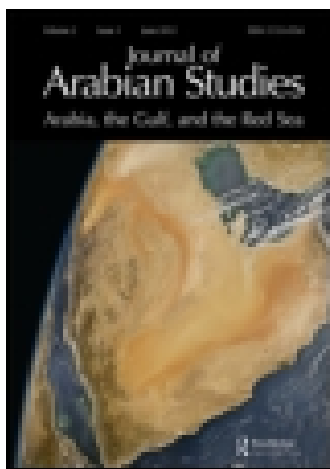


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Rules and Tools of Succession in the Gulf Monarchies

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Rules and Tools of Succession in the Gulf Monarchies

RUSSELL E. LUCAS

Abstract: This article surveys recent events and literature on succession in the six Arab Gulf monarchies, synthesizing the varied country experiences into a new thematic interpretation. It argues that succession rules are increasingly being enshrined in textual — if not constitutional — institutional architectures. The rationalization of succession mechanisms speaks to the growing institutionalization of monarchical rule. There is also a growing influence, but not dominance, of primogeniture in the Gulf monarchies. These constitutions and basic laws also generally allow for a greater institutionalization of succession practices through family councils. Finally, while the tools of consolation prizes for members of the ruling families left out of the succession are growing, they may have potential for diluting the dynastic control over the state too much. The changing norms of succession in the Gulf are responses to the ruling families' solidification of power. While the institutionalization of succession norms may not necessarily lead to stability, it does change the dynamics of intra-family contention in the Gulf.

Keywords: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, dynastic monarchy, succession, constitution, basic law, primogeniture, politics

1 Introduction

The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Sultan bin Abd al-Aziz, died on 23 October 2011. Less than a week later, his younger brother Prince Nayif was made the new heir apparent. Briefly afterwards some observers of Saudi politics pointed to confusion surrounding Nayif's appointment: had he been appointed to the position by King Abdullah or had he been elected to it by the new Allegiance Council (*Hay'at al-Bay'ah*). The apparent confusion stems from the fact that he was appointed by the King and then ratified by the Council. But the discussion also reveals a deeper dynamic that has emerged over the past few decades in Saudi Arabia, and in the other Gulf monarchies: that succession rules in the Gulf monarchies are increasingly being enshrined in textual — if not constitutional — institutional architectures.

The monarchies of the Gulf have developed mechanisms that allow them to overcome one of the factors that inhibits the survival of regimes around the world — the stabilization of norms of succession. Succession battles frequently tear regimes apart, a potential that the monarchies of the Gulf have faced and seem to have resolved. The institutionalization of rules not only provides a window into the type of common patterns of family and political elite management being used in the Gulf, it also allows for the analytical exploration of the underlying causes of the tools of 'dynastic monarchy'. Are succession rules in the Gulf a product of an essential tribal cultural

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script found in the Gulf and Arab-Islamic world? Are they the product of complex family dynamics being married to state-building outcomes? Or are the emerging constitutional norms codifying previous understandings that can be used for renegotiating power relations by political actors?

One school of thought on Arab monarchies sees their success in survival rooted in their proximity to tribal and Islamic cultural values, especially in the Gulf. These monarchies fit into a stable cultural script. "Arab monarchies have been ostensibly more successful at managing the challenge of succession than have the republics, in part because their approach to governance is closer to traditional tribal practices and family rules, therefore, easier to justify".¹ However, a focus on the cultural essences that Gulf monarchies follow has a difficult time explaining why over the past few decades many of the Gulf monarchies have introduced or codified succession mechanisms into constitutional texts and basic laws. This approach's best explanation for these innovations is "necessity"² which, as a functional rationale, cannot account for the variance between the different states.

In a different vein, other scholars argue that the Arab monarchies have survived because the monarchical system is well suited to the demands of state-building and nation-building that the Gulf States have faced during the previous century.³ Within this approach, Michael Herb builds his notion of 'dynastic monarchy' to explain how family battles for succession have led to the ruling family ruling collectively as a regime in which those members of the ruling family who are left out of the line of succession are offered incentives to bandwagon with the rule of the winners rather than undertake fratricide (figuratively and literally) that would undermine the power of the entire ruling family. Rentier state income allowed the expansion of the state bureaucracy to accommodate surplus princes, but the decision to do so was not made *a priori*. Thus, these families share political power among the members of the family by distributing and redistributing bureaucratic offices within the family so as to avoid drawing outsiders into family disputes.⁴ While competition within the family for power has been intense, the simultaneous building of the state and regime spurred by increasing oil wealth has led — most notably in the Saudi case — to the creation and distribution of bureaucratic offices as personal fiefdoms.⁵ While the 'balancing' and 'bandwagoning' for power and office may provide a better account of the development of the political institutional nature of the Gulf monarchies than explanations based on political culture, they also have some difficulty accounting for current dynamics that have led to the increasing formalization of institutional rules.

By synthesizing the scholarly literature on succession in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states in the light of recent events, this article proposes a revised institutionalist interpretation of the formalization and textualization of succession rules in order to better explain recent succession decisions in the Gulf, especially how political actors make decisions within normative and rule-based frameworks. This approach assumes that actors will attempt to enhance their power in one of three ways: (1) by establishing norms and writing new institutional rules to their advantage; (2) by codifying existing understandings into more formal institutions when possible; and/or (3) by interpreting existing norms and rules to alter their practice to their advantage.⁶ In each of the Gulf

¹ Billingsley, *Political Succession in the Arab World* (2010), p. 68. See also Kéchichian, *Power and Succession in Arab Monarchies: A Reference Guide* (2008), pp. 25–65.

² Billingsley, *Political Succession*, p. 18.

³ Anderson, "Dynasts and Nationalists: Why Monarchies Survive", in *Middle East Monarchies: The Challenge of Modernity*, ed. Kostiner (2000).

⁴ Herb, *All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies* (1999), pp. 3–4.

⁵ Hertog, *Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats: Oil and the State in Saudi Arabia* (2010).

monarchies, changes, clarifications, or interpretations of succession rules have happened over the past few decades. This growing constitutionalization has helped to generally stabilize the power of the Gulf monarchies and explain their survival as regimes — especially in comparison to Arab republics and other non-democratic regimes outside the Middle East.

Within the larger field of comparative politics, one of the key issues identified in non-democratic regimes is their difficulty in successfully transferring leadership from one ruler to the next. While democratic regimes have institutional mechanisms of leadership transitions, most other types of regimes lack such regularized norms. The failure to institutionalize leadership succession can lead to splits and factionalization of ruling elites that may lead to their downfall and replacement by opposition forces.⁷

Dynastic monarchy, as a regime type, however, is noted for its continuing survival and apparent ‘stability’.⁸ One of the stabilizing factors that monarchy offers is the restricted criteria for obtaining leadership and for clear patterns of succession. Monarchy provides a preset pool of potential leaders in comparison to other types of regimes. Incumbents, moreover, have not only professional interests in fostering the recruitment of their chosen successors, but a personal stake in the issue as well. However, unlike personalized patrimonial regimes — ‘sultanism’ — the family of the ruler also acts as a constraint on his personal power.⁹ Nevertheless, the practice of dynastic monarchy, as the case of Kuwait below will demonstrate, should not be automatically assumed as inherently stable.

Social scientists generally argue that the institutionalization of practice emerges from a combination of three factors: (1) actors rationally pursuing political aims; (2) the formalization of current shared understandings; and (3) the organizational framework serving a function that creates efficiencies for all involved.¹⁰ The constitutions of Arab monarchies define and organize, without limiting, state authority. As Nathan Brown explains, “Constitutions offer monarchies some clear lines of authority and smoother succession”.¹¹ Of the six GCC states, however, only Kuwait had a significant constitutional tradition that predated independence. Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE also promulgated constitutions at independence — and have changed them since. Oman and Saudi Arabia also have made “basic laws” that textualize core principles without rising to the formality of a constitution. Nevertheless, Nathan Brown argues that the stronger the monarchy’s constitutional tradition, the more stable and smooth succession have been.¹² Recent events in Kuwait do not support this generalization, however. Institutionalization can lead to its own contention in response to endogenous practices as well as exogenous developments.

The assumption of the stability of succession within monarchies may be based on the general preference of Western European monarchies for succession by primogeniture (usually male

⁶ Steinmo, Thelen, and Longstreth (eds.), *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis* (1992).

⁷ Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market* (1991); Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (1996).

⁸ Hadenius and Teorell, “Authoritarian Regimes: Stability, Change and Pathways to Democracy, 1972–2003”, working paper 33 (2006), pp. 7–8.

⁹ Chehabi and Linz, *Sultanistic Regimes* (1998); Lucas, “Monarchical Authoritarianism: Survival and Political Liberalization in a Middle Eastern Regime Type”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36 (2004).

¹⁰ Thelen, “How Institutions Evolve: Insights from Comparative Historical Analysis”, in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, ed. Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003), pp. 208–40.

¹¹ Brown, *Constitutions in a Nonconstitutional World: Arab Basic Laws and the Prospects for Accountable Government* (2002), p. 65.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 64.

primogeniture) in which the oldest child inherits the throne. Among the Arab monarchies, following the historical examples from the Ottoman Empire until the twentieth century, most succession used a model of agnatic seniority in which the next oldest male of the family came to power. Preferences for primogeniture among the Gulf monarchies, however, have emerged to challenge notions of seniority in recent decades.¹³ The transition and competition of different models of succession in most of the Gulf monarchies have added a level of instability among supposedly smooth succession. Saudi Arabia still stands as the exemplar of succession by seniority. Meanwhile, Bahrain as an example of primogeniture has seen a number of transitions from father to son. Today a number of these families are showing a preference for succession by sons — if not full primogeniture. Yet, primogeniture also can provide a destabilizing dynamic within monarchies as sons refuse to wait until their fathers' deaths to take the reins of power.

For the dynastic Gulf monarchies, positions in the cabinet were consolation prizes for the losers of the succession battles in both seniority and primogeniture systems. Thus, each of the Gulf monarchies has had slightly different variations on the dynastic monarchy theme, as well as different ways in which succession norms have been established, codified, and reinterpreted. However, the key difference that will emerge from the discussions of each of the recent experiences of the six Gulf monarchies is the growing divergence between the succession norms of primogeniture and seniority. Neither is a guarantor of stability or instability, but rather each norm produces its own dynamic of contention.

2 Kuwait

In Michael Herb's view, the first dynastic monarchy to emerge was Kuwait. Kuwait also has the longest constitutional history in the Gulf. Kuwait demonstrates the importance of actors reinterpreting existing rules and the sometimes unintended outcomes that result. On one hand, the al-Sabah have managed to have peaceful succession since Mubarak the Great's 1896 *coup* and to alternate leadership between branches of the family. Today, however, the dynastic monarchy model in Kuwait has been showing signs of strain. Despite a growing number of princes, longevity of al-Sabah elders has stunted the ability of junior shaykhs to gain leadership experience, undercutting the logic of al-Sabah control over Kuwait's executive branch. Moreover, the insertion of the parliament into succession issues in 2006 rewrote the norms of extra-family influences on al-Sabah family dynamics.

With Mubarak the Great, one particular line of al-Sabah has ruled the country since 1896. Mubarak's ascension — by murdering his brothers — was also the last time that violence marked the Kuwaiti succession. For most of the twentieth century the family alternated granting the role of Amir to Mubarak's sons, Jabir and Salim, and then to their respective descendants in alteration. With the failure of the 1938 constitutionalist movement, power moved from the person of the Amir to the broader family as the members of al-Sabah divided the offices of administration among themselves, thus marking the birth of the dynastic monarchy structure.¹⁴

After independence in 1961, Kuwait's National Assembly (parliament) approved a constitution the following year enshrining the al-Sabah's dominance over the executive but with a role for the elected parliament. Moreover, the day-to-day affairs handled by the Prime Minister also reinforced the succession of qualified individuals because the heir apparent held both roles. Moreover, smooth transitions were also facilitated by the al-Sabah family

¹³ Billingsley, *Political Succession*, pp. 82–3.

¹⁴ Herb, *All in the Family*, pp. 68–75; Brown, *Constitutions*, pp. 30–1; Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (1990), pp. 62–6.

council.¹⁵ Thus, jockeying for power mainly focused on the alternation between the al-Jabir and al-Salim branches of the family. The main points of contention in Kuwaiti politics instead focused on the relationship between the al-Sabah executive and the elected National Assembly.

While this arrangement has kept the al-Sabah united in the face of opposition from other Kuwaitis in the National Assembly and from external (namely Iraqi) threats to the emirate's sovereignty, the dynastic model has come under strain since liberation also from issues internal to the al-Sabah. These issues have led to a number of reinterpretations of the succession norms that had been established earlier in the century and codified with the 1962 constitution. First, the longevity of al-Sabah shaykhs has given long experience to a handful of family members, thus younger generations are lacking opportunities to prove themselves — even though many of them are now in their fifties.¹⁶ Kuwait's seniority system is developing a problem that succession may begin to pass to more elderly, but not particularly experienced (or adept) members of the family — something commonly found in primogeniture systems. The splitting of the office of Prime Minister from that of the Crown Prince in 2003 has not fully resolved this issue.

The alternation of the al-Jabir and al-Salim branches was broken in the past — namely in 1965 as Sabah al-Salim (1965–77) followed his brother, Abdullah al-Salim (1950–65). Jabir al-Ahmad al-Jabir, who was skipped at the time, followed as Amir in 1977, returning the alternation. With the death of Jabir in 2006, however, the National Assembly was required to settle the resulting succession dispute between the two branches of the al-Sabah. The heir apparent, Saad al-Abdullah al-Salim, was physically unable to take the oath of office in front of the National Assembly, as constitutionally required — and most likely would have been unable to rule. The National Assembly invoked its constitutional power and removed Saad from office, handing power to the Prime Minister, Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir. The decision of the new Amir, Sabah al-Jabir, to appoint members of al-Jabir to both the positions of Crown Prince (his brother, Nawaaf al-Ahmad) and Prime Minister (his nephew, Nasir al Muhammad al-Ahmad) marked “a historic turning point in the fortunes of the other branches” of al-Sabah.¹⁷ The succession of two members of the al-Jabir, back to back, may have been a way of equaling the tally for the branches, or it may have marked the ascendancy of the al-Jabir line. The al-Jabir's dominance was reinforced by the appointment of Jabir al-Mubarak al-Hamad al-Jabir as Prime Minister in 2011. The problem of the al-Salim line lacking qualified shaykhs for senior positions receives regular public comment.¹⁸

Both disgruntled members of the al-Salim and reformist members of the al-Jabir may be using the National Assembly in a proxy cold war resulting in the early dissolution of parliament in 2006, 2008, 2009, and 2011. Tensions within the al-Sabah are now regularly manifested in the National Assembly in the form of “grillings” of cabinet members by parliamentary supporters of one rival family faction or another.¹⁹ Before 2006, family tensions never appeared in public;²⁰ today they appear in full view.²¹ However, the influence of commoners over al-Sabah family dynamics is severely weakening one of the main norms of dynastic rule — that family disputes stay inside the family. Following the transitions of the Arab Spring elsewhere in the region, calls are now being publicly heard for the removal of the al-Sabah from the executive branch of government

¹⁵ Kéchichian, *Power*, p. 106.

¹⁶ Peterson, “The Nature of Succession in the Gulf”, *Middle East Journal* 55 (2001), p. 586.

¹⁷ Tétreault, “Three Emirs and a Tale of Two Transitions”, *Middle East Report*, 10 Feb. 2006.

¹⁸ Anon., “The Kuwait Succession Crisis and the New Leadership”, *The Estimate*, 27 Feb. 2006; Tétreault, “Three Emirs”; Peterson, “Nature”; Kéchichian, *Power*.

¹⁹ Izzak, “Drama as Pro-Govt. Kuwaiti MPs Desert Sheikh Ahmad”, *Kuwait Times*, 1 June 2011.

²⁰ Interviews, Kuwait City, May 2008.

²¹ Laessing, “Kuwait in Crisis as Ruling Family Splits, MPs Rebel”, Reuters, 7 June 2011.

and the turning of Kuwait into a constitutional monarchy.²² The Amir may concede the demands of some al-Sabah shaykhs and do away with the National Assembly, turning instead towards a narrower al-Sabah family coalition. In other words, the reinterpretation of succession norms may open the door to more sweeping constitutional changes in future.

3 Saudi Arabia

While the Gulf model of dynastic monarchy may have been invented in Kuwait, the paragon of this regime type would have to be Saudi Arabia. With its enormous number of family members that control most aspects of the state and its administration, the kingdom warrants its status as the only country in the world named after its ruling family. While succession in Saudi Arabia has become more codified and institutionalized, the interpretation of these rules and the performance of the new institutions will remain unclear until they face more significant tests. These tests are sure to emerge soon with the advancing age of the Saudi royal family elders.

While today Saudi Arabia is known for its seniority succession of brothers, this rule was only established through a great deal of family conflict. King Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, the founder of modern Saudi Arabia, ruled as a patrimonial figure based on his singular individual leadership. Abd al-Aziz appointed his eldest son, Saud, as his heir in an attempt to limit the possibilities that a succession dispute would destroy the Saudi state, as had happened in the past. With Saud bin Abd al-Aziz's ascension in 1953, however, he tended to "appoint his inexperienced young sons to major governmental positions, rather than older and more seasoned uncles and nephews. Many feared that such appointments signaled that Saud was planning to transfer succession to his offspring".²³ With the family lining up behind Faisal bin Abd al-Aziz to eventually remove Saud in 1964, the norm of seniority succession rather than primogeniture was established. Anthony Billingsley sees this as a victory for "traditional tribal and Islamic processes",²⁴ but other authors like Joseph Kéchichian see the battle and its outcome as a result of family balances of power facilitated by financial pressures, international intrigue, and bureaucratic specialization.²⁵ For Steffen Hertog, "it is telling that the group that had built the larger alliance within the royal family carried the day. At no point in the struggle were broader social constituencies mobilized".²⁶ This enabled dynasty to triumph over royal monarchy.²⁷

With the establishment of a norm of seniority, J.E. Peterson observes that

the principle was established of succession through the sons of King Abd al-Aziz in chronological order, albeit with some exceptions. [And] because these sons display varying qualities as rulers, a pattern of rivalries between sons has been a feature over the last sixty years.²⁸

However, with dozens of sons, not every prince could become King — or wanted to. The expansion of the House of Saud is remarkable; estimates put the number of princes at more than 5,000.²⁹

²² Anon., "Kuwaiti Parliamentary Candidates Call for Move to Full Democracy", *The National*, 30 Jan. 2012.

²³ Kéchichian, *Succession in Saudi Arabia* (2001), p. 41

²⁴ Billingsley, *Political Succession*, p. 136.

²⁵ Kéchichian, *Succession*, pp. 40–4.

²⁶ Hertog, "Shaping the Saudi State: Human Agency's Shifting Role in Rentier-State Formation", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39 (2007), p. 551.

²⁷ Herb, *All in the Family*, p. 99.

²⁸ Peterson, "Nature", p. 581.

²⁹ Kéchichian, *Power*, p. 245.

No matter the number of princes, the leadership of the sons of Abd al-Aziz is slowly coming to a close, as demonstrated by the death of Crown Prince Sultan bin Abd al-Aziz in 2011 at the age of eighty-five. King Abdullah bin Abd al-Aziz (who has ruled since 2005) was born in 1923, Crown Prince Nayif in 1933 and Prince Salman in 1936. Even though the sons may still rule for the time being, consideration of Saudi family dynamics today, however, needs to include the grandsons of Abd al-Aziz, and even now their sons as well.

Some grandsons, like Saud bin Faisal bin Abd al-Aziz, the Foreign Minister, or Bandar bin Sultan bin Abd al-Aziz, the former Saudi Ambassador to the USA, have made international names for themselves. Many have followed their father's footsteps in running the Saudi state, such as King Abdullah's sons in the National Guard or Crown Prince Sultan's in the Army. However, many more grandsons await their turn for leadership positions as their elderly fathers and uncles continue to occupy the top echelons of government. Thus, as in Kuwait, the question of experience among the next generation is raised — but not to the same extent because of greater competition between princes and a larger state to run.

To address both the issues of smoothly transferring the succession to the next generations and the possibilities that the Saudi gerontocracy may be unable to rule, both King Fahd and King Abdullah fostered a greater codification of succession decisions. In 1992, King Fahd introduced the Basic Law in which future succession was opened to not just the sons of Ibn Saud, but his grandsons and later descendants as well. Most important was the qualification that "the most upright among them shall receive allegiance", which seemed to indicate that seniority was no longer the prime consideration. But the Basic Law also gives the King the right to choose the heir apparent.³⁰ The introduction of the Basic Law, however, did not seem to influence the selection of Abdullah or Sultan in the succession.

After the ascension of King Abdullah in 2005, he chose to further institutionalize how the succession was to be run. In 2006 King Abdullah decreed that a family council would name the heir apparent. The Allegiance Council (also known as the Allegiance Commission) was to come into effect after Crown Prince Sultan became King. At that point, the new King would either submit a name to the Council for approval or the Council would name a qualifying member of Al Saud as heir apparent. The Council is to finish its deliberations quickly and can even act as a transitory ruling council if neither the monarch nor heir is fit to rule.³¹

The thirty-five member Council was named in 2007 by King Abdullah. Prince Mishal bin Abd al-Aziz was named to chair it.³² In 2011 with the death of Crown Prince Sultan, the Council received its first task — the unprecedented occasion of the death of the Crown Prince preceding that of the King. King Abdullah retained his prerogative to first appoint Prince Nayif as Crown Prince, but afterwards he did meet with the Allegiance Council for the ratification of his choice.³³ Some analysts have commented that with Nayif's opposition to such institutional innovations like the Allegiance Council, upon his ascension to king he would keep his power of appointment — and not just nomination. Nevertheless, with the possibility of the movement to the next generation of princes looming, the broader family may insist on keeping the Allegiance Council active.

³⁰ Peterson, "Nature", p. 582; Kéchichian, *Succession*, pp. 71–3.

³¹ Kéchichian, *Power*, p. 258.

³² Arab Decision "Saudi Arabia: Allegiance Commission", *Arab Decision Makers Project*, 14 Dec. 2007; Henderson, "After King Abdullah: Succession in Saudi Arabia", *Policy Focus* 96 (2009), p. 15.

³³ Freeman, "Saudi King to Hold Historic Vote", *The Telegraph*, 22 Oct. 2011, Abul-Samh, "Royal Reshuffle", *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 27 Oct. 2011; Anon., "Prince Naif bin Abdulaziz was Chosen Crown Prince", Saudi Press Agency, 27 Oct. 2011.

Even if the Allegiance Council does eventually begin to play a formal role in Saudi succession, it is a *family* council. King Fahd and King Abdullah's codification of institutions in Saudi Arabia are intended to insure that the family will continue in its exclusion of the public from Al Saud family decisions.

4 Bahrain

Of the GCC monarchies — all of which more or less follow the dynastic model — only Bahrain has consistently followed the primogeniture pattern of succession. Today both norms are well established in the Kingdom. This unique pairing has been produced by Bahrain's pluralism — both within the Al Khalifa family and Bahraini society in general. The succession of Hamid bin Isa as Amir in 1999 and his constitutional changes that made him a King and Bahrain a Kingdom in 2002 have led to a bipolar balance of power within the Al Khalifa family. The structure of the Al Khalifa's regime thus tries to accommodate the centralizing tendencies of primogeniture with the pluralizing pull of dynasticism. This balancing act is further complicated by the monarchy trying to keep demands for public participation at bay — a task that has become increasingly difficult.

The death of Amir Isa bin Salman and the ascension of his son, Hamid, in 1999 was the fourth consecutive time that primogeniture has governed succession in Bahrain since 1923.³⁴ This line of succession originated with Shaykh Isa bin Ali, who was installed as ruler with the help of the British in 1869. The 1973 constitution (Article 1b) and its 2002 amendments make the primogeniture succession rule explicit.³⁵ Upon taking power, Hamad named his eldest son, Salman, as Crown Prince, continuing the tradition. Of all the GCC states, primogeniture succession is most strongly established and codified in Bahrain.

While succession norms are clear, the implications of dynastic rule in Bahrain for the balance of power within the Al Khalifa family are still far from settled. Since King Hamad's ascension, a three-sided tug of war has emerged for power in Bahrain between the King, his uncle the long-serving Prime Minister, and Bahrain's vocal opposition.

The dynastic monarchy system in the Gulf today, in which the entire family rules, first appeared in Bahrain with the arrival of oil wealth and the resulting expansion of government in the 1930s–70s. The ruler gradually began to populate his expanding state administration with members of his own family, increasingly placing close relatives in charge of departments in order to keep power away from the general population, especially the Shia, which the Al Khalifa viewed with distrust because of growing nationalist, sectarian, and labor strife since the 1920s.³⁶ The Al Khalifa-dominated cabinet of 1970 changed little in the quarter century after independence the following year because, as Michael Herb observes, “no one has died and family disputes have not led to the resignation or dismissal of cabinet ministers”.³⁷

While Amir Isa was head of state, his brother, Khalifa bin Salman, the Prime Minister, handled the day-to-day affairs of the state. Khalifa also handled the internal security apparatus and amassed a vast personal fortune from business ventures and “commissions” for awarding government contracts — earning him the nickname, “Mr Ten Percent”. As heir apparent, Hamad bin Isa, commanded the Bahrain Defence Force — a position he has handed to his son

³⁴ Peterson, *Nature*, p. 588.

³⁵ Al-Baharnat, *Al-Bahrain Bayn Dustouriyyn* (2005), p. 71 has a side-by-side test of the 1973 and 2002 constitutions. The constitution also permits the King to appoint another son besides the eldest as heir.

³⁶ Lawson, *Bahrain: The Modernization of Autocracy* (1989).

³⁷ Herb, *All in the Family*, p. 132.

Salman, now that he is King. Hamad, however, had a much different vision of his role as ruler than his father, taking a more direct role in government, causing tensions between him and his uncle, and their respective camps within the Al Khalifa.

King Hamad has introduced a number of significant constitutional innovations since 1999: the promotion of a national pact, called the National Charter, in 2000; the transformation to a Kingdom in 2001; a new constitution in 2002; and perhaps most notably, the return of parliamentary life to Bahrain that was suspended in 1975. King Hamad's changes, however, have not brought about a dissolution of Al Khalifa authority. What is important is that all of these reforms have opened up the political area for greater public participation, but with a structure that favors the power of the executive branch over the legislative with the power of the King notably enhanced.

The reforms were the King's strategy for containing Bahrain's many social problems and the contention that they have brought. Steven Wright argues that "internal power politics within Bahrain's ruling elite largely explain the manner in which the reforms have been implemented. A key aspect of the reforms was a desire by the King to enhance his autonomy vis-à-vis the Prime Minister through a populist mandate".³⁸ Joseph Kéchichian also notes this bipolar system as determining alliances within the Al Khalifa — with the young King on one side and his uncle entrenched as Prime Minister on the other.

Kéchichian does not see the areas of difference between the two teams as being all that great, except when it comes to liberalizing political reforms.³⁹ This, however, may have come to a dramatic turning point with the 2011 Pearl Roundabout protests. As part of a reaction to the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt, a large percentage of Bahrainis called for greater political liberalization. But, as protests were met with repression, the protestors' demands escalated from reasonable reforms and the sacking of the deeply unpopular Prime Minister, to the ousting of the Al Khalifa. The Crown Prince was charged with leading negotiations with the main opposition parties, such as Al-Wefaq. However, his efforts were quickly undercut by the intervention of GCC Peninsula Shield forces under Saudi command brought in seemingly at the request of Shaykh Khalifa and members of the royal family in the military. As a result of the crackdown, the Crown Prince and the King have lost much of their authority.⁴⁰

Thus, while the succession norms in Bahrain have been well established and codified, it is unclear what power Crown Prince Salman would inherit from his father if the hard-line elements of the family, led by the Prime Minister, continue to crack down on Bahrain's divided society.

5 Qatar

The case of Qatar illustrates the growing consolidation of formal written rules for succession codified in a constitution as well as the movement towards a norm of primogeniture in the Gulf. Qatar, however, also demonstrates one of the dangers in naming heirs, who can become political rivals. Since 1972, two crown princes have forced out the Amir with broad ruling family support and taken over. In the most recent transfer of power in 1995, Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani took advantage of his father's absence and seized power. As Amir, Hamad bin Khalifa has both centralized power and promised to put Qatar on a path towards political liberalization.

³⁸ Wright, "Fixing the Kingdom: Political Evolution and Socio-Economic Challenges in Bahrain", *Occasional Paper* 3 (2008).

³⁹ Kéchichian, *Power*, pp. 95–6.

⁴⁰ Cockburn, "Power Struggle Deepens Divisions among Bahraini Royal Family", *The Independent*, 27 September 2011; Seznec, "The Center or Bust: Will the Various Forces in Bahrain Finally Compromise on a Centrist Approach to Power?", *Jadaliyya*, 8 Mar. 2011.

Qatar first codified succession rules in its 1970 “provisional” constitution. The document, however, underspecified succession rules. A family council would determine the heir in the event of a dispute. Kéchichian argues that the document “assumed that Qatari tradition, mostly oral, would carry the day, and that the family would reach whatever decisions might be required in relative harmony”.⁴¹ The assumption of harmony, however, may not have been prudent. As compared to Kuwait or Bahrain where recent succession have happened because of the deaths of Amirs, Qatar has a long history of tension within its ruling family, the Al Thani, leading twice to *coups* in 1972 and 1995. This instability has led the current Amir to appoint only those from his camp within the Al Thani to Qatar’s state offices.

Given Qatar’s small size and sizeable oil and gas revenues, instability in the country has been limited mainly to ruling family disputes. In 1948, the heir apparent, Hamad bin Abdullah Al Thani, died and was replaced by his younger brother, Ali. The following year, the ruler, Abdullah bin Jasim faced a near revolt within the ruling family over his distribution of the new oil revenues, so he decided to abdicate, naming Ali as his successor and Hamad’s son, Khalifa, as the new heir apparent.⁴² But when Ali abdicated in 1960, he handed power over to his own son, Ahmad. Khalifa was again named heir apparent. Ahmad’s general disinterest in government affairs left the day-to-day matters of state in Khalifa’s hands. With the combination of Britain’s preparations for leaving the Gulf in 1971, discussions about Qatar joining the nascent United Arab Emirates federation or taking a road to independence, and Ahmad’s developing plans to groom his own son, Abd al-Aziz, as his successor, Khalifa mobilized family and popular resentment to overthrow Ahmad in 1972. The transition was easy because Khalifa had been Prime Minister and *de facto* Amir for the past twelve years.⁴³ In the later years of Khalifa’s reign, in the 1980s, he began to delegate much of his power to his son, Hamad, the Commander in Chief of the Qatari Armed Forces. By the 1990s, Hamad controlled most of the State’s affairs with the exception of finances, although his father retained the post of Prime Minister. In June 1995, Hamad replicated his father’s palace *coup* while Khalifa was out of the country. An attempted counter-*coup* by Khalifa in February 1996 failed to restore him to power. Eventually Khalifa reconciled with his son, recognized him as the legitimate ruler of the state, and returned to Qatar in 2004.⁴⁴

In consolidating his position as Amir, Hamad rewrote the constitution in which he codified succession norms more clearly. Under the 2005 constitution the Amir names a son as heir apparent (Article 8) after consultation with the members of the ruling family and notables (Article 9). Previously, Amir Hamad had appointed his third son, Jasim as heir and Crown Prince. In 2003, Jasim stepped down for health reasons and the Amir named his fourth son, Tamim (born 1980), as heir. Both are the sons of the Amir’s second and favorite wife, Shaykha Mozah al-Misnad. Thus, while the Qatari succession norms promote father-to-son succession, it does not endorse full primogeniture of the eldest son. Rather it allows the Amir to choose the most able of his children.

Given his family’s history, the Amir is wary of alternative power centers within Al Thani.⁴⁵ To help shore up family support, Amir Hamad has clarified the succession. However, he also has limited the possibility of the heir apparent gaining too much power by formally separating the positions of Crown Prince and Prime Minister, even though the last Crown Prince to hold the office of Prime Minister was Hamad’s father. The latter position was first held by Hamad’s half-brother, Abdullah bin Khalifa, from 1996 until 2007. In 2007, Hamad bin Jasim bin Jabir

⁴¹ Kéchichian, *Power*, p. 196.

⁴² Crystal, *Oil and Politics*, pp. 118–21.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 152–6.

⁴⁴ Kéchichian, *Power*, pp. 212–15.

⁴⁵ Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (1988), pp. 207–23.

Al Thani was made Prime Minister. With the rise of gas income since 2003, state revenues have been increasingly shared with Qatari citizens and the Al Thani. The concentration of political power in Amir Hamad's hands has, however, been shared with a variety of family members through state offices and burgeoning para-state institutions such as the Supreme Planning Council and the Qatar Investment Authority, a sovereign wealth fund. These institutions, under the Amir's direct control, help incorporate members of the Al Thani into the government in an attempt to diffuse family factionalism and consolidate his control of the country.

Moreover, Amir Hamad has embarked on a project of promised political liberalization to further counter family factions. As Mehran Kamrava notes, "internal political dynamics within the Al Thani family prompted the Amir to promise political liberalization" to counterbalance disgruntled members of the ruling family with more enthusiastic parts of the broader Qatari society.⁴⁶ Amir Hamad's promise of delivering long promised elections in 2013 are odd given the almost negligible demands for political participation from Qataris (despite the rising demands for participation elsewhere in the Arab world). Qatar's apolitical citizenry is notable given the noise in neighboring Bahrain.

6 Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates is a federation of city states. Its two leading emirates, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, are ruled by families that practice dynasticism: the Al Nahyan and Al Maktoum, respectively. Today's leaders of these emirates stand in the shadow of Shaykh Zayid bin Sultan Al Nahyan and Rashid bin Said Al Maktoum, the two fathers of the nation. While succession battles have not reverted to the bloody style of the nineteenth century, tensions about who will rule in the future do not seem far beneath the surface. Neither the Al Nahyan nor the Al Maktoum have established a definite decision rule on succession — both mix primogeniture and seniority succession among brothers. Positions in government are available both at the level of each emirate and the Federation for shaykhs of these leading families. Succession in the other five emirates — while being contested in Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah — have not impacted on the Federation's leadership. While succession of the Federal President is outlined in the UAE constitution, the norms within each emirate have not been codified and vary considerably.

When the founder of the Federation, Shaykh Zayid Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi, died in 2004, he designated his son, Khalifa, as heir, his third son, Muhammad, as the Crown Prince and next in line. This innovation resulted in two things. First, it put an end to the possibility that Khalifa's rival relatives would mount a challenge to the continued rule of Zayid's line. The moving of some of rival relatives into positions in the UAE Federal Council also eased the process.⁴⁷ Secondly, the naming of Muhammad bin Zayid as Khalifa's heir apparent also skipped Zayid's second son, Sultan, as well as Khalifa's son, also named Sultan. While the passing over of Sultan bin Zayid may have something to do with his tumultuous youth, it may also reflect the prominence of Muhammad bin Zayid's military experience as Deputy (and *de facto*) Commander of the UAE Armed Forces.⁴⁸ Muhammad's status as the eldest of six full brothers — the Bani Fatima (after their mother) who control much of Abu Dhabi's security and intelligence apparatus — also elevated his position within the family.⁴⁹ With Shaykh Khalifa, his sons, and brother

⁴⁶ Kamrava, "Royal Factionalism and Political Liberalization in Qatar", *Middle East Journal* 63 (2009), p. 415.

⁴⁷ Rugh, *The Political Culture of Leadership in the United Arab Emirates* (2007), p. 94.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

Sultan on one side, and the Bani Fatima on the other, the remainder of Shaykh Zayid's nineteen sons hold the balance on further succession intrigues. While Khalifa and the two Sultans have sway of the finances of Abu Dhabi's oil wealth and sovereign wealth funds, Muhammad and the Bani Fatima have control of the growing areas of the emirate's economy, such as the Mubadala Development Company.⁵⁰ Thus, while the order of succession in Abu Dhabi seems to be stable in the near future, no definitive norm seems to hold other than the appointment of the most suitable candidate.

In Dubai, the 2006 succession of Shaykh Muhammad bin Rashid from his brother Maktoum was the first major break from a century-long pattern of primogeniture in Dubai.⁵¹ Today, however, the Al Maktoum also potentially face a succession dispute after Shaykh Muhammad bin Rashid replaced his older brother, Hamdan bin Rashid, with his son, Hamdan bin Muhammad, as heir apparent in 2008.⁵² While such uncle-nephew tension over succession has played itself out before in Dubai's past, today's 'consolation prizes' are considerably greater.⁵³ Hamdan bin Rashid, for example, has continued as the UAE's Finance Minister and has played a key role in helping Dubai steer its business juggernauts. Other, more distant, Al Maktoum family members also have places in the local and federal administrations, but in secondary capacities. The expansion of the Al Maktoum family also spills beyond the administration of the emirate into the growing plethora of 'private' companies. With the financial crash of 2008, a number of Al Maktoum members moved into positions of power within "Dubai Inc.," replacing long-serving managers.⁵⁴ Thus, while it is likely that Dubai will return to its established norm of primogeniture in the future, that norm, however, is not institutionally codified.

Thus, for both the Al Nahyan and Al Maktoum, the leadership role their families and emirates play in the UAE have allowed the patterns of dynasticism to extend beyond their home emirates and into the federal structure. The UAE's recent economic boom, both from Dubai's speculation and Abu Dhabi's petroleum revenues, have generated opportunities for wealth creation for the ruling families rather than competition over political the spoils. Yet, succession norms in both emirates have become less clear. The institutionalization of succession remains informal without the same constitutional structure of the Federal level being replicated within the two emirates.

7 Oman

Unlike the rest of the GCC dynastic monarchies, in Oman one man alone holds absolute power. Yet, compared to the linchpin monarchies of Jordan and Morocco, family members do control key ministries and parts of the state despite the centrality of Sultan Qaboos. Since the Sultan does not have children and he has not named an heir for fear of being overthrown, as he himself overthrew his father, it is unclear who will succeed Qaboos. Nevertheless a mechanism for succession has been established for the day that it will be necessary. It remains to be seen if the level of personalization of power in the Sultan will continue after that point. Oman may turn towards a broader dynastic control over the state like the rest of the GCC; or a new Sultan may delegate power towards expanding institutions of representation in the hands of commoners.

Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said came to power in July 1970 in a palace *coup* against his father, Said bin Taymour. The young prince came to power with the assistance of his uncle, but more

⁴⁹ Davidson, *Abu Dhabi: Oil and Beyond* (2009), p. 98.

⁵⁰ Kéchichian, *Power*, p. 306; Davidson, *Oil and Beyond*, p. 103.

⁵¹ Davidson, *Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success* (2008), p. 144.

⁵² Anon., "Shaikh Hamdan Appointed Dubai's Crown Prince", *Gulf News*, 1 Feb. 2008.

⁵³ Rugh, *Culture of Leadership*, p. 121.

⁵⁴ Krane, *City of Gold: Dubai and the Dream of Capitalism* (2010), p. 317.

crucially, with British backing. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Qaboos modernized the country's infrastructure and institutions with new-found oil wealth, bringing benefits to Omanis who had previously known only poverty — a period known as Oman's Renaissance — while simultaneously consolidating control in his hands. He holds more power within his country than any other ruler in the GCC. It is thus fitting that the concept of 'sultanism' may be most apt in the case of Oman.⁵⁵

Although Sultan Qaboos was once married briefly, he has no children. He also has no brothers, only three sisters. This means that an unbroken line of father-to-son succession dating back to 1871 will come to an end. The 1996 Basic Law opens the succession to a male descendant of Sayyid Turki bin Said bin Sultan (ruled 1871–88), the first of this patrilineal line.⁵⁶ Moreover, the Basic Law grants the power of naming a successor to the ruling Family Council which must meet within three days of the Sultan's death. If the Family Council is unable to agree on a successor, then the Defence Council should appoint the person named in a letter left behind by Sultan Qaboos.⁵⁷ This codifying of succession rules changes the norm to that of the most able male. Analysts point to Fahd bin Mahmud Al Said and the three sons of the Sultan's uncle and former Prime Minister, Tariq bin Taymour Al Said — Asad, Haitham, and Shihab — as being the leading contenders within the Al Said for the succession.⁵⁸ However, the name written in the letter (of which there are rumored to be up to three copies) will remain unknown until Qaboos passes from the scene. It is assumed that the Sultan does not wish to publically name a successor for fear of allowing the heir to build his own constituency which could undermine the Sultan's unrivaled power.⁵⁹ Thus, Marc Valeri concludes that "it is not possible to talk about an 'Omani ruling family' as such". In fact, the Sultan has relied on the larger Al Bu Said family tree for state office holders than his closer Al Said branch.⁶⁰

Thus, while Oman differs from the rest of the GCC in terms of the personalization of power today, Herb sees that "something akin to dynastic monarchism may emerge when Qaboos departs the scene",⁶¹ if more members of the Al Said or wider Al Bu Said family are appointed to key positions in government as their counterparts have been in the other GCC states.⁶² Another possibility is that the growing institutionalization of different decision-making bodies, such as the State and Shura Councils, will influence the composition of the cabinet more greatly and thus turn Oman into more of a linchpin-style monarchy where merchant elites begin to share power with a young rising new middle class — especially those with constituencies outside the capital.

8 Conclusion

As this survey of the six GCC states demonstrates, succession within these monarchies has undergone adaptations in recent years. The assumption of simple and traditional succession contrasts with the growing formalization of norms of succession. The institutionalization of succession

⁵⁵ Chehabi and Linz, *Sultanistic Regimes*; Valeri, *Oman: Politics and Society in the Qaboos State* (2009), pp. 171–81.

⁵⁶ Kéchichian, *Power*, p. 445.

⁵⁷ Oman Ministry of Information, *Basic Law of the State*, Articles 5–7. See also Kéchichian, *Power*, p. 161.

⁵⁸ Peterson "Nature", p. 598.

⁵⁹ Kéchichian, *Power*, p. 170.

⁶⁰ Valeri, *Oman*, p. 101.

⁶¹ Herb, *All in the Family*, p. 152.

⁶² Allen and Rigsbee, *Oman Under Qaboos: From Coup to Constitution: 1970–1996*. (2000), p. 226.

rules is also accompanied by the emergence of tools to ease the contention of family politics — especially those left out of the central line of succession.

With the exception of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, all the other monarchies under consideration here have some sort of constitution or basic law that includes rules spelling out succession norms. While Bahrain and Kuwait's constitutions were promulgated decades ago, this has not stopped succession dramas from playing out in Kuwait. In these cases, codified rules were followed, but they have been reinterpreted for contemporary use. In contrast, the newer inscribing of norms into text also reflects the desire of incumbent leaders to enhance their authority over their successors.⁶³ Qatar's new 2005 constitution finally spelled out that state's specific succession mechanism in contrast to the previous constitution's ambiguity in the matter. Since the 1990s both Oman and Saudi Arabia have adopted Basic Laws that fall short of full constitutions. Yet, Saudi Arabia and Oman still have built into their basic laws institutions for determining succession — in Saudi Arabia, the Allegiance Council and in Oman, the ruling Family Council. Both formalize the collective role of the family in monarchical rule — but only a select subset of the family and not the entire family. Thus, it is only in the UAE, where the constitution is limited to the level of the Federation, that the rules and institutions for deciding succession within individual emirates are not codified. The rationalization of succession mechanisms speaks to the growing institutionalization of monarchical rule — which can be noted in other areas as well, which are beyond the scope of this article, such as legislative and consultative councils.⁶⁴

While Saad al-Sabah's removal from power by the Kuwaiti parliament in 2005 on the grounds of ill health has produced notable succession intrigues, in other cases, the decisions — sometimes outside of the framework of written rules, but still within solidifying informal norms — have helped reduce the drama of succession. The most notable of these is the practice in Saudi Arabia of generally designating not only an heir apparent, but also his successor as well. While this practice is no less contentious than designating successors in other monarchies, it does have the benefit of allowing the tensions generated at the second-in-line's appointment to cool off before they take the mantle of leadership. Thus, both formal institutions and informal norms are readily noticeable in the recent and looming succession in the Gulf monarchies. However, one should not over-generalize. The formalization of rules does not automatically lead to the stability of succession practice. Rather norms, rules, and the interpretation of rules have led to changes in how succession have been recently practiced and will be handled in the future.

It is also not possible to say conclusively that there is a growing preference for primogeniture in the Gulf. Yet, more monarchs are being followed by their sons in recent succession. The exceptions, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, still have agnatic succession. In Saudi Arabia, the brother-to-brother succession of the sons of Abd al-Aziz renewed in 2011 will end someday soon. Moreover, Kuwait's faltered 'alteration' seems to be reduced to the al-Jabir line for the future. Oman, which previously employed a primogeniture system, has defaulted to agnatic succession for the lack of an heir for Sultan Qaboos — but the chosen heir may not necessarily be the most senior of all possible candidates. In contrast, Bahrain has followed primogeniture and formalized that into recent succession and constitutions. Qatar is not following a full primogeniture model; Amir Hamad did oust his father, but instead he has designated his younger sons as heirs on the basis of their competency: initially his third son, then his fourth son. Abu Dhabi and Dubai are still

⁶³ Brown, *Constitutions*, p. 92.

⁶⁴ Khalaf, "Rules of Succession and Political Participation in the GCC States", in *Constitutional Reform and Political Participation in the Gulf*, ed. Khalaf and Luciani (2006).

showing mixed patterns of succession. With a generational change in Abu Dhabi, Skaykh Khalifa, the eldest son, took over after his father. But before his death, Shaykh Zayid had also designated the next in line to be Muhammad, his third eldest son, rather than Sultan, the second eldest. In Dubai, Shaykh Muhammad was able to replace his brother as designated heir with his own son. Thus, in Qatar, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai, father-to-son-based succession may be preferred but the norm still remains contested.

Primogeniture offers a level of certainty in alleviating succession battles. It does, however, also have its drawbacks. While it also usually offers a long period of grooming for the heir, any system with long-lived monarchs can offer that period of training. The most notable drawback of primogeniture is that birth order alone does not guarantee that the heir will be an acceptable leader. This is the reason for the skipping of older sons in Abu Dhabi and in Qatar. Moreover, switching to primogeniture, or a son-based order, also has the potential for aggravating the agnate branches that are now locked out of succession — something that in many of the lower Gulf states has led to near rebellions of disgruntled members of the ruling family, necessitating the offering of significant financial consolation prizes. Moreover, as the case of Qatar exemplifies, the grooming of an heir does not remove the problem of growing alternative centers of power which can lead to restless sons (and sometimes their foreign supporters) launching palace *coups* — a lesson that may have contributed to the lack of a named heir in Oman. Yet, the problem of alternative power centers also applies to the more agnatic succession as well — thus the development of dynasticism to regularize those family power centers into more centripetal forces at the cost of divvying up the state's institutions.

Such consolation prizes as cabinet positions and offices in the state's bureaucracy have been well explained by Michael Herb and Steffan Hertog. While a military career has been a path for future heirs (in Bahrain, Qatar, and Abu Dhabi), it is also a common consolation prize for those outside the direct succession. In addition to the standards of state office, many monarchies have found places for underemployed royals in the growing parallel state apparatus of foundations, development boards, and NGOs. These institutions also offer a public role and place for many female royals to contribute to the family's perceived charitable mission while also offering positive public relations in the West. Finally, the consolation prizes of business opportunities have mushroomed in some of the later developing dynastic systems, such as those of Dubai and Qatar.

Another feature of dynastic monarchies, the Crown Prince occupying the office of Prime Minister, which was used to groom future heirs in the day-to-day affairs of governance, is becoming less frequent. In Bahrain, the roles of heir apparent and prime minister have always been separate. In Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar these positions were often held by the same individual in the past, but are not today. In regards to the Bahraini case, Herb notes that “Al Khalifa rule would be more stable if the posts of crown prince and prime minister were held by the same shaykh”.⁶⁵ After recent events in Bahrain (2011–12), one would be hard pressed not to agree. As the practice of having the future monarch running the cabinet falls by the wayside in order to make more room for aspiring members of the ruling family, should we expect more instability as ruling family politics spreads out from the palace? If both Bahrain and Kuwait serve as examples, as the patterns of dynastic monarchy begin to break down and meet the growing assertiveness of the public, demands for constitutional monarchy seem to emerge.

In conclusion, while the GCC monarchies all have their specific methods of handling succession and ways of dividing the power of the ruling family, some generalizations can be observed. There is a growing influence, but not dominance, of primogeniture in the Gulf monarchies. Gulf regimes are codifying these norms into constitutions and basic laws. These texts are also generally

⁶⁵ Herb, *All in the Family*, p. 136.

allowing for a greater institutionalization of succession practices through family councils. Finally, while the consolation prizes for members of the ruling family members left out of the succession are growing, they may have potential for diluting the dynastic control over the state. Thus, the changing norms of succession in the Gulf do not reflect a timeless tribal or Islamic essence, but are responses to the ever-changing present that undermines the ruling families' hold on power. What remains to be seen is if these rules lead to more regularized behavior or become new tools to be used in periods of future family contention.

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