much like men in the Arab Gulf states—lack basic modern skills and lag far behind women in educational achievement.

The report also noted the striking statistic that the percentage of students who are female in Georgia's universities, colleges, and technical institutes is approximately 60 percent, a number that is in line with the percentages in the Gulf.<sup>83</sup>

## CONCLUSION

How women use their growing social power in the future and engineer social changes for both themselves and their educated and undereducated male colleagues remains to be seen. Olayan and a host of other well-placed professional women throughout government and business advocate a social vision that is consistent in many ways with Western social norms. In recent years, Olayan has continued to link the vision she outlined in Jeddah with a call for a society that is less dependent on expatriate workers. She and other educated Gulf women know that they are the only cost-effective option to fill the Gulf states' future needs for skilled and unskilled labor. What is more, Gulf women are in a unique position to "rebrand" the conservative patriarchal image of Gulf states in the world community, to win needed foreign investment, and to forge new political alliances at home and abroad.

Gulf governments and Saudi popular culture have already begun to accommodate women's growing socioeconomic and political influence, promote their goals, and seek their support. Saudi Arabia's first feature-length film, *Keif al Hal?* (How's It Going?), deals with the desire of some young women to have a career instead of marriage after finishing their education. Throughout much of the film, the lead character, Hind, and other women, frequently appear unveiled, and Hind herself has multiple scenes in which she is driving—with her father's consent, no less.<sup>84</sup> Hind is also educated and works for a Saudi newspaper. *Tash Ma Tash*, one of Saudi Arabia's most popular television programs, regularly shows women driving.<sup>85</sup> In an interview with the *New York Times*, Abdullah Samhan, the producer of *Tash Ma Tash*, explained why female characters are so often seen driving in his show. "A woman," he said, "cannot be sepa-

rated from society, and women will be driving, whether it's now or fifty years from now."<sup>86</sup> Nor are Samhan's views radical: polls have shown that nearly two-thirds of Saudis favor allowing women to drive and work.<sup>87</sup> In today's Saudi Arabia, women already drive tractors, water tankers, and cars in rural communities.<sup>88</sup>

Nonetheless, not all women support Samhan's vision. Islamic parties in Kuwait have polled well among women, and young Gulf women have yet to abandon the hijab or other traditional symbols of patriarchal power. There is, of course, precedent for this type of conservatism among women in other parts of the world and in the Middle East. Images of veiled women holding assault rifles were a powerful propaganda weapon for Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979.

It is ironic that women's place in the Gulf may evolve into something reminiscent of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A Saudi female activist, Wajeha al-Huwaider, argues that the past provides Gulf women with a possible future social model. "Our parents," she said, "had the right of movement; our grandparents had it too...But we ladies of the cities lost the old ways and got nothing in their place."<sup>89</sup> In the past, as now, one can find women in positions of authority and power. Women have been successful in commerce, medicine, education, and government. They have also been religious leaders, who received both social and cultural respect for their knowledge and power.

Future generations of women in the Gulf will most likely live in societies that resemble those of al-Huwaider's grandparents and great grandparents more than they do the Gulf states since the 1970s. Women will be integrated into virtually every aspect of public and private life at home and abroad and will have an increasing say in how their societies are managed. Once this happens, earlier female experience will be reinterpreted and reevaluated. American songwriter Cole Porter made a point that applies strongly to women of the Gulf: "If you want a future, darling, why don't you get a past?"<sup>90</sup>

\* Sean Foley is an Assistant Professor of History at Middle Tennessee State University. He specializes in the Middle East and religious and political trends in the broader Islamic world. Previously, he taught at Georgetown University, where he earned an M.A. in Arab Studies in 2000 and a Ph.D. in History in 2005. Foley held Fulbright fellowships in Syria and Turkey in 2002 and 2003. He has published widely on Middle Eastern history, Sufism, Persian Gulf politics, and Muslims in Euro-American history. His first book, [The Arab Gulf States: Beyond Oil and Islam](#), will be published by Lynne Rienner Press in March 2010. His website is <http://website--www.seanfoley.org/>.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>“Saudi Arabia’s Top Cleric Condemns Calls for Women’s Rights,” *New York Times*, January 22, 2004.

<sup>2</sup>Robin Gedye, “Unveiled Women Are Root of All Evil, Says Saudi Cleric,” *Daily Telegraph* (London), January 22, 2004.

<sup>3</sup>The women drove for at least an hour before they were stopped by the Saudi police. Donna Abu-Nasr, “Stunning Saudi Car Ride Celebrated 18 Years Later,” Associated Press, November 14, 2008.

<sup>4</sup>Fatima al-Sayegh, “Women and Economic Changes in the Gulf: The Case of the United Arab Emirates,” *Domes*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2001), p. 3.

<sup>5</sup>Haya al-Mughni, *Women in Kuwait: The Politics of Gender* (London: Saqi Books, 2001), p. 46.

<sup>6</sup>For more on these issues in Unayzah, see Soraya Altorki and Donald P. Cole, *Arabian Oasis City: The Transformation of 'Unayzah* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989).

<sup>7</sup>Al-Sayegh, “Women and Economic Changes,” pp. 5–6.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Louay Bahry and Phebe Marr, “Qatari Women: A New Generation of Leaders,” *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (2005), pp. 104–05; Ahmad Suba’i, *My Days in Mecca*, trans.

and ed. Deborah Akers and Abubaker Bagader (Boulder, CO: First Forum Press, 2009), p. 35.

<sup>10</sup>Phebe Marr, “Girls’ Schools—The Hijaz,” April 8, 1961, William Mulligan Papers, Georgetown University Library Special Collections, Box 3, Folder 6.

<sup>11</sup>Abeer Abu Said, *Qatari Women: Past and Present* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1984), pp. 24–25.

<sup>12</sup>Raymond O’Shea, *The Sand Kings: The Experiences of an RAF Officer in the Little-Known Regions of Trucial Oman, Arabia* (London: Methuen and Co., 1947), pp. 62–63.

<sup>13</sup>Mai Yamani, “Changing the Habits of a Lifetime: The Adaptation of Hejazi Dress to the New Social Order,” in *Languages of Dress in the Middle East*, ed. Nancy Lindisfarne-Tapper and Bruce Ingham, pp. 57–58 (Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 1997).

<sup>14</sup>Eleanor Doumato, *Women, Islam, and Healing in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), pp. 176, 182–83.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Shafeeq N. Ghabra, “Balancing State and Society: The Islamic Movement in Kuwait,” in *Revolutionaries and Reformers: Contemporary Islamist Movements in the Middle East*, ed. Barry Rubin, pp. 106–08 (Binghamton: State University of New York Press, 2003).

<sup>17</sup>Eleanor Doumato, “Gender, Monarchy, and National Identity in Saudi Arabia,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 1. (1992), pp. 34–39; Eleanor Doumato, “The Saudis and the Gulf War: Gender, Power, and Revival of the Religious Right,” in *Change and Development in the Gulf*, ed. Abbas Abdelkarim (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), pp. 184–210.

<sup>18</sup>Doumato, “Gender, Monarchy, and National Identity,” p. 41.

<sup>19</sup>Munira Fakhro, “Gulf Women and Islamic Law,” in *Feminism and Islam, Legal and Literary Perspectives*, ed. Mai Yamani (New York: New York University Press, 1996), p. 257.

<sup>20</sup>Ida Patterson Storm, “Bahrain,” *Arabia Calling*, Vol. 244 (Autumn 1956), p. 10.

<sup>21</sup>Bruce Ingham, "Men's Dress in the Arabian Peninsula: Historical and Present Perspectives," in *Languages of Dress in the Middle East*, ed. Nancy Lindisfarne-Tapper and Bruce Ingham (Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 1997), pp. 40-54.

<sup>22</sup>May Seikaly, "Women and Religion in Bahrain: An Emerging Identity," in *Islam, Gender, and Social Change*, ed. Yvonne Haddad and John Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 178.

<sup>23</sup>For more on these issues, see Munira Fakhro, *Women at Work in the Gulf: A Case Study of Bahrain* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1990).

<sup>24</sup>Bandar added that Bedouin women "had started driving trucks" in the desert and emphasized the seriousness (and veracity) of the observation by adding "and I'm not kidding." Richard Harwood, "Change Is Slow for Saudi Women," *Washington Post*, February 12, 1978.

<sup>25</sup>Eleanor Doumato, "Saudi Arabia: The Society and Its Environment," in *Saudi Arabia: A Country Study*, ed. Helen Metz (Washington, DC: Library of Congress Federal Research Division, 1993), p. 103.

<sup>26</sup>Rajaa al-Sanea, *Girls of Riyadh*, trans. Rajaa al-Sanea and Marilyn Booth (New York: Penguin Press, 2007), p. 270.

<sup>27</sup>For its part, the Saudi state recognized these limitations and sought to encourage women—at least indirectly. In 1989, it awarded its highest award, the King Faisal Award in Islamic Studies, to the Egyptian scholar Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali, who had taken a strong stand that year in an article in a Saudi daily newspaper on allowing women to earn an education and work. Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Saudi Women Quietly Win Some Battles," *New York Times*, April 26, 1989.

<sup>28</sup>Ghabra, "Balancing State and Society," pp. 107-08.

<sup>29</sup>Youssef Ibrahim, "Amid Crisis, West Meets Mideast in Saudi Arabia," *New York Times*, August 25, 1990, (*Historical New York Times*), p. 1.

<sup>30</sup>Eleanor Doumato, "Women and the Stability of Saudi Arabia," *Middle East Report*, Vol. 171 (July-August 1991), p. 37.

<sup>31</sup>Doumato, "Gender, Monarchy, and National Identity in Saudi Arabia," p. 32.

<sup>32</sup>Mary Ann Tétreault, "A State of Two Minds: State Cultures, Women, and Politics in Kuwait," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (May 2001), p. 211.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Mary Ann Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy: Politics and Society in Contemporary Kuwait* (New York: Columbia University Press), pp. 110-31.

<sup>35</sup>Munira A. Fakhro, "The Uprising in Bahrain: An Assessment," in *The Persian Gulf at the Millennium: Essays in Politics, Economy, Security, and Religion*, ed. Gary G. Sick and Lawrence G. Potter (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), p. 181.

<sup>36</sup>Sean Foley, "The Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyya, Islamic Sainthood, and Religion in Modern Times," *Journal of World History*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (December 2008), p. 535.

<sup>37</sup>Eleanor Doumato, "Women and Work in Saudi Arabia: How Flexible Are Islamic Margins?" *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (Autumn 1999), p. 577.

<sup>38</sup>Sean Foley, "Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the UAE," in *Guide to Islamist Movements*, ed. Barry Rubin (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2010), p. 309.

<sup>39</sup>Hamad bin Hamid al-Salimi, "Where Is the Saudi Woman?" *Al-Jazeera* (Riyadh), May 3, 1999.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Kathy Sheridan, "They Mean Business: How Saudi Women Are Making a Breakthrough," *Irish Times*, February 18, 2006.

<sup>42</sup>Christian Chaise, "Saudi Arabia Discreetly Presses Ahead with Reform," *Agence France-Presse—English*, March 1, 2006.

<sup>43</sup>Donna Abu-Nasser, "Women Can Now Sell Cars in Saudi Arabia, but the Ban on Female Driving Remains," *Associated Press*, December 3, 2006; "Women Received 1,848 Auto Loans," *IPR Strategic Business Information Database*, December 26, 2006; "Saudi Women Receive 11% of Total Credit," *Global*

News Wire—Asia Africa Intelligence Wire, December 26, 2006.

<sup>44</sup>Sean Foley, “The Gulf Arabs and the New Iraq: The Most to Gain and the Most to Lose,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2003), p. 34, <http://www.gloria-center.org/meria/2003/06/foley.html>.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>“Woman Wins Seat in First UAE Poll,” *Financial Times Information Limited*, December 17, 2006; “Chosen People of the UAE,” *Financial Times Information Limited*, October 23, 2007.

<sup>48</sup>For more on this issue, see Foley, “Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the UAE,” p. 308.

<sup>49</sup>Sobhi Rakha, “New Woman Minister Cracks Saudi Glass Ceiling,” Agence France-Presse—English, February 15, 2009.

<sup>50</sup>Bahry and Marr, “Qatari Women: A New Generation of Leaders,” p. 110.

<sup>51</sup>“Saudi Women Brave Stares to Carve a Niche,” *Financial Times Information Limited*, April 17, 2007.

<sup>52</sup>“Bahrain Names Jewish Woman as Ambassador to US,” Agence France-Presse—English, June 8, 2008.

<sup>53</sup>Al-Mughni, *Women in Kuwait*, pp. 104–11, 164–65.

<sup>54</sup>John Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 130.

<sup>55</sup>Information taken from the following sources: Greg Levine and Zina Moukheiber, “Al-Olayan Leads Forbes’ Top Arab Businesswomen List,” *Forbes Magazine*, March 28, 2006; Elizabeth MacDonald and Meghan Bahree, “The World’s Most Powerful Women: Muslim Women In Charge,” *Forbes Magazine*, August 30, 2007; Elizabeth MacDonald and Chana R. Schoenberger, “Special Report: The 100 Most Powerful Women,” *Forbes Magazine*, August 30, 2007; Elizabeth MacDonald and Chana R. Schoenberger, “The 100 Most Powerful Women,” *Forbes Magazine*, August 31, 2006; Hassna’a Mokhtar, “Women’s Empowerment a Must,” *Arab News*, March 20, 2007; “Special Issue: The Time 100,” *Time*, April 10, 2005.

<sup>56</sup>The exceptions were Muhammad Atta, who was from Egypt, and Ziad al-Jarrah, who was from Lebanon.

<sup>57</sup>“Saudi Arabia: From Banking to Racing,” *Saudi-US Relations Information Service Newsletter*, February 12–18, 2006.

<sup>58</sup>There are many examples of this phenomenon, but perhaps the most infamous was in 1995 in the UAE. During that year, the country’s private sector created 50,000 jobs; just 30 were taken by Emirati nationals. Gary Sick, “The Coming Crisis,” in *The Persian Gulf at the Millennium: Essays in Politics, Economy, Security, and Religion*, ed. Gary Sick and Lawrence Potter (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), p. 18.

<sup>59</sup>“Kuwait’s Population Reaches 3.4 million,” Agence France-Presse—English, March 30, 2008; “Kuwait Population to Reach 5.63 Million by 2030,” Middle East Financial News Wire, February 6, 2008; Central Intelligence Agency, *World Fact Book*, “Kuwait,” “Oman,” and “UAE” (available at <https://www.cia.gov/>).

<sup>60</sup>Robert Worth, “Laid-Off Foreigners Flee as Dubai Spirals Downward,” *New York Times*, February 11, 2009.

<sup>61</sup>Jamal al-Suwaidi, who directs the Center for Emirates Studies, a top GCC policy institution in Abu Dhabi, articulated this angst in a series of articles published in the UAE media from 2006 to 2008. His views are worth noting because he is a leading Emirati academic and adviser to Abu Dhabi’s crown prince, Shaykh Muhammad bin Zayid al-Nahyan. In 2006, he noted in *al-Itihad*, a major Arabic daily in the UAE, that he and his fellow Emiratis no longer existed socially or politically. “Our country,” he lamented, is now “filled with various nationalities to such an extent that there is no longer any place left for us.” Although al-Suwaidi failed to define what the consequences of this situation might be, he implied that indigenous Emirati culture might soon vanish in a society comprising people who are neither Arabs nor Sunni Muslims. The minister of labor of Bahrain, Majid al-Alawi, echoed al-Suwaidi’s words in 2008, observing that the presence of 17 million South Asians

and other foreigners was “a danger worse than the atomic bomb or an Israeli attack” to the future of the Gulf. Abdullah Khalaq, “UAE’s Demographic Imbalance,” *Gulf News*, April 14, 2007; “Bahrain Labour Minister Warns of Asian Tsunami,” Agence France-Presse—English, January 27, 2008. The *al-Itihad* article is cited in Abdelbari Atwan, “The Gulf’s Momentous Challenges,” *Mideast Mirror*, May 11, 2006.

<sup>62</sup>“Value of Indian Workers’ Wages in Gulf May Fall Further,” *Indo-Asian News Service*, April 2, 2008.

<sup>63</sup>Habib Toumi, “Bahrain Minister Pushes for New Law,” *Gulf News*, December 26, 2008.

<sup>64</sup>World Bank, *The Status and Progress of Women in the Middle East and North Africa* (Washington, DC: World Bank Press, 2007), pp. 129, 135, 139, 140, 141, 144.

<sup>65</sup>“Bahraini Women Fail to Make It to the Upper Echelons of Journalism,” *Financial Times Information Limited*, July 6, 2007.

<sup>66</sup>Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, pp. 160–64.

<sup>67</sup>“Girls Outshine Boys in Graduation Exams,” *Financial Times Information Limited*, June 13, 2007.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup>Barbara Bibbo, “Qatari Women Find Key to Greater Emancipation,” *Gulf News*, March 24, 2007; World Bank, *Women in the Middle East and North Africa: Women in the Public Sphere* (Washington, DC: World Bank Press, 2004), pp. 31–33.

<sup>70</sup>World Bank, *Women in the Middle East and North Africa*, pp. 31–33.

<sup>71</sup>World Bank, *Status and Progress of Women*, p. 10.

<sup>72</sup>Bahgat, “Education in the Gulf Monarchies,” p. 134; al-Sayegh, “Women and Economic Changes,” p. 9; World Bank, *Status and Progress of Women*, p. 144.

<sup>73</sup>“UAE’s First Female Pilot,” United Press International, June 17, 2007; “First Bahraini Lady Pilot Gains Her Wings with Gulf Air,” *al-Bawaba*, February 5, 2007.

<sup>74</sup>Al-Sayegh, “Women and Economic Changes,” p. 9.

<sup>75</sup>Bahry and Marr, “Qatari Women: A New Generation of Leaders,” p. 112.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>77</sup>Hassan Fattah, “Saudis Rethink Taboo About Women Behind the Wheel,” *New York Times*, September 28, 2007.

<sup>78</sup>For more on employment issues, see John R. Calvert and Abdullah S. al-Shetaiwi, “Exploring the Mismatch Between Skills and Jobs for Women in Saudi Arabia in Technical and Vocational Areas: The Views of Saudi Arabian Private Sector Business Managers,” *International Journal of Training and Development*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2002), pp. 112–24; “Saudi Arabia: Fewer Women Employed in Private Sector,” *Financial Times Information Limited*, May 17, 2007; “Women Rising in the Ranks in Middle East Job Market,” Middle East Newswire, April 30, 2007.

<sup>79</sup>“10,000 Chase KSA lingerie jobs,” AME Info FZ, LLC—Middle East Retail and Leisure News Wire, April 22, 2006; “Saudi Suspends Lingerie Plans,” AME Info FZ, LLC—Middle East Retail and Leisure News Wire, May 15, 2006; Alexandra Pironti, “Saudi Women Obligated to Discuss Underwear Size with Men,” Deutsche Presse-Agentur, May 31, 2006.

<sup>80</sup>Tom Whitwell, “This Week: The Arab Drift,” *Times*, August 16, 2008; Robert F. Worth, “Saudi Races Roar All Night Fueled by Boredom,” *New York Times*, March 7, 2009.

<sup>81</sup>Fatima Sidya, “Verdict in Abu Kab Case Today,” *Arab News*, February 2, 2009 and Worth, *Saudi Races Roar All Night Fueled by Boredom*.

<sup>82</sup>Faiza Saleh Ambah, “Bored Young Saudis Find Outlet in Graffiti,” *Washington Post*, October 31, 2007.

<sup>83</sup>Michael Thurmond, “Georgia Men Hit Hardest By the Recession, December 2007 to May 2009,” *Georgia Department of Labor: White Paper on Georgia’s Workforce*, July 2009, p. 7.

<sup>84</sup>Hassan Fattah, “Riyadh Journal: Daring to Use the Silver Screen to Reflect Saudi Society,” *New York Times*, April 28, 2006; Hassan Fattah, “Saudi Arabia Begins to Face Hidden AIDS Problem,” *New York Times*, August 8, 2006.

<sup>85</sup>The name *Tash Ma Tash* comes from a game played by Saudi children in the 1960s where they would “pop” the tops off soda bottles by shaking them hard. It roughly translates as “you either get it or you don’t” or “make or break it.” Neil MacFarquhar, “Riyadh Journal; Seeing the Funny Side of Islamic Law, and Not Seeing It,” *New York Times*, November 24, 2003; Pascal Ménoret, “‘State Television Has Guarded Us Against Cretins’: Saudi TV’s Dangerous Hit,” *Le Monde diplomatique English edition*, September 16, 2004.

<sup>86</sup>Fattah, “Saudis Rethink Taboo.”

<sup>87</sup>Sheridan, “They Mean Business.”

<sup>88</sup>Donna Abu-Nasr, “Saudi Ban on Women Drivers May Be Eroding,” Associated Press, August 22, 2008.

<sup>89</sup>Fattah, “Saudis Rethink Taboo.”

<sup>90</sup>Cole Porter, “Let’s Misbehave,” *Paris*, in *The Complete Lyrics of Cole Porter*, ed. Robert Kimball (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), p. 104.