





THREE ESSAYS ON THE DYNAMICS OF LEGISLATURES IN MONARCHICAL  
REGIMES: KUWAIT'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

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A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Political Science

University of Houston

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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By

Luai A Allarakia

December 2016

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Literature on institutions in authoritarian regimes has made important advances in terms of our understanding of how these institutions affect political and economic outcomes, like regime survival, stability, and economic growth. Despite these important advances the literature's macro approach has often mean that we know very little about the actual internal dynamics of these institutions. For example, how are legislators actually selected in authoritarian assemblies? And how do these legislatures behave once they make it into an authoritarian assembly? Moreover, there is often an assumption that these institutions have a uniform effect regardless of the authoritarian regime type. To be sure a few studies have attempted to rectify this shortcoming by examining the internal dynamics of legislatures using single case studies. Yet these studies focused on single party regimes leaving other regime types unexplored. I attempt to fill this gap by examining these dynamics within the context of monarchical regimes. I use the case of the Kuwaiti National Assembly (KNA) to answer three important questions about the internal dynamics of legislatures in monarchical regimes. In the first paper I examine the function of these legislatures using votes on economic issues. I find that monarchical regimes contrary to conventional wisdom are not just simply venues for the distribution of rent but also serve as venues to contest long term economic policies. In the second paper I examine how legislators are selected in monarchical regimes with no dominant ruling parties. I show that these types of regimes deliberately choose electoral formulas that not only encourage the multiplication and fragmentation of political blocs and electoral lists, but also disadvantage larger political blocs and electoral lists by discouraging coordination between them. In the third paper I explore how legislators in authoritarian regimes behave and vote once they make it into the assembly. In find that dimensions of conflict are and voting in monarchical regimes is

multidimensional. One dimension is based on a social divide dimension that stems from the lack of an institutionalized party structure, and another dimensions is based on a pro- and anti- government divide that is based on the positions legislators take vis-à-vis the government in motions of confidence. These findings are important because they facilitate a comparison with other authoritarian regimes types especially with the available studies on single party regimes.





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## Introduction

When Juan Linz wrote his important book Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes, he barely mentioned elections and legislatures. In fact, elections were mentioned only in a few instances, but any reference to their function was mostly disregarded (Linz, 2000). Linz was not alone in this general attitude towards nominally democratic institutions within authoritarian regimes. Indeed, when other scholars examined these institutions, they were dismissed as mere window dressing with no real function (Friedrich and Brzezinski, 1965). These institutions were largely ignored or dismissed until scholars realized that many of the post- Cold War regimes that were in transition were not in fact on their way to democracy. Rather, they had become non-democratic regimes with their own internal logic. The fact that these regimes integrated nominally democratic institutions into their authoritarian repertoire finally sparked a scholarly interest (Levity and Way, 2010; Diamond, 2002; Schedler, 2002).

Scholars found that nominally democratic institutions (legislatures, parties, and for some even elections) serve a number of different purposes. Power sharing theories argue, for instance, that legislatures and elections in non-democratic regimes prolong the survival of such regimes by mitigating “commitment and monitoring problems caused by the secrecy that pervades authoritarian governance” which in turn enhances “power sharing among the ruling elite” (Boix and Svolik, 2007). Another take on the power sharing thesis posits that parties allow the dictator to pass on his control of powerful positions and “state privileges” to organizations like a political party, which then becomes invested in the regime’s existing institutions, as opposed to the opposition (Magaloni 2008). Furthermore, elections are said to be used in order to offer concessions and policy compromises to “ruling party factions,” ensuring that they do not split (Magaloni 2008).

Ezrow & Frantz, however, put forth a different theory on the role of nominally democratic institutions in non-democratic regimes. Their theory views these institutions as a mechanism for withstanding leadership transitions. They argue that these institutions are useful (in particular parties and legislatures) in as much as they enable constitutional transfers of power by institutionalizing and regulating succession (Ezrow, & Frantz, 2011).

Still more, these institutions were argued to be a means to co-opt outside opposition into the system. Gandhi puts forth a theory that is more nuanced and takes into account both threats within the ruling elite *and* from the outside opposition. She distinguishes between 1 tier and 2 tier institutions. The first tier is devised to protect the dictator from internal threats, i.e. threats from within the ruling elites. As such, each regime type has a unique first tier institution. For example, monarchical rulers devise dynastic structures while civilian rulers rely on parties to maintain the cohesion of the ruling group. The second tier includes institutions that deal with threats to the regime from outside the ruling group. To be more precise, legislatures are used “to solicit cooperation and to neutralize the threat of rebellion from forces within society” (Gandhi 2008).

The literature in general did not confine itself to the general purpose of nominally democratic institutions but also examined the effect of these institutions on economic outcomes. Scholars arrived at the general consensus that, in general, legislatures have a positive impact on investment and economic growth (Jensen, 2014; Escriba Folch, 2003) (Truex, 2013). However, as Wright rightly argues, most of the scholarship on legislatures assumes that there is no variation in the types of legislatures within non-democratic regimes (Wright, 2008). He demonstrates that there are several types of legislatures, which vary with each non-democratic regime type. Wright demonstrates that each non-democratic regime type relies on a different main source of income (Wright, 2008). Personalist regimes and monarchies (whose distinctions will be clarified in the



next section) rely mostly on unearned income, while single party and military regimes depend mostly on domestic investment (Wright, 2008). Regimes which rely on unearned income either do not have an incentive to create legislatures or, when they do, have legislatures that are non-binding. By contrast, regimes, which rely on domestic investment, tend to create binding legislatures (i.e. legislatures which constrain the dictator's powers) (Wright 2008). Wright therefore posits that when dictators in personalist and monarchical regimes create legislatures, they do so to "manage elites which challenge them," to "constrain and split the opposition," and to distribute patronage (Wright 2008; 2012). Dictators in single party regimes, on the other hand, create legislatures to share power with a strong organized party, which can constrain them to a degree (Wright 2012). The conclusion here is that regime types with legislatures that constrain tend to lead to higher economic growth and investment, while those that do not constrain lead to lower economic growth and investment.

### **Regime Type and the Micro Logic of Legislatures in Authoritarian Regimes**

While the literature on authoritarian regimes as levers of survival has generally panned out systematic and generalizable studies, it did so at the expense of overlooking several crucial aspects of institutions within authoritarian regimes. To return to Wright's argument above, legislatures are not uniform in terms of the functions they serve and effect they have on economic and political outcomes in authoritarian regimes. Despite this revelation, Wright's own work falls short of providing any plausible mechanisms connecting authoritarian regime type to the function of legislatures and how this affects political and economic outcomes. As such, there was a sole focus on the macro "institutional choices authoritarian rulers adopt," i.e. having elections and creating legislatures as opposed to not having them (Schedler 2009). As Malesky and Schuler point out, Wright's work has "abstracted away from the specific parliamentary rules

governing the co-optive exchange” (Malesky and Schuler 2010). The consequence has been that we know very little about how legislatures in varying regime types, “operate on the ground” and “how representatives behave” and “how they are selected” (Truex 2014).

As a result of this revelation, a new wave of literature on legislatures within authoritarian regimes has focused on single case studies as a method to hone in on the casual mechanisms that explain the adoption of these legislatures, and how they affect political and economic outcomes. For instance, Malesky and Schuler demonstrate how ex-ante manipulation of legislative elections in Vietnam’s single party regime ensures that only certain types of representatives are elected to the legislature (Malesky and Schuler, 2011). In particular they show how a combination of allowing only one party in the legislature, altering candidate-to-seat ratios, and placing favored candidates in districts, the regime can control who makes it into the Vietnamese National Assembly (Malesky and Schuler, 2011). In addition, a related study by Malesky and Schuler finds that delegate responsiveness in the Vietnamese National Assembly varies based on nomination procedures and the competitiveness of electoral districts (Schuler and Malesky, 2010).

Echoing Schuler and Malesky, but for sub-national legislatures in authoritarian regimes, Oliver and Gueorguiev find that participation in Shenzhen’s Municipal People’s Congress in the People’s Republic of China is conditional on institutional factors (Oliver and Gueorguiev, 2012). They cite how a combination of direct and indirect elections at all administrative levels is held every five years, but within the context of pre-screening by party and credentialing committees. The responsiveness of these delegates varies with the embeddedness of a delegate (i.e. holding concurrent seats at the municipal people’s congress and at the district level people’s congresses) (Oliver and Gueorguiev, 2012). Beyond electoral variables that influence the selection of candidates who make it

into authoritarian assemblies, the regime can also develop agenda control strategies that parameterize the range of issues that delegates discuss (as in the case of the Vietnamese National Assembly) (Schuler). Finally, Desposato puts forth a theory that aims to explain when deputies in the Brazilian parliament during the period of the military dictatorship (1864-1985) vote for or against the military regime's agenda (Desposato, 2001). He finds that deputies balance between the cost of reprisal by the military regimes, and the career risks of voting against constituents' interests whether they are local political elites or voters (Desposato, 2001).

Despite these important advances in opening the black box that links legislatures in authoritarian regimes to political/economic outcomes, much of the work has only focused on single party regimes. In contrast, other regime types such as monarchical regimes are largely ignored or simply discussed using a qualitative template that does not properly explain how the internal dynamics of legislatures within these regimes actually affect political and economic outcomes. This dissertation aims to fill that gap and in turn contribute to rectifying some of the shortcomings of the new wave of literature examining the micro logic of legislatures within authoritarian regimes. The next section gives an overview of the three papers that make up this dissertation and the theoretical contributions they make. The final section explains the case selected as well as the methodology.

### **The Dynamics of Legislatures in Monarchical Regimes**

Any examination of the micro-logic of legislatures in authoritarian regimes seeks to answer several important questions. First, what function does the legislature serve? The literature provides several functions for legislatures in authoritarian regimes, the most important being signaling regime strength, power sharing, providing policy concessions and distributing rent (Geddes 2006; Boix and Svolik 2007; Gandhi's 2008;

Blaydes 2008; Lust 2009; Wright 2008). This function depends to a large degree on the regime type; the first three functions are usually used to explain how single party regimes utilize legislatures. This is not to say that rent distribution was not posited as a function of legislatures in single party regimes. There have in fact been studies that put forth this idea, but the reality is that rent distribution theories to be more predominant in explanations of the functions of legislatures in personalist and monarchical regimes. In fact theories of legislatures in monarchical regimes tend to be reductionist and do not ascribe any roles to these legislatures beyond being conduits for the distribution of rent.

I challenge this reductionist view in the first paper of this dissertation titled *Rent Distribution as an Epiphenomenon of Regime Type: Economic Voting in Kuwait's 12th and 13th National Assembly*, by demonstrating that legislatures in monarchical regimes are not only used to distribute rent/patronage, but they are also forums through which different social groups contest long-term economic policies. This results from that fact that the unique characteristics of monarchical regimes leads them to co-opt a broad social base, which necessitates varied strategies of cooptation of each component within this social coalition. This in turn affects how each of these groups utilizes the legislature be it for rent seeking or contesting long term economic policies.

Beyond understanding the function of legislatures, it is critical to understand how legislators are selected in authoritarian regimes. Authoritarian regimes vary in the levels of electoral freedom and accordingly in the manner in which legislators are selected. In some countries the legislators are simply appointed, as in the case of China. In others, the electoral competition is between carefully vetted members of one single dominant party like in Vietnam, while some countries which experience a higher level of electoral freedom the competition is relatively open with some legal and political constraints on the political groups participating in the elections (Truex 2014; Malesky and Schuler, 2011). In the case of the authoritarian regimes that have a relative degree of electoral

freedom, the manipulation of electoral rules is crucial to ensure that the legislators that make it to the assembly is not overwhelmingly from the opposition. Schedler (2009) refers to this as the balancing the imperatives of delegation and control; that is, how do authoritarian regimes delegate some power and authority to the legislative branch but at the same time ensure that it does not spin out of control and mount an effective challenge to them.

Since authoritarian regimes in countries with a relatively higher level of electoral freedom cannot rely on methods such as agent selection through nomination and screening as in closed single party states, they must rely on manipulating electoral rules to ensure an outcome favorable to the regimes. The literature distinguishes between two types of electoral manipulation strategies; electoral rules chosen to give dominant parties an unfair advantage through seat bonuses as opposed to more proportional or permissible electoral rules created to fragment and multiply the number of political parties (Higashijima and Chang 2015). The former strategy has been explored reasonably well with several studies systematically testing and detailing how regimes with dominant parties manipulate and choose electoral rules which ensure that the dominant ruling party gains seats that exceed its vote shares (Diaz-Cayeros and Magaloni 2001). On the other hand the strategy of choosing proportional or semi-proportional electoral rules to fracture political and social forces has been less explored (Lust and Jamal 2002; Posusney 2002). This strategy tends to predominate more in regimes with no dominant ruling parties, such as monarchies. I examine this strategy in my second paper *Electoral Rules in the Absence of Ruling Parties: Elections to Kuwait's National Assembly*. I show that these types of authoritarian regimes deliberately choose electoral formulas that not only encourage the multiplication and fragmentation of political blocs and electoral lists, but also disadvantage larger political blocs and electoral lists by discouraging coordination between them.

Finally there is the question of how legislators in authoritarian regimes actually behave and vote once they make into the assembly. There is generally a dearth of literature on the internal dynamics of legislatures in authoritarian regimes. The few studies that examine how legislators behave once they make into the authoritarian assembly look into the extent to which legislators participate in the assembly or whether they are willing to criticize the ruling regime or not (Schuler and Malesky, 2010; Oliver and Gueorguiev, 2012). Their aim is to test theories of co-optation by demonstrating that legislators do in fact participate in these authoritarian assemblies by asking questions and to express dissent through critical questions. Despite their importance, these studies do not examine the dimensions of conflict in authoritarian regimes or reduce them to simply support for or criticism of the government. This is generally because most of these studies focus on single party regimes with limited levels of political participation. I attempt to close this gap in my third paper *Dimensions of Conflict in an Authoritarian Hybrid Regime: Kuwait's National Assembly* by examining regimes that do not have ruling parties but also have relatively high levels of political participation in comparison with other authoritarian regimes. I find that more than a simple pro- and anti- government divide, like single party regimes, characterizes monarchical regimes. Monarchical regimes tend to be multidimensional, especially ones which combine some features of presidential and parliamentary regimes. One dimension is based on a social divide dimension that stems from the lack of an institutionalized party structure, and another dimension is based on a pro- and anti- government divide that is based on the positions legislators take vis-à-vis the government in motions of confidence.

### **Case and Methodology**

I examine the aforementioned theories using the case of Kuwait's National Assembly (KNA). I chose the KNA because it exemplifies a "typical" case that features many of the characteristics useful in examining the empirical implications of the theories

I outline in my papers. The rationale for this case selection is spelled out in more detail in each of the three papers.

Methodologically the dissertation uses several methodological tools depending on theoretical questions under examination. In the first paper I utilize a multi-method approach combining a detailed analytical narrative as well as regression analysis. The analytical narrative details how the different socio-economic groups in Kuwait (Hadar, Tribes, and Shiites) are co-opted through a mixture of rent/patronage and specific long-term policy concessions. Then I utilize a logit regression model to examine how each of these groups vote on issues pertaining to either rent distribution or long term economic issues. To do this I constructed a novel dataset of individual level legislator votes on economic issues for the KNA during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> terms. These votes were taken from the full transcripts of legislative sessions for the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> terms of the KNA.

In the second paper, I analyze 5 elections to the KNA from the period of 2006-2012. I utilize several methods to examine the proportionality of elections and the level of coordination amongst political blocs. For the former I use Gallagher's (2008) least squares index to measure the disparity between vote and seat shares. I also use a proportionality profile plot developed by Taagepera and Shugart (1989, 67-68) to create a visual tool that examines the extent to which each electoral system generates a vote-to-seat outcome that deviates from perfect proportionality, i.e. when the vote and seat share are equal. To examine the level of coordination amongst political blocs I follow the insights of Reed (1990; 2003) and Cox (1999), who find that electoral competitions in each plurality multimember district will follow equilibrium of  $M+1$  candidates, where  $M$  is the district magnitude. To do this I rely on a novel dataset, which contains a wide range of election-related data at the district level, in addition to multiple candidate-level social, political, and demographic variables. The dataset is based on my expansion of Michael Herb's comprehensive Kuwait Politics Database. I expand on Herb's database using

electoral results information provided by Al-Harbi (2003), Al-Saeedi (2008; 2009) as well as my own fieldwork.

Finally, in the third paper I make use of the geometric analysis of legislative voting originally developed and popularized by Pool and Rosenthal (1985) to study the American Congress. In particular I utilize the Optimal Classification (OC) Method developed by Pool (2005), which is a non-parametric method used to analyze roll call votes and unveil the “ideal points” of legislators, without making assumptions about the distribution of errors. The method is very useful for producing a map of the legislators’ “idea points” and accordingly the dimensions of conflict, which divide them. I created a dataset of roll call votes for the KNA, which were extracted by examining the transcripts of every legislative session for the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> assemblies. By combining legislator data and roll call votes, two novel datasets are developed that cover the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> sessions. These sessions took place in 2006-2008 and 2009-2011 respectively.



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# **Rent Distribution as an Epiphenomenon of Regime Type: Economic Voting in Kuwait's 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> National Assembly**

## **Abstract**

Do legislatures in rentier monarchies simply exist to distribute rent? If so, what effect does that have on legislative behavior in these regimes? I argue that the unique characteristics of monarchical regimes lead to the co-optation of a broad social base, which necessitates varied strategies of cooptation of each component within this social coalition. This has important implications for understanding the function of legislatures in monarchical regimes and how representatives in these legislatures behave. I utilize the case of Kuwait's National Assembly (KNA) to put forth my argument and I focus on the use of economic tools for co-optation. I test the argument using a novel dataset of roll call votes from the KNA's 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> legislative terms. My results show that legislatures in monarchical regimes are not merely venues for the distribution of rent/patronage, but also forums through which the different social groups contest long-term economic policies.

**Word count: 11,056**

**Key words:** Authoritarian Regimes, Monarchies, Kuwait, Arabian Peninsula, Roll Call Votes, Legislative Politics, Authoritarian Institutions, Rentier State, Arab Politics.

## Introduction

Do legislatures in rentier monarchies simply exist to distribute rent? If so, what effect does that have on legislative behavior in these regimes? The literature on legislatures in authoritarian regimes has become increasingly cognizant of the importance of studying the behavior of legislators, i.e. the micro-logic of these legislatures, as a function of regime type. As a result, recent studies have become focused on how legislatures in varying regime types, “operate on the ground” and “how representatives behave” and “how they are selected” (Truex 2014). Others frame these questions differently, arguing that studies on legislatures in authoritarian countries should aim to answer the questions: 1) who is being co-opted, 2) is there evidence that the groups co-opted are responsive to groups outside the ruling elite, and 3) how does the government balance between opening this institutional forum for the opposition without it spinning out of control, and how do these legislatures affect policy making? (Malesky and Schuler 2010, 485).

I argue that these questions are not necessarily separate and that who the regime co-opts and how it co-opts them (i.e. the types of concessions offered) has an effect on how representatives in an authoritarian legislature behave. More precisely, the nature of the co-opted coalition, and the strategies/concessions used for co-option affect the behavior of legislators in authoritarian parliaments. The literature has thus far ignored most regime types aside from single-party regimes; therefore, I focus on the monarchical regime type specifically to fill this gap.<sup>1</sup> In particular, I argue in this paper that monarchical regimes often co-opt a broad social base, which necessitates varied strategies of cooptation for each component within this social coalition. Hence, contrary to most of the literature on legislatures in monarchical regimes, these legislatures do not

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<sup>1</sup> I discuss monarchies in general but ultimately my aim in this paper is to focus on narrower subset of monarchies, which are oil rich monarchies.

simply serve as venues for rent seeking. They can also be forums for obtaining long-term policy concessions. Such a dynamic has important implications for how representatives in monarchical legislature behave.

I utilize the case of Kuwait's National Assembly (KNA) to put forth my argument about legislatures in monarchical regimes, and I focus in particular on their use of economic tools for co-optation. I demonstrate how the emergence of the groups co-opted by the monarchical regime in Kuwait (from different socio-economic groups) pushed the regime to use a mixture of rent/patronage and specific long-term policy concessions as its strategy of cooptation. The choice to use either of these tools depends on the social/political group in question. This has important implications for understanding the function of legislatures in monarchical regimes and how MPs in the Kuwaiti National Assembly vote on economic issues. I first provide a qualitative assessment of my argument. Then I empirically test my argument using a logit regression. My results show that contrary to the typical depictions of legislative activities in monarchies, legislators don't only seek rents for themselves and their constituents. They also use these parliaments as forums to contest long-term economic policies and demand long-term policy concessions from the regime.

The paper is composed of six sections. The first section is an overview of the literature on legislatures in authoritarian regimes with a focus on existing gaps. The second part discusses my theory of the unique role of legislatures in monarchical regimes and its empirical implications. The third part provides a qualitative assessment of the argument based on the case of the KNA. The fourth section will present the data and research design for testing the theory. The fifth section will test the implications of the theory I put forth. The final section will conclude with a discussion of the results and future implications for this study.

## **Legislatures in Authoritarian Regimes as a Tool for Co-Optation**

Much of the earlier literature on legislatures in authoritarian regimes focused on the macro-function of these legislatures, as tools to prolong the survival of authoritarian regimes. These theories were broadly divided into four main types: signaling, power sharing, rent distribution and policy concessions.

The most well known signaling theory is the one developed by Geddes (2006) who argues that elections to legislatures in authoritarian regimes are used to garner high turnout rates and super majorities in the legislature as a show of strength to the regime's opponents (Geddes 2006; see also Malesky and Schuler). In this scenario, these legislatures are "rubber-stamp" institutions, with little political power. In contrast, power-sharing theories allow for the possibility that representatives in authoritarian legislatures have some capacity to constrain the regime. Indeed, Boix and Svolik (2007) argue that legislatures in authoritarian regimes provide the dictator with a useful mechanism to share power with, and get the support of, the notables in the elite by promising them a share of the national budget and other political benefits (Boix and Svolik 2007). The legislature in this scenario is then an "institutionalized forum" that allows the dictator to govern with the notables and reduces the possibility that either party will renege on the power sharing agreement (Boix and Svolik 2007).

The third type of theories is based on Gandhi's (2008) work. Her work conceives of legislatures in authoritarian regimes as an institutionalized mechanism to induce cooperation and stave off the possibility of rebellion from elements outside of the regime and elites, through the use of policy concessions (Gandhi 2008). She makes a distinction between rents in the form of perks, privileges, spoils, and policy compromises, arguing that the size of threat the regime faces as well as its need for cooperation determines the strategy of choice (Gandhi 2008). In particular, the higher

the threat and need for cooperation the more likely the regime will depend on policy compromises for co-optation (Gandhi 2008).

Connected to Gandhi's last point, the last group of theories on legislatures in authoritarian regimes reduces them to venues for co-option through rent/patronage distribution. Blaydes (2008) for instance demonstrates that elections to the legislature in Egypt during the Mubarak era are a mechanism to distribute rent to the set of elite individuals who constitute the regimes selectorate: family heads, businessmen elites and senior bureaucratic appointees. For Blaydes (2008; 4) the "highly competitive electoral market" provides an "indirect mechanism for the allocation of rents or access to rents — both relatively scarce resources — to members of Egypt's broad elite coalition." Lust (2009) makes a similar argument regarding elections to the legislature in Jordan's monarchy. However, her focus is on voters who view these elections as an opportunity to vote for candidates that can provide them with patronage and services. Hence, it is ultimately a contestation over the distribution of patronage, not candidates, whose policies the voter agrees with (Lust 2009). For both authors, legislators in the Middle East have little capacity to gain any policy concessions, because their ability to legislate is limited. Thus, the legislatures are reduced to forums for gaining rent/patronage (Lust 2009) (Blaydes 2008).

Wright (2008) puts forth a more nuanced theory and argues that the usage of legislatures by authoritarian regimes distribution of rent depends on the regime type. He shows that legislatures in single party regimes are created to constrain dictators; while in personalist and monarchical regimes they are created to distribute rent and patronage (Wright 2008). The rationale for the argument is that because monarchical and personalist regimes rely on sources of "unearned income" they mainly establish legislatures to distribute rent and patronage, which is consistent with their method of rule: "the exchange of material rewards to a select group of regime insiders in return for



mobilizing political support” (Wright 2008, 323; See also Bartton and Van de Walle 1994). These legislature then are used to “pit potential rivals against each other for blandishments from the dictator” mainly in the form of “private goods” (Wright 2008; 328). But on the other hand, because legislatures in military and single party regimes rely on the productive domestic economy to get the tax revenue necessary to stay in power, so they create legislatures that constrain their “confiscatory power” (Wright 2007, 327).

Though important, ultimately few of these theories directly examine legislative activity in authoritarian parliaments. Such legislative activity is important to understand the extent to which legislators demand policy concessions, versus seek rent. As such much of the evidence for co-optation is based on “a correlation between the existence of legislatures and regime survival” (Reuter and Graeme 2015). Or, in the case of Wright’s theory, the evidence is based on a correlation between regime type and income source. Even in studies, which use single-case analysis, the evidence is based on indirect proxies (i.e. as in the case of Blaydes, who uses turnover and turnout rates in Egyptian legislative elections as her evidence for rent seeking by legislators)(Blaydes 2008; 2011). To address this omission, the latest wave of studies on this topic has utilized single country cases, with a focus on the micro-logic of legislatures.

For instance, Malesky & Schuler (2010) analyze query sessions in the Vietnamese National Assembly and find that delegate responsiveness in the form of critical questions is based on nomination procedures and the competitiveness of electoral districts. Echoing this finding, but for sub-national legislatures in authoritarian regimes, Oliver & Gueorguiev (2012) find that legislative activity (i.e. the number of questions asked) in Shenzhen’s Municipal People’s Congress in the People’s Republic of China is conditional on institutional factors. Particularly, factors include holding

concurrent seats at the municipal people's congress and at the district level people's congresses.<sup>2</sup>

Despite being novel and important, these studies are focused on single party regimes particularly, and ignore other types of regimes, including the monarchical regime type. As a result we know very little about the function of legislatures in regimes where there are no ruling parties. Moreover, when testing their theories, these studies rely heavily on legislative questions. This poses an issue because, as Reuter (2015; 6) notes, these questions "do not show either that legislators are successful in delivering policy benefits to constituents." This same issue also applies to the disbursement of rent to legislators and their constituents. The only exception to this rule is Reuter's (2015) study, which unlike many studies actually details and quantifies the specific legislative concessions (legislative committee assignments) and the effect these concessions have on reducing dissent against the regime. Reuter (2015) shows that the legislature in Putin's Russia is used to provide opposition elites with spoils, thus reducing their incentives to protest.

In the next two sections, I attempt to develop a theory that explains the function of legislatures and the determinants of legislative behavior in rentier monarchical regimes. My aim is twofold. First, I go beyond existing explanations that are often reductionist generalizations and characterizations of legislatures in monarchical regimes to rent-seeking forums. Secondly, I provide a test of the implications of my argument

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<sup>2</sup> One of the earliest studies of the behavior of legislators in authoritarian regimes is desposato's (2001) study of the legislature in Brazil's military dictatorship (1964-1985). The article was written before the study of institutions in authoritarian regimes became a staple of comparative politics. He studied the determinants of voting against the military dictatorship in Brazil legislature and found that deputies balanced between the cost of reprisal by the military regimes, and the career risks of voting against constituents' interests (be they local political elites or voters). The study was not included in the literature review because it does not relate to the function of legislatures in authoritarian regimes.

regarding the function and behavior of legislators in monarchical parliaments, using measures that directly address legislative activities; in particular roll call votes.

### **Legislatures in Monarchical Regimes: Reductionist Generalizations**

Much of the literature on legislatures in monarchical regimes relegates them to forums for distributing rent with no serious policy implications. Wright's (2008) theory, discussed above, argues that because monarchical regimes rely on revenue generated from natural resources and other sources of "unearned income," they are less likely to create legislatures. When they do, they are used to divide the opposition and provide opportunities for rent seeking. Gandhi (2008) makes a similar point and expects that monarchies need less cooperation and are more likely to govern without institutions for two reasons: they can directly extract rent from mineral resources, and they can rely on the dynastic family as a "ready-made institution" to organize their rule (Gandhi 2008). In fact, she takes her point further by expecting that monarchies that rely on mineral exports need less cooperation from broad sectors of society to maximize revenue, so they can easily just *share* rent to maintain political acquiescence (Gandhi 2008). The economic determinism inherent in Wright (2008) and Gandhi's (2008) arguments limits the range of options available to the regimes in structuring their economy. With regards to monarchical regimes, the argument reduces legislatures to mere venues for the distribution of private goods.

Lust (2009, 35), on the other hand, gives more weight to the regime type, arguing that monarchies are often intent on the "palace's role" or the monarch's role to "stand above the political fray" and to serve as mediating channel between factions that compete with one another for access to patronage. What follows from these arguments then is that activities in monarchical legislatures should be focused on competing for private goods and state resources between different political/social factions, with little if

any opportunities for enacting substantive long-term policies or serious oversight over the executive's activities. This is in contrast to Wright (2008) and Gandhi's (2008) arguments, which are similar to some of the literature on the resource curse (i.e. Ross 2001). Particularly, they are similar in terms of their assumption that deterministic causal effect exists, which flows from oil or unearned income to political/economic outcomes. Such arguments ignore the agency of the regime to terms of deciding how to control the flow of this income beyond using it to provide private goods. Although Lust (2009) does not follow the same economically deterministic assumption as Wright (2008) (mainly because her case, Jordan, is not typically a rentier state), she still does not ascribe a role for the legislature beyond patronage distribution. Finally, the arguments made by Lust (2009), Gandhi (2008) and Wright (2008) all make the assumption that because these regimes tend to have legislatures with a limited capacity to legislate, these legislatures are more fit for rent seeking than serious policy concessions. But the reality is that these regimes vary in terms of the powers allotted to their legislatures.

This reductionism is one gap my theory seeks to redress. In the next section, I will present an amended theory of legislatures in rentier monarchies, as well as the empirical implications of the argument. This theory helps to combine both our understanding of the economic role of these legislatures, while also addressing the behavior of representatives and acknowledging the agency of the regime in this process.

### **Theory and Empirical Implications: Legislatures in Rentier Monarchies**

Existing explanations of legislatures in monarchical regimes focus on the income-base of these monarchies, or the role of the monarch himself, in order to explain how such legislatures function. As previously mentioned, this function is often reduced to mere patronage distribution. What is problematic in this line of argument is that it either

assumes a homogenous regime coalition that can be co-opted through the same methods (Wright 2008) (Gandhi 2008) or, if it does acknowledge the heterogeneity of the regime coalition, still makes the assumption that the coalition can be co-opted through the same methods (Lust 2009).

The reality is that monarchies are distinguished by the unique role of the monarch, who places himself above “tribal, religious, ethnic, and regional divisions” thereby making him the “linchpin of the political system” (Lucas 2004, 107; see also Anderson 2000). This means that the monarch stands at the locus of a regime coalition, which can include multiple actors with distinct interests, in one broad social base (Lucas 2004). Though the linchpin authoritarian monarchy type was generally utilized to describe the two oil poor monarchies of Jordan and Morocco, critical amendments should be made to this focus (Lucas 2004). Oil-rich monarchies also feature much of the same “linchpin” dynamics; broad-based cross-cutting coalitions which link “different social constituencies to the ruling family” are common in almost all of the monarchies in the Arab world, regardless of the variation in the degree of openness in these regimes (Yom & Gause 2012; Hertog 2013).

This argument implies that the regime’s income base is not deterministically associated with certain political outcomes. Rather, the regime’s agency plays a crucial role in how rent affects political and economic outcomes. To quote Herb (2015, 3): “the causal mechanisms by which rents affect outcomes are numerous and highly conditional.” This has considerable implications for the function of legislatures in monarchical regimes, a function, which cannot be reduced to, the provision of private goods using income generated from rent to coopt regime supporters. Instead, the agency of the regime, in particular the role of the monarch, in utilizing its resource wealth to preserve its role is what ultimately determines how legislatures function in these types of regimes.

Combining the two points above (i.e. the agency of the regime in determining how income from rent is utilized, and the desire of the monarch to preserve his role at the helm of a broad social coalition), one can argue that the regime uses different economic tools to co-opt the different social/political groups. This is because variations in the level of wealth and political experience within the same regime coalition dictate different cooptive exchanges and strategies. The point that authoritarian regimes use different types of goods to co-opt the social/political groups is illustrated quite well by de Mesquita et.al (2003; 44-45), who distinguish between two types of goods: public goods and private goods. Public goods are non-excludible and non-rival while private goods are excludible and rival. Public goods according to de Mesquita et.al (2003; 45) encompass the “rule of law, transparency and accountability, even-handed police services, general access to education, a level commercial playing field, anti-pollution legislation, parkland preservation, communication and transportation infrastructure, and the like.” However, in the context of rentier monarchies public goods also encompass payments and compensation packages associated with public sector employment, as well as goods such as free access to education, healthcare and food/oil subsidies. The reason these items fall within the purview of public goods that are non-excludible and non-rival is because these goods are distributed using oil rent and without the citizens incurring any taxes. Moreover, as I will explain in a later section they are distributed through public sector employment where most of the citizens of the Arabian Peninsula monarchies are employed. Private goods based on de Mesquita’s (2003; 45) theory can be rents that are distributed to supporters of the regime, “favorable tax policies, subsidies to special interests, trade or tariff policies that especially benefit domestic supporters.” Private goods in rentier monarchies therefore, should come in the form of subsidies to special interests, preferential trade and tariff policies, targeted market access policies, and preferential access to the means of production to certain groups.

These policies are obviously rival and excludible, and have considerable implications for class relations and the structure of the economy. Therefore, they have long-term policy implications that go beyond rent seeking.

For groups that are less fortunate economically and less experienced politically, the monarch can utilize the most obvious method in the rentier state's tool kit: the provision of public goods often associated with public sector employment such as health, education, food/oil subsidies and compensation packages. For the groups that are more economically and politically advanced, these benefits are not satisfactory in and of themselves, because they are seen as a right and not a privilege. Thus, the monarch opts for more selective economic benefits, which approximate what de Mesquita et.al (2003) term private goods. These benefits, as noted earlier, can come in the form of targeted market access benefits for example, which have long-term policy implications for the structure of the economy and class relations. In the cases where the monarch allows for an elected assembly with a reasonable capacity to legislate, the laws sanctioning and governing the provision of these economic benefits or goods will be go through this assembly. Therefore, voting on economic issues should be a reflection of attempts to reinforce/increase these goods, or to contest them. Based on this I will argue that legislatures in monarchical regimes, contrary to the expectation of the literature, do not just serve to distribute rent/patronage. They are also used to gain long-term policy concessions.

Therefore there are several empirical implications to this argument. First, the distribution of public goods is not associated with any direct cost on the citizens in rich rentier states, which use income from rent to provide these goods without the need to tax citizens. Secondly, as I will show in the coming section these public goods are provided on a non-discriminatory basis and all of the social groups in the Kuwaiti case benefit from them. The only party that may have an interest in curbing or limiting these

goods is the government itself, which bears the burden of these payments in its budget and so usually likes to control the ceiling of these goods, and when they are distributed.

Thus, we can expect:

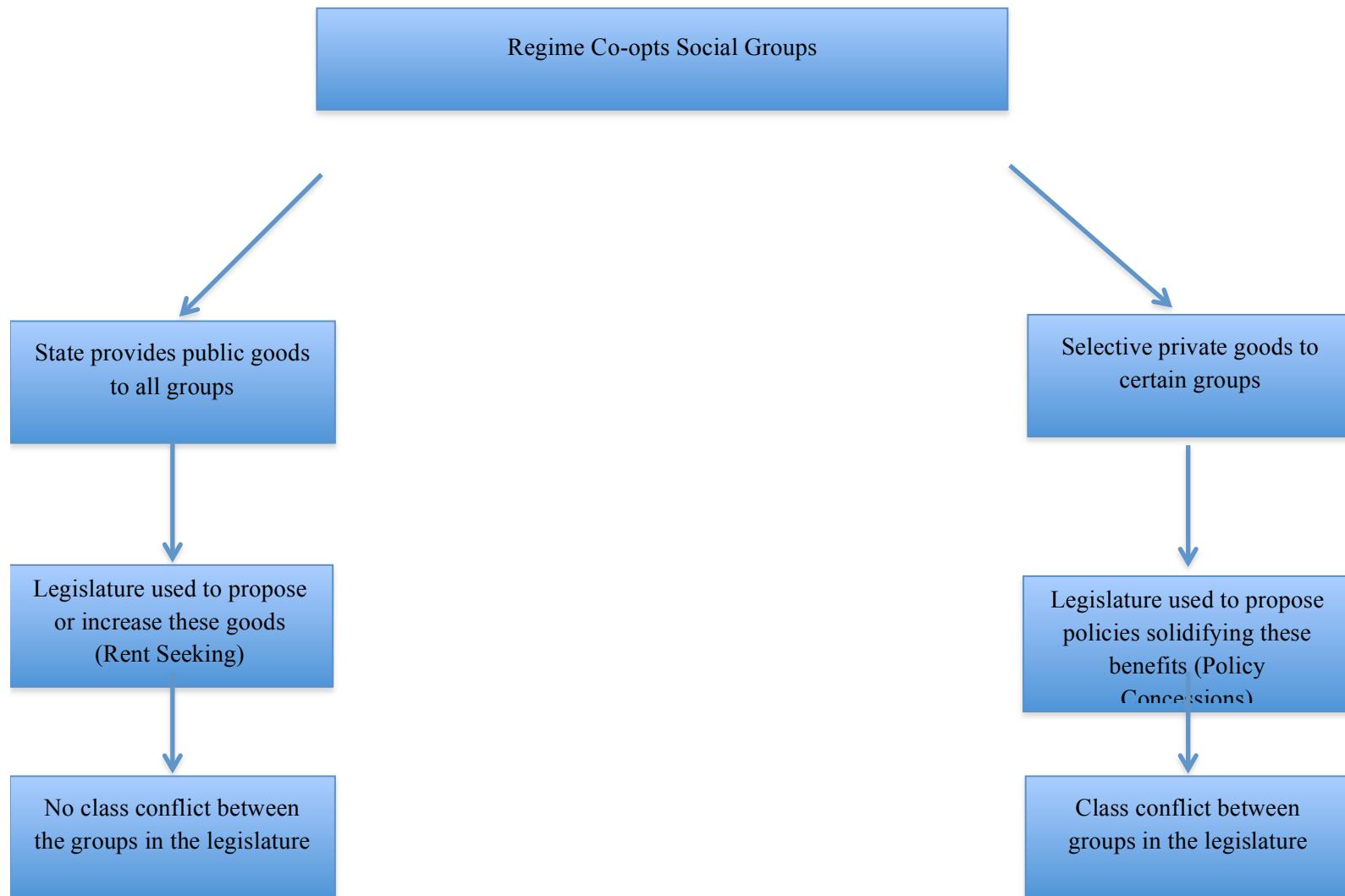
*H1: Voting on the provision of public goods does not lead to contention between social groups.*

The previous hypothesis follows the logic of Wright (2008) and Lust (2009) in assuming that legislatures in monarchical regimes are generally used to distribute patronage to the regime's coalition. However, I argue that this is only part of the story. If in fact the legislature is not just a patronage-distribution system, then we should find lines of contention based on the long-term policy consequences of the government's provision of selective private goods. In other words, we should find that legislators, despite the monarchical regime type, actually contest policy that has long-term implications and contend over policy concessions. Thus:

*H2: Voting on issues related to the consequences of private goods will lead to contention between social groups.*



**Figure 1: Causal Mechanism Linking Regime Co-optation Strategies to the Behavior of Legislators**



The theory I put forth (summarized in figure 1 above) contributes to the literature on legislatures in authoritarian regimes in several ways. First, I demonstrate that legislatures in monarchies are not mere venues for panning out rent, but can also serve to provide a forum to contest long-term economic policies. Secondly, while many of the theories of legislatures in authoritarian regimes have discussed the connection between how legislators in authoritarian regimes are selected and their subsequent behavior in

the legislature, I attempt to make a connection between who the regimes co-opt and how it co-opts them. I use both aspects to explain their subsequent behavior in the legislature.

## Research Design and Case Selection

I utilize the case of Kuwait because it acts as a sort of “typical” case that features many characteristics useful in examining the empirical implications of the theory outlined above.<sup>3</sup> First, the Kuwaiti regime is a monarchical regime with a broad social base, as we see in table 1 below. The Kuwaiti monarchy relies on a crosscutting coalition that ties the three main social groups (Shiites, Tribes and Hadar) to the royal family. This makes it a suitable case to examine one aspect of the theory, which relates to the breadth of the social coalitions in monarchical regimes and their particular effect on legislative behavior.

**Table 1**  
**Cross Cutting Coalitions in Monarchical Regimes**

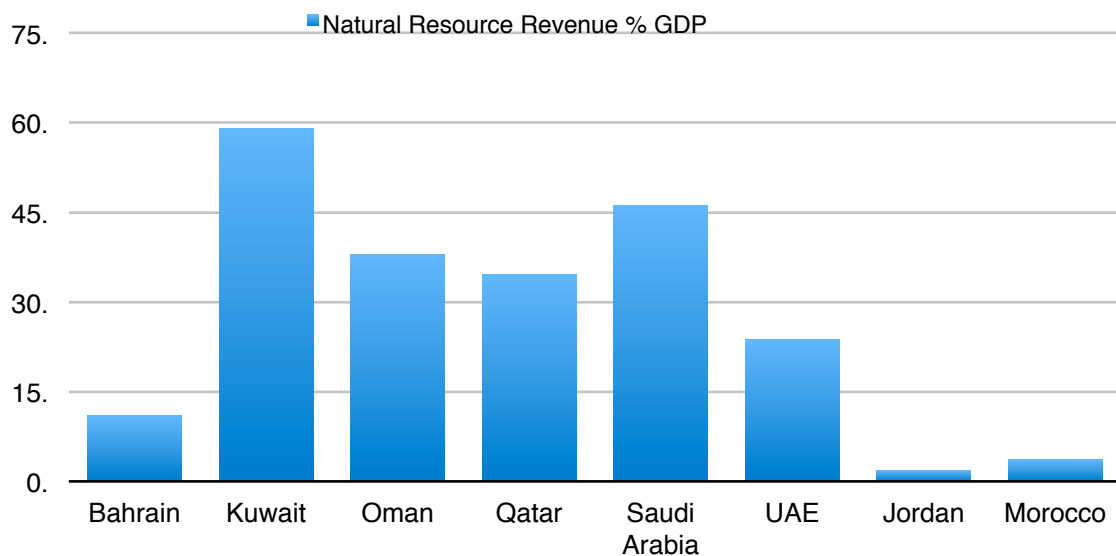
Country	Crosscutting Coalition?	Coalition Members
Bahrain	No	Ruling family, Sunni minority.
Kuwait	Yes	Ruling family, Sunni Merchants, Shiite minority, tribal communities.
Oman	Yes	Ruling family, regional elites from Muscat, Inner Oman, and Dhufar; tribal communities.
Qatar	No	Not necessary due to small homogenous population.
Saudi Arabia	Yes	Ruling family, regional business elites, religious establishment.
UAE	Yes	Seven ruling families.
Morocco	Yes	Business class, religious authorities, agricultural elites.
Jordan	Yes	East Bank minorities, Palestinian business, tribal communities.

Source: (Yom and Gause 2012)

<sup>3</sup> Gerring & Seawright (2008).

Secondly, it is a rentier monarchy whose economy relies mostly on income generated from oil revenues, as figure 2 below demonstrates. This means I will be able to use the dynamics of this case to explore economic cooptation tools that can be clearly outlined and measured.

**Figure 2**  
**Income Generated from Natural Resources in Monarchies**



Finally, the Kuwaiti legislature is elected relatively freely and has considerable power in comparison to other authoritarian regimes. Evidence of this level of parliamentary power, and electoral freedom in comparison to other authoritarian regime types can be found in tables 2 and 3. It can be noted from table 3 that the KNA scores much higher on the Parliamentary Election Index. Moreover, its components - Freedom of Candidate of Participation, Fairness of Voter Registration, Voting Procedures and Vote Count, and Freedom of Expression in Electoral Campaigns – score higher compared to the mean of the other authoritarian regimes included in the sample. Additionally, we can see that the KNA's Parliamentary Power Index indicator is higher than the mean of the other authoritarian legislatures included in the sample. This is true for all of the components of the Parliamentary Power Index: Influence on the Executive,

Institutional Autonomy and Special Powers. The only exception is Institutional Capacity, in which the KNA fares lower than the mean of other legislatures included in the sample. Overall however, the Kuwaiti legislature is not a rubber-stamp legislature; rather, it is a functioning forum, which strengthens the overall validity of the findings especially as it pertains to the legislatures being a venue for enacting the policies I discussed.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 2**  
**Parliamentary Power Index**

	Kuwait	Mean
Parliamentary Power Index	0.38	0.33
Influence on the Executive	3	2.19
Institutional Autonomy	2	2.91
Special Powers	2	2.02
Institutional Capacity	5	3.33

Notes and Source: The Index is made up of the three component listed in the table. For more details see Parliamentary Power Index Scores in M. Steven Fish and Matthew Kroenig, *The Handbook of National Legislatures: A Global Survey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Or alternatively visit <http://polisci.berkeley.edu/people/person/m-steven-fish>.

<sup>4</sup> For both the parliamentary power index and the parliamentary election index I drop the democratic regimes from the sample and then I calculate the mean for the remaining regimes, which are all authoritarian. I then compare this mean to Kuwait.

**Table 3**  
**Parliamentary Election Index**

	Kuwait	Mean	Min	Max
Parliamentary Election Index (EEI)	9	4.84	0	11
Freedom of Candidate Participation	3	1.8	0	4
Fairness of Voter Registration, Voting Procedures and Vote Count	3	1.47	0	4
Freedom of Expression in Electoral Campaigns	3	1.48	0	3

Notes and Source: The e-Parliament Election Index (EEI) is made up of three principal components Freedom of Candidate Participation, Fairness of Voter Registration, Voting Procedures and Vote Count, and Freedom of Expression in Electoral Campaigns. For more details see <http://polisci.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/people/u3833/eParliamentElectionIndex.pdf>.

For these reasons, Kuwait is a suitable case to explore the empirical implications of the theory outlined above. It provides an avenue to explore the monarchical regime type, its cooptation mechanisms, and their effect on a substantive legislative body.

To test my argument and theory, I first use the case of Kuwait to provide a qualitative assessment of my theory. The aim is to demonstrate how the function of legislatures in monarchical regimes is a product of the monarch's role, in which the breadth of the social coalition being co-opted has a more direct effect on legislative behavior than oil rent in and of itself. This will prove that rent is merely epiphenomenal to the monarch's role, and is not a causal determinant of legislative behavior or the construction of political institutions. Moreover, this qualitative assessment will

demonstrate the dual function of the legislature in the Kuwait case. Finally, it will provide the appropriate contextual analysis for the empirical test to follow. I test my argument empirically using a logit model and I utilize a direct measure of legislative activity, i.e. roll call votes, in this analysis.

### **Kuwaiti Political Development: The Cooptation of a Broad Social Coalition**

Throughout its history, especially during the period leading up to the independence of Kuwait and onwards, the monarchy in Kuwait sought to build a broad social coalition that brought together three main social groups into its fold while preserving its central role as the main arbiter of the system. These three groups are: the Hadar, the Tribes, and the Shiites. Given this wide-ranging coalition, the monarchy has had to utilize different tools to co-opt the three disparate social groups into the system. The tools used depended on the social, political, and economic background of the groups in question.

For the Tribes and the Shiites, who were less experienced politically and less fortunate economically, the monarchy could simply integrate into the welfare state fueled by oil wealth, and provide them with public goods/ benefits such as health, education, subsidies and compensation packages associated with employment in the public sector. On the other hand, the more economically powerful and politically sophisticated Hadar Merchants could not be simply bought off by welfare benefits. In fact, they viewed such benefits as a right not a privilege. Thus, the monarchy opted to provide them with selective economic benefits, or private goods, in the form of targeted market access benefits that ensured their stature as the dominant group in Kuwait economically. Thus, as Al-Dekhayel (2000, 45) noted, “by controlling the oil rent, the state influenced, articulated and shaped the social structure in Kuwait.” This has had profound implications for political and economic dynamics in Kuwait.

The importance of the Kuwaiti National Assembly is that it serves as a venue through which the government can enact these cooptation policies, and the elected members of the KNA can solidify or contest these policies. In particular, the assembly functions in many ways as a patronage distribution venue, in as much as it used to propose increasing the provision of distributive welfare benefits, or public goods, noted above. But at the same time, it is also a medium through which contestation over the long-term consequences of the selective benefits,<sup>5</sup> private goods, mentioned above takes place. This demonstrates how the role of the KNA cannot be reduced to a simple process of patronage distribution, but is rather an institution where contestation over long-term policies can also take place. This dual function is a direct consequence of the cooptation strategies the monarchy has, and continues to pursue in order to maintain its role as an arbiter of the broad social coalition it relies on to rule. In this section I will break down the components of the causal mechanism outlined above and explain its empirical implications.

### *Co-Opting the Economic Powerhouse through Private Goods: Sunni Hadar*

Historically, the predominant group in pre-oil Kuwait economically and politically was the Sunni Hadar merchants. The Hadar were able to establish their political influence through their grip on the maritime economy, which the royal family depended on. The merchant class needed the freedom to perform its economic activities, but agreed in return to abdicate responsibilities of governance and security to the Al-Sabah family (Al-Otaibi 2010, 14). The relationship between the Hadar merchants and the royal family ebbed and flowed as the Hadar merchants sought to translate their economic

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<sup>5</sup> Selective economic benefits, private goods and targeted market access are used interchangeably in this paper. Though, I often opt for private goods because it's a shorter less cumbersome term. Moreover, whenever there is a reference to long term economic policies or votes on issues pertaining to these said policies they are always discussed within the context of their connection to the targeted market access benefits I discuss later.

prowess into political influence on occasion. This resulted in several elected councils in the 1920s and 1930s, none of which survived and were shut down eventually (Al-Otaibi 2010).

However, the discovery of oil ushered in a new era in which the Al-Sabah family's grip on the state tightened. This came in conjunction with the weakening of the maritime economy, which gave the royal family a newfound economic autonomy vis-à-vis, the Hadar Merchants (Al-Najjar 2010; Crystal 1990, 73). This did not necessarily mean that the Hadar merchants' demands for political participation were completely ignored, as the middle class element within the Hadar often allied with the merchants to pressure the government for political reforms. Nor did it mean that the royal family was able to monopolize control over the economy because, when it tried to do so, it led to an eventual protest from the Hadar merchants. For instance, in 1953, the Hadar petitioned the ruler Abdullah Al-Salim Al-Sabah to curtail corruption within his administration and to protest their exclusion from the state's economic development plans brought on by oil (Crystal 1990, 75). And so it was that the ruler of Kuwait moved quickly to reintegrate the merchants into the regime's economic machinery. In particular, the government attempted to co-opt the Hadar merchants using two important economic mechanisms: access to public tenders for government projects, and the land acquisition program (Al-Fadallah 2010, 86-87; Crystal 1990, 75-78).

Before delving into these mechanisms, a bit of context is critical. The integration of the Hadar merchants (into the economy and the government's development plans brought on by oil) took place within the context of a reversal of roles between the two sides. In particular the decline of the maritime economy and the parallel development of a rentier economy following the discovery of oil meant that the private sector now hinged on activities where capital accumulation did not require a long process. These activities formed the basis of the Hadar merchants' economic activities (Al-Dekhayel 2000, 46). As



a result, the co-optation and economic integration of the Hadar merchants in the rentier economy could now take place within the context of activities that hinged on the government having the upper hand, and being the mediator of these economic activities.

Access to public tenders for government projects was an important mechanism precisely because of the connection between these tenders and the activities mentioned above: brokerage, import/export trade, service and construction sectors (Al-Fadallah 2010, 86-87). This reality was not lost on the ruler of Kuwait in the 1950s, Abdullah Al-Salim. Despite the state's newfound autonomy vis-à-vis the Hadar merchants, he understood that not only would it be a wise endeavor to co-opt this group using economic means, but also that this would be based on activities where the government was the ultimate and main client. Thus this would inevitably tie the economic fate of the merchants to the government (Al-Fadallah 2010, 86).

It was then perhaps not surprising that he was willing to concede to the Hadar merchants when they petitioned him as mentioned earlier, and part of his concessions was to temper the economic influence of the British on Kuwait's oil economy by countering British attempts to tender for Kuwaiti development projects (with a stipulation that this would have to be through a local partner on a 50/50 basis) (Al-Najjar 1984, 32). Not only this, but Al-Salim also went as far as cancelling the contracts awarded to five British firms for developmental projects in Kuwait and requiring them to tender alongside local firms with the aforementioned stipulation in effect (Al-Najjar 1984, 32-33; Crystal 1990 75-78). Finally, the development board, which oversaw economic development, plans in Kuwait, kept a list of approved companies for public projects. It is not a surprise that in addition to British companies, the Hadar merchants had a rather strong showing on the list (Crystal 1990, 75). This worked to solidify the wealth of the Hadar merchants and perpetuate this wealth. As tables 4 and 5 below show, this trend of designating a list of approved companies to tender for government projects as well as the Hadar merchant

dominance of the economy is one that still predominates the economic structure of Kuwait in the present era. Additionally, as can be seen in figure 3 the Hadar overwhelmingly dominate the chamber of commerce in Kuwait.

**Table 4**

**Social Background of Ownership of Companies Classified by the Central Tenders Committee**

	Category IV	Category III	Category II	Category I
Hadar	149 (38%)	43 (48%)	54 (59 %)	40 (70 %)
Tribal	124 (32%)	17 (19%)	16 (18 %)	2 (3.7%)
Shiite	55 (14%)	8 (9 %)	6 (6.6%)	3 (5.6%)
Royal Family	7	3	0	1
Mixed Background	11	4	3	5
Unknown	42	13	12	2
Total	388	88	91	53

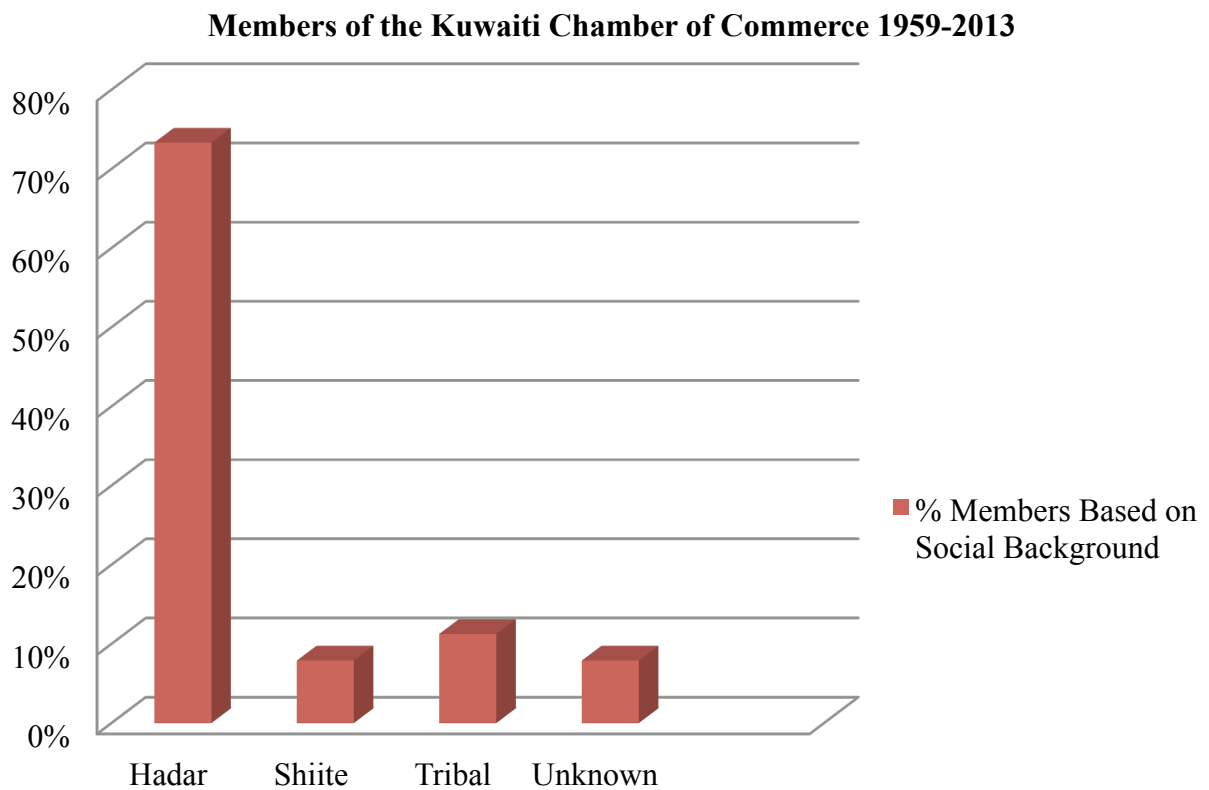
Notes and Source: The categories are divided by the company's capital in Kuwaiti Dinars (KD). Category IV is for companies with a capital of no less than 50 thousand KD. Category III is for no less than 100 thousand KD. Category II is for no less than 200 thousand KD. Category I is for no less than 500 thousand KD. Table is taken from Al-Fadallah 2010 page 59.

**Table 5****Companies Awarded Government Tenders Based on Social Background of Owners**

	Government Tenders Awarded for the Period (1/1/2010) - (3/31/2010)	Item Based Government Tenders (86 items) for the Period (1/1/2010) - (3/31/2010)
Hadar	101 (59%)	49 (57 %)
Tribal	19 (11%)	10 (11.6%)
Shiite	25 (15%)	17 (20 %)
Royal Family	1	1
Mixed Background	7	6
Unknown	17	3
Total	170	40 for 86 Items

Source: Table taken from Al-Fadallah 2010, page 61.

**Figure 3: Social Background of Members of the Kuwaiti Chamber of Commerce**



The other mechanism through which the Hadar merchants were co-opted was the land acquisition plan. The land acquisition plan to quote Al-Najjar (1984, 1) is “a policy first devised by the Kuwaiti government in 1951...which involves the government's purchase of property (land or otherwise) at artificially inflated prices in order to achieve political, economic and/or social ends.” The policy involved the state buying land in the downtown area mainly owned by the Hadar merchants at inflated prices and reselling other plots of land in new suburbs at a nominal price (Al-Najjar 1984, 92).

The purpose of the program was twofold. First, its purpose was to relocate urban families living in the old city into new areas and to utilize this land for public and commercial development. Secondly it was used to facilitate the transfer of money from the public sector to the private sector dominated by the Hadar merchants (Al-Najjar

1984, 91-92; Al-Nakib 2014, 15). The state viewed this scheme as a “quick form of oil revenue distribution” and it was the “principal form of wealth accumulation for most urban Kuwaitis,” the urban Kuwaiti’s being mostly the Hadar merchants (Al-Nakib 2014, 15). According to Al-Najjar (1984, 91-92 & 327), “the upper echelons” of Kuwaiti society, the Hadar merchants and the Royal Family, earned almost 50% of the money disbursed through the land acquisition plan. This means that the royal family and the Hadar merchants who dominated the business sector earned a considerable margin of the earnings from the land acquisition plan.

*Co-opting through Non-Exclusionary State Provided Benefits: The Underprivileged*

Powered by oil revenues the Kuwaiti government embarked on a considerable effort to build a “cradle to the grave” rentier welfare state, which to a large extent provided most Kuwaiti citizens an opportunity to receive education, health care benefits, and most importantly state employment (Crystal 1990, 78). State employment was a critical distributive mechanism and it was provided without any discrimination against any of the three groups, meaning it benefitted all of the social groups equally. However, it was arguably aimed more towards co-opting the two lesser fortunate social groups, the Shiites and the Tribes, because the Hadar merchants were already a group with considerable political and economic power vis-à-vis the government. As such, by the Hadar’s standards, these welfare policies were not viewed as privilege but rather as a right. Although these distributive policies to provide public goods began to take hold in the 1950s, they were accelerated and expanded after Kuwait gained its independence and the Kuwaiti National Assembly was established in 1961-1962 (Crystal 1990, 78-79; Al-Dekhayel 2000, 89).

Al-Dekhayel (2000, 89) described these distributive policies to provide public goods in the clearest terms, noting that “these rewards have been largely governed by reasons unrelated to the job – that is, it was neither intended as an incentive for better performance nor was it given as a reward for distinguished public employees.” Instead, distribution was politically motivated. These rewards and compensations include free health care, free education, marriage grants, subsidized utilities, and housing grants (Herb 2014, 18). Moreover, even though these compensations are tied to being employed in a public sector job, they are “set relative to state oil income rather than overall productivity in the economy” (Herb 2014 18, 20). Therefore, these benefits increased continuously from Kuwait’s independence onwards with important increases in 1971/2, 1979, 1981, 1982 and 1985 (Al-Dekhayel 88-90). The trend continued even after the post-1991 period, the period following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

But the crucial question remains: to what extent are these distributive benefits, or public goods, non-discriminatory? First, as Al-Dekhayel (2000, 88) noted, since the late 1950s the Kuwaiti government has followed a “guaranteed job” policy for all Kuwaitis regardless of employment requirements, despite the fact that in 1979 the Civil Service Commission (CSC) had actually laid down some “qualifications for occupying public posts.” Instead, what appears to have been followed is an Emiri decree No 19/1960, which guarantees public sector jobs for almost all Kuwaiti citizens (Al-Dekhayel 2000, 88). In fact, even after the process of recruiting for employment became more centralized by the CSC in 1999 to “increase transparency and to discourage favoritism,” the vast majority of those who applied for jobs through the CSC’s new system were given jobs. According to published reports, 78,000 of 98,000 applicants between 1999-2006 were awarded positions (Herb 2014, 19). Secondly, it has historically been the case that the overwhelming majority of Kuwaitis have been employed in the public sector and this trend continues today as we can see in the table below.

**Table 6****Kuwaiti Labor Force by Sector 2005-2012**

	Public Sector	Private Sector	Total
2005	269.2 (90.09%)	29.6 (9.91%)	298.8
2006	284.4 (88.10%)	38.3 (11.86%)	322.8
2007	250.2 (84.64%)	45.3 (15.32%)	295.6
2008	259 (83.01%)	53 (16.99%)	312
2009	265.9 (80.75%)	63.4 (19.25%)	329.3
2010	275.2 (79.17%)	72.4 (20.83%)	347.6
2011	289.8 (78.86%)	77.7 (21.14%)	367.5
2012	300.6 (78.73%)	81.2 (21.27%)	381.8

Note: Numbers in Thousands based on the National Bank of Kuwait's Economic Brief for October 22, 2012.

It should be noted that the government also used the enfranchisement of the Tribes and Shiites into the political system from 1961 onwards as a measure to co-opt those groups and balance them against the Hadar. This was the case because, at that point in time, the Hadar were the group that formed the backbone of the opposition to the government (Crystal 1990: 83). This was a particularly important move for the Tribes

and the Shiites, both of whom were excluded from the early councils pushed for by the opposition (Al-Otaibi 2010). This point perhaps explains why the Tribes and Shiites were content with public goods the government extended, as opposed to the Hadar Merchants.

### *The Role of the Kuwaiti National Assembly*

Now that I have explained how the government in Kuwait used different tools to co-opt the three disparate social groups into the system, I will attempt to deal with the question of how these strategies manifest themselves in the KNA. When the KNA was established in 1962 it was established within the context of domestic pressure from the opposition represented by the Arab Nationalists and the Merchants, both of whom belonged to the Hadar, and external pressure precipitated by the Prime Minister of Iraq, Abdul Karim Qassim, and his threats to annex Kuwait and make it a part of Iraq (Herb 2014, 90; Al-Yousifi 2013, 294-295). In an effort to form a unified front against the Iraqi threat (Herb 2014, 105) and also to provide a venue through which the three social groups could be balanced against one another (Crystal 1990, 83), Kuwait's ruler Abdullah Al-Salim created a constituent assembly tasked with writing Kuwait's constitution and establishing an elected assembly.

The constitution of Kuwait created in 1962 established an interesting balance between the hereditary executive and the legislative branch. Executive power is mainly vested in the Emir who is a member of, and appointed by, the royal Al-Sabah family (Kuwait Constitution Article 1). The Al-Sabah family has ruled Kuwait for close to 250 years. Notably and quite importantly the Emir exercises his powers through his ministers and accordingly appoints and relieves them of power (Kuwait Constitution Articles 55, 56). The balance between the hereditary executive branch and the elected KNA manifests itself in several provisions to give not only the executive the right to legislate, but also the national assembly. Moreover, the assembly has motions of confidence as



an oversight mechanism of the executive. But for our present purposes, we are only interested in the aspects related to legislation. This is because the assembly is an arena where the both the government and the three social groups can initiate, amend, or veto/contest the provision of public good. It is also an arena to do the same with the long-term economic policies that hinge on the government's private goods.

To start, the Emir, has the power to "propose, sanction, and promulgate laws" (Kuwait Constitution Article 65). Additionally, he has the right to issue emergency decrees should the occasion for an emergency arise when the national assembly is not in session or is dissolved (Kuwait Constitution Article 71). On the other hand, the constitution balances many of the powers vested in the Emir by several oversight and law-making powers as well as checks on executive power. These powers are exercised by the KNA. The KNA is composed of fifty members "elected directly by universal suffrage and secret ballot," though ministers, who are appointed, are ex-officio members (Kuwait Constitution Article 80). KNA members can initiate laws, and no law can be promulgated unless the KNA passes it and it is sanctioned by the Emir (Kuwait Constitution Article 79). Not only that, but even when the Emir issues decrees, he has to submit these decrees to the KNA within 15 days, whether the KNA is, or is not, in session or it is dissolved during the first meeting after the KNA reopens (Kuwait Constitution Article 71).

However, it should be noted that there is a difference between the laws proposed by the government and those proposed by the KNA. The laws proposed by the KNA, which are called law proposals, are first sent to the committee on legislative and legal affairs to ensure they are in proper legal form and not in violation of the constitution. After that, the law is submitted for discussion and will be transferred into the appropriate specialized legislative committee (Kuwait National Assembly Bylaws 98-110). On the other hand, laws proposed by the government, which are called draft laws, are directly

transferred to the appropriate specialized legislative committees without going through the legislative and legal affairs committee (Kuwait National Assembly Bylaws 98-110). The law proposal/draft law goes through three deliberations: a vote on principle for the law to be considered in general, a vote on the first deliberation of the law and a vote on the second deliberation of the law (Kuwait National Assembly Bylaws 98-110). In between each of these deliberations both members of the KNA and the government are allowed to put forth amendments to the law in question (Kuwait National Assembly Bylaws 98-110).

Based on the discussion above, it becomes clear that the government cannot pass laws to provide public goods or laws pertaining to the private goods described above without the approval of the KNA. Even if the government attempts to pass some of these benefits by decree as outlined above, it still has to get the approval of the KNA. Not only that, but members of KNA also actually have the power to propose laws to gain more public goods or solidify long-term economic benefits stemming from the government's private goods to certain groups. KNA members can also challenge or veto these long-term economic benefits. Hence, by examining the constitutional requirements of legislation alone, it becomes clear that the KNA is not only a venue for the distribution of patronage but also a venue to battle over the structure of the economy and long-term economic policy between the different social groups.

Before moving on to the next section, two key points are important to note. First, while the government has in the past put forth draft laws to create state employee compensations and to even increase them in conjunction with inflation and price increases, it has become increasingly wary of continued demands for these compensations. As such, whenever a legislator puts forth a law proposal to increase these compensations, the government will very often vote against the measure. The government also often prefers to be the party that sets the ceiling for these public goods.

Secondly, when it comes to long-term economic issues, the government often takes a position in favor of policies that facilitate the expansion of the private sector in a variety of ways. The relevance of these two points will become clear in the next section.

## VI. Description of Data and Method

To assess how the regime's co-option strategies affect the voting patterns of the members of the KNA, I will utilize an original dataset entitled the Kuwait National Assembly Roll Call Votes dataset. The dataset is based on combining legislator specific variables from Herb's Kuwait Politics Database with roll call votes for the KNA from 2008-2011, which covers two legislative terms the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> legislative terms. The analysis is an individual level analysis, which aims to determine how the legislators in the KNA vote on two types of economic issues. Specifically, I utilize the dataset with respect to votes pertaining to the provision of public goods, and votes on long-term issues regarding the structure of Kuwait's economy. These long-term issues are often tied to the consequences of the regime's distribution of private goods.<sup>6</sup> The first includes votes on issues pertaining to the distribution of public goods such as increasing compensation for military personnel and firemen, compensation for teachers, and remuneration for students. The second includes votes on long-term economic issues such as privatization and restructuring/dropping interest on loans for defaulters. The sample covers the position of all 50 MPs in each legislative session on 44 issues, with a total of 1720 observations. The ministers who serve as ex officio members, as mentioned previously, are dropped from the dataset to avoid completely determined outcomes in Stata.

The main dependent variable is the likelihood of voting against the government on a given issue, with legislators coded as 1 for a vote against the government and 0

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<sup>6</sup> See my website (removed for anonymity purposes) for a detailed description of these votes

otherwise.<sup>7</sup> In particular I use the voting positions of government ministers, who serve as de facto members of the KNA, as a measure of the government's position on issues for several reasons. First, these ministers almost never defect or contradict each other's votes; in other words, they always vote in unison. Secondly, the government's position on the provision of public goods is to oppose any law proposals by the MPs to increase the amount of these goods, or to oppose these law proposals on grounds that it prefers to control the ceiling for these compensations. Third, when it comes to long-term economic policies, the government prefers policies that aid in the expansion of the private sector in a various ways, which usually benefits the groups that gained the targeted private goods discussed above. As such, using an indicator of whether MPs vote alongside the government or against it is an accurate measure of the position of these MPs on issues pertaining to the provision of public goods and long-term economic policies. This is because a vote against the government on issues of providing public goods is a vote *for* these public goods, while a vote against the government on issues pertaining to long term economic issues is a vote *against* the expansion of the private sector. Basically, a vote against the government in the latter group of issues is a vote to block measures that expand or solidify the private goods the government traditionally preserves for the Hadar. Thus, even though the ministers are dropped from the dataset they are still used to construct the likelihood of voting against the government variable.

I use two models, both of which are logistic regression models, to test the first and second hypothesis respectively. The first model includes the whole sample with both issues types (public goods and long term economic issues) in the sample. The key independent variable in the first model, *Issue Type*, is a dummy variable which measures whether the issue at hand is one pertaining to voting on the provision of public goods or long-term economic policies (coded as 1 for the former type of issues and 0

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<sup>7</sup> See the appendix for a full table of how the variables are coded

otherwise). I have argued that the KNA serves as a venue to provide rent in the form of public goods, which leads to the first and second hypotheses:

*H1: Voting on the provision of public goods does not lead to contention between social groups.*

Framed in terms of the Kuwaiti case, I expect that because these public goods are provided by the regime to the three social groups on an equal basis, we should expect no discernable difference between them on voting for these measures. However, as noted earlier, it is expected that the government will usually vote against these measures. Hence, the expectation for H1 is that the *MPs belonging to all three social groups will vote against the government, and that there will be no discernable contention between these groups regarding these measures.*

I control for social group because, for the whole sample, Shiites and tribes are more likely to vote against the government in comparison to the Hadar. In addition, I control for opposition parliamentary blocs such as the Development and Reform Bloc and the Popular Action Bloc, because they are likely to vote against the government regardless of the issue at hand.<sup>8</sup> Finally, I control for electoral district characteristics to see whether constituent pressure has any effect on the likelihood of MPs voting against the government.<sup>9</sup> In particular the districts are coded based on the social group most predominant in the district.

The key independent variable in the second model is a dummy variable for each of the three social groups in Kuwait, which are Hadar, Tribal and Shiite (coded as 1 for belonging to the group and 0 otherwise). It is important to note that this model, unlike the first model, restricts the sample to votes on long-term economic issues. In terms of the second hypothesis, which deals with voting on long-term economic issues, the effect of

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<sup>8</sup> I control for the Development and Reform Bloc (DR) and the Popular Action Bloc (PAB). Both were opposition blocs as described by media accounts and as shown in Allarakia (2015).

<sup>9</sup> In the period covered by this paper there are 5 electoral districts. I code each one based on which social group is predominant.

the government's distribution of private goods should lead to lines of contention along the positions of each social group, particularly with regards to long-term economic consequences of these policies. Framed in terms of the Kuwaiti case, I expect that the government's distribution of private goods (which as I detailed earlier solidified the control of the Hadar over the private sector) would lead to contention between the economically powerful Hadar and the lesser fortunate Tribal and Shiite MPs. The Tribal and Shiite MPs view the expansion and protection of these policies as an intensification of these private goods to the private sector. Thus, since the government generally favors policies that facilitate the expansion of the private sector in a variety of ways, the expectation for H2 is that *the Hadar will vote alongside the government when it comes to long-term economic issues, as opposed to the two other social groups*. In this test, I control for the same variables as the first model.

## **Empirical Analysis**

Table 7 below sums up the results of the two logistic regression models. In the first model it appears that the main independent variable Issue Type is significant and in the hypothesized direction, meaning that the MPs overall are more likely to vote against the government on issues pertaining to the provision of public goods than on long-term economic issues. To further test the first hypothesis it is useful to also assess if the MPs are more likely to vote against the government on issues pertaining to the provision of public goods than on long-term economic issues *regardless* of their social group, because the results in the previous model may well be driven by any of the groups separately. As can be discerned from figure 4 there is no real significant difference between the groups when it comes to voting on issues pertaining to the provision of public goods.

**Figure 4: Voting Against the Government of the Provision of Public (Distributive) Goods**

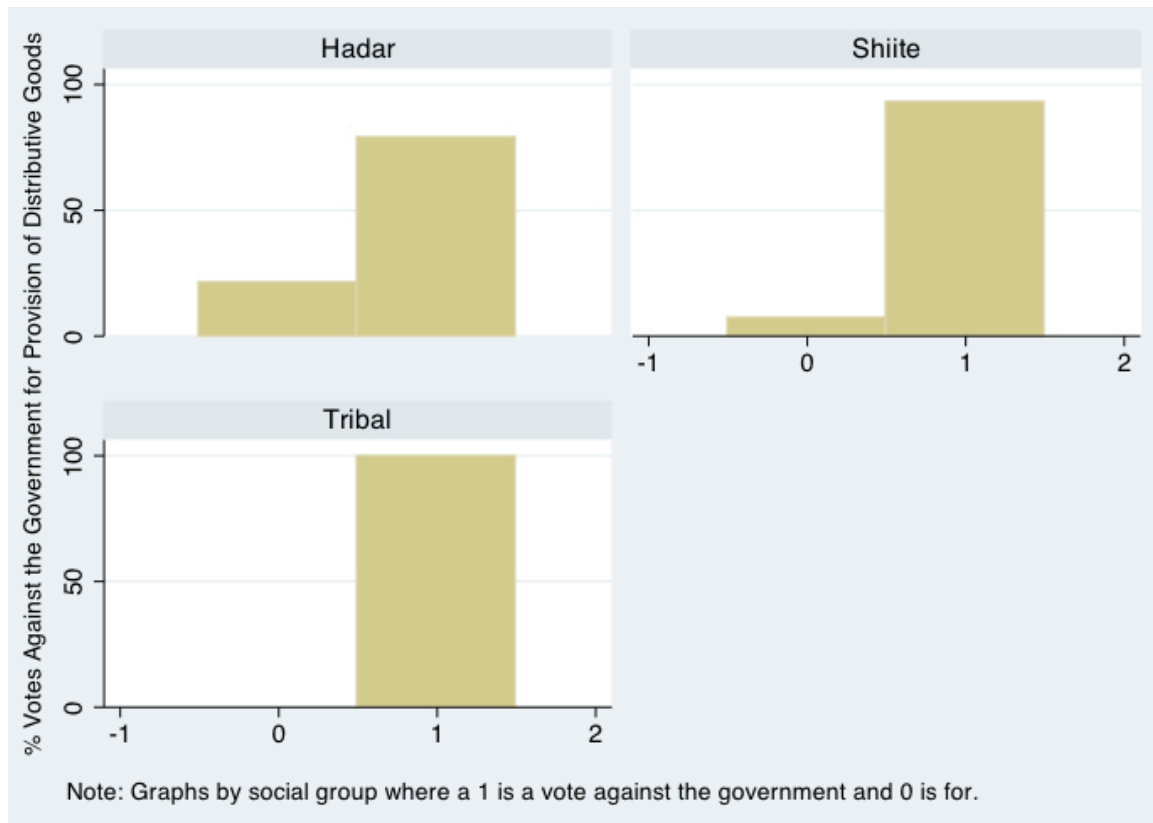


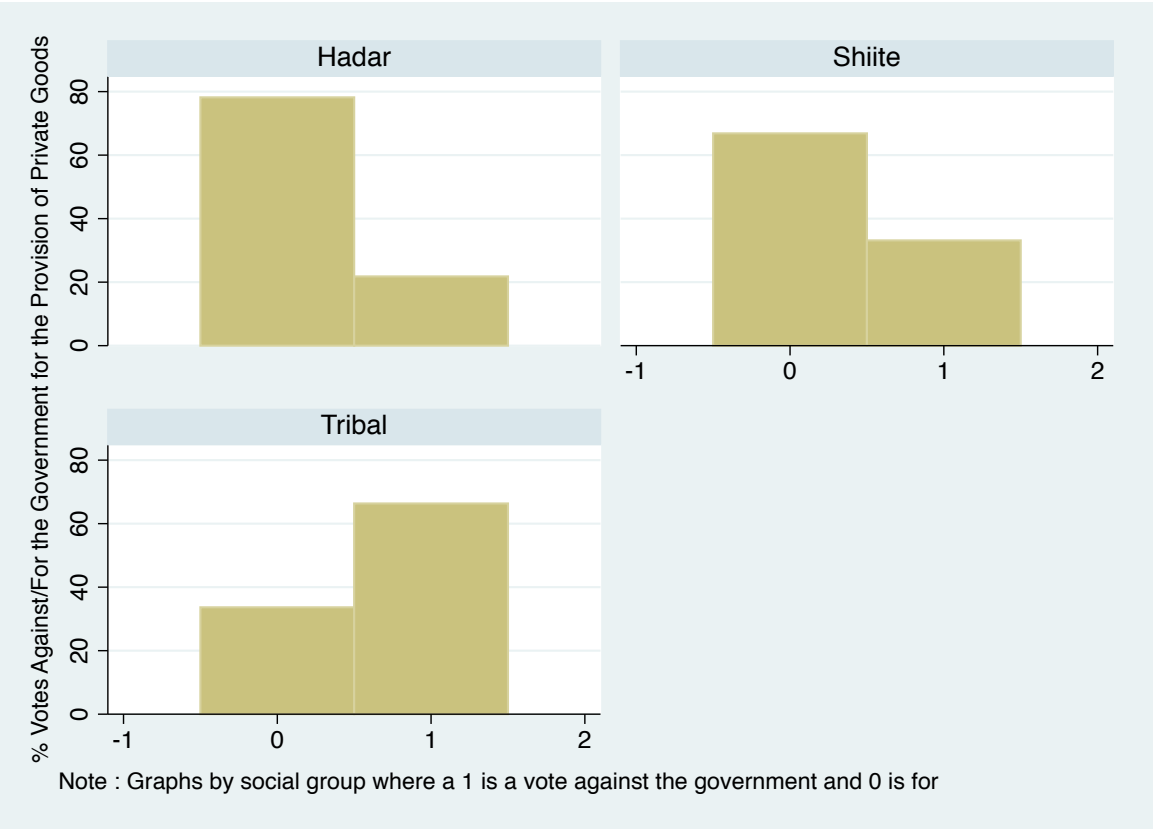
Table 7 and Figure 4 combined confirm H1. Clearly, all the MPs in the KNA will vote for increasing public goods regardless of their social affiliation. This demonstrates the patronage distribution function of the KNA. When controlling for the likelihood of any social group voting against the government regardless of issue type, it appears that only the Tribal MPs are more likely to vote against the government in comparison to the two other social groups. Moreover, belonging to a parliamentary bloc that is opposed to the government predictably increases the likelihood of voting against the government on all issues regardless of social affiliation. However, it should be noted that most of the parliamentary blocs tend to be homogenous in terms of their social makeup, barring a few exceptions. Finally, it does not appear that the characteristic of the electoral districts affect the voting decision of the MPs; this is probably because despite the relative

homogeneity of the districts, minority social groups within these districts tend to vote for their own social group rather than the social group most dominant in that district.

Again table 7 and figure 5, combined confirm H2. In the second model, which restricts the sample to the votes on long-term economic issues, the main independent variable is social group affiliation. This variable is significant and in the hypothesized direction. This means that Tribal MPs appear to be more likely than the Hadar MPs to vote against the government on long-term economic issues. This confirms H2, which expected that there would be contestation between the less fortunate groups Tribal and Shiites, and the more fortunate group which is the Hadar. It should be noted though that there was no discernable difference between the Shiites and the Hadar in terms of voting against the government on economic issues. For the control variables, it appears that belonging to an opposition parliamentary bloc does increase the likelihood of voting against the government and the Hadar on long-term economic issues. But again, given the homogeneity of these blocs, this is a hardly surprising result. The electoral districts are in the hypothesized direction, but are not significant. This is likely because despite the overall homogeneity of the districts, minorities within each district tend to vote for their own social group. We can also see figure 5 that Tribal MPs mostly vote against the government on long-term economic issues while Hadar MPs mostly vote alongside the government. Shiite MPs, however, vote against the government with a higher frequency than the Hadar MPs but they mostly vote alongside the government.



Figure 5: Voting Against the Government on the Provision of Private Goods



**Table 7****Regression Results for Voting Against the Government on Public Goods and Long-Term Economic Issues**

	Model 1	Model 2
Y: Voting Against the Government	Full Sample	Restricted: Long Term Economic Issues
Issue Type	3.079*** (0.586)	
Tribal Legislator	1.717*** (0.637)	1.528*** (0.527)
Shiite Legislator	0.754 (0.629)	0.635 (0.559)
Member of Development and Reform Bloc	2.086*** (0.275)	1.981*** (0.162)
Member of Political Action Bloc	1.006*** (0.119)	0.886*** (0.137)
Shiite Dominated District	0.211 (0.213)	0.115 (0.173)
Tribal Dominated District	0.441 (0.424)	0.416 (0.441)
Constant	-1.589 (0.392)	-1.426 (0.318)
R Squared	0.3298	0.159
N	1720	1103

Notes: Standard errors in parenthesis and \*\*\* Denotes significance at the 0.01 level or less.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The empirical tests of the relationships described in previous sections show that, for the first model, the members of the KNA regardless of their social group are likely to vote against the government when it comes to increasing the provision of public goods. In other words, regardless of what their social group is, they are likely to challenge the government and vote for increasing these goods. This in many ways confirms the theories that posit that parliaments in authoritarian regimes distribute rent or patronage to the potential opposition. However, given the monarchical regime type in this case, it appears that rent is circulated to a wider social base. This especially confirms the theories that argue that legislatures in monarchies are particularly suited for the purpose of circulating rent.

However, the results of model two show that when it comes to long-term economic issues, the contention between the social groups is apparent. In particular Tribal MPs were more likely than the Hadar MPs to bloc government initiatives aimed at expanding the private sector.<sup>10</sup> This is perhaps a predictable result given the predominance of the Hadar in the private sector as noted in the casual mechanism section. This result is important theoretically, however, because it shows that legislatures in monarchical regimes can also be a sight for battling over long-term economic policies, in addition to the distribution of rent. Thus, this proves that 1) legislatures in monarchies are not mere rubber-stamp institutions, and 2) these legislatures serve dual functions.

Both models also point to the fact that there is often a neglected connection between co-optation policies and the behavior of representatives in authoritarian legislatures, especially with the context of a comparatively open and strong legislature. In addition to these findings, this study is distinguished by the fact that it builds on

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<sup>10</sup> The Shiites were also more likely than Hadar MPs to bloc these initiatives based on the direction of the coefficient but it was statistically insignificant.

previous work by utilizing an original dataset, which uses roll call votes to analyze legislatures in authoritarian regimes (in and of itself a direct measure, rarely used in the literature on this topic). In this specific case, the authoritarian regime is a monarchical one, which is a regime type that has hitherto been unexamined in that context.

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## Appendix

### The Description and Coding of the Variables

Variable	Description	Code
Issue Type	Dummy Variable for the Type of Issue Being Voted on	1 for provision of public goods and 0 for long-term economic issues
Tribal Legislator	Dummy variable for social group	1 if legislator is a member of a tribal family 0 otherwise
Shiite Legislator	Dummy variable for social group	1 if legislator is a member of a Shiite family 0 otherwise
Hadar Legislator	Dummy variable for social group - Base Group	1 if legislator is a member of a Hadar family 0 otherwise
Member of Development and Reform Bloc	Dummy variable for political bloc	1 if legislator is a member of the bloc 0 otherwise
Member of Political Action Bloc	Dummy variable for political bloc	1 if legislator is a member of the bloc 0 otherwise
Member of National Action Bloc	Dummy variable for political bloc - Base Group	1 if legislator is a member of the bloc 0 otherwise
Member of Salafi Islamic Rally	Dummy variable for political bloc - Base Group	1 if legislator is a member of the bloc 0 otherwise
Service MP	Dummy variable for political bloc - Base Group	1 if legislator is a member of the bloc 0 otherwise
Shiite Dominated District	Dummy variable for Shiite dominated district	1 if district is dominated by group in question 0

		otherwise
Tribal Dominated District	Dummy variable for Tribal dominated district	1 if district is dominated by group in question 0 otherwise
Sunni Hadar Dominant District	Dummy variable for Hadar Dominated district- Base Group	1 if district is dominated by group in question 0 otherwise
Mixed Leans to Sunni Hadar District	Dummy variable for mixed leans to Sunni Hadar district-Base Group	1 if district is dominated by group in question 0 otherwise



# **Electoral Rules in the Absence of Ruling Parties: Elections to Kuwait's National Assembly**

## **Abstract**

How do electoral rules affect political behavior in different types of authoritarian regimes? The literature distinguishes between two types of electoral rules that are adopted by authoritarian regimes. Electoral rules chosen to give dominant parties an unfair advantage through bonus seats as opposed to more proportional or permissible electoral rules created to fragment and multiply the number of political parties. The first type of strategy, has been explored relatively well with several studies systematically testing and detailing how regimes with dominant parties exploit disproportional rules to gain seats that exceed their fair share. By contrast the latter strategy of imposing proportional or semi-proportional electoral rules that fragment political and social forces has not been explored as much. These types of strategies tend to predominate in regimes with no dominant ruling parties, such as monarchies, and strong regimes. I chart some hypotheses for how electoral rules in authoritarian regimes with no ruling parties are chosen and how they can potentially affect the proportionality of electoral outcomes, as well as the fragmentation and coordination between political and social groups. I assess these hypotheses using elections to the Kuwaiti National Assembly. I find that as expected in the literature electoral rules in Kuwait tend to be more permissible and as a result: they encourage the multiplication and fragmentation of political blocs and electoral lists, disadvantage larger political blocs and electoral lists, and discourages coordination between them.

**Word count:** 8,306

**Key words:** Authoritarian Regimes, Monarchies, Kuwait, Arabian Peninsula, Elections, Legislatures, Authoritarian Institutions, Electoral Rules, Coordination, Proportionality, Arab Politics.

## Introduction

When scholars first began to study elections in authoritarian regimes they were focused on their function as a mechanism to prolong the survival of these regimes. The literature varied as to how these elections contributed to the survival of authoritarian regimes with explanations ranging from co-optation, power sharing, patronage distribution to resolving information asymmetries (Boix & Svolik, 2007; Ezrow, & Frantz, 2011; Magaloni 2008; Gandhi 2008). The literature has since begun to focus more on a topic that was given less attention, namely electoral rules in authoritarian regimes. In particular how they are chosen, what purpose they serve and how they affect the fortunes of opposition forces and political parties in general. The literature has generally distinguished between two types of electoral rules choice strategies adopted by regimes. Electoral rules chosen to enhance the dominance of a single dominant party, such as SMD plurality, as opposed to more proportional or permissive electoral rules created to fragment and multiply the number of political parties. The first type of strategy, the winner take all strategy, has been explored relatively well with several studies systematically testing and detailing how regimes with dominant parties exploit disproportional rules to gain seats that exceed their fair share. By contrast the latter strategy of imposing proportional or semi-proportional electoral rules that fragment political and social forces has not been given as much attention. These types of strategies tend to predominate in regimes with no dominant ruling parties, such as monarchies, and strong regimes.

In this paper I attempt to chart some patterns for how electoral rules in authoritarian regimes with no ruling parties are chosen and how they affect the behavior of political and social actors. This is important because it provides valuable insights into how the choice of electoral rules in these types of regimes affect the proportionality of

electoral outcomes, the degree of fragmentation amongst political and social groups running for elections and also how these factors affect the capacity of these groups to strategically coordinate during elections. Using district level electoral results for the Kuwaiti National Assembly (KNA) in five elections between 2003-2012 I systematically assess how electoral rules affect the proportionality of electoral results, fragmentation amongst political and social groups, and coordination (or lack thereof) between these groups. I utilize several tools developed by scholars of electoral rules in democratic elections to assess elections to the KNA. Particularly, the extent to which it conforms to the expectations of the literature on electoral rules in non-ruling party authoritarian regimes.

The paper is divided into six sections. The first section explores literature on electoral rules in authoritarian regimes. The second one probes deeper into electoral rules in authoritarian regimes with no ruling parties and puts forth several testable hypotheses regarding the potential effect of electoral rules in these regimes on electoral outcomes and coordination amongst political actors. The third section makes the case for why the KNA is a suitable choice to test assess these hypotheses. The fourth section charts the research strategy developed to assess these hypotheses and also describes the data used. The fifth section is an empirical assessment of the hypotheses put forth. The paper concludes with a discussion of the results and implications for future research.

### **The Dilemma of Institutional Design<sup>11</sup>: Electoral Manipulation in Authoritarian Regimes**

The basic intuition behind any effort by authoritarian regimes to manipulate electoral outcomes is Schedler's (2013) "dilemma of institutional design," which is summed up as follows:

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<sup>11</sup> Term originally coined by Schedler 2013.

“Unless political institutions are granted minimal margins of power and autonomy, they cannot make an independent contribution to authoritarian governance and survival; and as soon as political institutions are granted minimal margins of power and autonomy, they can turn against the dictator. They open up sites of diversion and subversion, open and subterranean, with multiple actors testing in multiple manners the limits of the permissible. In autocracies, then, institutions are arenas of control and cooptation, but also of contention.”

The fact that all authoritarian regimes face this dilemma means that while they will open up legislatures, it is rarely the case that they will allow them to run amok or become serious grounds for contesting the regime. They have to balance between the conflicting imperatives of delegation and control (Schedler 2009). Doing so, however, would mean that the authoritarian regime might eventually lose control over these legislatures. To resolve this dilemma, authoritarian regimes must engage in what Schedler (2009) describes as “institutional gardening,” which is the micro-design and micromanagement of these legislatures to ensure that they are representative but within bounds and parameters set by the regime itself.

One effective way to control these institutions is to control *who* is appointed or elected to them. Malesky and Schuler (2011) for example show how ex-ante manipulation of legislative elections in Vietnam’s single party regime ensures that only certain types of representatives are elected to the legislature. The tools used ensure a controlled degree of pluralism within the context of only one party being allowed in the legislature. The regime alters the candidate-to-seat ratios, and places favored candidates in certain non-competitive districts, to control who makes it into the Vietnamese National Assembly (Malesky and Schuler, 2011).

Electoral rules manipulation, however, can be trickier in authoritarian regimes, which allow a higher degree of pluralism. In particular, agent selection through nomination and screening is not as easy or direct as in single party states. In this instance, the study of electoral rules in democracies can provide authoritarian regimes with particularly powerful methods to “manipulate the rules that shape voter and candidate behavior in elections” (Lust and Gandhi 2009, 412). Authoritarian regimes can in other words, manipulate electoral rules to affect the representation of political parties and social groups. They can also alter these rules to affect the strategic behavior and of candidates and parties (Buttorf 2015).

The literature on the choice of electoral systems in authoritarian regimes provides some very useful findings in this regard. Mindful, for instance, of Duverger’s (1951) law regarding single member plurality electoral systems and his hypothesis regarding proportional representation systems, authoritarian regimes in the Arab world sought to put in place winner-take-all electoral laws, or highly proportional ones, depending on the context (Posusney 2002). Both Posusney (2002) and Lust & Jamal (2002) demonstrate how authoritarian regimes in the Arab world differ in their strategies of electoral containment depending on whether they are dominant party regimes or monarchical regimes.<sup>12</sup> Dominant party regimes use electoral strategies such as increasing the electoral threshold, introducing party lists, and vote pooling to transfer remainder votes to the largest party. Thereby allowing these parties to garner significant seat bonuses to dominate the legislature (Lust and Jamal 2002) (Posusney 2002).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> I distinguish between single party and dominant party regimes. The former refers to regimes where only one party is legally sanctioned as in Cuba, China and Vietnam. the latter refers to regimes where multiple parties are allowed but one party tends to be predominant or hegemonic as in the PRI in Mexico or the now defunct RCD in Tunisia.

<sup>13</sup> For example in the 1984 elections to the Egyptian assembly votes the small parties won but could not use to obtain seats were transferred to the most successful party instead. This was naturally the dominant ruling National Democratic Party (NDP). (Posusney 2002)

Regimes in monarchies, and where there are no ruling parties, usually prefer electoral rules that disperse political power across competing political and social groups (Lust and Jamal 2002) (Posusney 2002).

Higashijima and Chang (2016) also make a similar argument; but, for them, the source of variation in electoral system preferences stems from the “strength” of the authoritarian regimes. Weak regimes rely on single member district plurality systems (SMD) that disproportionately reward the largest party, usually the dominant ruling party, to ensure its dominance and capacity to co-opt the ruling elites into the legislature (Higashijima and Chang 2016). On the other hand, strong regimes can guarantee that they can induce the compliance of the elites and citizens, and are relatively secure in their capacity to win elections with a reasonable majority. Hence, they can forgo the seat bonuses generated by SMD and rely on proportional representation (PR) systems, or similar systems with low electoral thresholds that allow for a more balanced and proportional representation of political forces (Higashijima and Chang 2016). The multiplicity of opposition forces under a PR system allows these regimes to “divide and conquer” the opposition without resort to repression and coercion (Higashijima and Chang 2016).

The utilization of electoral rules to disproportionately favor dominant ruling parties has been systematically tested and demonstrated beyond cross-national studies. As an example, Diaz-Cayeros and Magaloni (2001) showed how the dominant PRI in Mexico was particularly skilled at engineering outcomes that allow for some representation by the opposition while maintaining the hegemony of their own party. Thus, when the PRI reformed the electoral law for the 1986 legislative elections, it increased the seats for the multimember district to facilitate the participation of opposition parties but at the same time it established a “governance clause” to automatically give the largest party the majority of seats if the vote was above 35% but below 51%. It was also illustrated in the

case of Singapore, where the regime's combined use of SMD plurality and Multi-Member Plurality rules disproportionately favored the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) and ensured their dominance in the legislature. (Diaz-Cayeros and Magaloni 2001)

Regimes with no dominant ruling parties, which tend to predominate in monarchies and regimes that are classified as "strong" by virtue of their natural resource wealth, have been less explored (Lust and Jamal 2002; Higashijima and Chang 2016). As such, there are few if any systematic studies that explore the consequences of electoral rules such as PR, and generally systems with low electoral thresholds, on these regimes. Of particular importance is the effect of electoral rules on the strategic behavior and coordination of candidates and on the proportionality of electoral outcomes in these regimes. I explore these regimes in more detail in the next section and develop some hypotheses that I assess using elections to the Kuwaiti National Assembly (KNA).

### **Institutional Design in Non-Ruling Party Regimes: Hypotheses**

In authoritarian regimes where there is no strong dominant party or no dominant party at all, the use of electoral systems is not geared towards manufacturing majorities to any parties through seat premiums. Rather the main strategy is to encourage the multiplication of a plethora of social and political groups such that power is dispersed between these groups (Lust and Jamal 2002). The main aim, therefore, is to make coordination amongst these groups difficult. This is often achieved through electoral systems that are permissive, such as PR and other semi-proportional electoral systems like the Block Vote and SNTV<sup>14</sup>. As Higashijima and Chang (2016) argue: because opposition parties can win seats with a relatively small vote share, they do not have the incentive to coordinate and form pre-electoral coalitions. Barbera (2013) echoes the

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<sup>14</sup> A Block Vote System is a multimember plurality system where voters cast as many votes as the magnitude of the district. The SNTV system is similar to the Block Vote System in all respects save for one crucial difference which that it allows the voters to cast only one vote regardless of the district magnitude.

same point, showing that restrictive electoral rules create an incentive for opposition parties to coalesce prior to elections and for citizens to vote prudently for viable parties so as not to waste their votes. More permissive electoral rules like PR increase the number of opposition parties represented, especially in heterogeneous countries, and dampens any impetus for these parties to coordinate to form a block or coalition (Barbera 2013).

The logic of these arguments is based in large part on Duverger's law, which is predicated on the idea that restrictive electoral systems create mechanical and psychological barriers that decrease the chances of small parties winning elections in democracies (in his theory, it is the SMD plurality)(Duverger 1954). Mechanically restrictive electoral systems are anchored in electoral formulas that translate votes in a manner that rewards large parties with a percentage of seats that is disproportionality higher than their vote share. Psychologically, because voters, political opposition groups, and parties are aware of this mechanical bias, they tend to coalesce into larger coalitions to "exploit electoral economies of scale" (Strom et.al 1994). Reversing this logic then: as the electoral system becomes more permissive, the mechanical effect no longer poses an obstacle for smaller opposition parties. Thus, as Barbera (2013) argues, the number of opposition parties and groups increases. Accordingly as these parties and groups are aware of the lower vote share needed to win a seat in legislative elections, their incentive to coordinate to form opposition coalitions is inhibited.

Based on these arguments we can derive several hypotheses regarding the effect of electoral formulas in monarchical regimes and regimes that are resource rich. These predictions are predicated on the idea that these regimes strategically use more permissive electoral formulas such as PR and semi-proportional formulas (like block



vote and limited vote) to multiply the number of parties and induce coordination dilemmas for the parties.

*H1: In monarchical regimes or those that are resource rich, the seat share is dispersed and no single party dominates.*

*H2: In monarchical regimes or those that are resource rich, the vote-to-seat share is proportional and larger parties are not disproportionately advantaged.*

*H3: In monarchical regimes or those that are resource rich, the level of electoral coordination between parties is very low.*

Finally, and perhaps counterintuitively, it has been noted by some scholars that demands for change in the electoral systems of authoritarian regimes by reformists and opposition members often lead to a more permissive or proportional electoral system, regardless of the regime type (Lust and Jamal 2002; Posusney 2002). The demand for change often takes the form of campaigns to lower the electoral threshold, institute some form of PR or at the very least a semi-proportional formula, and in general any kind of electoral formula that encourages the participation of small opposition groups (Lust and Jamal 2002; Posusney 2002). Thus, from this analysis, we can expect:

*H4: Changes and reforms won by the opposition lead to a more proportional electoral system.*

*H5: The more permissive the electoral system is, the more proportional it is and the lower the level of coordination.*

I use elections to the Kuwaiti National Assembly to empirically assess these hypotheses. Kuwait provides an appropriate case to test these predictions for several reasons that I outline in my description of the Kuwaiti political and electoral system below.

## **Kuwait's Political and Electoral System: An Overview**

The Kuwaiti political system is a hybrid system that combines a hereditary executive with an elected assembly. It is classified as a monarchical regime by all of the

well-established typologies of authoritarian regimes (Geddes et.al 2014). The 50 member Kuwaiti National Assembly (KNA) established by ruler Abdullah Al-Salim in conjunction with Kuwait's independence between 1961-63 is considered to be relatively free and fair in comparison with other authoritarian regimes based on several international metrics. For example the KNA scores much higher on the Parliamentary Election Index than the mean of the authoritarian regimes included in the sample. The same is true when we look at the components of the Parliamentary Election Index - Freedom of Candidate of Participation, Fairness of Voter Registration, Voting Procedures and Vote Count, and Freedom of Expression in Electoral Campaigns – where the KNA again scores higher than the mean of the other authoritarian regimes included in the sample.

**Table 1**  
**Parliamentary Election Index**

	Kuwait	Mean	Min	Max
Parliamentary Election Index (EEI)	9	4.84	0	11
Freedom of Candidate Participation	3	1.8	0	4
Fairness of Voter Registration, Voting Procedures and Vote Count	3	1.47	0	4
Freedom of Expression in Electoral Campaigns	3	1.48	0	3

Notes and Source: The e-Parliament Election Index (EEI) is made up of three principal components Freedom of Candidate Participation, Fairness of Voter Registration, Voting Procedures and Vote Count, and Freedom of Expression in Electoral Campaigns. For more details: see

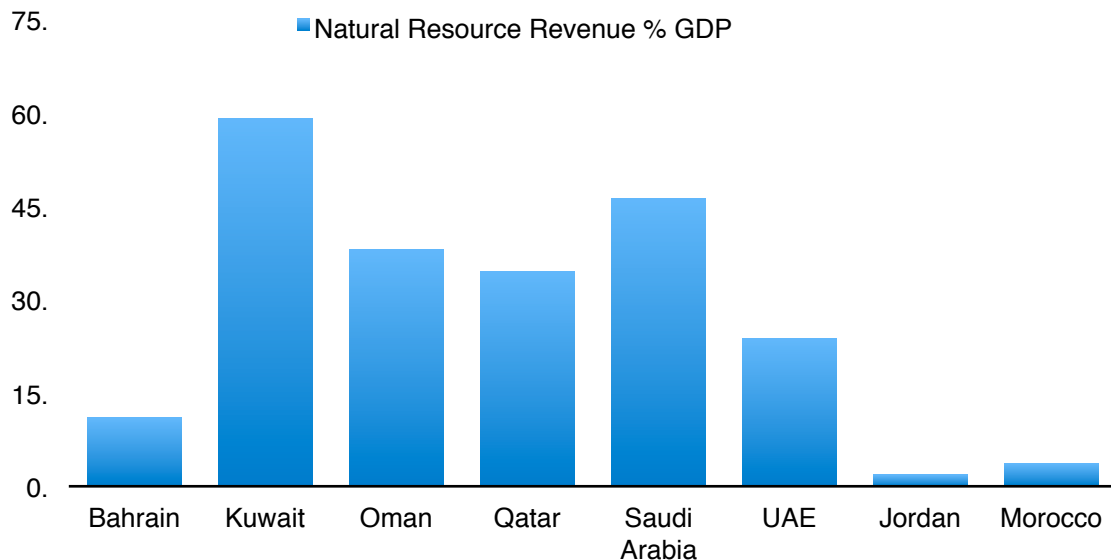
<http://polisci.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/people/u3833/eParliamentElectionIndex.pdf>.

The first reason that Kuwait is an appropriate case to test the hypotheses outlined above is the absence of a ruling party. Given the political structure of Kuwait there is no dominant ruling party. In fact, political parties are neither banned nor legally sanctioned in Kuwait. However, political blocs did form historically and are allowed to function (Al-Saeedi 2010). These political blocs usually fall into three categories: Islamist, Liberals/nationalists and Populists (Al-Saeedi 2010). The blocs do resemble parties in many ways but they remain less disciplined and, save for certain political blocs, they are not always salient. Not only this but, given the nature of the Kuwaiti electoral system, access to the ballot is not controlled by the party and is in fact a highly

individualized process. Political blocs and candidates can and do endorse candidates, and candidates also run on political bloc labels, but there is no official institutional process that gives the leaders of these political blocs control over ballot access. It is also notable that since the change in the electoral system in 2008 electoral lists became more common. Though because political blocs are weak in Kuwait, lists based on alternative forms of political organization also exist such as lists based on sectarian and tribal affiliation.

Moreover, the Kuwait case offers the chance to assess electoral dynamics in a “strong” authoritarian regime, making it suitable for our empirical analysis. Kuwait falls into the category of a strong authoritarian regime based on Higashijima and Chang’s (2016) classification. The author’s proxy for the strength of an authoritarian regime based on its level of oil wealth, and as the figure below demonstrates, Kuwait’s oil wealth is quite high.

**Figure 1**  
**Income Generated from Natural Resources in Monarchies**



Finally the electoral system in Kuwait has been a constant battleground between the regime and the opposition. Thus this contentious dynamic allows us to assess

changes in the electoral system, both when the government imposes a scheme and when the opposition gets a chance to do so themselves.

Kuwait's electoral system has changed four times since Kuwait's emir at the time Abdullah Al-Salim made the decision to create a constituent assembly, and then a national assembly in 1961-1962. The government's initial decision in 1962 was to divide the country into 20 districts each represented by 2 members. The opposition countered by insisting on a single district given the small size of Kuwait. The opposition accused the government of attempting to impose a districting scheme that would create boundaries drawn in a manner that ensures forces that are sympathetic to the government would be represented as a counter to the opposition. The compromise that was eventually reached was ten districts with two members representing each district. (Al-Harbi 2003)

Moreover, during the constituent assembly sessions, the government altered the electoral law such that the elections to the first national assembly were based on the same number of districts but with the district magnitude now changed from 2 to 5, to match the increase in the numbers of elected MPs from 20 in the constituent assembly to 50 in the national assembly. Thus, the electoral system was a block vote system (BV) with 10 districts and a district magnitude of five seats. The districting scheme chosen reflected, according to its detractors, the government's desire to strengthen the Shiites and Tribal Bedouins as a counter-balance to the Sunni Hadar, a group from which the opposition at the time mainly drew its ranks as table one below shows (Karam & Al-Ali 1999, 7; Al-Harbi 2003, 24-25; Al-Khatib 2007, 225).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Hadar means sedentary or urban in Arabic. The differences between the three groups, the hadar, tribes and Shiites stems from sectarian affiliation, immigration and settlement patterns, citizenship laws, class and the relationship with royal family during early periods of struggle for a participatory political system.

This electoral system remained until 1976 when the monarchy unconstitutionally dissolved the assembly for reasons beyond this paper. What is to be noted however is that when the regime made a decision to reconvene the assembly, it announced elections to the assembly on the 23rd of February 1981 and issued electoral law number 99/1980 (Al-Najjar 2010, 20). The new electoral system retained the block vote system but increased the districts from 10 to 25 districts and reduced the district magnitude from 5 to 2 seats. The regime claimed that the electoral law was put in place to reflect population changes, and the development of new residential areas. But critics of the system argued that upon a closer examination of the new district boundaries a different, political rationale behind the new electoral schema is evident (Al-Naqeeb 1996 b, 127). The government's goals it seems were threefold: increase the representation of pro-government tribal candidates, reduce the representation of Shiites, and fragment the Hadar vote - especially in areas which formed the reservoir of the anti-government leftist opposition (Al-Naqeeb 1996 b, 126-127)(Al-Harbi 2003, 29)<sup>16</sup>. Not only this but reducing the number of votes from 5 to 2 votes also meant that the capacity of the Arab Nationalist opposition to coordinate under one list in each district was significantly restricted.<sup>17</sup>

This electoral system lasted until 2006 when the opposition was finally able to push for a change in the electoral system that merged the 25 districts into 5 districts (Al-Logani 2007). The new electoral scheme was made up of 5 electoral districts and a district magnitude of 10. Voters were allowed to cast 4 votes for different candidates. In other words, the system changed from a block vote system to a limited vote system

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<sup>16</sup> The Shiites were historically close to the regime but as by the late 1970s as the Iranian revolution took hold the Shiite pro-government consensus broke apart with some groups now shifting to a stance more critical of the government. See Al-Naqeeb (1996 a) and Mudayris (1999) for more details on the Shiites in Kuwait.

(LV).<sup>18</sup> Although the system increased the size of the districts, increased the district magnitude, and the number of votes for each voter, the scheme still drew district boundaries that maintained the social homogeneity of these districts.

This electoral scheme was short lived and only lasted 4 years between 2008-2012. The impetus for the change came when in February 2012 a parliament dominated by opposition figures was elected following a government corruption scandal, which led to the dissolution of the previous parliament (Al-Yousifi 2013). The regime took advantage of a constitutional court decision to annul the February 2012 elections and to issue a decree reducing the number of votes per voter from 4 to 1. This effectively shifted the electoral system to a Single Non Transferable Vote (SNTV) system while keeping the district magnitude, size and boundaries the same (Al-Yousifi 2013).<sup>19</sup> The table below summarizes information on the electoral system changes since 1963.

**Table 1 – Summary of Electoral System Changes in Kuwait**

Years	Electoral Rule	Votes	District Magnitude	Number of Districts	Preference	Effective Electoral Threshold
1963-1975	BV	5	5	10	Regime	12.50 %
1981-2006	BV	2	2	25	Regime	25.00 %
2008-2012	LV	4	10	5	Opposition	6.82 %
2012-current	SNTV	1	10	5	Regime	6.82 %

Note: Votes refers to the number of votes each voter is legally allowed to cast while preference denotes whether the system was put through by the opposition or the regime.

<sup>18</sup> The Limited vote system is similar to the Block Vote system in that it is a multimember plurality system. However, the crucial difference is that whereas in a block vote system each voter casts as many votes as the district magnitude, in a limited vote system the voter casts a number of votes that is more than one but less than the district magnitude.

Several important points can be noted in table 1. First, the combination of multi-member districts with plurality was retained despite the many changes in the electoral system. Secondly, if one examines the effective electoral threshold (EET), defined by Boix (1999:614) as “the proportion of votes that, for each electoral system, secure parliamentary representation to any party with a probability of at least 50 percent” and operationalized as:

$$EET = 75\% / (M + 1)$$

It is clear that the EET for all of the electoral formulas used throughout Kuwait’s many electoral changes has generally not reached the value that is often assigned to SMD systems which is 35% (Powell JR et.al 2000). This means that all of the electoral systems adopted in Kuwait occupy an intermediate category between PR and SMD systems and are thus what is often called semi-proportional systems (Lijphart et.al 1986). This is especially true because, in addition to the value of EET, these systems are based on the plurality method of counting and not PR formulas.

Thus, elections to the KNA provide an appropriate context to understand the effect of electoral formulas such PR and semi-proportional formulas, on the level of proportionality, and coordination in monarchies and strong regimes.

## **Research Design and Method**

To empirically assess the effect of the electoral rules on the levels of proportionality and coordination in monarchical regimes, I analyze 5 elections to the KNA from the period of 2006-2012. The periods covered facilitate a comparison between two electoral systems: one imposed by the regime 1981-2006 and one put in place after demands for electoral reform by the opposition and reformists in general 2006-2012.<sup>20</sup> The dataset used is a novel one which contains a wide range of election-related data at



the district level, in addition to multiple candidate-level social, political, and demographic variables. The dataset is based on an expansion of Herb's comprehensive Kuwait Politics Database (Herb). I expand on Herb's database using electoral results information provided by Al-Harbi (2003), Al-Saeedi (2008; 2009) as well as my own fieldwork.<sup>21</sup>

To examine the effect of the electoral system on the level of proportionality in the elections to the KNA, I utilize Gallagher's (2008) least squares index to measure the disparity between vote and seat shares. The index is calculated as follows:

$$LSq = \sqrt{((\sum S_i - V_i)^2 / 2)}$$

Where  $S_i$  is the percentage of seat shares for the  $i$ th party while  $V_i$  is the percentage of votes for the  $i$ th party. The higher the LSq the higher the disparity between the vote and seat share and correspondingly the higher the level of disproportionality generated by the electoral system. In addition, to calculating the LSq for each election I also plot the proportionality profile of each election. The proportionality profile plot developed by Taagepera and Shugart (1989, 67-68) provides a very useful visual tool to examine the extent to which each electoral system generates a vote-to-seat outcome that deviates from perfect proportionality, i.e. when the vote and seat share are equal. The plot is created by first calculating the advantage ratio, which is calculated as

$$A = (S_i / V_i)$$

where again,  $S_i$  is the percentage of seat shares for the  $i$ th party while  $V_i$  is the percentage of votes for the  $i$ th party. The advantage ratio for each party or political bloc or electoral list is then plotted against its vote share  $V_i$ . If no seats are gained then  $A=0$ .

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<sup>21</sup> The dataset I created using my own expansion of Herb's Kuwait Politics Database encompasses district level election results for the years 1963-2013. However, due to time limitations I was only able to include the data for candidates who ran in the elections but did not win for the years 2003-2012. For the other years the data is confined to the winners of the elections only. This is why in the paper my analysis is confined to the 2003-2012 period.

But, if the party gains a seat share that is disproportionately lower than its vote share, then the value of  $A$  will be between 0 and 1. However, if the party obtains a seat share that is disproportionately higher than its vote share, then the value of  $A$  will be higher than 1. (Taagepera and Shugart 1989, 67-68)

Both the LSq and the proportionality profile plots provide a useful way to not only evaluate the arguments regarding the effect of electoral systems in non-ruling party regimes on the proportionality of electoral outcomes, but they also facilitate a useful comparison between changes imposed by the regime and ones gained by popular demands. Finally, to evaluate the extent to which a single party predominates the electoral area, I examine whether any party, political bloc or electoral list is able to gain an overwhelming majority of the seats in the KNA.

Beyond the mechanical effect of electoral rules on the proportionality of electoral results, I examine what is often called the psychological effect; in other words, how the expectations of the mechanical effect determine the capacity of parties and blocs to coordinate in the elections to the KNA. Cox (1999) attributes electoral coordination at the district level to two types of decisions strategic entry and strategic voting. I follow Buttorff (2015) in focusing on strategic entry, which is the decision by the candidate, party or bloc to enter the electoral race on the basis of their chances of winning seats in the election (Cox 1999, 149).

Coordination in plurality multimember districts is assumed to follow the insights of Reed (1990; 2003) and Cox (1999), who find that electoral competitions in each district will follow equilibrium of  $M+1$  candidates, where  $M$  is the district magnitude. These insights are based on an extension of Duverger's (1954) theory about SMD plurality outlined previously to multimember plurality. The idea summed by Cox (1999) is that for a district where  $M > 1$ , and the expectations for the candidates order of finish are clear in the poll, then the top  $M-1$  seats are essentially locked down. This means that the

competition will ultimately be over the Mth seat, and there are typically two viable competitors for the Mth seat, which are the last winner and the expected first loser. The expectation then is that  $(M-1)+2$  viable candidates will run for the elections, which reduces to  $M+1$  candidates (Cox 1999, 152). Any deviation from the  $M+1$  generalization thus is based on an inaccurate estimation of the prospective candidate vote shares and is clear evidence of coordination failure. To measure the deviation from the  $M+1$  generalization I follow Hsieh and Niemi's (1999) indicator of candidate viability. The indicator is meant to estimate the number of candidates who can get 70% or more of the vote share of the last winner i.e. the candidate who won the Mth seat in the district Hsieh and Niemi's (1999, 110).

## **Empirical Assessment: Disproportionality and Coordination**

I start by evaluating the level of proportionality for the 2003 and 2006 elections which took place under the block vote system, with 25 districts and 2 votes per voter. To do this I look at dispersion of the seat share between the political blocs/ electoral blocs in the KNA, how the votes for these blocs and lists are translated into seats, and the overall level of disproportionality in the elections using the LSq measure I outlined in the previous section. Table 3 shows that for both the 2003 and 2006 elections no bloc or electoral list gained a majority of the seat shares in the KNA. In fact, the largest vote share gained by any party was 10% in 2003 and 12% in 2006, which is 5 and 6 seats, respectively, out of the 50 seats in the assembly. The overall level disproportionality based on the LSq was 7.02 and 8.02, for 2003 and 2006 respectively.

In comparison to the international mean of 7.59, elections to the KNA do not produce results that are severely disproportional.<sup>22</sup> However, the overall measure of disproportionality does not reveal much about the electoral fortune of the individual

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<sup>22</sup> The international average is based on Christopher Gandrud's data which expands on Gallagher's (1991) work. See here for more details  
[http://christophergandrud.github.io/Disproportionality\\_Data/](http://christophergandrud.github.io/Disproportionality_Data/)

political blocs and electoral lists, especially how their size affects the vote-to-seat share. Looking at the seat to vote shares in table 3 we find that the electoral system's effect on the vote-to-seat share is erratic in 2003 and 2006. In other words, it is not immediately clear if the electoral system mechanically rewards larger or smaller parties.

**Table 3 – The Results for the 2003 and 2006 KNA Elections**

Political Bloc/Electoral List	2003			2006		
	Vote (%)	Seat (%)	Bonus	Vote (%)	Seat (%)	Bonus
Peace and Justice Rally (PJR)	0.81	2	1.19	0.52	0	-0.52
National Islamic Alliance (NIA)	1.05	0	-1.05	1.75	4	2.25
Democratic Forum	0.84	0	-0.84	1.34	2	0.66
Constitutional Islamic Movement (HADAS)	5.47	4	-1.47	4.75	12	7.25
Salafi Islamic Rally (SIR)	3.33	6	2.67	4.56	4	-0.56
Popular Action Bloc (PAB)	6.34	10	3.66	NA	NA	NA
Salamis	2.35	4	1.65	NA	NA	NA
Salafi Movement (SM)	0.51	2	1.49	2.06	4	1.94
National Democratic Rally (TWD)	0.53	0	-0.53	NA	NA	NA
Independents	78.76	72	NA	85.02	74	NA
		7.27			8.02	

Notes: By independents I mean any candidates who do not belong to a political bloc. The bonus for independents was not calculated because they don't form a bloc. Moreover, when calculating the disproportionality index each independent candidate was treated as a separate party because lumping independents together and counting them, as a single party will artificially distort the value of the disproportionality index.

To get a clearer understanding of how the electoral system affects the electoral fortunes of parties, I plot the proportionality profile for both elections. Referring to Figure 2, we find that in general the larger blocs do not receive large seat bonuses and in some cases they are penalized by a disproportionately lower seat share despite their comparatively high vote share, such as the case of HADAS. By contrast the two blocs, the Islamist Salafi Movement bloc (SM) and the Shiite bloc Peace and Justice Bloc (PJR) that received the lowest vote share has the highest advantage ratio.

**Figure 2: Proportionality Profile for the 2003 Election**

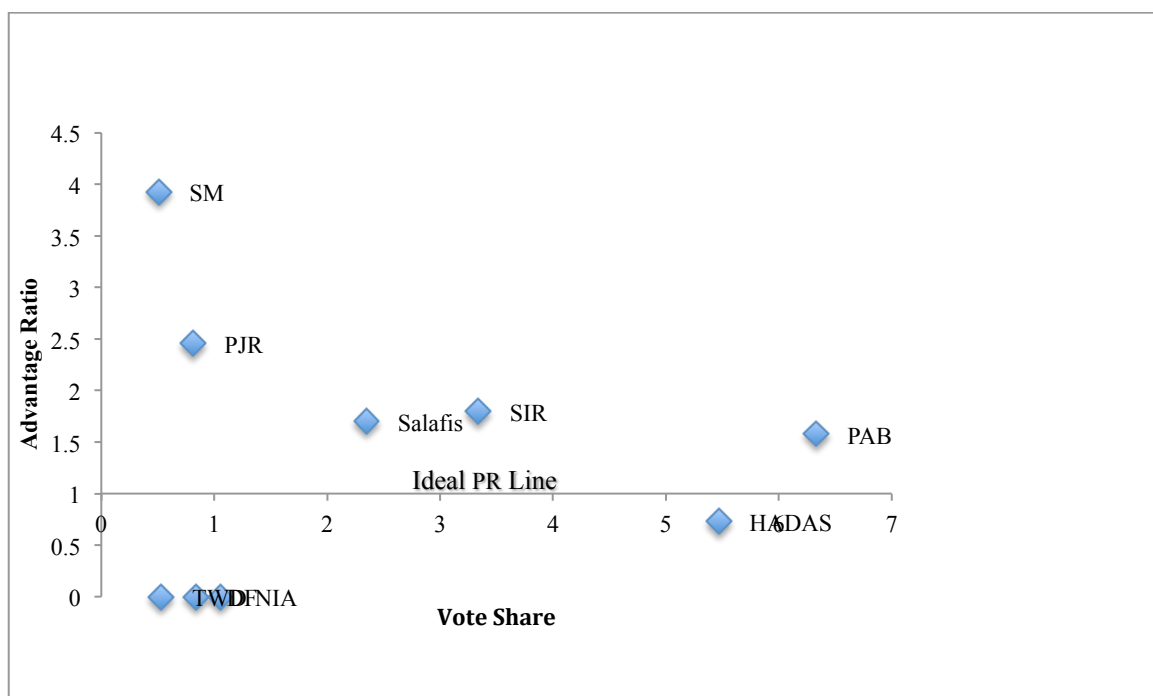
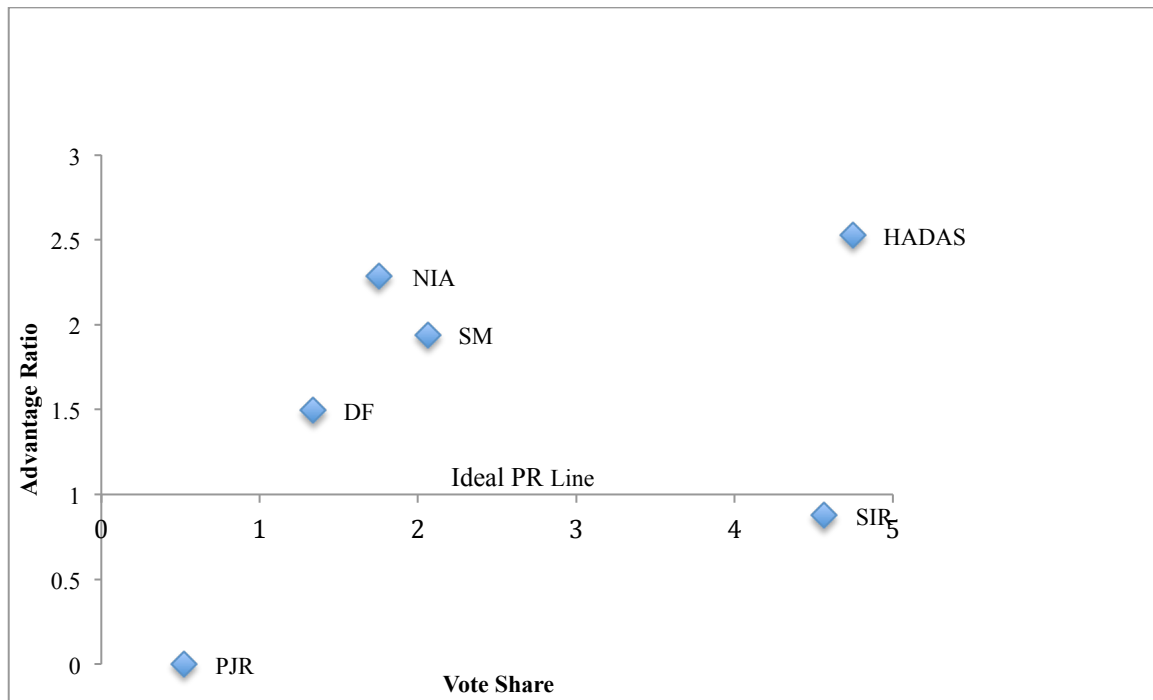


Figure 3 of the proportionality profile of the 2006 elections provide a somewhat similar view to Figure 2 with the exception that one of the blocs, HADAS (which earned the highest votes share), gained a large seat bonus as demonstrated by its high advantage ratio. Moreover, it can be noted again that the smaller parties, like the National Islamic Alliance (NIA), the Salafi Movement (SM) and the Democratic Forum (DM), also faired well, gaining seat shares well above their vote share. Thus, it seems like the block vote system in general gave most political blocs a seat share bonus, but this especially true for smaller blocs.

**Figure 3: Proportionality Profile for the 2006 Election**



Finally I move on to examining the level of coordination between the political blocs. I use Hsieh and Niemi's (1999) indicator, which is explained in the previous section, to see the extent to which the number of viable candidates exceeds the equilibrium of  $M+1$ . The higher the number of candidates in excess of  $M+1$  in a district, the lower the level of electoral coordination between the political blocs is. I follow Reed

(1990) in classifying the competitiveness of districts based on the number of viable candidates in the districts: under competitive districts with M candidates, competitive districts with M+1 candidates, over competitive districts with M+2 candidates and hyper competitive districts with M+3. From table 2 one can note that in 2003 the vast majority of districts had a percentage of viable candidates that exceeded the M+1 equilibrium by a huge margin. In fact, the majority of the 25 districts, 60%, were over competitive or hypercompetitive. While only 24% fell in the M+1 equilibrium. The same is true of the 2006 election where, again 60% of the 25 districts were over competitive or hypercompetitive. Interestingly, though, the number of districts that fell within the M+1 equilibrium increased in this election to 32% of the districts. Thus, it is clear that the 2006 and 2003 elections were mired by a serious lack of coordination between the political blocs in most electoral districts.

**Table 2: Number of Viable Candidates in the 2003 and 2006 Elections**

	Under competitive	Competitive	Over competitive	Hypercompetitive
Year	M	M+1	M+2	M+3
2003	16	24	32	28
2006	8	32	12	48

To facilitate comparison between the block vote system and the limited vote system I proceed by analyzing the 2008, 2009 and 2012 elections, which took place under the limited vote system with 5 districts and 4 votes per voter. I follow the same steps by examining the dispersion of the seat share between the political blocs/ electoral blocs in the KNA, how the votes for these blocs and lists are translated into seats, the overall level of disproportionality in the elections using the Less measure, as well as the proportionality profile for each of these elections.

Table 4 demonstrates that like the elections under the block vote, the elections under the limited vote system also yielded results where no political bloc or electoral list gained a majority of seats in the KNA. Indeed, the largest percentage of seats gained by any party in these elections ranged at most between 8%-10%. The overall level disproportionality measured by the LSq was 6.04, 6.24 and 7.18 for 2008, 2009 and 2012 respectively. Comparing these number to the international mean of 7.59 elections to the KNA under the limited vote do not produce results that are severely disproportional.<sup>23</sup> In fact, elections under the limited vote were slightly less disproportional then under the block vote system. In terms of the seat share bonuses or penalties the political blocs and electoral lists get based on their vote share, here again from table 4 the trend for the three elections appears erratic just like under the block vote elections. Thus, it is more useful to rely on the proportionality profiles for the three elections in order to get a better sense of the mechanical effect of the electoral system on the vote-to-seat share dividends or losses.

**Table 4 – The Results for the 2008, 2009 and 2012 KNA Elections**

Political Bloc/Electoral List	2008			2009		
	Vote (%)	Seat (%)	Bonus	Vote (%)	Seat (%)	Bonus
Peace and Justice Rally (PJR)	2.22	2	-0.22	1.19	2	0.81
National Islamic Alliance (NIA)	–	–	–	0.19	0	-0.19
Democratic Forum	–	–	–	2.00	2	0.00
Constitutional Islamic Movement (HADAS)	5.49	8	2.51	3.69	2	-1.69
Salafi Islamic Rally (SIR)	4.35	8	3.65	2.96	4	1.04
National Democratic Alliance (NDA)	4.54	6	1.46	1.94	4	2.06
Hizb Al-Ummah(HAU)	1.21	0	-1.21		–	
Coalition List - Shiite 12ver List (SCL)	3.09	6	2.91		–	

<sup>23</sup>



Awazim - Tribal List (AWA)	10.04	10	-0.04	7.16	8	0.84
Rashayda - Tribal List (RSH)	4.17	6	1.83	5.59	8	2.41
Mutair- Tribal List (MUT)	4.84	6	1.16	5.96	6	0.04
Zufair - Tribal List (ZUF)	1.65	0	-1.65		—	—
Ajman - Tribal List (AJM)	6.36	6	-0.36	6.21	8	1.79
Kuwait Unites Us (KUU)	3.83	2	-1.83		—	—
Hawajir-Mutiar-Kanadir -Subai'- Family +Tribal List (HMKS-FTL)	4.63	2	-2.63	—	—	—
Peace and Friendship Rally (PFR)	—	—	—	0.10	0	-0.10
Haswai Message Group (HMG)	—	—	—	0.55	2	1.45
Multazimoon - Unaza -Tribal List (MULT-TL)	—	—	—	2.10	0	-2.10
Motawakloon - Zufair-Ottban- Awazim (ZOA-TL)	—	—	—	2.10	0	-2.10
Hawajir-Mottran-Otban-Dawasir - Tribal List (HMOD-TL)	—	—	—	6.24	4	-2.24
Alliance (ALLI)	—	—	—	0.41	0	-0.41
Abdali razhan list (AZL)	—	—	—	0.24	0	-0.24
Shiite Alliance (SHA)**	—	—	—	3.15	4	0.85
The Fourth for Everyone (FE)	—	—	—	1.04	0	-1.04
Kandari-Subai-Suhool-Anaza - Family+Tribal List (KSSA-FTL)	—	—	—	3.53	0	-3.53
Free Voice (FV)	—	—	—		—	—
Independents (IND)						
Disproportionality Index		6.04			6.42	

Notes: By independents I mean any candidates who do not belong to a political bloc. The bonus for independents was not calculated because they don't form a bloc. Moreover, when calculating the disproportionality index each independent candidate was treated as a separate party because lumping independents together and counting them, as a single party will artificially distorts the value of the disproportionality index.

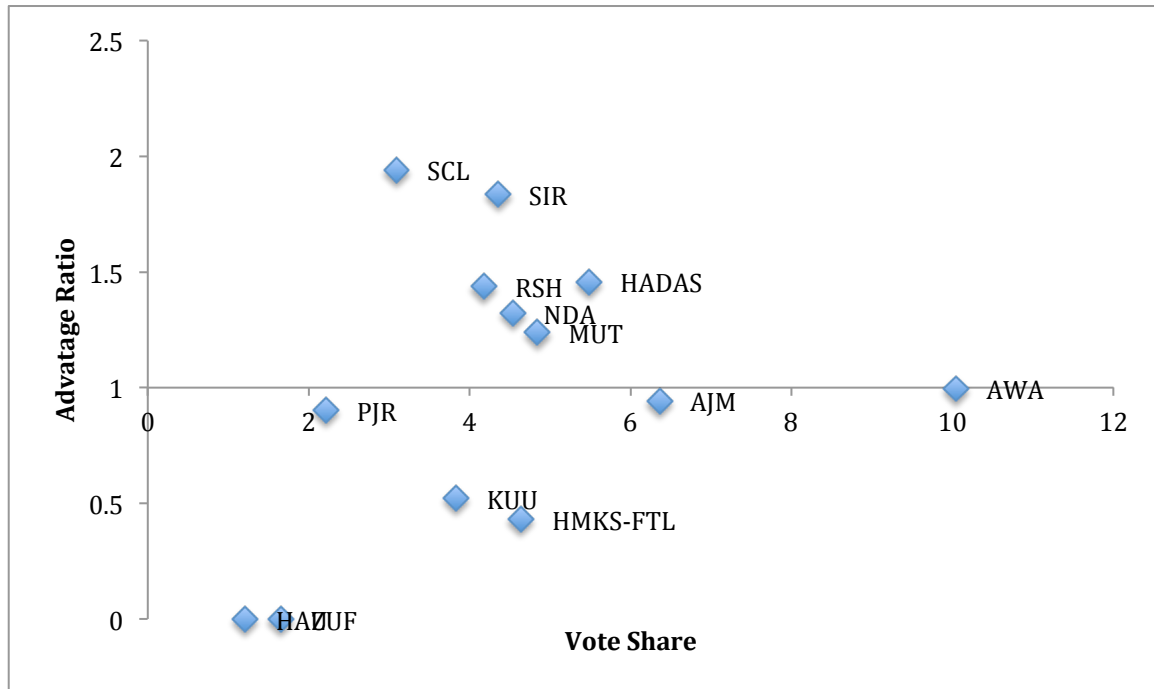
**Table 4 - Continued – The Results for the 2008, 2009 and 2012 KNA Elections**

Political Bloc/Electoral List	2012		
	Vote (%)	Seat (%)	Bonus
Peace and Justice Rally (PJR)	0.996	2	1.00
National Islamic Alliance (NIA)	1.65	4	2.35
Democratic Forum	1.40	0	-1.40
Constitutional Islamic Movement (HADAS)	4.12	8	3.88
Salafi Islamic Rally (SIR)	3.17	8	4.83
Awazim - Tribal List (AWA)	5.50	8	2.50
Mutair- Tribal List (MUT)	2.43	2	-0.43
Zufair - Tribal List (ZUF)		–	
Ajman - Tribal List (AJM)	5.07	6	0.93
Free Voice (FV)	0.11	0	-0.11
Independents (IND)*			
Disproportionality Index		7.18	

Notes: By independents I mean any candidates who do not belong to a political bloc. The bonus for independents was not calculated because they don't form a bloc. Moreover, when calculating the disproportionality index each independent candidate was treated as a separate party because lumping independents together and counting them as a single party will artificially distort the value of the disproportionality index.

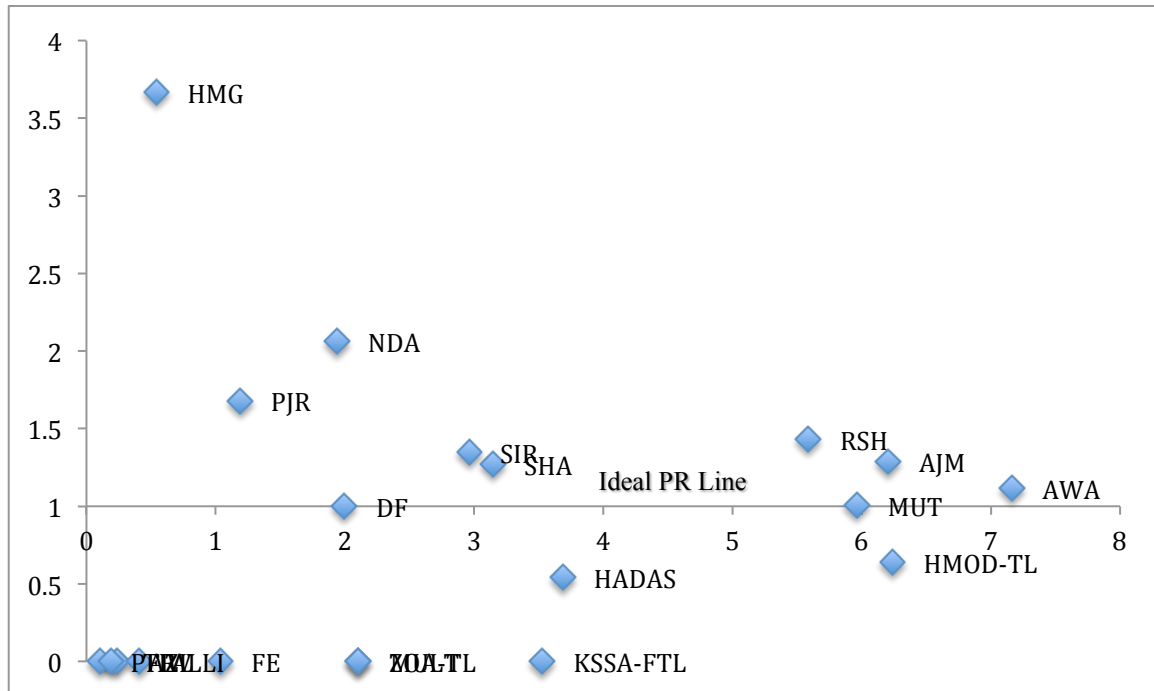
Figure 4 charts the proportionality profile for the 2008 elections. The trend shows that the blocs and electoral lists that have the highest advantage ratios are the medium-sized ones, and to a lesser extent the smaller blocs. On the other hand, the two electoral lists with the largest vote shares, the Ajman and the Awazim tribal lists, gained a seat share exactly proportional to their votes or only slightly less.

**Figure 4: Proportionality Profile for the 2008 Election**



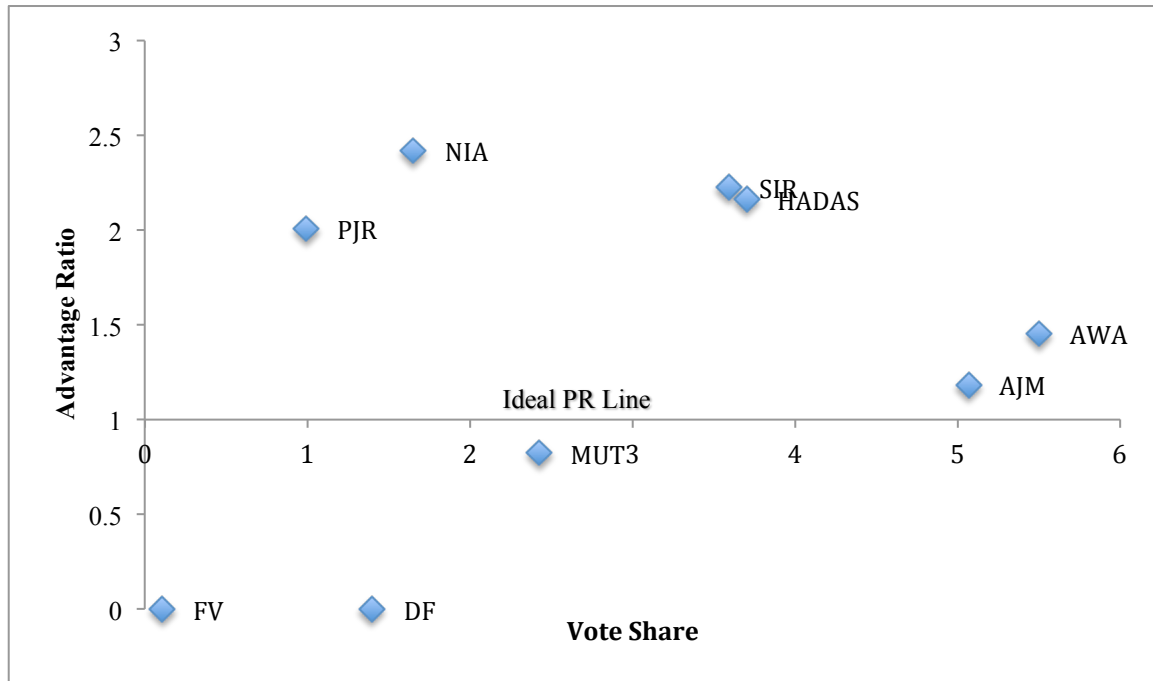
In the 2009 elections the proportionality profile demonstrates that the parties with the largest vote share as well as the medium sized parties had an advantage ratio that lay either directly on the ideal PR line or only slightly above it. In contrast the three blocs/lists with the lowest vote share, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the Peace and Justice Rally (PJR) and the Hasawi Message Group (HMG), had the highest advantage ratios respectively.

**Figure 4: Proportionality Profile for the 2009 Election**



Finally the trend for the proportionality profile of the 2012 shows that the medium sized to smaller political blocs and electoral lists had a much higher advantage ratio than the two largest electoral lists. In fact, the two largest electoral lists, the Awazim and Ajman tribal lists, were only slightly above the idea PR line despite their high vote share. Hence, the limited voted system has generally been more favorable to medium sized and smaller blocs and electoral lists, while generally giving most blocs and electoral lists a seat share that is disproportionately more than their vote share,

**Figure 5: Proportionality Profile for the 2012 Election**



I conclude by exploring the level of coordination between the political blocs under the limited vote system. For all three elections none of the districts had a percentage of viable candidates that fell within the range of the  $M+1$  equilibrium, as we can see from table 3. In fact, all of the districts were either over competitive or hypercompetitive. To be more precise the vast majority of the districts were hyper competitive, showing that the lack of coordination under the limited voted system higher and more severe than under the block vote system.

**Table 3: Number of Viable Candidates in the 2008, 2009 and 2012 Elections**

	Under Competitive	Competitive	Over Competitive	Hyper Competitive
Year	M	M+1	M+2	M+3
2012	0	0	40	60
2009	0	0	20	80
2008	0	0	0	100

## Discussion and Implications

The empirical assessment in the previous section reveals several important findings. First, as hypothesis one predicts, the seat share is indeed dispersed such that no single political bloc or electoral list gained an overwhelming or even slight majority of the seats in the KNA. Thus the literature is accurate in its assessment of these types of regimes, and their effect on single party/ruling party success.

The results regarding the proportionality of the election results, hypothesis two, are a bit more complicated. The Less for the all of the elections shows that the systems overall are not disproportional by international standards; however the proportionality profiles painted a more nuanced picture. The proportionality profiles in general show that larger political blocs and electoral lists were in fact disadvantaged under both electoral systems, while the medium and especially the smaller one blocs gained more as evidenced by the advantage ratio. In regards to coordination, the significant deviations from the  $M+1$  equilibrium in the vast majority of the electoral districts demonstrates that overall the political blocs and electoral lists did not coordinate effectively to form larger blocs. Thus, the evidence is also in favor of hypothesis three stating that the level of coordination between parties in monarchical and strong regimes should be weak.

Finally, the empirical assessment points to the fact that the limited vote system was more proportional than the block vote system based, with lower LSq scores under the Limited Voted system. Moreover, the level of coordination is much higher under the limited voted system, with the vast majority of districts having a number of viable candidates falling under the category of hyper competitive districts. These districts have a number of viable candidates that is above  $M+3$ .

The results provide evidence that monarchies and strong regimes, based on the case of the KNA, do indeed adopt electoral rules that tend to be more permissive and

allow a more diverse representation of political and social groups. In addition, these rules seem to disadvantage larger, more organized political blocs and electoral lists, lending credence to the claim that these electoral rules create coordination problems. They complicate coordination efforts among the political and social groups encouraging them to run separately rather than forming coalitions.

Nevertheless, these results should be treated with caution for a number of reasons. For instance, the period covered is limited to only five electoral cycles and it could be the case that this limits the scope of our understanding of how political groups react overtime to the changes in the electoral system. Not only this, but the mechanisms that produce this lack of coordination need greater exploration at the district level, especially given the complications that political and social groups face when nominating candidates in multimember plurality systems (Lijphart et.al 1986). Future research will focus on expanding the analysis to cover the full period of elections to the KNA from 1963-2013. It will also probe deeper into district level dynamics, especially in regards to the nomination dilemmas, which face political and social groups in multimember plurality systems. Finally, given that this paper mostly focused on organized political blocs and electoral lists future research will also aim to integrate the important role of independent candidates in the elections to the KNA.

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# **Dimensions of Conflict in an Authoritarian Hybrid Regime: Kuwait's National Assembly**

## **Abstract**

The geometric analysis of legislative voting has made significant advances in our understanding of voting patterns and dimensions of conflict in legislatures. Originally developed and popularized by Pool and Rosenthal (1985) to study the American Congress, the method became a standard for studying roll call votes in democratic system. The method was utilized to study different democratic regime types, for example presidential vs. parliamentary systems. It also spread geographically to Europe, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Yet to date it has not been utilized in authoritarian contexts. Applying geometric analysis of legislative voting to authoritarian contexts aids in answering questions regarding the dimensions of conflict in authoritarian regimes, particularly within those that lack national programmatic parties. I utilize the case of Kuwait's National Assembly (KNA), within a monarchical regime, to answer these questions. I use the Optimal Classification method to analyze two novel roll call votes datasets, which cover the 11th and 13th terms of the KNA. I find that Kuwait's political structure, which combines features of parliamentary and presidential systems, leads to an assembly that is multidimensional. In particular the two dimensions of conflict are a social divide dimension, and pro- and anti- government divide. The social divide dimension stems from the fact that Kuwait has an un-institutionalized party structure that makes social groups a more important form of political organization than parties.

**Word count:** 7161

**Key words:** Roll Call Vote Analysis, Pool and Rosenthal, Optimal Classification, Presidential, Parliamentary, Agenda Setting, Dimensions of Conflict, Authoritarian Regimes, Monarchies, Kuwait, Arabian Peninsula, Roll Call Votes, Legislatures, Authoritarian Institutions, Arab Politics.

## Introduction

The geometric analysis of legislative voting has made significant advances in our understanding of voting patterns and dimensions of conflict in legislatures. Originally developed and popularized by Pool and Rosenthal (1985) to study the American Congress, the method spread to Europe and became a standard for studying roll call votes in democratic countries. The studies ranged from studying votes in presidential systems to parliamentary ones, and eventually even broke into the developing world with important studies on Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Despite its advances, the method has yet to be applied to authoritarian regimes that have under-institutionalized or non-existent party systems.

Applying the method to authoritarian contexts aids in understanding the extent to which voting patterns and dimensions of conflict in these types of regimes differ from democratic systems. To be more precise: what are the dimensions of conflict in authoritarian regimes that lack national programmatic parties? Are these regimes characterized by unidimensionality or multidimensionality? I utilize the case of Kuwait's National Assembly (KNA), a monarchical regime, to answer these questions. I use the Optimal Classification method, to analyze two novel roll call votes datasets, which cover the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> terms of the KNA. I find that Kuwait's political structure, which combines features of parliamentary and presidential systems, leads to an assembly that is multidimensional. In particular the two dimensions of conflict are a social divide dimension, and pro-anti government divide. The social divide dimension stems from the fact that Kuwait has an un-institutionalized party structure that makes social groups a more important form of political organization than political parties.

## Determinants of Voting Patterns in Legislatures

Ever since Pool and Rosenthal (1985) published their seminal work analyzing voting patterns in the American Congress, spatial models of voting became a standard tool to analyze roll call votes in legislatures around the world. They developed a geometric model of voting that utilizes roll call votes to produce a distribution of legislators' ideal points, in order to form a spatial map that unveils the dimensions of conflict or division in the American congress (1985). They found that unidimensionality in the form of an ideological division between the Republicans and Democrats generally characterizes the American Congress throughout its history.<sup>24</sup> Other studies which extended Pool and Rosenthal's work outside of the US also found evidence of unidimensionality. For instance, studies of parliamentary democracies in Europe found that because the cabinet formed by the majority coalition has control over the legislative agenda, the split in these systems is based on one dimension (i.e. a government-opposition split). Hansen (2008; 2009) found this to be the case in Irish and Danish parliaments. The single dimension, as can be noted, varies based on the case under study. It can be an ideological left-right dimension or one that is based on the allocation of power between a dominant faction in control of government and a group/groups that is/are excluded from power (Hix 2001; Aleman 2012).

The reduction of the legislator's ideal points into one dimension has been criticized. In fact, some studies have found that legislatures can be characterized by multidimensional policy conflicts. The particular combination of dimensions varies of course based on the political and institutional structures of each country. Systems in which multidimensional policy conflicts exist are fundamentally different from unidimensional conflict systems for a number of reasons.

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<sup>24</sup> They also found that a second dimension existed which accounted for the conflict between southern and northern democrats over the issue of slavery and civil rights. Though this was merely an episodic occurrence, which disappeared overtime.

First, scholarship often describes unidimensional legislatures as stable while multidimensional ones as chaotic (McLean 2006; See also Hansen and Debus 2012). A prime example of the chaos that ensues when multidimensions of conflict are predominant is that of the Weimer republic and France's Fourth Republic. In both cases, the lines of policy divisions were between a left-right dimension *and* an anti- regime vs. pro – regime dimension, reflecting a troubled political system (Hansen and Debus 2012; Rosenthal and Voeten 2004). The multidimensionality can also be symptomatic of a newly established party system where legislators are facing a new set of issues and parties have yet to develop distinct programmatic preferences, as in the case of Russia (Bagashka 2008; Andrews 2002). Two other reasons for the predominance of multidimensions of policy divisions are regional divisions and an institutional structure where agenda control is divided between the president and the legislature. Canada is an example of the former case, where the traditional parliamentary dimension pro-governing party vs. opposition dimension exists in conjunction with a regional dimension that separates pro-Quebec vs. anti-Quebec movements (Godbout and Hoyland 2011). In the Korean National Assembly on the other hand, the dimensions depended on control of the legislative agenda. When agenda control was divided, party division was based on partisan/ideological preferences. But when one party gained full agenda control, through winning the presidency and a legislative majority, the dimension of conflict became a government-opposition divide (Hix and Won Jun 2009).

Although differences between unidimensional policy spaces vs multidimensional policy spaces have been examined, the analysis of roll call votes has yet to be adapted to the study of legislatures in authoritarian regimes. As such, we know little about voting patterns in authoritarian regimes and the dimensions of conflict they produce. Examining roll call votes in authoritarian regimes and the effect of their peculiar structures on the voting behavior of legislatures provides useful comparisons with legislatures in

democratic systems. Authoritarian regime types, and their legislatures, obviously vary in terms of both their structure and level of freedom. I focus here on the Kuwaiti National Assembly as an example of an authoritarian regime in a monarchical regime with no national programmatic parties.

This examination can shed light over several important questions. For example, how do legislators in the absence of national programmatic order themselves? Moreover, how does the peculiar political structure of Kuwait, a hereditary executive combined with an elected legislature affect the dimensions of conflict in Kuwait's legislature? The KNA, I argue, combines two features that make it subject to a combination of the dynamics found in both presidential and parliamentary regimes. First, members of the KNA can put forth motions of confidence against ministers. Motions of confidences, described by Rasch (2014) and Muller and Sieberer (2014) as the defining property and essence of the parliamentary system, often lead to the development of dimensions of conflict based on a government-opposition split (Hix and Jun 2009). In other words, it creates a divide between MPs who support members of the executive/cabinet and MPs who seek to remove them.

Yet unlike parliamentary systems, in the KNA agenda control is not vested in the cabinet/government (Tsebelis 2002; Obler 1981; See also Rasch 2014). Instead, it is divided between the executive and the legislature as in many presidential regimes where both have the right to initiate legislation and agenda setting is not monopolized by one side over the other (Shugart and Carey 1992; See also Hix and Jun 2009). Under democratic systems with institutionalized parties, parties are "free to propose bills on the issues they care about" - meaning that the divide will be driven by the ideological interests of these parties on a variety of issues (Hix and Jun 2009, 673-674). But under a system like the KNA where parties are not legally sanctioned or banned, the divide will be driven by the interests of other forms of political organization (such as social, religious

and ethnic groups). Thus, in the next section, I will put forth the argument that voting in the KNA will produce patterns of conflict or division that are multidimensional. On the one hand, there will be division based on the polarization between the interests of social groups. On the other hand, another dimension will develop along a government-opposition dimension driven by those who support the cabinet ministers and those who seek to remove them.

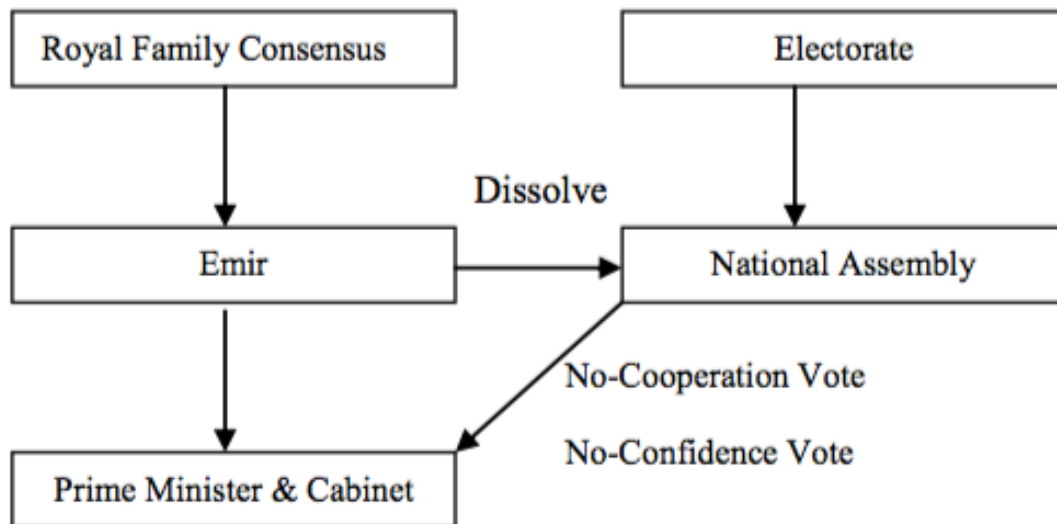
### **The Kuwaiti Political System: Expectations for the Dimensions of Conflict in a Hybrid System**

In this section I will describe the Kuwaiti political system and the KNA in particular, in order to provide context for the arguments I put forth in the previous section. The Kuwaiti system is a unique hybrid, which combines a hereditary executive structure and an elected assembly. Institutionally the Emir, who is a member of the ruling Al-Sabah family, stands at the apex of the hybrid political system, which combines a hereditary executive structure dominated by the ruling royal Al-Sabah family, and an elected assembly. This assembly, the KNA, was given considerable oversight and law making powers as well as checks on executive power in the constitution of Kuwait created in 1962. Figure 1 below illustrates the basic political structure of Kuwait.



**Figure 1 – The Structure of Executive- Legislative Relations in Kuwait**

### Structure of Executive Legislative Relations in Kuwait



The KNA is composed of fifty members "elected directly by universal suffrage and secret ballot," though ministers, who are appointed by the Emir, are ex-officio members (Kuwait Constitution Article 80). Ministers who serve as ex-officio members of the KNA can vote on all issues except motions of confidence. The MPs are usually self-nominated and compete in multi-member districts. Aside from a fraudulent election in 1967, the assembly has generally continued to be freely and fairly elected (Al-Khatib 2007)(Al- Shayji 1988)(Al-Otaibi 2010)(Al-Saeedi 2003). In fact, from table 1 below it is notable that the KNA's EEI is generally above the mean of other authoritarian regimes included in the sample (Fish 2009). The EEI is a measure of electoral freedom composed of 4 components - Freedom of Candidate of Participation, Fairness of Voter Registration, Voting Procedures and Vote Count, and Freedom of Expression in Electoral Campaigns. Thus it becomes clear that the KNA is a substantive institution.

The KNA is also a fairly strong legislature based on the Parliamentary Power Index (PPI), which measures legislative power based on three components - Influence on the Executive, Institutional Autonomy and Special Powers. From Table 2, one can see that the KNA's PPI scores, and its components except institutional capacity, are above the mean of the other authoritarian regimes included in the sample.

**Table 1**  
**Parliamentary Election Index**

	Kuwait	Mean	Min	Max
Parliamentary Election Index (EEI)	9	4.84	0	11
Freedom of Candidate Participation	3	1.8	0	4
Fairness of Voter Registration, Voting Procedures and Vote Count	3	1.47	0	4
Freedom of Expression in Electoral Campaigns	3	1.48	0	3

Notes and Source: The e-Parliament Election Index (EEI) is made up of three principal components Freedom of Candidate Participation, Fairness of Voter Registration, Voting Procedures and Vote Count, and Freedom of Expression in Electoral Campaigns. For more details see <http://polisci.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/people/u3833/eParliamentElectionIndex.pdf>.

**Table 2**  
**Parliamentary Power Index**

	Kuwait	Mean
Parliamentary Power Index	0.38	0.33
Influence on the Executive	3	2.19
Institutional Autonomy	2	2.91
Special Powers	2	2.02
Institutional Capacity	5	3.33

Notes and Source: The Index is made up of the three component listed in the table. For more details see Parliamentary Power Index Scores in M. Steven Fish and Matthew Kroenig, *The Handbook of National Legislatures: A Global Survey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Or alternatively visit <http://polisci.berkeley.edu/people/person/m-steven-fish>.

As discussed in the previous section two features define executive-legislative relations in Kuwait apart. First, agenda setting in the KNA is not monopolized by any branch and both the legislature and the government can initiate legislation. The Emir has the power to "propose, sanction, and promulgate laws" and he does so through the cabinet and prime minister, who is also a member of the royal family (Kuwait Constitution Article 65). He also has the right to issue emergency decrees should an emergency arise when the national assembly is not in session or has been dissolved (Kuwait Constitution Article 71). KNA members can also initiate laws, and no law is to be promulgated unless the KNA passes it, after which, it is sanctioned by the Emir (Kuwait Constitution Article 79). Even when the Emir issues decrees, he has to submit these decrees to the KNA within 15 days, whether the KNA is, or is not, in session or it is dissolved during the first meeting after the KNA reopens (Kuwait Constitution Article 71).

As such, agenda setting power is split between the government and the KNA and the dimensions of conflict should reflect an ideological split based on the interests of the parties in the legislature, based on the fact that each of the parties can essentially initiate legislation on issues that pertain to them. However, the nature of Kuwait's political

system is such that parties are not legally sanctioned or banned. This is not to say that political groups do not operate in Kuwait; they in fact do, but they tend to be weak and non-institutionalized. Social groups are thus more important for understanding voting patterns in the KNA, given that affiliation with these groups is much stronger in Kuwait than political affiliation. This is consistent with the arguments put forth about monarchies and authoritarian regimes with no strong national parties attempting to make “pre-existing religious, ethnic and/or regional cleavages in a country more salient to electoral outcomes” (Posusney 2002; page). Not only this, but there is often a close association and intersection between social group affiliation and political group association, as I will clarify below. *Hence, given that the KNA is a legislature bound by a political structure with divided agenda control and weak or non-existent political parties, the main dimension of conflict will be based on the division between social groups and the bundle of issues that pertain to them.*

This, as I had previously noted, will not be the only dimension of conflict that develops in the KNA. The members of the KNA, much like in other parliamentary systems, can put forth motions of confidence. The government in turn has the right to dissolve the KNA as I showed in figure 1. Furthermore, the KNA as a legislature has three interconnected powers vis-à-vis the government or executive. First, members of the KNA can interpolate the ministers and the prime minister on matters within their jurisdiction (Article 100). This right is a vital and definitive right in as much as it enables the members to essentially accuse the prime minister or his ministers of misconduct, and may lead to a vote of no confidence on the ministers in question. A vote of no confidence on a minister can be brought forth by 10 members of the KNA following an interpolation of the minister in question (“Halat hal al”) (“Alikhtisas,” 2007). The motion passes if the majority of the KNA members, except ex-officio members, vote for it. Interestingly the articles of the constitution do not give the KNA the right of a no confidence vote in the

prime minister. Nevertheless, the constitution grants the KNA a similar right but subject to different rules. If the KNA reaches a point of deadlock where it becomes apparent that it cannot cooperate with the prime minister, then the KNA can submit a request of no cooperation (subject to the same rules and regulations as a no confidence vote) to the Emir (Article 102). In this case, the Emir can, at his own discretion, either relieve the prime minister of his responsibilities or appoint a new cabinet. Or, he can simply dissolve the KNA (Article 102). Once the KNA is dissolved there has to be an election for a new assembly within two months from the date of the dissolution (Article 107). Once the new assembly is elected, if the new majority decides that it cannot cooperate with the prime minister (using the same procedures outlined above) and thus votes on no-cooperation, then the Emir is considered relieved of his duties and a new cabinet is to be formed (Article 102). It should be noted that the Emir also retains the power to dissolve the parliament at his own discretion even if there are no votes of non-cooperation with the prime minister. *Given this structure, which bears a strong similarity to executive-legislative relations in parliamentary democracies, another dimension of conflict in the KNA is likely to develop: a government-opposition dimension based on support for or opposition to motions of confidence.*

## **Data, Method and Analysis: Kuwait's 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Legislative Terms**

### ***Data***

I examine the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> legislative terms of the KNA to illustrate the predominance of the two dimensions outlined in the previous sections. The 12<sup>th</sup> section is not included because it only contained a total of around 35 non-unanimous votes and many legislators were dropped due to the small number of roll call votes. This made the analysis using the methods I describe below implausible. For the legislative terms included, I classify legislators both in terms of the parliamentary blocs they belong to and

their social groups. The classification is based on a combination of Michael Herb's Kuwait Politics Database (Herb), interviews with Kuwaiti scholars, as well as my own collection of data using monographs and newspaper reports on Kuwait's assembly.

Before moving to the other portion of the data, which is roll call votes, it is important to expand a bit on parliamentary blocs and social groups. First, though Kuwait does not have political parties officially, overtime political and parliamentary blocs have formed based on ideological programs, social affiliations, and similar stances on issues. Historically, Kuwait's political system has seen several political blocs form around three main political currents: Arab Nationalists/Liberals, Islamists, and Populists (Al-Ghazi 2007; Al- Saeedi 2010; Al-Qiwwa Al-Siyasiyya Wa Al-Kotal Al-Niyabbiya Fi Al-Kuwait 2013). Political blocs are often very important and have increasingly been used in recent years for electoral purposes, with parliamentary blocs taking on a more important role. It should be noted that political blocs and parliamentary blocs are different, and while there may be an intersection between them at times, it is often the case (with some exceptions) that candidates enter into the legislative election as members of certain political blocs. Once they are in the legislature, they form parliamentary blocs, which combine likeminded individuals *and* political blocs. For examples, members of the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated political bloc, members of the Islamist Scientific Salafi movement, as well as independent Islamists, run as independents or members of their respective blocs. Once elected, they sometimes coalesce and form one parliamentary bloc as in the case of the parliamentary development and reform bloc in 2009, which featured Islamists from a number of political blocs. For the purposes of this paper, the focus will be on parliamentary blocs as opposed to political blocs because the former are more crucial to understanding voting patterns. Table 3 below provides a breakdown of the parliamentary blocs in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> KNA.

**Table 3: Seat Distribution in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Legislative Terms**

Parliamentary Bloc	Ideological Orientation	11 <sup>th</sup> (2006-2008)	13 <sup>th</sup> (2009-2011)
Popular Action Bloc	Populist	7	4
National Action Bloc	Liberal	8	6
HADAS Islamist Bloc	Islamist	6	—
Independent Islamist Bloc	Islamist	8	—
Independents Bloc	Service Oriented	12	—
Salafi Islamist Bloc (Rally)	Islamist	3	2
Development and Reform	Islamist	—	4
Service	Service Oriented	—	13
Independents	Members who don't belong to blocs	6	21

Note: Independents bloc is an official parliamentary bloc while service is not. I coded MPs that were service oriented in the 13<sup>th</sup> term and group them together in one bloc because they often have a similar voting record. They vote along with the government on motions of confidence but defect from the government when it comes to economic issues.

In terms of social groups, there are three main groups in Kuwait: the Sunni Hadar, the Sunni Tribes, and the Shiites. Historically, an ever-changing relationship between these three social groups and the royal Al-Sabah family has characterized politics in Kuwait. Although these groups share a general belief in the legitimacy of Al-Sabah rule and the role of the Emir as the main arbiter of the system, the division between these groups is often stark and cuts across the lines of class, ideology, and sect. To be more precise, the division between these social groups is based on differences that stem concurrently from: 1) sectarian affiliation, 2) immigration and settlement patterns, 3) citizenship laws, and 4) relationship with the royal family during early periods of struggle for a participatory political system.

To understand these groups further, consider the following examples. The Hadar are historically the most powerful group economically in Kuwait, based on the fact that they are the heirs of the merchants who were responsible for establishing the country's participatory system (Ghabra 1997; Al-Otaibi 2010; Al-Najjar 2010). Moreover, they control a significant portion of the economy (Al-Fadalah, 2010). Contrast this with the fact that a significant proportion of tribes are a group that settled at a later point in time into Kuwait, and were granted nationality at a later stage (Longva 2006; Al-Nakib 2013). It is perhaps then not surprising that the tribes, despite benefitting from the state's rentier largess, are not as advantaged as the Hadar economically in terms of their control of the private sector and the economy (Al-Fadalah, 2010; Ghabra 1997).

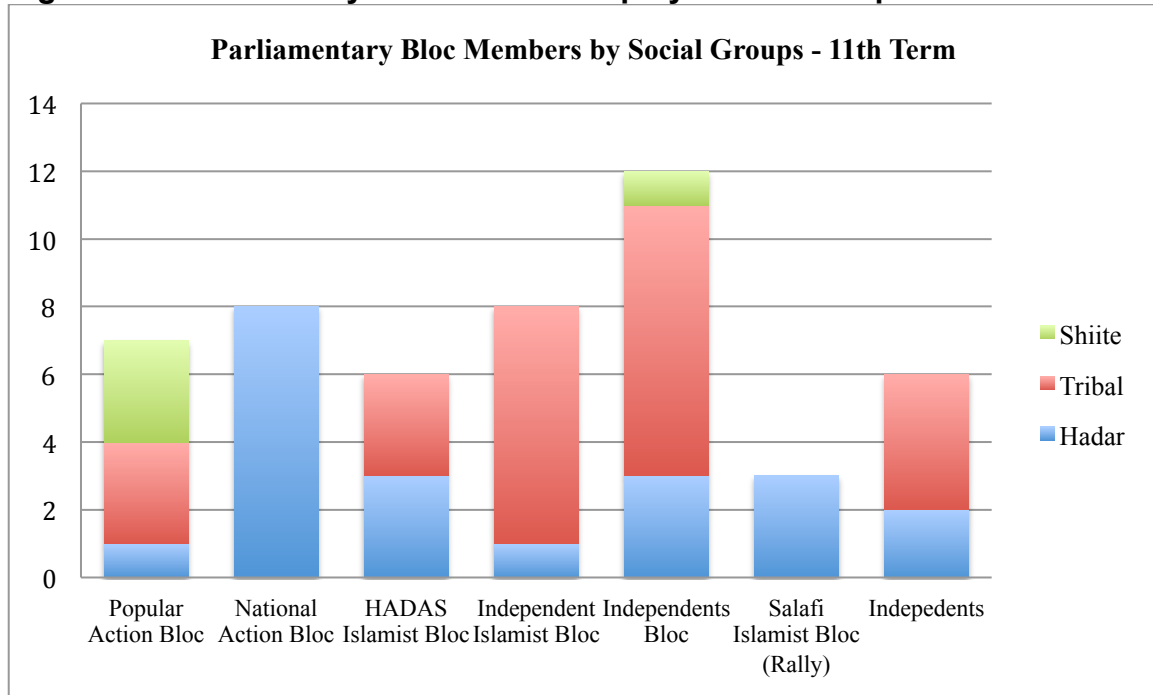
The formation of these political and parliamentary blocs has often been intersected with three main social groups in Kuwait just mentioned. The intersection between these social groups and political affiliation becomes clearer if we consider the following. Liberal blocs are concentrated almost exclusively in Hadar electoral districts, while Islamist blocs can be found in tribal as well as Hadar districts. They, unlike their liberal counterparts, have a reasonable showing in tribal areas (Al-Harbi 2003; Al-Saeedi 2010). The populist "Popular Action bloc" during its early stages was the most diverse bloc, with a strong showing in Hadar, tribal and Shiite dominated districts. However, since 2008 onwards, its showing has been relegated to tribally dominated districts, save for its only Hadar member Ahmad Al-Saadoun.

Finally, one important category of legislators that should be mentioned is what is often described as "service MPs" in the lexicon of Kuwaiti politics. Services MPs tend "to act as intermediaries between their constituents and the regime" and in particular they provide "scarce and selective benefits ranging from permits to import labor to authorizations to seek medical care abroad" (Tetreault 2000). In other words, these MPs

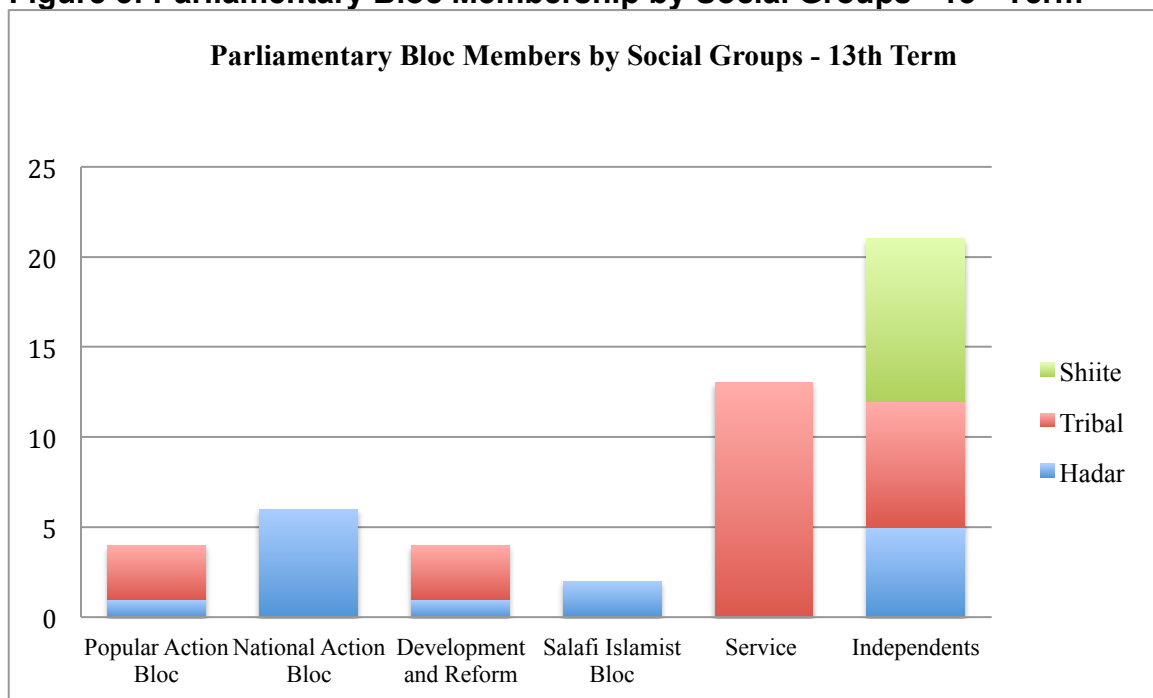


do not usually run on an ideological platform. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the intersection between parliamentary bloc membership and social group affiliation.

**Figure 2: Parliamentary Bloc Membership by Social Groups - 11<sup>th</sup> Term**



**Figure 3: Parliamentary Bloc Membership by Social Groups - 13<sup>th</sup> Term**



The roll call votes for the KNA were extracted by examining the transcripts of every legislative session for the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> assemblies. By combining legislator data and roll call votes, I created two novel datasets that cover the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> sessions. These sessions took place in 2006-2008 and 2009-2011 respectively. There were around 200 roll call votes in the 11<sup>th</sup> session. After dropping the unanimous votes, the number drops to 74 votes. Additionally, there were a total of around 170 votes in the 13<sup>th</sup> session. After dropping the unanimous votes in that session, the number dropped to 157 votes. The main categories of votes are: motions of confidence, economic issues, budget, distributive benefits, immunity removal, procedural issues, social issues, political issues, environmental issues, and issues regarding corruption.

**Table 4: Summary of Rolls Call Votes for the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Sessions**

Category	13 <sup>th</sup>		11 <sup>th</sup>	
	Number of Votes	% Of Votes	Number of Votes	% Of Votes
Budget	32	21.33%	17	22.97%
Motions of confidence	15	10.00%	1	1.35%
Economic	23	15.33%	24	32.43%
Corruption	8	5.33%	2	2.70%
Distributive Benefits	12	8.00%	7	9.46%
Immunity Removal	31	20.67%	7	9.46%
Religious Affairs	7	4.67%	4	5.41%
Political	2	1.33%	7	9.46%
Social Welfare	12	8.00%	0	0.00%
Environmental	1	0.67%	0	0.00%
Procedural	2	1.33%	0	0.00%
Other	5	3.33%	5	6.76%
Total	150	—	74	—

***Method***

The analysis of roll call votes was revolutionized with the development of Pool and Rosenthal's Nominate Procedure to analyze the US Congress (Poole & Rosenthal 1985)(Poole 2005). Though the method is a particularly powerful method for estimating the "ideal point" of legislators, its assumption of independent and identically distributed (i.i.d.) errors poses problems when the method is used in contexts outside of the US Congress (Rosenthal & Voeten, 2004). The Optimal Classification (OC) Method developed by Pool (2005) provides a useful alternative in that it is a non-parametric

method used to analyze roll call votes and unveil the “ideal points” of legislators, without making assumptions about the distribution of errors.

The character of the KNA makes OC a particularly well-suited method for analyzing roll call votes in it. This is the case because the KNA’s political structure (combining of independent legislators, parliamentary blocs, ministers as de facto members and the strong influence of social group affiliation) is likely to violate the assumption of i.i.d. errors. To be sure, there is a high level of variation in voting discipline amongst the social groups, parliamentary groups, and ministers in the KNA. We find for example that while the ministers and small number of legislators in the opposition vote as a bloc, the majority of legislators are more erratic and constantly shift their positions vis-à-vis the government. Secondly, we find that in many instances defections within parliamentary blocs are common to some extent. These issues can only be rectified using a model that does not make assumptions about the distribution of errors.

### *Analysis*

Table 4 below summarizes the overall fit of the spatial model as estimated by the Optimal Classification (OC) algorithm. The table shows the results estimated for a two dimensional model. Even though the KNA is composed of 50 elected members, the model also includes the ministers who are de facto members as previously mentioned. Looking at Table 4, it can be noted that in the 11<sup>th</sup> term a one-dimensional model correctly classifies % 95.01 of legislator vote choices. The addition of a second dimension increases the correct classification of legislator vote choices to % 97.46, which is a 2.45% increase. The Aggregate Proportional Reduction in Error (APRE) under a one-dimensional model for the 11<sup>th</sup> term is 81% and it increases to 89.77% when a second dimension is added which is.

In terms of the 13<sup>th</sup> term under a one-dimensional model, 92.1 % of legislator vote choices are correctly classified and the aggregate proportional reduction in errors is 75.58%. The addition of a second dimension actually increases the correct classification of legislator vote choices to 95.78%, which is a 3.68 % increase. Moreover, the APRE increases from 75.58% to 86.70%, which is an 11.12% increase. Thus, the two dimensional model improves the model fit for the 13<sup>th</sup> term by a rate that is slightly better than the 11<sup>th</sup> term.

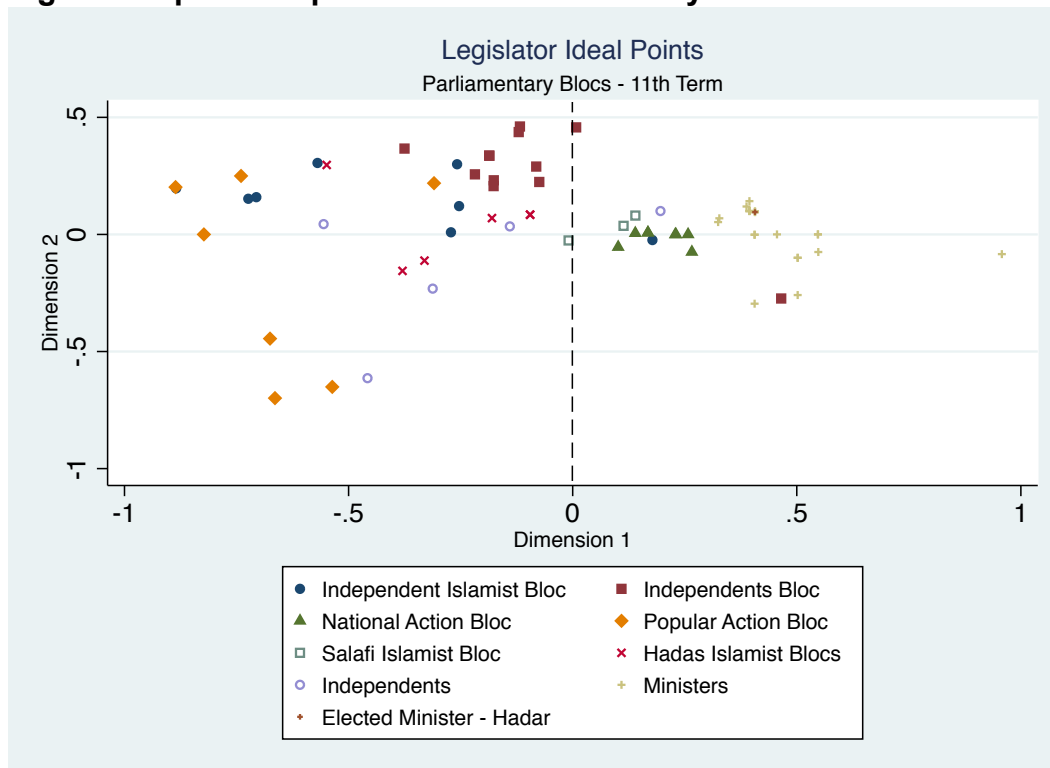
**Table 4: Fit Statistics for the Optimal Classification Model**

SUMMARY OF OPTIMAL CLASSIFICATION (OC) OBJECT						
	11th term			13th Term		
<b>Number of Legislators</b>	71 (3 legislators deleted)			71 (4 legislators deleted)		
<b>Number of Votes</b>	67 (7 votes deleted)			147 (3 votes deleted)		
<b>Number of Dimensions</b>	2			2		
<b>Predicted Yeas</b>	2265 of 2299	(98.5%) predictions correct		4605 of 4748	(97.00 %) predictions correct	
<b>Predicted Nays</b>	838 of 891	(94.1%) predictions correct		2503 of 2673	(93.60 %) predictions correct	
<b>1 Dimensions</b>	Class % 95.01	APRE	81 %	Class % 92.10	APRE	75.58 %
<b>2 Dimensions</b>	Class % 97.46	APRE	89.77 %	Class % 95.78	APRE	86.70 %

Figures 5, 6, 8 and 10 below illustrate the spatial maps produced by the OC algorithm. The spatial map in figure 5 illustrates the ideal points of legislators who are classified by their parliamentary bloc affiliation. At a first glance, it appears that the dimension along which most of the ideal points are aligned is the horizontal first dimension. The second dimension does not appear to have a consistent pattern aside from 4 legislators (an independent and three members of the Popular Action bloc) who are randomly clustered at the bottom. The first dimension appears to capture a government – opposition divide where members of the National Action bloc and the

salafi Islamic bloc, with the exception of one member, appear to be on the same side as the ministers appointed by the Emir. However, given the nature of Kuwait's political affiliations, it is not clear what issues pit some members against the ministers and vice versa. Moreover, given that there is only one confidence motion in the 11<sup>th</sup> session, the government-opposition divide cannot be explained as one stemming from differences over these motions.

**Figure 5: Spatial Map Based on Parliamentary Blocs – 11<sup>th</sup> Term**



I run the OC algorithm again but this time, as Figure 6 demonstrates, the legislators are classified based on their social groups. Figure 6 below demonstrates that social groups are a better indicator of the division along the first dimension. It can be noted that the Hadar make up the bulk of support for the government while the Shiite and Tribal MPs are on the other side. The majority of the laws or votes tapped issues that often polarize the social groups. Three votes illustrate this point clearly: the vote on dropping interest on loans that the was put forth by tribal MPs, the vote on reducing the

taxes levied on foreign investors in Kuwait, and the vote on regulating the activities of diwaniyas in Kuwait.<sup>25</sup>

The vote on dropping interest on loans was spearheaded by tribal MPs of different parliamentary bloc affiliations, and was supported to a large extent by Shiite MPs, especially members of the Popular Action bloc. The government had made several attempts to delay any progress to produce a bill on the issue. This led the aforementioned MPs to put forth a motion in the KNA to force the Financial Affairs Committee to produce its report on the issue by the next assembly session, so a bill can be debated and voted on (Transcript 1193 A). The motion predictably split the MPs along social group lines, with the government and Hadar, the group whose interests were most likely to be harmed by the bill as business owners, refusing the motion. On the other hand, the Tribal and Shiite MPs who are the groups poised to benefit from the bill, supported the motion as we can see from Figure 7.

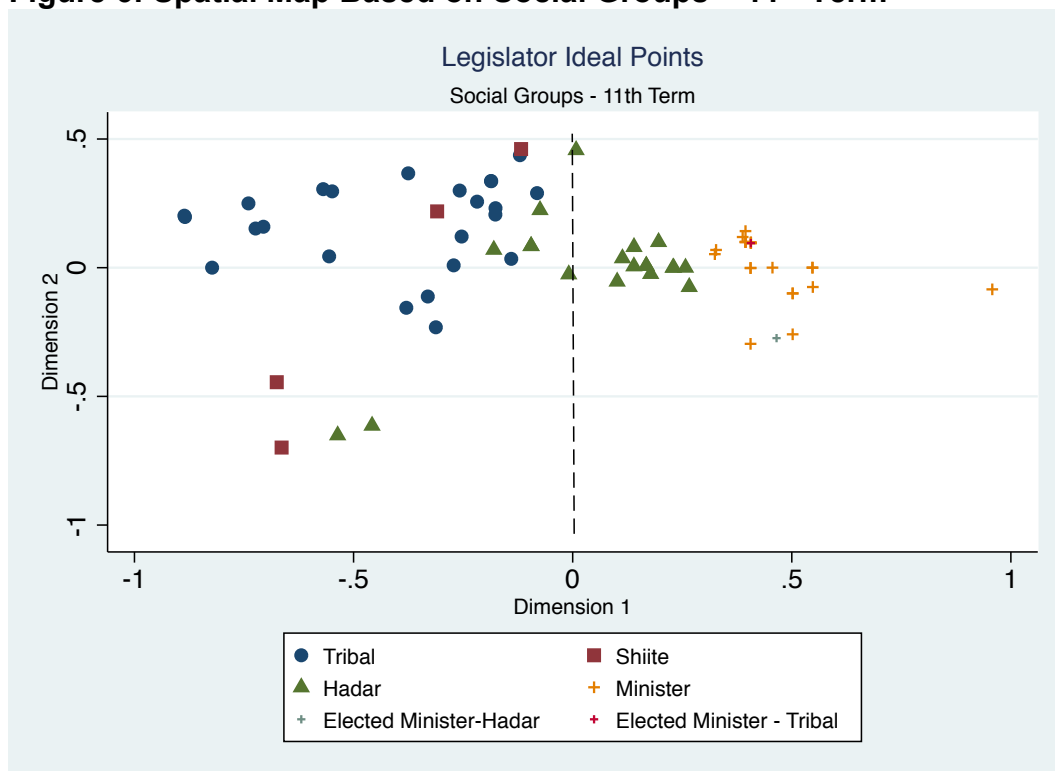
The vote on a bill to reduce the taxes levied on foreign investors was initiated by the government and supported by the Hadar who often partner with foreign investors in business ventures, while it was opposed by the Tribal MPs and to a lesser extent the Shiite MPs as we can see from figure 7. The government, supported by the Hadar, cited the need to transform Kuwait into a financial center and to increase foreign investment as reasons to vote for the bill. On the other hand, the Tribal MPs opposed the bill on grounds that a better bill was needed, one that takes into account the corruption of the private sector and the fact that the private sector does not help with Kuwaiti employment. As one Tribal MP put it, the private sector “does not employ Kuwaitis, so how can we defend it?” (Al-Nahar 2007; Transcript 1195 A).

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<sup>25</sup> Diwaniyas are essentially social salons where Kuwaiti citizens can meet to discuss all sorts of issues ranging from social to political. These salons are a very important part of Kuwaiti history and often formed the backbone of important political movements and opposition groups.

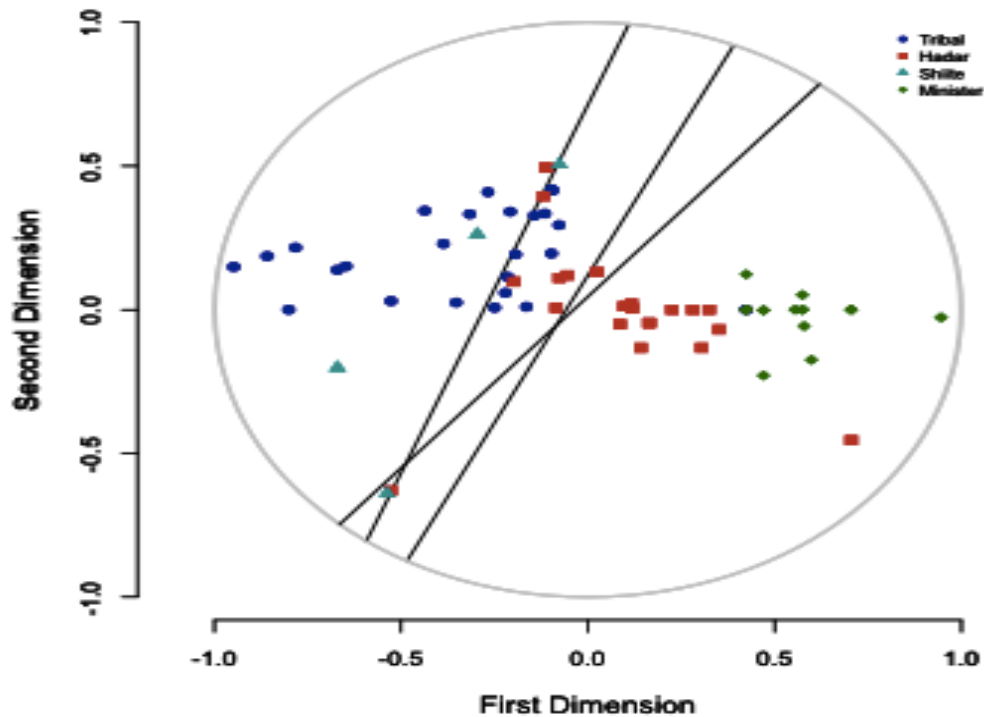
Finally, the motion to halt the government's measures to remove illegal diwaniyas, while at the same putting forth a bill to regulate the activities of these diwaniyas, was put forth by the Tribal MPs. The Tribal MPs charged that the measures to remove illegal diwaniyas disproportionately targeted tribal areas, and so the motion put forth was for a law to regulate the government's activities on the front while at the same time halting the measure to remove the diwaniyas until the law to regulate them was discussed and enacted (Transcript 1200 B).

**Figure 6: Spatial Map Based on Social Groups – 11<sup>th</sup> Term**





**Figure 7: Votes on Multiple Issues in the 11<sup>th</sup> Term**



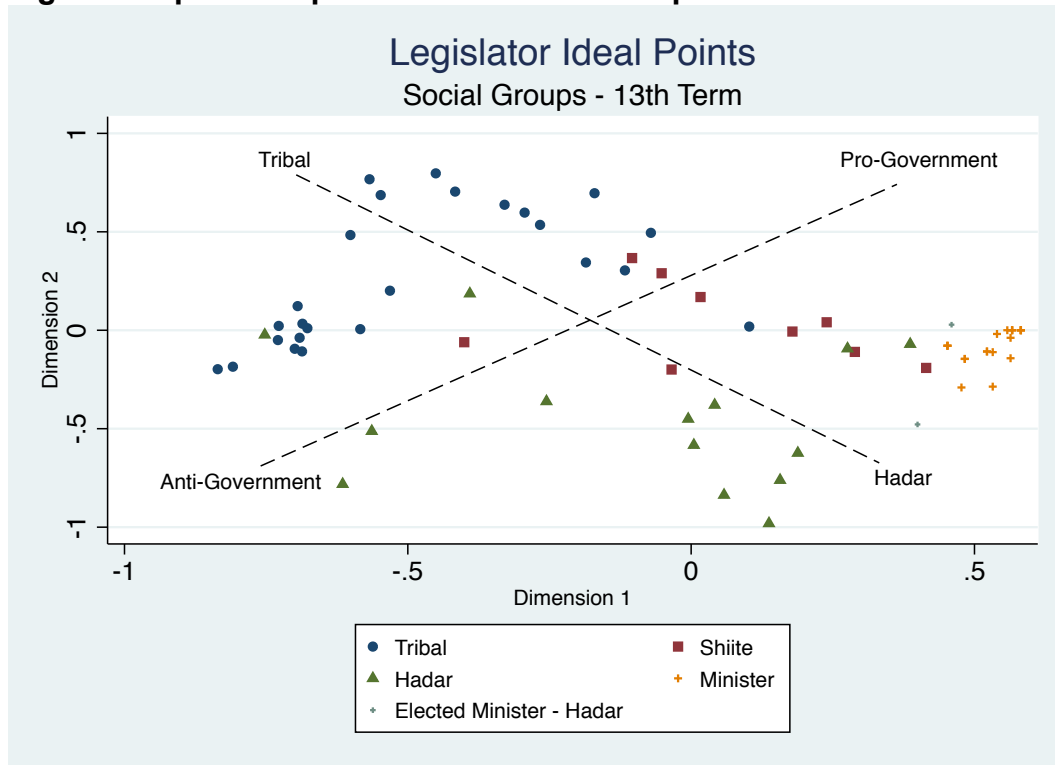
Notes: The cut lines for the votes, from the top right to the left, are dropping interest on loans, taxes on foreign companies and the regulation of the activities of diwanias.

The dimensions of conflict differed in the 13<sup>th</sup> legislative term, mainly because of the preponderance of confidence motions. Accordingly, the 13<sup>th</sup> legislative term was multidimensional. Noting Figure 8, I substantively interpret the dimensions of conflict to be two orthogonal axes and in Figure 9, I show that in fact most of the cutting lines were orthogonal, not horizontal or vertical. The first orthogonal line captures the division between the social groups and it stretches from the northwest to southeast and is labeled Tribal-Hadar. The second line runs from southwest to northeast, which for the most part captures the conflict between the groups that support motion of confidence against the government and those who do not. This line is labeled Pro-Anti Government.

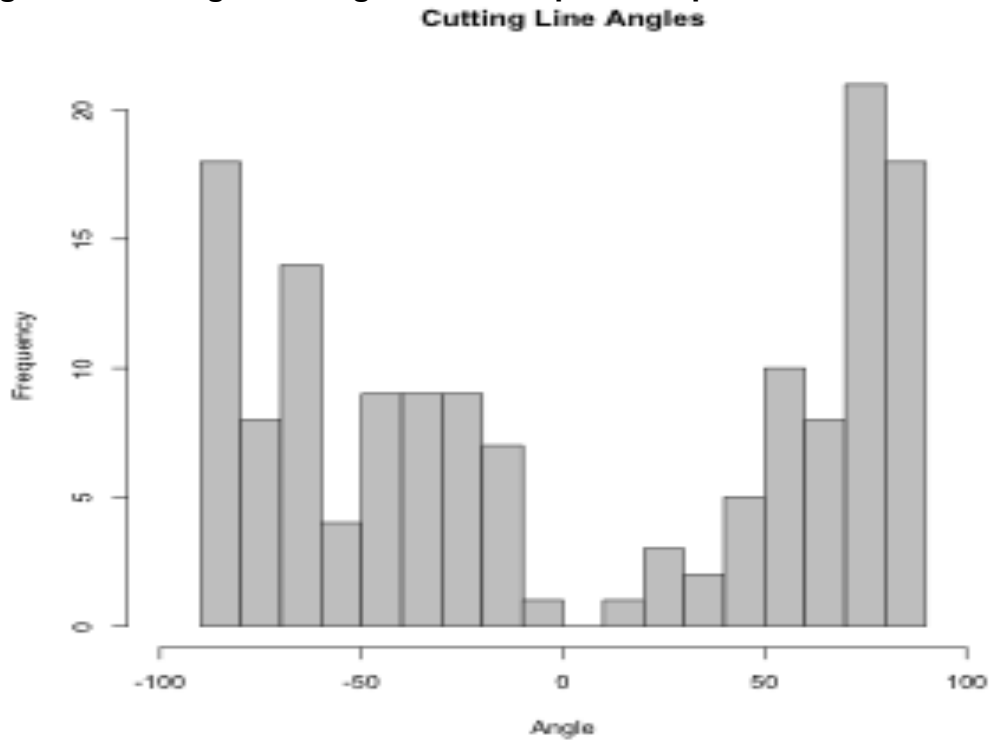
The first orthogonal dimension is useful in identifying the dimension of conflict between the social groups, mainly the Hadar and Tribal MPs. The Hadar in general were closer to the government which often put forth more conservative and free market

oriented economic policies, and policies that often limit the political activities of tribes such as banning tribal primaries prior to legislative elections. The Tribal MPs in general vigorously defended laws that pertain to their social groups and were the primary defenders of the public sectors and tended to be more suspicious of the private sector. The Shiites who in the 11<sup>th</sup> term were more critical of the government, and who in many cases sided with the Tribal MPs actually shifted closer to the government. The reason was a controversy, which ended the diverse membership of the Popular Action Bloc. The controversy took place in 2008 following the ejection of two Shiite members who mourned a member of Hezbollah whom the Kuwaiti authorities had suspected of being involved in the hijacking of a Kuwaiti civilian airplane in 1988. Since then the Popular Action Bloc has never had any Shiite members and the Shiites have become increasingly close to the government ("Kuwait MPs expelled for mourning Mughniyah" 2008).

**Figure 8: Spatial Map Based on Social Groups – 13<sup>th</sup> Term**



**Figure 9: Cutting Line Angles for the Spatial Map - 13<sup>th</sup> Term's**



Four votes capture the substantive meaning of the first orthogonal dimensions. These votes are a vote on a bill to drop interest on loans, a privatization bill, a bill to introduce a defaulters fund (which is the government's alternative to the tribal sponsored bill to drop interest on loans), and a vote on removing immunity from certain tribal members for participating in illegal tribal primaries. The bill to drop interest on loans, illustrated in figure 10, was originally proposed by the tribal MP Daifallah Buramiya to drop consumer loans on debtors. The division along social groups was stark, with the Hadar mostly opposing the measure, while the Tribal candidates supporting (Al-Fadalah, 2010). Indeed, even when the government proposed a more tempered version of the law, shown in Figure 11, that imposed a smaller more measured cost on banks, the Tribal candidates opposed while the Hadar supported, making the class division between these two groups ever more clear. Predictably, then when the government put forth a privatization bill, it was overwhelmingly supported by Hadar members in contrast to the Tribal MPs. Finally, the pattern for the vote on removing immunity from three tribal MPs for participating in tribal primaries was also one of division between the Hadar and Tribal, where the latter group voted overwhelmingly against removing immunity from participants in tribal primaries.

Figure 10: Bill to Drop Interest on Consumer Loans

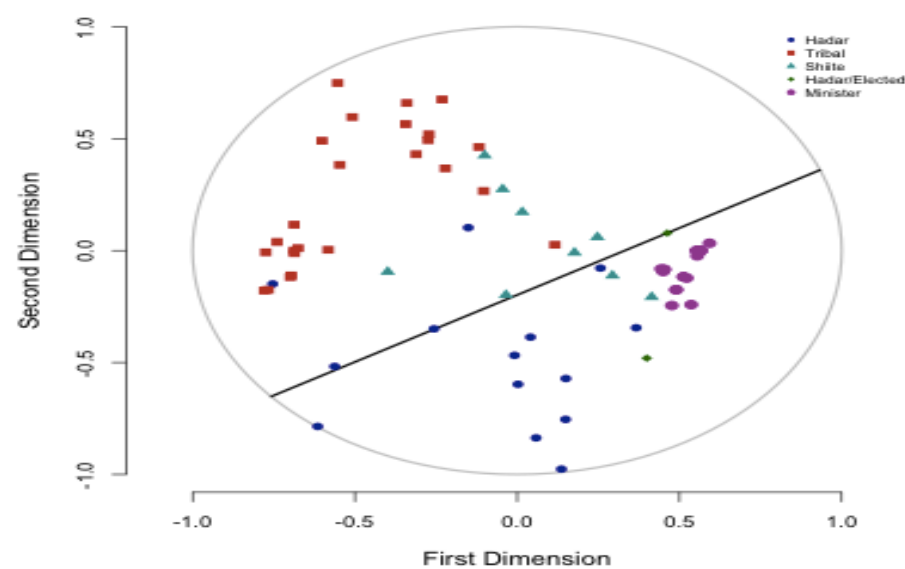
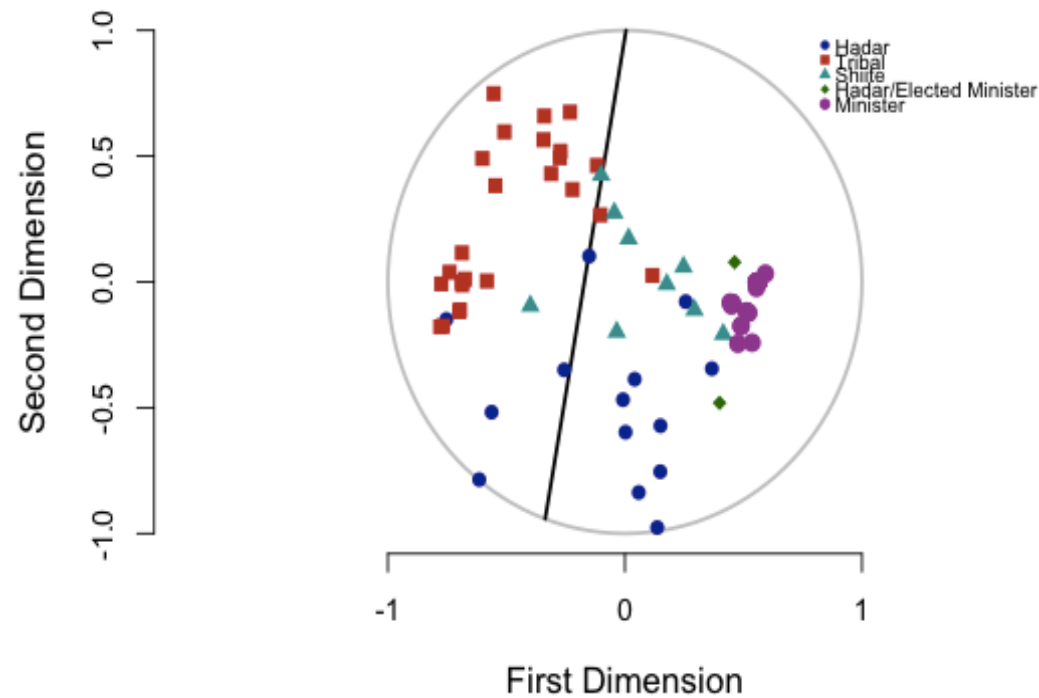
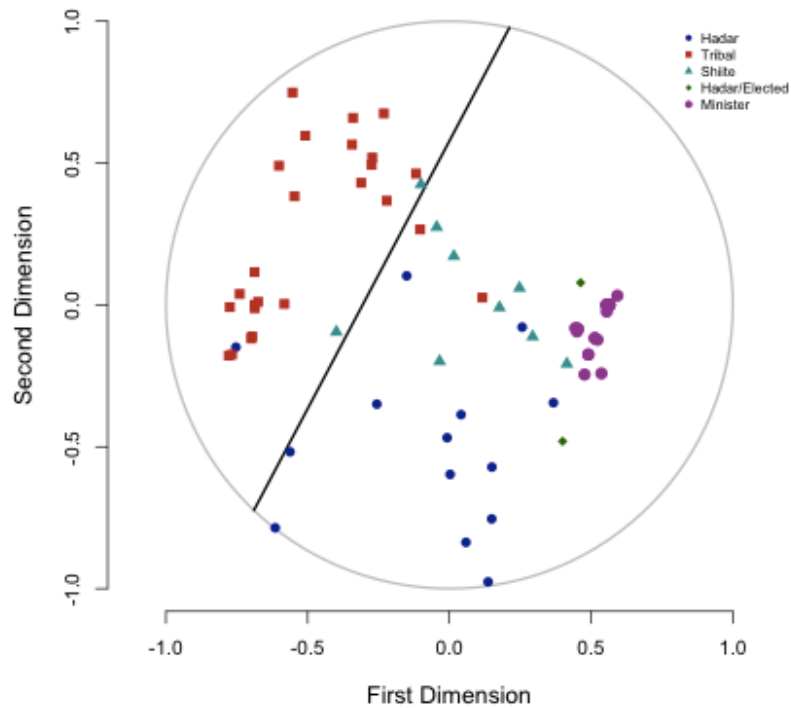


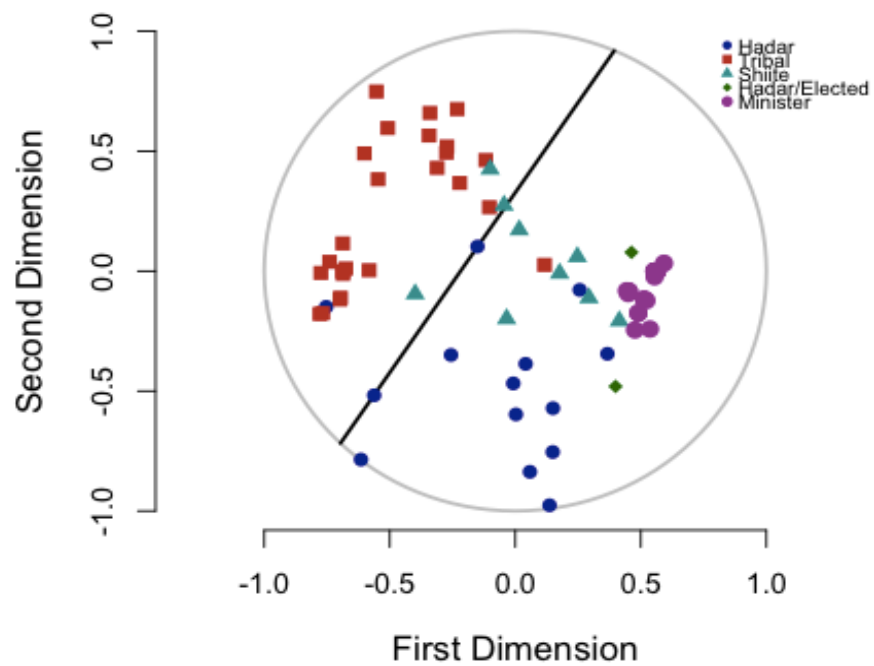
Figure 11: Bill to Create a Defaulters Fund



**Figure 12: Privatization Bill**



**Figure 13: Removing Immunity for Participating in Tribal Primaries**

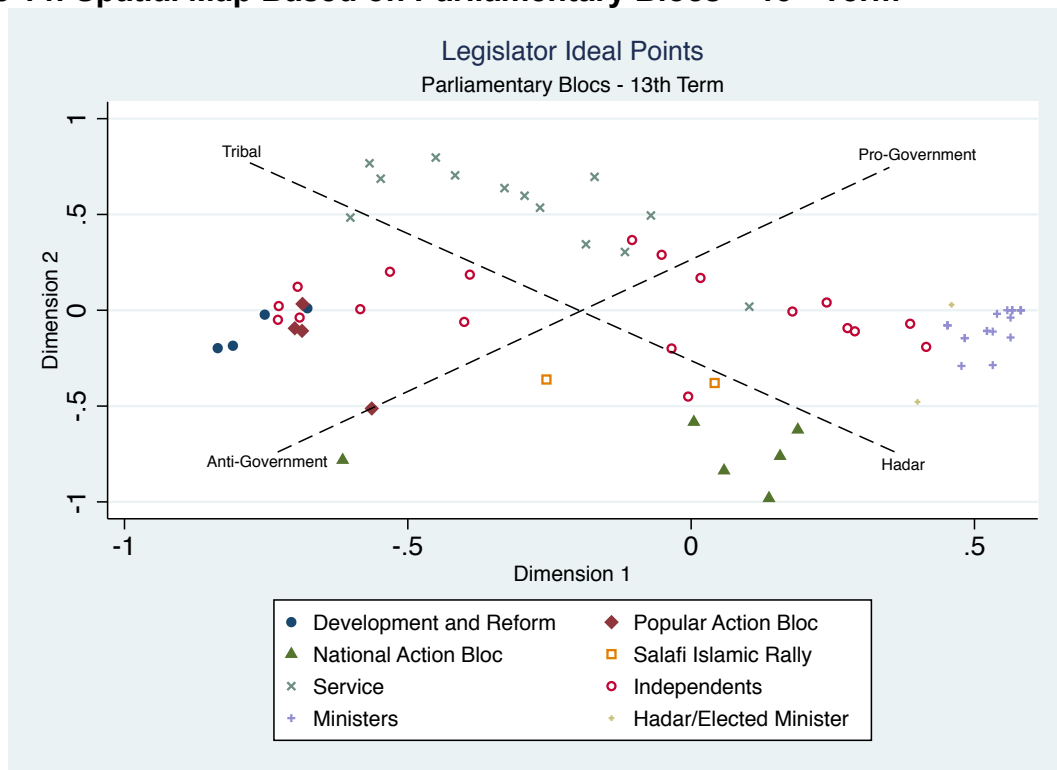


The second orthogonal dimension captures the division between MPs who support the government on motions of confidence and those who want to remove confidence. This dimension is distinct from the first one by virtue of the fact that social group affiliation plays a secondary role to political affiliation. Take for example the Hadar, who in the 13<sup>th</sup> legislative term were divided between independent candidates and the national action bloc. Their votes on motions of confidence were not homogenous. In fact, while independent Hadar MPs generally voted alongside the government, with very few exceptions, most members of the National Action Bloc took a more critical stance against the government. This stance intensified in 2010. The turning point was the government's violent crackdown on a public meeting held in the opposition MP Jama'an Al-Herbish's house (I'lan Istijwab 2010). After this crackdown the NAB's position on most motions of confidence was against the government (Al-Saeedi 2011) (Al- 'Amal Al-Watani Fi Al-Mizan 2012).

Another aspect to be taken into account is the NAB's stance on issue pertaining to the transparency of interpolation, and its opposition to any attempts by the executive to filibuster or delay interpolations. In contrast, with their votes alongside the government on issues pertaining to the specific interest of their social group, the Hadar were more divided on motions of confidence. On the other hand, Service MPs who voted against the government when it came to issues that affected their tribal affiliation, almost always voted alongside the government on motions of confidence. This is likely because Service MPs do not want to alienate the same ministers who will facilitate services to their constituents, as explained above. Finally, the tribal members of the Development Reform Bloc and the Popular Action Bloc tended to almost always vote against the government on motions of confidence in contrast to Service MPs. Again this illustrates how social group affiliation is not a good indicator of voting patterns on motions of confidence.

Figure 14 below illustrates the orthogonal dimensions that characterized the 13<sup>th</sup> legislative term, but this time the legislators are classified based their parliamentary blocs given that this is a stronger indicator of voting decisions regarding motions of confidence. This figure clarifies the second dimension better than an ideal point map based on the social groups. We can note that the Development and Reform Bloc, the National Action Bloc, the Salafi Islamic Bloc, and the Popular Action Bloc are all on the left side of the line, meaning they will often vote to remove confidence from the government. While the pro-government MPs who often vote against removing confidence from the government, shown on the right side, are mostly independents and Service MPs. It should be noted that Ministers who serve as de facto members of the KNA, can vote on all laws but they cannot vote on motions of confidence.

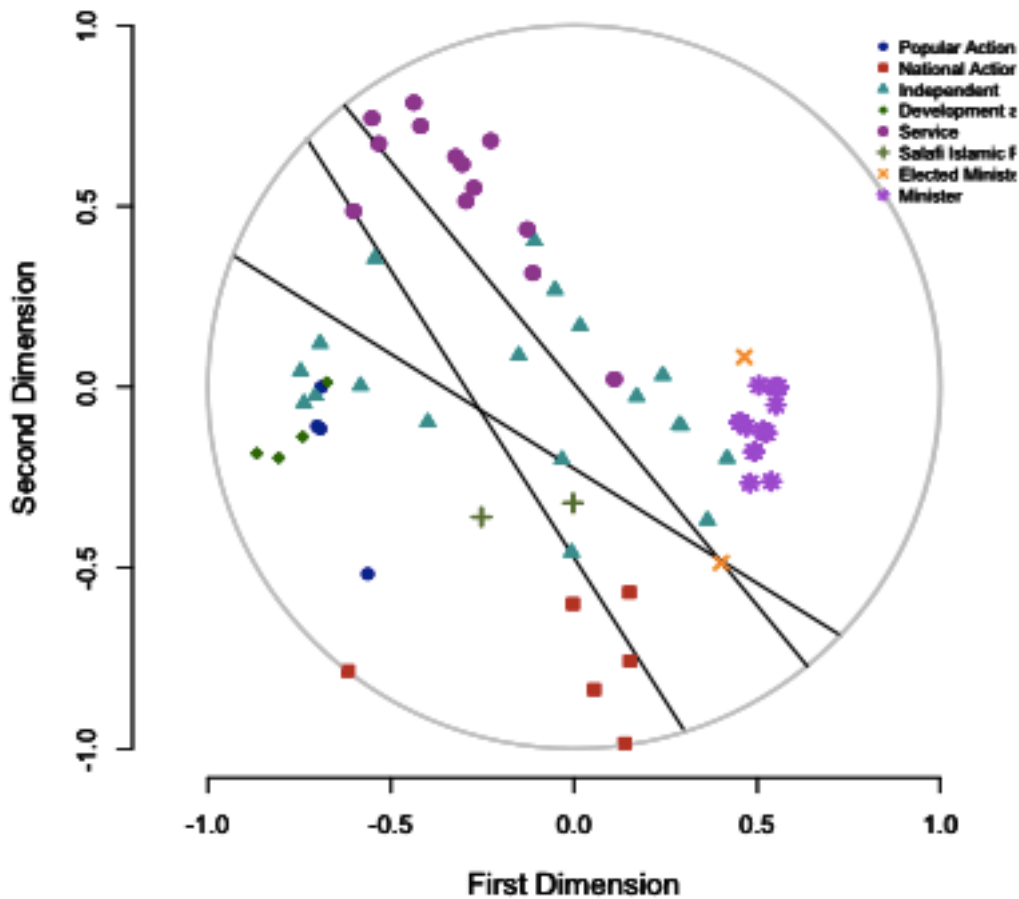
**Figure 14: Spatial Map Based on Parliamentary Blocs – 13<sup>th</sup> Term**





I examine three votes on confidence motions, or issues related to them, to further examine the substantive meaning of the second dimension. The votes include a motion of confidence put forth in 2011 against the Prime Minister, a vote put forth by the government to make the interpolation of the prime minister in 2011 a private session, and a vote also initiated by the government to remove the interpolation of the prime minister from the legislative agenda in 2011. We note that for all three votes the Service MPs and independents mostly voted for the government, while the Development and Reform bloc and the Popular Action bloc voted unanimously against the government. The National Action bloc and Salafi Islamic Rally also voted for the most part against the government with some minor defections. The latter two blocs are notable for having voted almost entirely alongside the government on issues that pertain to their social group, i.e. the Hadar, while voting against the government on motions of confidence.

**Figure 7: Votes on Multiple Issues in the 11<sup>th</sup> Term**



## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The analysis in the previous section demonstrates that the KNA has two main dimensions of conflict: a social group divide (more specifically a Hadar-Tribal divide), and another dimension based on a pro-anti government division between MPs that support motions of confidence and those who do not. This result, as I have argued earlier, stems from the fact that the KNA has an executive-legislative structure that combines features of both presidential and parliamentary systems. Like presidential systems, agenda control in the KNA is divided between the government and the legislature. This was illustrated in the Hadar- Tribal divide, where each social group tends to initiate legislation that comports with the interests of their constituency.

Moreover, the government also initiates its own motions and votes, which tend to intersect with Hadar interests because the government prefers conservative economic policies and policies that often challenge the interests of Tribes. The results also show that, on most issues, the interests of social groups were a stronger determinant of voting alongside the government due to the weakness and lack of institutionalization of political and parliamentary blocs.

This is not to say parliamentary blocs were not important, as they tended to become a more important determinant of voting patterns when it came to motions of confidence. Motions of confidence, which are a defining feature of parliamentary systems, tended to divide parliamentary blocs in the KNA along pro- and anti-government lines. It was often the case that some members of social groups that voted along side the government, such as the National Action Bloc, on issues pertaining to their social group tended to vote against the government on motions of confidence when doing so was consistent with their politically liberal stance. The same was true of service MPs who voted against the government on social and economic issues because of their predominantly tribal membership, but voted for the government on motions of confidence because they are service MPs who need access to government services. For that reason, they attempt to not alienate the government.

Therefore, the KNA's multidimensionality depends largely on whether there were motions of confidence in the legislative term. Where there were no motions of confidence, as in the 11<sup>th</sup> term, the KNA is unidimensional and based on a social group divide. Where motions of confidence are abundant, as in the 13<sup>th</sup> term, the KNA became multidimensional. The issue of dimensionality is important given that a unidimensional legislatures are theorized to be stable in comparison with multidimensional ones, which are chaotic (McLean 2006; See also Hansen and Debus 2012). This insight provides an opportunity for further research on the KNA specifically, to understand the extent to

which dimensionality affects executive-legislative relations and stability in Kuwait. Given the fact that executive-legislative relations in Kuwait are highly unstable, where the KNA was dissolved 8 out of a total of 16 terms, examining dimensionality further in Kuwait by adding more KNA terms should be a fruitful direction for future research. The aforementioned results also show that the stability associated with unidimensional legislatures may need to be reassessed under certain conditions.

The study of dimensionality in the KNA also facilitates comparisons with legislatures in other authoritarian regime types. This is especially true for regimes that, unlike Kuwait, has strong national parties, and the underlying assumption is a unidimensional divide between a strong national party and the opposition. The comparison is also useful because it demonstrates the importance of social, ethnic and religious groups in the absence of strong national parties and weak or non-existent party system.

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