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Viewing The Gulf States: Cadillacs, Security, and the "Gender Question" (Foley)

Posted by Scott Lucas in Middle East & Iran

Sean Foley, a professor at Middle Tennessee State University and author of The Arab Gulf States Beyond Oil and Islam, offers this essay for EA, based on a recent lecture at the American University of Beirut:

In 2002, I was in Damascus, Syria, researching the life of a leading nineteenth-century Sufi saint and scholar, Shaikh Khalid Naqshbandi. One day I was invited to visit the home of Shaikh Nazim al-Qubrusi, the most important contemporary figure in Shaikh Khalid's Sufi order, the Naqshbandiyya. When I arrived at the home, I was introduced to the shaikh, who asked me in Arabic about my work on Shaikh Khalid. After we spoke for a few minutes, Nazim switched to English, explaining that it was the only language that everyone present could understand, since some of his followers were Asian Muslims or Western converts to Islam. As Nazim spoke, I noticed that one of his followers was videotaping my conversation with him—to be posted, as I later learned, on YouTube and on his website.1

After my conversation with Nazim, I was besieged by several men who attempted to sit next to me, touch my back or arms, or even put their arms around my shoulders. At first, I assumed that the men were enthusiastic followers of Nazim who were displaying Arab social norms, since in Arab societies, from Morocco to Kuwait, heterosexual men engage in far more direct physical interaction than their US counterparts. But when one of the men asked if Nazim had touched my backpack, I understood what was happening: the men believed that Shaikh Nazim—like Shaikh Khalid before him—was a Muslim saint who could confer baraka, or blessings from God, onto anyone who interacted with him. By touching me or anything else that had made contact with Nazim, including my bag, they believed that they could benefit from the baraka that God conferred to humanity through Nazim.2

Shortly after my encounter with Shaikh Nazim and his followers, I was seemingly touched by Nazim's baraka. It happened at a newsstand in London's Heathrow International Airport. I would normally have gone straight for the *Economist* and the *Financial Times*, but another magazine caught my

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attention, the *National Geographic*. The cover was of a senior Saudi prince performing his kingdom's national dance, the ardha sword dance, to conclude a camel festival. Its caption read "Kingdom on Edge: Saudi Arabia." Even though I had lived close to the magazine's offices in Washington, DC when I was in graduate school, I had not read or even looked at *National Geographic* since I was in fifth grade. Had I not stopped at the newsstand at Heathrow, it is unlikely that I would have ever seen that particular issue.3

But the magazine caught my attention and held it. The cover highlighted Frank Viviano's article on Saudi Arabia and discussed his recent trip there; it included interviews and photographs of both Saudis and non-Saudis from all walks of life. Men, women (both veiled and unveiled), young, old, commoners, and members of the royal family appeared in rural, urban, public, and intimate settings. There were pictures of things anyone would expect to see: oil fields, deserts, enormous mosques, and palaces. But there were also pictures of things few would expect to see: a family watching Fox News, the crowded and dilapidated homes of foreign laborers, female university students, and a man sporting a colorful Che Guevara T-shirt and jeans rather than the dishdasha, the white full-length garment worn by Saudi and other men in the Gulf.

As I returned to the article again and again over the following weeks, I was struck by the contrast between the diverse modern society that appeared in Viviano's photographs and the conservative Arab Muslim society that I had found in my reading on Saudi Arabia and its neighbors in my classes at Berkeley and Georgetown. An especially surprising example of Saudi diversity was the name of the family watching *Fox News* — Naqshbandi — because Shaikh Nazim and the Naqshbandiyya advocate a vision of Islam that is hostile to Wahhabism, Saudi Arabia's state-sanctioned interpretation of Islam. Indeed, adherents to the Naqshbandiyya have reportedly been persecuted in the kingdom,4 yet the Naqshbandis were presented as a typical Saudi family. They lived in Jeddah, which resembles cities in other parts of the world, with their countless automobiles and traffic congestion, office buildings, mass-produced consumer goods, and low-rise suburban houses. One nighttime picture of the Saudi capital, Riyadh, could easily have been mistaken for Phoenix or Las Vegas.

Equally striking to me was how much Viviano's portrayal of traditional modes of authority undermined the current chief intellectual tool for understanding Gulf states, the rentier model. The rentier model emerged to explain the oil-funded socioeconomic transformation of Iran and what would become the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Scholars see these states, which had tiny indigenous populations and strong monarchies, as so exceptional that they deserved a new scholarly model—the rentier model. The model focuses on the state's monopolies over the fees, or "rents," that foreigners paid for the right to extract oil from Gulf nations. Scholars argue that these rents permitted monarchs in the Gulf to acquire the resources necessary to govern as police states without taxing their subjects or negotiating with the rest of society, as their

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counterparts must do in countries without oil. Within the rentier framework, the autonomy of a government vis-à-vis its population correlates to external rents from oil: the greater the revenues from these external rents, the greater the autonomy, and vice versa. If oil revenues decline, rentier governments must make significant concessions to their populations in order to remain in power.5

Yet events in the Gulf in recent years have challenged the rentier model in significant ways. Although the price of oil and revenues from oil sales increased with breakneck speed between 1999 and the onset of the global financial crisis in 2008, the opposite of what the standard rentier model predicts has occurred. Governments have held regular elections and permitted many groups outside of traditional Sunni Arab male elites — groups including women, Shia, foreigners, and religious and secular opposition groups — to take a far more visible public role than ever before. In 2008, Bahrain even appointed a Jewish woman, Huda Nono, to serve as its ambassador to the United States.6 Furthermore, most Gulf governments lack one critical element of a police state: robust police.7 The number of internal security forces per 100,000 residents in most Gulf states is analogous to states such as Portugal or Brazil—none of which are seen as autocratic police states.viii Equally strikingly, the wide local accessibility of Fox News and other foreign media suggests that Gulf governments have limited ability to shape public opinion and to control their own media—both of which are also hallmarks of authoritarian police states.

Together, these insights frame the four themes that are at the heart of my analysis of Gulf society and politics in my new book, *The Arab Gulf States: Beyond Oil and Islam*. First, the Arab Gulf states face many of the same political and socioeconomic problems that other states do, including those that lack oil. Second, many of the challenges that Gulf states face in the twenty-first century predate the rise of the region's oil industry in the 1930s. Third, we cannot understand either the past or contemporary realities in the Gulf states unless we come to terms with their diversity and look at the roles of non-Arabs, non-Muslims, and women. Fourth, technological change has had and continues to have an important effect on life and on politics in the Gulf.

Above all, I ask if it is possible to think of these states without beginning and ending our discussion with Islam and oil. Indeed, neither Islam nor oil provides us with an explanation for how it is possible that a mass-circulation newspaper in Saudi Arabia regularly published schedules for satellite television programs and once employed an openly gay writer even though satellite television and homosexuality are officially illegal in the Kingdom.

Broadening our analysis beyond petroleum reveals the breadth of socio-economic and political factors and actors that shape the destiny of GCC societies. By starting our analysis in the period before the rise of the region's oil industry, we can see important historical and institutional continuities over the past century. In particular, Gulf ruling families are unique in the Middle East: with the exception of Morocco, they are the only regimes that can claim a tradition of governing their states that

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predates World War I. Gulf rulers have governed by utilizing established traditions of governance, by cultivating social networks, and promoting Islamic and tribal values. At times, rulers have utilized non-Islamic calendars and beliefs—even when they contradict the religious traditions they claim to uphold. While Ibn al-Wahhab characterized astrology as sorcery and thus forbidden under Islamic law, the decree establishing Saudi Arabia announced that the date of the Kingdom's founding was specifically timed to correspond to the first day of the ascendancy of the constellation Libra.ix

For decades, ruling families have utilized these traditions, networks, and values to maintain their position and fend off various foreign and domestic challenges to their power. In mosques, sword dances, majleseses (councils in which politicians field requests from ordinary subjects), markets, hajj pilgrimage speeches, royal visits to provincial cities, and welfare institutions, monarchs interact with ordinary subjects and are thereby confirmed as leaders. Many rulers have further reinforced their authority through a system analogous to a welfare state in which individual subjects and tribes receive generous cash subsidies, food, and clothing. Rulers have also often leveraged their international position and importance to Great Britain, the United States, and South Asian Muslims to win assistance and funds akin to the rents they would later receive from oil. In fact, Saudi Arabia's dependence on the annual fees paid by hajj pilgrims in the 1930s and the 1940s resembled the Kingdom's later dependence on the proceeds from the sale of oil.

Significantly, the oil industry that took hold in Saudi Arabia and its neighbors reflected a nexus of technological and social factors that was every bit as global as the hajj pilgrimage. To begin with, in 1912 the British Admiralty turned oil into the most prized strategic commodity in the world by transforming the fuel of the British fleet's steam turbine engines from coal to oil. In a single stroke, Britain ensured that the Arab Gulf would play a paramount role in global affairs over the next century. Equally important were the economic and cultural factors after 1945 that intensified energy consumption while limiting the use of coal, especially in North America and Europe. These factors included shortages of coal after the war, an enormous global increase in the number of automobiles, solid economic growth, and public outcries about pollution from coal. The following statistics suggest how dramatic a shift this international transformation was. In 1950, coal provided 75 percent of the energy for the Western world, whereas oil provided 23 percent. By the 1970s, oil provided 60 percent of the West's energy needs, whereas coal provided 22 percent. Thanks to these changes, Saudi Arabia and its neighbors grew wealthy and emerged as a key center of global economy.10

Yet the modern oil industry was not just oil rigs and tankers. It arose in a society that utilized a host of other technological advances which have had at least as important an effect as oil on politics in the Gulf. These new technologies permitted Gulf governments to build massive communities modeled on postwar US suburbs, increase foreign and native populations, and achieve rapid economic growth. Air conditioning was especially significant, since it permitted foreigners to live in the region year-round without suffering the disabling effects of

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prolonged exposure to extreme heat. It also reduced the incidents of illness from unimaginable levels to those on a par with those in Europe and North America.11

None of these changes were enough, however, to convince Arab Gulf nationals that the socioeconomic and political structures of their states had changed beyond all recognition. Although the outside world may have increasingly seen these states chiefly through the lens of petroleum, Arabs in the Gulf no more defined their communities by oil than did Americans, Western Europeans, or others who lived in societies in which the consumption of oil had become central to every facet of daily life since World War II.

Instead, Gulf Arabs saw the changes as part of a process that was so tentative that their societies could easily re-embrace the Bedouin lifestyle of their fathers and grandfathers. This view emerged in a saying among Gulf Arabs in the 1970s: "My father rode a camel. I ride a Cadillac. My son flies a jet. My grandson will have a supersonic plane. But my great-grandson ... will be a camel driver."12

The debate over the political structure and future of Gulf society has played out for decades in the region's mass media. Following World War I, radios became very popular in the Gulf. They were easily transportable and provided information to people who were both semiliterate and, with rare exceptions, without access to daily newspapers and weekly magazines. Television appeared in the 1950s and became as much an aspect of daily life in the region as the call to prayer and Quran readings. From the start, Gulf states treated mass media as an aspect of sovereignty and competed fiercely with one another, as well as with private oil companies, Arab nationalists, and regional US military bases, over stations and channels. The result was that Arabs in the Gulf—much like Germans during the Cold War—had access to broadcasts in their native language from terrestrial radio and television stations based in neighboring states. Although regional governments censored domestic radio and television content whenever they could, they did not in fact control everything that was broadcast within their national borders. Instead, they were forced to compete for domestic audiences, which overwhelmingly preferred foreign television and radio broadcasts.13

After Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the media framework in the Gulf underwent a shift as profound as was the introduction of radios. The new framework centered on the rise of satellite television networks modeled on Cable News Network. It altered which foreign and domestic groups could demand access to state resources and also ensured that government decisions respected the interests and views of those groups. The media—foreign and Gulf-based—pursued their own agendas and were sometimes funded by governments or organizations that differed considerably from the official voice of the Gulf states. The Internet and new satellite television media gave a platform to dissident Gulf and Arab voices and often employed Western-trained, Arabic-speaking journalists. Unlike European or American journalists, these journalists did not depend on local (often government appointed) guides and translators. They could follow a story wherever it naturally led without fear. If that meant interviewing Bin Laden, covering anti-US protests

The Huffington Post
The One Eye Lies
The Raw Story
The Smirking Chimp
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in Bahrain, or discussing long taboo subjects, the stories went on the air.

Fortunately for al-Jazeera and the other new Arab satellite television networks there were a plethora of local stories to cover. During the late 1990s, there were growing and tangible imbalances in many Gulf societies and, starting in 1999, a decade of steep increases in the price of oil. From the start, many of the policies Gulf states adopted to address these twin phenomena produced a host of unintended outcomes, some of which undermined the stability of the GCC societies. Although the decision of the Gulf states to maintain close ties with the United States may have deterred Iran or Iraq from attacking them, it also enraged important segments of GCC public opinion, convincing some people to support Al-Qaida and other organizations dedicated to using violence to overthrow Gulf regimes.

Initiatives designed to reduce the dependence of Gulf economies on the proceeds from exporting oil joined with an influx of expatriate labor to reopen social divisions, since few GCC nationals were qualified to work in the positions created by the booming private sector. Moreover, the private sector's dependence on foreign investment left the GCC states open to the whims of foreign investors.

The principal beneficiaries of the reforms in the Gulf have been women, who began to fill ever more positions in the booming private sector. They benefited far more than men from the massive investments made by Gulf states in education starting in the 1970s. Since younger women on average are more literate, perform better academically, and stay in school longer than their male counterparts this gap will only widen in the future. Already women account for two thirds of the students in many Gulf universities and hold senior positions in government and business. By contrast, men are increasingly qualified for few jobs outside of family businesses and the military.

Furthermore, women are a natural ally for the Gulf's leaders, who, since September 11, 2001, have sought to modify their region's austere image in order to win greater foreign investment and to combat extremist groups. In the long run, extending the right to vote to women and permitting them to drive—issues that make headlines today—will look minor in comparison to those issues facing the Gulf states when women emerge as the only segment of the indigenous population qualified to work in modern economies.14

These new social pressures point to two key larger insights of my argument. First, the emerging power of Gulf women is consistent with their position historically in Gulf society. As recently as the 1930s, women traveled freely and were teachers, entrepreneurs, political leaders, religious leaders, and even led men into battle. Second, issues such as the veil and gender-separated schools are not solely women's issues; they reflect social norms in which both women and men are expected to act modestly. The male dishdasha and accompanying headgear cover nearly as much of the body as traditional women's garments do and are just as politically and culturally significant.

The example of Bahrain is instructive. Starting in the 1950s, Bahrainis of all ages began to wear Western clothing, and Bahraini men, as an American noted at the time, "left the Arab gown" for "foreign clothes."15 But when Bahrain joined the GCC in 1981, many Bahraini men switched back, adopting the thobs worn by their fathers and grandfathers. It was now important for Bahrainis to look correct and to signal that they had joined the community of Gulf Arabs.16

An equally misunderstood element of Gulf life is the role of non -Sunni Muslims and expatriates in GCC states. These individuals are often referred to by Gulf scholars as a collective other, whose presence is temporary. Many scholars characterize expatriates as indicative of the decadence of Gulf society and warn of the danger if they are not replaced by indigenous workers.

In reality, the presence of these foreigners is the product of a long tradition whereby Americans and other non-Arabs and non -Muslims have gone to the Gulf and made important contributions to the region. Both before and after the rise of the oil industry in the 1930s, individuals as disparate as Italian Catholic priests, Protestant missionaries, Greek mariners, European geologists, and Indian and Jewish merchants have played important roles in the region. Missionary doctors served hundreds of thousands of patients in Saudi Arabia between the 1920s and the 1950s, while French Jews were generous philanthropists in Bahrain. Although Gulf peoples have a reputation for religious intolerance, the ruling families have readily integrated non-Muslims into their societies and granted them wide cultural freedoms and, over time, direct state protection and citizenship. While Shia Muslims sometimes faced discrimination, they also benefitted from official commercial privileges and used the oil industry to achieve rapid socioeconomic advancement.

Just as indigenous Sunni Arabs have been affected by the technological and rapid political changes in the Middle East since 1990, non-Muslims and Shia have too. These individuals can turn not only to international media and nongovernmental organizations to promote better labor practices in the Gulf but also to the Shia government in Iraq, to India, and to other states that send workers to the Gulf. Many expatriates also maintain extensive communal organizations in the Gulf and have representatives in their home country's parliament.

The demographic presence of foreigners (as much as 70 percent of the population in some states) and their sociopolitical activities have not gone unnoticed by the indigenous Sunni Arabs. Although some fear that the expatriates will lead to the eventual extinction of indigenous Gulf society, others have sought to incorporate Indian democratic traditions into civil

How well indigenous Gulf Arabs (and expatriate workers) reconcile these issues will play an important role in the future of the region, especially given the fact that petroleum prices declined rapidly and a world financial crisis erupted in 2008. Not only did Gulf government revenues decline, but sovereign wealth funds in the Gulf were eviscerated by declining stock markets. In the past, these funds had provided a useful tool for

Gulf governments to survive sustained declines in the global oil market. Many Gulf leaders do not appear to have that option at this time. Furthermore, China, the United States, and other nations sought to stimulate their economies in 2009 by investing in technologies that will decrease their use of oil, promote reusable energy sources, and reduce carbon emissions.17 In the long run, these new investments could have as significant an impact on the demand for and price of oil as the reduction of coal use did in the United States and Europe in the 1950s and 1960s.

Within this financial environment, Gulf Arabs have an opportunity to reshape their societies and to achieve an economic model more in line with that of Mexico, where petroleum is important but not the center of daily life. A potential place to start would be the investments that Gulf governments made in manufacturing, alternative energy, and service industries since the 1990s.

Another engine of change may be the new universities built in the region, especially those schools that are partnered with existing elite Western research universities.18 Because they are more research intensive than older Gulf universities, the new schools could form the types of public-private partnerships and technology transfers that have worked well in Europe, Asia, and North America. The key to such projects may be expatriates, since they are precisely the type of hard-working and industrious people who are essential to the success of contemporary economies, especially those based on knowledge industries. If expatriates remain in the Gulf, they could transform the region's economy and spearhead an economic system not based on petroleum. Ironically, the chief dilemma posed by expatriate workers for Gulf Arabs would not be how to replace them but how to keep them from leaving.

When the Gulf states achieve a post-petroleum economy, women are well-positioned to take advantage of it but men will not be. They continue to fall further behind their female peers. Although this is not a new social problem, it has taken on greater social significance in recent years. With bleak career prospects and ample time on their hands, young men (and 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.19

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, Faisal al-Otabi — better known as Abu Kab — 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 sixty speeding tickets. There have been similar deadly accidents in other cities in the Gulf. One of the most dangerous of terrorists was a drifter: Youssef al-Ayyeri headed Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula until he died in a shootout with Saudi security forces in 2003.20

Drifting, especially when linked to other dangerous antisocial problems of young men, suggests that future "gender questions" in the Gulf 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.

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 US state of Georgia's Department of Labor in 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.21

Just as the question of gender may increasingly be viewed very differently in the Gulf (as well as in Georgia), one may well come to see national security in different terms. The chief foreign policy question for Gulf Arabs for half a century has been how to balance their dependence on Western security guarantees and financial ties with their populations' anger at Western policies toward Israel and the Palestinians. To achieve these almost irreconcilable goals, Gulf leaders have deployed flexible policy approaches. On the one hand, they refuse to recognize Israel, and they briefly boycotted oil shipments to Israel's allies in the 1970s. On the other hand, they maintain ironclad links to Israel's closest ally, the United States. Thanks to this approach, Gulf leaders have retained their credibility on the Arab-Israeli dispute, have profited from their Western investments, and have successfully repelled various external threats. In 1991, the Gulf states' multitrack approach paid off handsomely when the United States expelled Iraq from Kuwait and initiated negotiations that set the stage for the emergence of the Oslo Peace Process.

The decline of US power in the Middle East has raised new concerns, however, for the leaders in the Gulf. Despite the fact that Washington maintains tens of thousands of troops in the Middle East, the United States has proven unable to defend the Gulf Arabs' core interests in the Middle East or to protect their overseas wealth. In particular, Gulf governments are astonished that Washington has allowed Iran to gain unparalleled influence in Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and the Palestinian territories since 2003 and has permitted the US dollar to fall to such a low level that it has sparked inflation in Gulf economies.22

Gulf leaders have good reasons for their fears. US power in the region will necessarily decline as the nation finally withdraws its troops from Iraq and begins to implement the deep cuts in defense spending that are needed to offset new increased domestic spending.23 Although the United States will retain a

naval presence in the Gulf and remain an important source of investment for some time, it will not again maintain the web of military facilities that it had between 1991 and 2003. It is also unlikely to have the resources necessary to launch an operation similar to the 1991 Gulf War.
Consequently, in future years, Gulf governments will no longer have to make the same compromises they once did in order to secure US friendship, but they will simultaneously no longer be able to depend on overwhelming US military power in a crisis. Which nation or nations might replace the United States in the Gulf is unclear, since no other major state—aside from Iran—currently has the capabilities to project power into the region.

As difficult as these various dilemmas are, they should be weighed against the enormous advantages that Gulf Arabs currently possess. To begin with, they produce a product, oil, that is still critical to the international economy. Even if many industrialized nations reduce their use of oil and adopt alternative fuels, this does not mean that they (or any other states) will abandon petroleum altogether. Fifty years ago, Americans reduced their use of coal in favor of oil, but coal still accounts for 23 percent of all US energy needs.24

These major transitions take time. Even when global oil use inevitably declines, the Gulf states will still be able to fall back on investments in alternative fuels, education, and other non-oil industries, which have the potential to yield significant economic growth in the future.

Although the Gulf states are facing immense problems, by international standards they are doing very well. They may be angst-ridden, but they are also immensely rich. As the US songwriter Cole Porter put it, they are "down in the depths," but they are also in rich man's haven "on the ninetieth floor".25

ENDNOTES

1. For more on Shaikh Nazim and his use of technology, see Sean Foley, "The Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyya, Islamic Sainthood, and Religion in Modern Times," Journal of World History 19, no. 4 (December 2008): 521–545.

2. Ibid.

3. Frank Viviano, "Kingdom on Edge: Saudi Arabia," National Geographic 204, no. 4 (October 2003): 3–41.

4. U.S. Department of State, Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "International Religious Freedom Report 2005: Saudi Arabia" (available at http://www.state.gov/).

5. The leading proponents of the rentier model are Hazem Beblawi, Kiren Chaudhry, Jill Crystal, Gregory Gause, and Giacomo Luciani. Even the recent work of Michael Herb, which investigates the institutional development of the states' monarchies and compares Kuwait and the UAE, accepts the guiding assumptions of the rentier model as accurate. The same cannot be said of the Italian scholar Matteo Legrenzi, who has done the most in-depth recent work on the GCC. One scholar who has sought to move away from the rentier paradigm in regards to Saudi Arabia is Pascal Ménoret. Together, these studies have yielded important insights into the

institutional constructions of GCC states, such as the political and economic dangers of state dependence on oil sales and the problems arising from weak societal institutions. For more on these works, see Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani, eds., The Rentier State (New York: Routledge, 1987); Kiren Chaudhry, The Price of Wealth: Economies and Institutions in the Middle East (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Jill Crystal, Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Qatar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Gregory Gause, Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1994); Michal Herb, All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999); Matteo Legrenzi, The Gulf Cooperation Council: Diplomacy, Security and Economy in a Changing Region (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008); Pascal Ménoret, The Saudi Enigma, trans. Patrick Camiller(London: Zed Books, 2005).

6. Nora Boustany, "Barrier-Breaking Bahraini Masters Diplomatic Scene: Nonoo Is First Jewish Ambassador from an Arab Nation," Washington Post, December 19, 2008 (available at http://www.lexisnexis.com/).

7. This type of misperception is hardly unique to Gulf states. Imperial Russia, which is often portrayed as an autocratic police state, had significantly fewer police officers per capita in the first decades of the twentieth century than democratic states, such as Great Britain or France. For more on this paradox and the surprising weakness of Russia's police forces in relation to its civil society before World War I, see Paul du Quenoy, Stage Fright: Politics and the Performing Arts in Late Imperial Russia (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009).

8. All of these statistics are approximate and based on the following: Anthony Cordesman and Khalid al-Rodhan, Gulf Military Forces in an Era of Asymmetric Wars (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies and Prager Security International, 2007); United Nations Office of Drugs and Crimes, Surveys of Criminal Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (see http://www.unodc.org/); the work of scholars with Vision of Humanity (see http://www.visionofhumanity.org/).

9. Astrology is still important to Saudi society, despite the fact that senior Saudi religious scholars continue to link it to sorcery and other sinful acts. The Saudi Arabian daily newspaper, The Saudi Gazette, regularly published horoscopes in the 2000s, and the characters in Raja al-Sanea's novel, The Girls of Riyadh, discuss their horoscopes and those of potential husbands. For more on Astrology and Saudi Arabia, see Amos Peaslee, The Constitutions of Nations, 2nd ed., vol 3: Nicaragua to Yugoslavia (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1956), 276, Rajaa al-Sanea, Girls of Riyadh, trans. Rajaa al-Sanea and Marilyn Booth (New York: Penguin Press, 2007), 53-55, and Natana DeLong-Bas, Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Islam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 73-75.

10. Arthur P. Clark, et al., A Land Transformed—The Arabian Peninsula, Saudi Arabia, and Aramco (Dhahran: Saudi Arabian

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11. Sean Foley, The Arab Gulf States: Beyond Oil and Islam (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Press, 2010), 18.

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