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Crystallizing a Discourse of "Khalijiness": Exclusion and Citizenship in the Arab Gulf States

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Abstract

For many of the Arab Gulf countries, non-national populations constitute the majority of the population, with the discrepancy between the size of the national and non-national populations continuing to grow. It is in this context that the role played by these non-national populations becomes critically important. In my paper, I argue that exclusion of non-national populations from state-sponsored national identities, as manifest through citizenship rights, plays a pivotal role in fostering imagined national identities and communities among the local Arab Gulf citizens. The study considers two cases in particular: the *bidoon* (stateless) of Kuwait and middle-class Indian migrants in Dubai. Using a variety of primary and secondary sources, I explore the ways in which the two aforementioned populations are excluded, how they contended with their exclusion, and finally attempt reconcile what, in broad terms, constitutes the overarching *khaleeji* – Gulf – identity that this exclusion has sought to foster. On one hand, the study finds that the *bidoon* of Kuwait's pursuit of inclusion is rooted in their ethnic heritage as Arabs and the Kuwaiti, tribal-rooted national identity. On the other hand, the middle-class Indian migrants of Dubai embrace their exclusion because of their self-perceived temporariness in the city and instead exhibit a sense of dual-belonging. In light of this, the study considers how the resultant *khaleeji* identity crystalizes around its exceptions and exclusions, while highlighting the performative and nationalistic aspects of it.

Keywords

gulf, khaleej, citizenship, state, exclusion, khaliji, khaleeji, kuwait, dubai, united arab emirates, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Political Science, Sharkey, Heather, Heather Sharkey

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**Crystallizing a Discourse of
"Khalijiness"**
*Exclusion and Citizenship in the
Arab Gulf States*

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*Honors Senior Thesis
Huntsman Program in Business & International Studies
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خلق الهوية الخليجية: الإقصاء والمواطنة في دول مجلس التعاون

ملخص تنفيذي للبحث

يشكل الأجانب جزءاً كبيراً من إجمالي عدد سكان العديد من دول مجلس التعاون، أبرزها البحرين وقطر والإمارات والكويت. وتتصدر دولة قطر في نسبة تعداد الأجانب حيث بلغت هذه النسبة ما يقارب ٩٠٪ من إجمالي عدد سكان تلك الدولة، تليها الإمارات بنسبة ٨٥٪.

ويعالج هذا البحث موضوع المواطنة في دول الخليج ودورها في خلق الشخصية الخليجية. وفي هذا الإطار، يناقش البحث قضية مجموعتين: "البدون" في الكويت والجالية الهندية في إمارة دبي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. وتقارن الدراسة حالة المجموعتين والتشابهات والاختلافات بينهما للتوصل إلى استنتاجات حول معنى الشخصية الخليجية بشكل عام.

يمكن تصنيف الأجانب في دول مجلس التعاون إلى قسمين رئيسيين، أحدهم ما يسمّى "البدون" وهم فئة سكانية تعيش في الكويت ولا تحمل الجنسية الكويتية أو أي جنسية أخرى. وقد عُرف البدون بهذا الاسم نسبة لكونهم "بدون جنسية" بالرغم من إقامتهم في الدولة لمدة طويلة قد تصل إلى عشرات السنين، وقد يكون الكثير منهم من مواليد الكويت ولا يعرفون وطناً آخر.

أما القسم الآخر فهم العمالة الوافدة التي أتت إلى دول الخليج طلباً للرزق منذ بداية الطفرة الاقتصادية التي بدأت في السبعينات والثمانينات من القرن الماضي، وساهموا بشكل كبير في النهضة الاقتصادية في تلك البلاد. والجدير بالذكر أنّ هاتان المجموعتان مختلفتان تماماً حيث أن البدون يعتبرون أنفسهم مواطنين الدولة حيث تطبّعوا بعادات وتقاليد البلد ولكن لا يتمتعون بالجنسية رغم مطالباتهم المستمرة للحصول عليها، بينما فئة "الهنود" ترى هجرتها إلى الخليج كمرحلة مؤقتة فلا تُطالب بالجنسية وتحافظ على عاداتها وتقاليدها وممارساتها الدينية.

يتناول هذا البحث حرمان هاتين الفئتين من الحصول على الجنسية الخليجية رغم قضائهما عشرات السنين في هذه الدول وعدم حصولهم على الفوائد والمزايا التي يتمتع بها أبناء مواطني تلك البلاد كالعلاج الصحي والتعليم والخدمات الإسكانية وغيرها. ويخلق هذا الحرمان خطأً فاصلاً بين المواطنين الخليجين من جانب وما يسمّى بالأجانب من جانب آخر، حيث يتناول

هذا البحث بشكلٍ تفصيليٍ عدم الانفتاح ما بين الشطرين وعدم اندماجهما. ويختلف هذا الوضع عن دول أخرى مثل أمريكا وأستراليا وأوروبا حيث يحصل المهاجر في تلك البلدان على الجنسية بعد سنواتٍ قليلةٍ من تاريخ هجرته إليها.

وعليه، تصبح الشخصية والهوية الخليجية تعتمد بشكلٍ أساسيٍ على القبلية والأصل والنسب من ناحية وعلى عوامل أخرى مثل اللهجة الخليجية والزيّ الخليجيّ والبذخ في الحياة فيُصبح من الصعب لفئة الأجنبيّ تبني هذه الشخصية والاندماج مع سائر الخليجيين.

ونظراً للتغيرات العالمية المتسارعة، أبرزها الانكماش الاقتصادي في هذه الدول بسبب انخفاض أسعار النفط، فهذا يشكّل تحدّي كبير للهوية الخليجية التي كانت في السابق محل رعاية الدولة. ويبقى السؤال، هل من الممكن استدامة هذه المبادئ وما هو مصير الهوية الخليجية؟

ونحاول في هذا البحث الإجابة على الكثير من هذه التساؤلات وذلك بالاستعانة بالعديد من المراجع والكتب التي تم إصدارها حول تاريخ الكويت والإمارات بالإضافة إلى المقابلات والمدونات الإلكترونية.

II. Introduction

At the center of Sophie Robehmed’s satirical graphic novel *Only in Dubai: An Essential Guide to the Emirate’s Expats* is Karama Kumari.¹ Named after Karama, a predominantly Indian residential area in Dubai, she is the exemplar of the Indian, middle-class, expatriate community in the Emirate. Karama Kumari drives a mid-sized Japanese sedan, lives in a densely populated residential community, and sends her kids to an Indian private school.

Outside the satire of Robehmed’s novel, however, the reality for Karama Kumari, the community she represents, and perhaps all non-national populations in the country, is that they are forever bound to the “alien” label they currently hold. Regardless of how long they have been – and plan to remain – in the United Arab Emirates, and regardless of whether their children were born and raised there, they will never become Emirati citizens. Their experience is, in fact, representative of many – perhaps all – non-national populations in the Arab states of the Persian Gulf.

For many of the Gulf countries, non-national populations constitute the majority of the population, with the discrepancy between the size of the national and non-national populations continuing to grow.² It is in this context that the role played by these non-national populations becomes critically important. In my paper, I argue that exclusion of non-national populations from state-sponsored national identities, as manifest through citizenship rights, plays a pivotal role in fostering imagined national identities and communities among the local Gulf Arab citizens.

¹ Sophie Robehmed, *Only in Dubai: An Essential Guide to the Emirate’s Expats* (Cincinnati, OH: Turning Point, 2015).

² Kristian Ulrichsen, *The Gulf States in the International Political Economy* (London: Palgrave, 2016) p. 169.

My study will consider two cases of exclusion: the *bidoon* (stateless) in Kuwait and middle-class Indian migrant workers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and especially Dubai. The *bidoon* of Kuwait comprise primarily two groups. First, the *bidoon* include the descendants of illegal migrants or quasi-nomadic peoples of primarily Arab descent whose ancestors either failed to register as citizens when Kuwait's Nationality Law was promulgated in 1959 or were excluded from doing so; second, they include migrants from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab countries who abandoned their native citizenship to join the Kuwaiti armed forces between the 1960s and 1970s but were never granted Kuwaiti citizenship. Though no official figures are available, the *bidoon* are estimated to represent approximately a tenth of Kuwait's total population.³

The middle-class Indians of Dubai are one important group among many in the city's non-national population. In fact, non-nationals make up 85 percent of Dubai's population, with South Asians (primarily Indians, Bangladeshis, and Pakistanis) making up 85 percent of that non-national population.⁴ Non-nationals work a diverse range of jobs, with a substantial proportion representing high-skill labor, many of whom hail from Europe and the Americas, but also a large population of low-skill, low-pay laborers, primarily from the Indian subcontinent and East Asia. Indians represent the largest non-national population in Dubai and the UAE, and are employed in a wide range of positions that range from professionally qualified personnel to blue-collar workers.⁵ Importantly, many middle-class Indians in Dubai become long-term residents, sometimes for

³ Anh Nga Longva, *Walls Built on Sand* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), p. 49

⁴ "Dubai Population 2017", *World Population Review*, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/dubai-population/>

⁵ Ali (AI)Nuaimi, *أثر تنقل العمالة في التنمية المستدامة* [*The Effects of Labor Migration on Sustainable Development*] (Abu Dhabi: Markaz al-Imārāt lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Buḥūth al-Istirātījyah, 2014)

multiple generations, and are therefore not necessarily transient. Yet, their non-national status persists and they have virtually no route to citizenship in the UAE.⁶

This study will consider how these populations are excluded from everyday life and society and how this exclusion is used to construct distinct identities and discourses with which citizenship-bearing natives identify. In both cases, for the *bidoon* of Kuwait and Indians in the UAE, exclusion culminates in restrictive nationality laws that make naturalization an impossible recourse for these non-national populations. Yet, as this study will show, the *bidoon* of Kuwait and Dubai's middle-class Indian migrant workers have been dealing with their situation quite differently. Whereas middle-class Indian migrants in Dubai have, in some senses, embraced their exclusion and fostered a more sanguine transnational 'dual identity', the *bidoon* of Kuwait have continued to seek inclusion.

In the pages that follow, I will draw on a variety of secondary sources to survey existing scholarship on the theoretical frameworks of citizenship, migration, and imagined communities. In addition, I will utilize existing literature on the cases of the *bidoon* in Kuwait and migrant workers in the UAE, which although substantial, has remained largely descriptive with little attention to the ways in which these populations experience and produce their environments socially, culturally, and politically. Prominent authors on the case of the *bidoon* include Anh Nga Longva and Farah Al Nakeeb, while Neha Vora has become renowned for her study of the Indian population in Dubai in her book *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora*. I will also rely on

⁶ Neha Vora, *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013) p. 3

primary sources, in the form of interviews, activist blogs, and interview transcripts, to get a more nuanced account of experiences with exclusion.

The study will be divided into five sections. The first will give a brief overview of the historical and theoretical contexts that underpin this topic, with a specific emphasis on the history and development of the Gulf states. I will also provide a survey of existing literature on the topic.

The next two sections will look at the Kuwaiti and Emirati cases of exclusion more closely. This will require an exploration of the histories of these non-national populations, with an emphasis on situating how they were introduced to their respective countries, and an overview of the specific laws, policies, and practices that have created their exclusion. Although my study will treat the national, state-sponsored identity-building project as a continuous process, it will nonetheless draw on specific episodes that have highlighted this phenomenon; the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, for example, was the pivotal episode for the *bidoon* in the country.⁷ Each case will conclude with a commentary on how the respective populations have contended with their exclusion, be it through awareness, rejection, activism, or some combination thereof.

Next, in light of my findings from both case studies, I will attempt to reconcile what, in broad terms, constitutes the overarching *khaleeji* – Gulf – identity that this exclusion has sought to foster. As I will argue, the conception of a *khaleeji* identity on the part of local citizens is inextricably linked to many forms of nationalism, including performative ones.

⁷ Abdurasaool Moosa, *مجتمع النخبة المترفة، الكويت: [Kuwait: Elites and Luxury]* (Beirut: Dar Al Saqi Publishers, 2000)

Finally, the conclusion will briefly recap the arguments presented and the case study findings, and combine both to attempt to explain the motivations and reasoning behind the Kuwaiti and Emirati policies of exclusion. I will assess the factors that have allowed this policy to succeed and proliferate throughout the Gulf states, and, looking forward, will consider how sustainable these policies are, while highlighting potential factors that could undermine these state-sponsored discourses.

Existing Literature

Following the dramatic acceleration in labor migration that came with the sharp increase in oil prices between 1974–1978, Indian migrants in the Gulf became a subject of academic inquiry. This created a considerable body of scholarship on the topic, which was initially largely descriptive, focusing on three broad themes. These were, first, national and international migration trends and remittance flows; second, the government policies and regulations in both the labor-sending and receiving countries that were designed to organize this migration; and finally, community-level comparative studies of migrant behavior in labor-receiving countries, and the concomitant effects migration had on the social and household structures in labor-sending countries.⁸

More recently, these studies have adopted a labor-focused lens, studying the lives of migrants, almost exclusively, in economic terms. Many scholars have framed labor migration of low-wage workers from poorer nations in rational-actor models, such as push-pull factors, and

⁸ Seecombe, Ian J. “International Labor Migration in the Middle East: A Review of Literature and Research, 1974–84.” *The International Migration Review*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1985, p. 335

have contextualized it in a discussion of the Gulf Arab states' rentier model.⁹ At the same time, on the other end of the social spectrum, scholars have framed the arrival of wealthy expatriates as motivated by an attractive business ecosystem, with an emphasis on the tax-free benefits and higher salaries the region offered. This created a polarized body of scholarship that paid little attention to the white-collar middle-class and how they produced and experienced their environment socially, culturally, and politically.

Literature on the case of the *bidoon* in Kuwait, however, remains even more limited still. In fact, academic research in the fields of sociology and political science in post-oil Kuwait considers – almost exclusively – the process of institution-building in the nascent state.¹⁰ The anthropologist Anh Nga Longva was one of the first scholars to critically examine the dynamics of citizenship, by undertaking a comparative study on a nationality-based hierarchical society.¹¹ The national identity debate, meanwhile, is a relatively contemporary one which was “sparked by acute socio-economic concerns about demographic imbalance and existential concerns among a number of Gulf leaders about the internal and regional influence of Iran”.¹²

My study seeks to situate itself at the intersection of existing literature, furthering the comparative nationality-based hierarchical study put forth by Longva, while also building on the largely descriptive scholarship on migrant workers in Dubai. It is worth noting that although the term “migrant worker” in this literature has generally referred to low-skill, low-pay workers

⁹ Sevil Sönmez, et al. “Human Rights and Health Disparities for Migrant Workers in the UAE”, *Health and Human Rights*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2011, pp. 17–35, accessed February 20, 2017, www.jstor.org/stable/healthumarigh.13.2.17.

¹⁰ Hamsa AlJumaili, *الإصلاح السياسي في دول مجلس التعاون الخليجي بين المحفزات والمعوقات* [*Political Reform in the GCC: Catalysts and Obstacles*] (Amman: Dar Al Jinan Publishers, 2011) p. 344

¹¹ Neil Patrick, “Nationalism in the Gulf States,” *LSE Middle East Center* (October 2009), p. 19

¹² Patrick, “Nationalism in the Gulf States”, p. 3

hailing from the Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia, my study will include and emphasize the role played by the prosperous middle-class, many of whom hail from those same regions. By drawing on the common experience of exclusion, I seek to bridge the two seemingly disparate case studies of the *bidoon* and middle-class Indian migrants, with a focus on the triadic interaction between the state, national populations, and these non-national populations.

III. Background & Context

The Gulf Countries: Nascent States & a Narrative of Hyper Development

The Gulf countries are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), an economic and political union that comprises Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. All of them are relatively new states. Having been under British control from as early as the eighteenth century, their modern forms only developed towards the later part of the twentieth century, and continues to evolve today.¹³

British activity in the region, which at its beginnings was primarily a commercial pursuit, gradually evolved into strategic interests with the signing of the “Exclusive Agreement” in 1892. Although this agreement essentially tasked Britain with the responsibility of protecting the Trucial States, which were sheikhdoms along the western Persian Gulf coast and include present-day Bahrain and the UAE, it simultaneously prohibited Trucial rulers from yielding territorial sovereignty without British consent. Although the borders of many of these states were initially fluid, this agreement made owning and controlling territory vitally important.¹⁴ The discovery of oil in the region, first in Bahrain in 1932 and elsewhere shortly thereafter, further heightened the importance of territorial boundaries.¹⁵

The discovery of oil had two important effects. Firstly, in most of the Gulf states, there was a rapid and substantial increase in immigration from the desert and neighboring countries. Although initial employment opportunities primarily served the rapidly growing oil and refining

¹³ Khaldoun Al-Naqeeb, *Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula* (London: Routledge, 1990) p. 47

¹⁴ Yusuf AlYusuf, الإمارات العربية المتحدة على مفترق طرق [The United Arab Emirates at a Crossroads] (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahdah al-‘Arabīyah, 2013)

¹⁵ Al-Naqeeb, *Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula*, p. 79

sectors, the spillover effects created numerous opportunities in secondary and tertiary sectors. Immigration initially occurred from neighboring Arab states, including Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Syria, and Egypt, where high-skill labor such as teachers and doctors were either lured by high salaries or expelled from their countries by events such as the *nakba* in Palestine. Soon, it expanded to include South Asian countries such as India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the Philippines, drawing both low and high-skilled labor.¹⁶ Secondly, the discovery intensified desires to break away from the British protectorate to prevent exploitation of local oil resources by British interests. Kuwait was the first to gain independence in 1961, with Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, and the UAE following shortly thereafter in 1971.¹⁷

Nonetheless, the borders of many of these countries remained contested well towards the end of the twentieth-century and even the early part of twenty-first century. The Kuwaiti border, for example, was formally demarcated and accepted in 1993 following an intervention by the United Nations. Similarly, the Bahrain-Qatar dispute over Hawar Islands only ended in 2001 and required mediation by the International Court of Justice. The Bahrain-Qatar dispute, despite being over largely uninhabited territories, highlighted the importance of demarcating maritime borders in order to determine control over offshore oil and gas deposits.¹⁸ More broadly, the recentness of these disputes demonstrates that “the concept of territorial boundaries for the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council is a relatively new phenomenon... [and] a principal difficulty in conceiving territorial boundaries, let alone defining them, was the alien nature of boundaries themselves, the lack of any need for them, and the absence of putative states in most of the Peninsula”.¹⁹

¹⁶ Ulrichsen, *The Gulf States in the International Political Economy*, p. 174

¹⁷ Al-Naqeeb, *Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula*, p. 63

¹⁸ Mehran Kamrava, *International Politics of the Persian Gulf* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011) p. 22

¹⁹ Kamrava, *International Politics of the Persian Gulf*, p. 21

Many of these territories, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, and Dubai, are rooted in histories as mercantile city-states or quasi city-states ruled by local dynasties of tribal descent. With many modern state institutions introduced only after the discovery and exploitation of oil, the state – and, by extension, its citizens – remained defined by their urban spaces. In Kuwait, for example, “it was the wall built in 1920 to protect urban residents from the attacks of the tribal militias of Ibn Saud which sensitized the landmark of modern identity politics. The wall defined a new line of physical separation between town dwellers and the populations that lived outside”.²⁰ Elsewhere, in places like Bahrain and Dubai, “harbors were the only geographic barrier that separated towns from their surroundings, [and] coastal rulers (*shaykhs*) exercised loose control over people and goods entering their towns”.²¹ In this context of weakly defined notions of citizens and migrants, both groups became vulnerable to actions by the other and the by the overarching state. Studying this three-way interaction, between citizens, migrants, and ruling authorities of the state, is the crux of this study.

Theoretical Underpinnings: Citizenship, Migration, and Imagined Identities

The citizenship discourse has generally revolved around two predominant models: liberal and republican. The key principle of the first is civic self-rule and political membership, while the second builds itself as a legal status, and emphasizes protecting individual freedoms and rights. More recently, the concept of an ethno-nationalist citizenship has entered the discourse, defining itself as “a version of the nationalist doctrine ... interested not in civil society, but in a different

²⁰ Nelida Fuccaro, "Pearl Towns and Early Oil Cities," *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity*, ed. Ulrike Freitag (New York: Routledge, 2011) p. 108

²¹ Fuccaro, "Pearl Towns and Early Oil Cities," p. 110

kind of community: the nation or ethnic group”.²² Postmodern approaches, however, emphasize the increasing heterogenization of society and thus question universalist theories of citizenship, which define “citizenship primarily as a legal status through which an identical set of civil, political and social rights are accorded to all members of the polity”.²³ It is thus the differentialist model of citizenship, which highlights the political relevance of cultural, gender, class, and racial differences, that underpins my study.

Emerging from the differentialist model of citizenship, and lending itself to the new forms of transnational identities and belonging that modern migration has fostered, is the concept of a diasporic citizenship. Though this concept has been conceived in numerous ways, two definitions prove particularly relevant to my study. The first, proposed by Michel Laguerre, describes it as the situation of “an individual who lives outside the boundaries of the nation state to which he or she had formerly held primary allegiance and who experiences through transnational migration ... the subjective reality of belonging to two or more nation-states”. This definition is appropriate for framing the case of Indian migrants in the UAE. Due to the contested transnationality of the *bidoon* in Kuwait, however, this definition proves less resilient in their case. Instead, I propose the definition put forth by Lok Siu, which defines diasporic citizenship as “the process by which diasporic subjects experience and practice cultural and social belonging amid shifting geopolitical circumstances and webs of transnational relations”. Here, the emphasis is on the modes of cultural and social belonging, and in my study, barriers to them.²⁴

²² Gershon Shafir, and Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p. 6

²³ "Citizenship," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2014, p. 4

²⁴ Caroline Brettell and James F. Hollifield, *Migration Theory* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013) p. 168

Central to my argument is the notion of an imagined community and identity. First put forth by Benedict Anderson in the context of nationalism, he defines the nation as “an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign... it is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”.²⁵ Moreover, the community is imagined “because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible”.²⁶ Perhaps most importantly, this community does not include everyone due to the difficulty it would create in sustaining a sense of unity; instead, comradeship and a sense of purpose is built on the community contrasting itself to an “other”.²⁷ In my study, the “other” and exclusion become inextricably linked.

Deproblematizing the Vocabulary: Definitions

For the purposes of this study, I will define certain recurring concepts that may be considered contested and therefore interpreted in multiple ways. The definitions provided are merely intended to operationalize these terms in the context of my analysis, and do not necessarily lend themselves to official or theoretical underpinnings.

The term statehood will refer to the independent, sovereign status all Gulf countries claim. For the purposes of this essay, the terms “state” and “nation” will be used interchangeably to refer to countries; in this case, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. While city-state will also be used,

²⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (N.p.: Verso, 1991) p. 6

²⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.7

²⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.7

it will refer, in the case of Kuwait, to the capital city's sovereignty as the country's urban center. In the case of Dubai, it will, instead, refer to the city's virtual sovereign status even as an emirate (state) that is part of a larger federation.

In terms of geographies, the Gulf states, as mentioned earlier, will refer to the six collective states that make up the Gulf Cooperation Council, and may be used interchangeably with the acronym GCC. The United Arab Emirates will also be referred to by its acronym, the UAE.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, citizenship will be defined in its legal sense, as holding the passport of a country. Thus, national populations will be considered those that hold a passport of, for example, Kuwait or the UAE, while non-nationals do not, and this will crystalize their exclusion. In the case of the stateless of Kuwait, they will be defined as they are by the United Nations, "individuals not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law".²⁸

²⁸ Brad Blitz, *Statelessness and Citizenship: A Comparative Study on the Benefits of Nationality* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2012), p. 1

IV. The “Haves and Have Nots”: The *Bidoon* of Kuwait

In 1957 – three years before its independence – Kuwait conducted its first census. The population was estimated at 206,000, with Kuwaitis accounting for 55% of that figure. This proportion decreased to 45% by 1961. In 1989, however, Kuwait’s Ministry of Public Planning publicly acknowledged that the *bidoon* had been counted as Kuwaiti citizens, thereby inflating the demographic data. The true proportion of Kuwaitis, the ministry held, was only 28% instead of 40%. Thereafter, the *bidoon* were excluded not only from the count of Kuwaiti citizens, but by 1995, they were excluded completely from population censuses.²⁹ With no official government figures on the size of the *bidoon* population, the most recent estimates in 2016 have placed it at approximately 112,000.³⁰

The pivotal moment for the *bidoon* was 1959, when Kuwait introduced the current iteration of its Nationality Law. The law essentially defined three classes of citizens, the first being “original Kuwaitis”, Kuwaitis *bil-asl*. The law identified this class of Kuwaitis according to the historical urban spaces they occupied; specifically, they were those who settled within the confines of the wall that was built in 1920 to protect urban dwellers from attacks by the tribal militia of Ibn Saud, head of the Saud tribe and the first monarch of Saudi Arabia.³¹ The second class of citizens were those who were naturalized, and included Persian families and the *huwala*, Arabs who migrated to Persia in the eighteenth century for better economic opportunities but returned during the oil era of the 1940s and 1950s. It is worth noting that two important amendments introduced in 1960 and 1981 made citizenship by naturalization increasingly less common; the first restricted the number of naturalizations of non-Gulf Arabs to fifty per year and the second required candidates to be Muslim.³²

²⁹ Longva, *Walls Built on Sand*, p. 52

³⁰ *Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Kuwait*, Washington, DC: US Department of State, 2015, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2015/nea/252933.htm>

³¹ Fuccaro, "Pearl Towns and Early Oil Cities," p. 111

³² Longva, *Walls Built on Sand*, p. 48

Importantly, the 1959 Nationality Law required citizens-to-be to register in order to obtain citizenship, but nomads, who “due to a combination of failure to understand the newly introduced concept of citizenship and an attempt to hold on as long as they could to their traditional pattern of cyclical migration”, did not register.³³ Thus, they became the third class of citizens – the stateless. This hierarchy of citizenship was extrapolated to dictate the degrees of political participation each echelon would enjoy, effectively creating gradations of inclusion. Today, while “original” Kuwaitis have full political rights, naturalized Kuwaitis are only allowed to vote after thirty years of residence in Kuwait, while the third class enjoys virtually no political rights whatsoever.³⁴

Initially, statelessness for the *bidoon* was not a problem. Not only could these nomads settle permanently in the country without the formal recognition of citizenship, but in Kuwait, where the importance of citizenship is in “the social privileges and material benefits it [implies]”, the *bidoon* still had access to free education and healthcare in exchange for taking up roles in the army and police force.³⁵ Given the *bidoon*'s background as fighters in the desert, they were, in fact, more willing to take up these roles than their urban Kuwaiti counterparts.

It is worth noting that there was a second category of *bidoon* who, although technically not initially stateless, performed a similar national purpose as the first category. When Kuwait decided to pursue its independence in 1961, it found itself having to assemble an army, but was faced with a native population that – despite mandatory conscription – was neither equipped nor interested in

³³ Longva, *Walls Built on Sand*, p. 50

³⁴ Longva, *Walls Built on Sand*, p. 49

³⁵ Longva, *Walls Built on Sand*, p. 47, 50

joining the army. It thus relied on mercenaries from neighboring Arab states, namely Iraq, Jordan, and Syria, to perform this duty. To avoid the national humiliation of admitting to recruiting foreign mercenaries, Kuwaiti authorities labeled them as *bidoon*.³⁶ Following the end of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991, however, many *bidoon* from this category fled the country to escape persecution after being accused of collaborating with the Iraqis. This brought down the population of the *bidoon* from 250,000 to around 100,000, with those remaining being predominantly from the first category.³⁷

It was only in the early 1980s that the combination of two separate phenomena made the issue of the *bidoon* a pressing one for both the Kuwaiti government and the stateless populations themselves. First, the oil crisis led to shrinking government revenues, tightening budgets, and the reduction of welfare benefits provided by the state. In 1986, the government abruptly and decisively ended all state-provided benefits that the *bidoon* had enjoyed for many years, including free healthcare and education.³⁸ Secondly, the intensification of Iraqi aggression and the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979 heightened concerns among the Kuwaiti authorities and the local populace over internal security threats posed by the non-national population. Anh Nga Longva highlights how this perceived threat was rooted in the *bidoon*'s "ambiguous status as an unacknowledged population [which] provided a human pool into which Iraqi refugees, draft dodgers, and infiltrators as well as absconding workers and illegal aliens could easily blend after getting rid of their identity papers".³⁹ It is in this context that the *bidoon* became socially

³⁶ Longva, *Walls Built on Sand*, p. 51

³⁷ Sultan Barakat and John Skelton, "The Reconstruction of Postwar Kuwait: A Missed Opportunity?," *Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States*, no. 37 (2014): 5.

³⁸ Longva, *Walls Built on Sand*, p. 51

³⁹ Longva, *Walls Built on Sand*, p. 51

stigmatized, and naturalization became a virtually impossible recourse for them as citizenship became increasingly restrictive and equally exclusive.

Today, the exclusion of the *bidoon* from the national community manifests itself in many ways. For the purposes of this case study, I will focus on their physical, civil, and social exclusion.

Physical Exclusion: Spatial Segregation

The physical exclusion the *bidoon* experience determines the spaces they can occupy and where they can live. Because the *bidoon* are Arab like their Kuwaiti counterparts, often descended from similar tribal ancestry, visible physical separation becomes particularly important in excluding them from the national community: simply, they look like other Kuwaitis, with the result that authorities restrict them in spatial terms to keep the two groups apart. Today, most *bidoon* live in either Al Jahra (twenty miles northwest of Kuwait City) or Sulaibiya (fourteen miles west of Kuwait City). In the 1970s, the government built low-quality housing in these areas for *bidoon* employed in the army or police force. Though these houses are leased for minimum rent to the *bidoon*, the current ban on employing *bidoon* in both the public and private sector, which was instated in 1985, has forced them into the informal sector, and has made paying this rent well beyond their capabilities.⁴⁰ Furthermore, no new affordable housing developments dedicated to the *bidoon* have been built. This, combined with the growth of their population, has created a severe housing undersupply, and has led to tin-roofed housing communities arising, thereby transforming these predominantly industrial areas into shanty towns housing *bidoon* populations. Importantly, these areas occupy the space “between Kuwait’s new urban and national boundary lines”: they are

⁴⁰ Blitz, *Statelessness and Citizenship*, p. 181

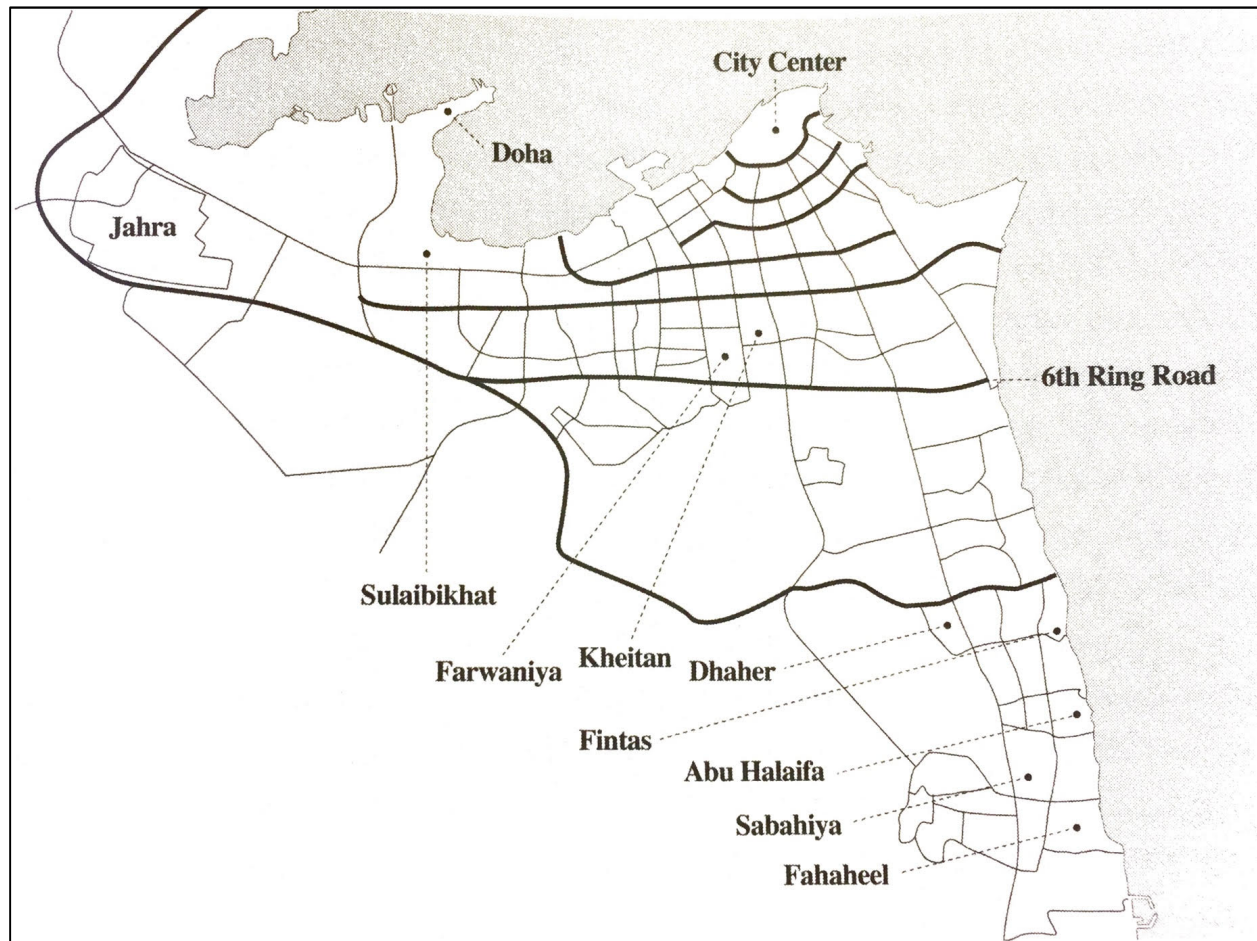
isolated outside the traditional urban-space that came to define Kuwaiti citizenship in the twentieth century – the walled town – and are instead closer to the traditional Bedouin desert hinterland.⁴¹

Physical, socio-spatial boundaries separate Kuwaitis from the non-Kuwaiti *bidoon* population. Paramount is a system of multiple ring roads which have Kuwait City as its epicenter. This road system, which was built in 1952, creates definite boundaries thus mimicking the function the original wall surrounding Kuwait had. The First Ring-Road, surrounding Kuwait City, historically encircled members of the ruling family, with other original residents, *ahl al-Sur*, occupying the area restricted to them which is bounded by the First Ring Road to the north and the Fourth Ring Road to the south. Non-Kuwaitis today occupy the areas between the Fourth Ring Road and the Sixth (the outermost) Ring Road (Figure 1).⁴²

⁴¹ Farah Al-Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed: A History of Oil and Urban Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2016), p. 142

⁴² Al-Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed*, p. 136

Figure 1: Kuwait's Ring-Road System (The six ring roads are bolded)



Jahra and Sulaibiya lie outside the ring road system, and are known in popular and official discourse as *al-manatiq al kharjiya*, the “outlying areas”. The housing developments in these areas have essentially created distant, self-contained townships that ensure their “residents would not need to commute to commercial or service centers within the Kuwait City metropolitan area”, and it is through this physical exclusion that the *bidoon*’s first instance of exclusion from the Kuwaiti, state-sponsored national identity crystallizes.⁴³

⁴³ Al-Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed*, p. 140

Civil Exclusion: A Passport to National Participation

The Kuwaiti state effects the civil exclusion of the *bidoon* by denying forms of official documentation to this population, including civil identification cards; birth, death, and marriage certificates; and driving licenses. In Kuwait, the law states that only Kuwaiti citizens and legal residents may receive Civil ID cards. These cards are required to “rent or purchase real estate or cars, open bank accounts, enroll in private universities and some private schools; hold legal employment; and receive birth, marriage or death certificates”.⁴⁴ In 1985, however, the *bidoon*’s official classification by the state changed from “undefined nationality” to “illegal residents”, *al-muqimin bi-sura ghayr qanuniyya*, thereby deeming them ineligible to apply for these cards.⁴⁵ The importance of this ineligibility lies not only in ensuring the *bidoon*’s exclusion from the aforementioned activities, but also in preventing symbolic claims to Kuwaiti identity.

Recently, Kuwaiti documentation has acquired a performative role, offering metaphoric passports to participation in Kuwaiti mobility at home and on the world stage. For example, Kuwaitis boast that many Arabs regard the Kuwaiti passport as one of the most powerful Gulf passports in allowing visa-free travel to foreign countries, thus highlighting the mobility and empowerment it grants its holder.⁴⁶ The *bidoon*’s lack of passports denies them this mobility. Though some may possess an Article 17 Passport, an application-based temporary travel document that does not confer nationality, it permits only certain types of travel, has additional visa requirements, and can only be renewed within Kuwait.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the Article 17 Passport’s

⁴⁴ United Kingdom Home Office, *Country Information and Guidance – Kuwait: Bidoons*, 2006, Version 2.0, p. 24.

⁴⁵ UK Home Office, *Kuwait: Bidoons*, 2006, p. 28.

⁴⁶ “الجواز الكويتي الأقوى عربياً والسعودي خامساً” [“The Kuwaiti Passport Ranked the Strongest Arab Passport, Saudi Passport Comes in Fifth”], *Raialyoum*, July 1 2014, <http://www.raialyoum.com/?p=114867> (Accessed March 3, 2017).

⁴⁷ *Report on Human Rights Practices – Kuwait*, US Department of State, 2015

dull gray color sharply contrasts the Kuwaiti passport's distinctive blue color. The blue color has in fact become a symbol of Kuwaitiness and the country's official color; members of the Kuwait National Football Team, for example, are affectionately called "The Blues" while locals commonly describe the country's national carrier, Kuwait Airways, as *al-ta'ir al azraq* – the "Blue Bird".⁴⁸

Social Exclusion: Demarcating and Isolating Public Spaces

Finally, one can perhaps see most clearly the social exclusion the *bidoon* experience by looking at how they interact – or are prevented from interacting – with the citizen population in public spaces. I will use the example of state-owned education and healthcare institutions in Kuwait to draw out this point. Even before Kuwait's independence, education and healthcare were traditionally state responsibilities. Twelve years after the discovery of oil in Kuwait and four years after the country's first exports began, Abdulla Bin Salem ascended to power in January 1950 as the Emir of Kuwait. In his first year of rule, the Emir spent a fifth of the country's total revenues on just healthcare and education.⁴⁹ In fact, Kuwait's first constitution, which was promulgated in 1962 and reinstated in 1992, explicitly listed the provision of healthcare and education as state obligations. Article 13 under Part II of the constitution, "Fundamental Constituents of Kuwaiti Society", states that "Education is a fundamental requisite for the progress of society, assured and promoted by the State". Similarly, Article 15 under the same section reads that, "The State cares for public health and for means of prevention and treatment of diseases and epidemics".⁵⁰ Although these benefits ended for the *bidoon* in 1986, the exclusion did not end there.

⁴⁸ Anonymous Interview with a *bidoon*, interviewed by Khaled Abdulkarim, Philadelphia, PA, February 28th, 2017.

⁴⁹ Al-Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed*, p. 92

⁵⁰ Government of Kuwait, *The Constitution of the State of Kuwait*

Given the critical life-saving role hospitals play, they have a duty of care to patients, and therefore cannot deny service to anyone. Although the cost of unsubsidized health care deters *bidoon* from visiting health centers for non-critical conditions, it does not prevent contact in public hospitals between them and the national population for more pressing cases. Kuwaiti authorities, however, have introduced laws to ensure exclusion. In 2013, for example, the Ministry of Health introduced segregated hospital timings for nationals and non-nationals; since then, public hospital's Outpatients Department (OPD), which provides non-urgent ambulatory care, will only treat Kuwaiti (citizen) patients in the morning hours (but they can also visit at any other time during the day). By contrast, non-Kuwaitis, the *bidoon* included, can only visit in the evening.⁵¹ Furthermore, Kuwait's first new government hospital in over thirty years – poised to open in the second half of 2017 – will only be accepting Kuwaiti passport-holders for all types of care.⁵² Although government authorities have stated that these measures aim to reduce hospital wait times, because non-Kuwaitis represent approximately 70% of the population while Kuwaitis are a mere 30%, this measure will indubitably increase wait times for the country's non-citizen majority.⁵³

With education, social exclusion is even easier to engineer. Public schools in Kuwait offer free elementary through secondary education for all Kuwaitis, and are therefore the preferred choice for the national population. However, birth certificates – which the *bidoon* do not hold – are a necessary requirement for enrollment, and therefore the *bidoon* are completely excluded from

⁵¹ Courtney Trenwith, "First Kuwaiti Hospital Starts Morning Ban for Expats," *Arabian Business*, June 30, 2013, <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/kuwait/kuwait-hospital-bans-foreigners-in-the-morning-1.1684997> (accessed Mar 4, 2016).

⁵² "Kuwait's First New Government Hospital To Open After Three Decades Only to Kuwaiti Citizens," *Arabian Times*, February 21, 2017, <http://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/kuwait-first-new-government-hospital-open-three-decades-kuwaiti-citizens/> (accessed March 4, 2016).

⁵³ Trenwith, "First Kuwaiti Hospital Starts Morning Ban for Expats"

this space.⁵⁴ Instead, their only option is to attend private schools, which many *bidoon* cannot afford. They are thus forced to enroll in lower-quality schools, often community schools close to their dwellings and totally devoid of Kuwaiti students.⁵⁵ Recently, makeshift schools dedicated to serving *bidoon* students, where classrooms are set up in independent societies and teachers are often also from the *bidoon* community, have arisen and offered free education to their population.⁵⁶

State-owned higher-education institutions make use of similar documentation requirements to exclude the *bidoon* from this space. Kuwait University – the country’s only public university and free for all Kuwaitis – has clear documentation requirements for admission. For the 2016-2017 academic year, the university’s handbook defined Kuwaitis as passport-holders and the children of Kuwait mothers, even though the latter are not technically Kuwaiti nationals since Kuwaiti Nationality Law – like almost all Arab Nationality Laws – stipulates that nationality is transmitted by paternity. The second group must therefore present additional documents, including: the student’s birth certificate, the mother’s valid ID card, and the mother’s original Certificate of Nationality. The handbook also defines a separate category of students, “Illegal Residents Born to non-Kuwaiti Mothers”, and places an enrollment cap of one hundred students for this category. In addition to receiving security clearance from the Central Apparatus for Illegal Residents, these students must have achieved a minimum 90% in their high school diploma. No such requirement exists for Kuwaiti students, and this percentile is in fact higher than the requirement for all the

⁵⁴ Longva, *Walls Built on Sand*, p. 37

⁵⁵ “Kuwait: Stateless ‘Bidun’ Denied Rights,” *Human Rights Watch*, June 13, 2011, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/06/13/kuwait-stateless-bidun-denied-rights> (Accessed March 4, 2017).

⁵⁶ Dahlia Kholaf, “Kuwait Makeshift School Takes in Shunned Stateless Students,” *Middle East Eye*, November 11, 2014, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/in-depth/features/kuwait-makeshift-school-takes-shunned-stateless-students-1515630296> (Accessed March 5, 2016).

university's merit-based scholarships, for which students in this category are not eligible.⁵⁷ *Bidoon* rights activists and activist organizations continue to assert that *bidoon* students tend to outperform many of their peers because admission requirements for the *bidoon* are considerably higher and there is immense pressure for them to excel, but no university or government data is publicly released to confirm this.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, the combination of limited spaces and high minimum entry requirements make higher education a viable path for only a small number of *bidoon*, thus effectively excluding most of them from this space.

The Struggle for Inclusion

In February 2011, hundreds of *bidoon*, encouraged by the relative success of the Arab Spring revolts in other Arab countries, took to the streets in their hometowns of Jahra and Sulaibiya demanding citizenship and – more importantly – inclusion.⁵⁹ Though Kuwaiti authorities quickly suppressed the protests, it had become clear that the creation of a “deprived community in the midst of a prosperous society [was] a recipe for resentment, social destabilization, and further insecurity”.⁶⁰

The *bidoon*'s tenacious pursuit of inclusion must be understood as response to their ethnic heritage as Arabs and the Kuwaiti, tribal-rooted national identity. The *bidoon* who remain today

⁵⁷ Kuwait University, دليل قواعد القبول والتحويل: العام الجامعي ٢٠١٧/٢٠١٦ [Guidebook on Admission and Transfer Rules for the Academic Year 2016/2017], p. 41, http://portal.ku.edu.kw/manuals/admission/en/admission_rules.pdf (Accessed March 5, 2016).

⁵⁸ Bedoon Rights, “Kuwait Denies School Registration for Bedoon Children”, <http://www.bedoonrights.org/2012/09/15/kuwait-denies-school-registration-for-bedoon-children/> (accessed March 28, 2017)

⁵⁹ James Calderwood, “Police Teargas Protesting Kuwaiti Stateless,” *The National*, March 12, 2011, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/police-teargas-protesting-kuwaiti-stateless> (Accessed March 6, 2017).

⁶⁰ Blitz, *Statelessness and Citizenship*, p. 177

see themselves as descendants of the same Arab tribal heritage that Kuwaiti citizens claim, and are paying the price of exclusion because of their forebears' failure to understand the citizenship laws and their importance when they were introduced in 1959.

In light of this, they view themselves as equally deserving of the social and welfare benefits granted by the Kuwaiti government to Kuwaiti citizens. They resent that the fact that they have been relegated to the lower-most echelon of Kuwaiti society, even below temporary expatriate workers, whom the *bidoon* believe do not harbor the sense of territorial and cultural belonging to Kuwait that they do, and who yet get to enjoy more of the state's benefits than the *bidoon*. The *bidoon* highlight the fact that their ancestors comprised the majority of the army and police force during the late-twentieth century, and even though Kuwaiti citizens accused the *bidoon* of being collectively responsible for an assassination attempt against the Emir in 1986, the *bidoon* emphasize that many of them were part of the Emir's security detail, and several died protecting him.⁶¹

Yet, it is their relative deprivation compared to the conditions of Kuwaiti nationals and expatriate workers that fuels the *bidoon*'s discontent. While expatriates can occupy the space between the fourth and sixth ring-roads, the state relegates the *bidoon* to the "outlying areas", completely outside the ring-road system; while expatriates and migrant workers – even low skill, low-wage laborers – can pay a nominal health insurance premium and enjoy subsidized health care (compared to free healthcare for all Kuwaiti citizens), the *bidoon* must pay unsubsidized prices because they are considered "illegal residents"; and finally, while expatriates and most migrant

⁶¹ Blitz, *Statelessness and Citizenship*, p. 176

workers enjoy free movement in and out of Kuwait, Kuwaiti authorities use documentation as a bargaining chip with the *bidoon*. That is, the Foreign Office of the UK has reported that Kuwaiti authorities will agree to issue birth, marriage and death certificates for *bidoon* on the condition they renounce claims to Kuwaiti citizenship.⁶²

Beginning in the 1970s, the Kuwaiti government promoted the concept of *al-usra al-wahida*, “the united family”, to idealize and foster national cohesion.⁶³ The *bidoon*, however, were not part of this conception; authorities portrayed them as outsiders and as a threat to social stability and internal security. It was through this sense of insecurity that the state created an image of an “us” versus a common, outside “them”, and crystalized a sense of national identity on the part of Kuwaitis who hold citizenship. In this way, the state ensured the systematic, calculated, and multifaceted exclusion of the *bidoon*. Nonetheless, despite the state’s best efforts to render this population invisible, the *bidoon* have resisted and asserted their presence.

⁶² UK Home Office, *Kuwait: Bidoons*, 2006, pp. 27-28.

⁶³ Al-Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed*, p. 183

V. The Middle-Class Indians of Dubai: Not too Far from Home

Every morning at 6:05am, Emirates Airlines flight EK501, an Airbus A380 – the largest passenger aircraft in the world – lands at Dubai International Airport, completing its three-hour journey from Mumbai. Flight 501 is one of seventeen daily flights between Dubai and Mumbai, catering to a fraction of the 2.4 million passengers in annual traffic.⁶⁴ Although part of this figure are passengers connecting onwards through Dubai’s megahub, many end their journey in Dubai. They represent Dubai’s blue and white collar workers, but also the Indian elites who either reside, visit, or do business in the city. Although they have just completed an almost twelve-hundred-mile journey, many see it as having landed in “India West”; through tightly-knit nationality-based communities, a microcosm of Indian life is created. It is, however, the self and state-imposed exclusion that makes these communities, their schools, and hospitals distinctively “Indian”.

Migrants in the Gulf & Dubai: An Overview

The arrival of migrants in the Gulf Arab states closely followed the timeline of the development of the oil industry, with the discovery of oil having marked the initial trigger for short-term, remittance-based labor migration.⁶⁵ It is worth noting, however, that the process of large-scale migration to the Arabian Gulf began well before the advent oil, during the pearling industry boom in the later part of the nineteenth century. Migrants, mainly from Iran, India, and East Africa, moved to Bahrain, Kuwait, and Dubai to participate in the economic boom these bustling port cities were experiencing. As the pace of migration accelerated, so did the rate of growth of the local populations; in the period between 1834 and 1905, the population of Dubai, for example, grew from 800 to 10,000.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Emirates Airlines, *Emirates and India: Partners in Economic Growth*, Dubai, 2016, accessed 24 March 2017, https://cdn.ek.aero/downloads/ek/pdfs/fact_sheets/India_fact_sheet.pdf

⁶⁵ Vora, *Impossible Citizens*, p. 10

⁶⁶ Fuccaro, "Pearl Towns and Early Oil Cities," p. 101

By emphasizing an economic narrative for both pre- and post-oil urbanization migration, the state portrays migrants' role as "[existing] solely to furnish the managerial and service labor for the country's day-to-day functioning, and thus they are not usually considered beyond their role in the economy".⁶⁷ Furthermore, because Emirati authorities regard migrants as entirely temporary, observers have tended to regard their long-term effects on the host countries as largely transient, too. As the growth of these economies continued, the influx of migrants persisted. Migrant identities – and the formative roles they played on social and cultural institutions in the host country – began to prove more resilient.

In the context of Dubai's relatively negligible oil industry, academic literature in the field generally ties the arrival of Indian migrants to the city's history as one of the Gulf's primary trading ports. Throughout the mid-twentieth century, Indian merchants and businessmen, seeking to benefit from what Neha Vora describes as Dubai's "neoliberal economic 'freedoms'", played an instrumental role in building Dubai as a trade hub, especially for gold. Today, Indians represent the largest non-national population in Dubai. The most recent estimates have placed their total population in Dubai at 2.8 million, with 15-20% representing "professionally qualified personnel... followed by 20 percent white-collar nonprofessionals (clerical staff, shop assistants, salesmen, accountants, etc.) and the remaining 65% comprises blue-collar workers".⁶⁸

As the demographic imbalance between the national and non-national population continues to widen, Emirati authorities have become particularly vigilant in protecting the exclusivity of

⁶⁷ Vora, *Impossible Citizens*, p. 4

⁶⁸ Ministry of External Affairs, *India-UAE Bilateral Relations*, New Delhi, 2016, accessed 24 March 2017, https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Bilateral_Brief_for_US_DD_new.pdf

Emirati citizenship in light of what they consider an “internal demographic threat”.⁶⁹ This, I contend, has required multi-faceted exclusion. The examples of physical, civil, and social exclusion will be discussed in this section, specifically in the case of Dubai’s middle-class Indian migrants.

Physical Exclusion: Spatial Segregation

One of the most prolific images shared on the internet and used to capture Dubai’s rapid development is a before-and-after comparison of Sheikh Zayed Road (Figure 2), Dubai’s main artery that connects the eastern, older part of the city and the western, newer part. Importantly, these two sides of Dubai have come to represent a much more significant divide. And because Indians in Dubai represent one of the city’s first migrant populations, the first areas they occupied, in the eastern part of Dubai, have today become associated with them. I contend that historical self-imposed geographic segregation of Indian migrants in Dubai has crystallized their social isolation today, and this is propagated through informal government policies.

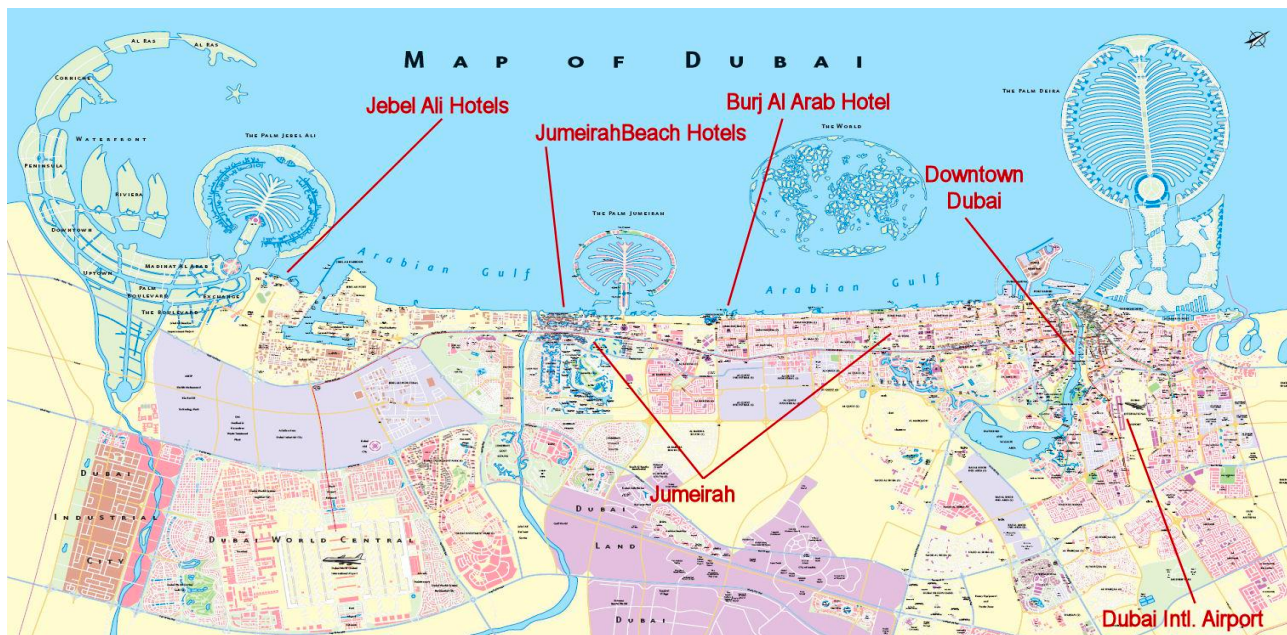
Figure 2: Sheikh Zayed Road in 1991 and 2012 (Source: DubaiMemes.com)



⁶⁹ Patrick, “Nationalism in the Gulf States”, p. 28

The areas of Bur Dubai, Deira, and Karama in the western part of the emirate represent the closest residential areas to *Khor Dubai*, Dubai Creek, historically the preferred location for Indian businessmen involved in the gold trade.⁷⁰ Today, middle-class Indians in Dubai have congregated towards these areas for two primary reasons. Firstly, a heated rent market – created by both increased demand due to an expanding job market and a relative market undersupply – has led to skyrocketing rents and has driven many middle-class Indians earning modest incomes to less desirable neighborhoods; this has generally meant a move to “old Dubai”, which the three aforementioned areas are part of, or areas closer to the outskirts of Dubai, which the aforementioned areas have recently become a part of as the central business district has moved further west, away from the old downtown near the airport (Figure 3).⁷¹

Figure 3: Map of Dubai. The areas of Bur Dubai, Deira, and Karama lie in the eastern part of the city, near *Khor Dubai*. (Source: DubaiCityHotels.com)



⁷⁰ Vora, *Impossible Citizens*, p. 101

⁷¹ Vora, *Impossible Citizens*, p. 124

Secondly, and in a related vein, the preference among Indians for these Indian-dominated areas relates closely to the image that middle-class Indians in Dubai have of themselves. Unlike Indian migration to the United States, where the main purpose is permanent settlement, many Indians in Dubai consider their migration to be both economically-motivated and entirely temporary. As a result, Indians have tended to develop a different – and, one could say, much milder – type of attachment or belonging to Dubai, while regarding the preservation of their native culture as of utmost importance. Many have achieved this through maintaining “a nondiverse social circle, sticking to those they felt formed part of their community usually based on religion, region, language, and class simultaneously”.⁷² Indian-dominated residential areas therefore become the most conducive environment for these purposes.

Informal state policies have reinforced the practice and perception of geographic segregation. The strategic placement of community, social, and cultural centers, for example, demarcate middle-class Indians’ claims to certain part of the cities. The India Club in Dubai, which boasts its “top class facilities in the field of Sports, Social Amenities, Entertainment, Recreation and promotion of Business”, is located in Karama; in fact, the plot of land on which the club was built was a gift from Sheikh Rashid Bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the first Emir of Dubai.⁷³ Similarly, Dubai’s only two Hindu temples, built in 1958 and 2012 respectively, are both located in Bur Dubai, and were built following directives by the presiding rulers and on land gifted by the government.⁷⁴

⁷² Vora, *Impossible Citizens*, p. 102

⁷³ India Club Dubai, “About Us”, <http://www.indiaclubdubai.com/about-us/> (accessed March 22 2017)

⁷⁴ Ians, “What Makes Indian Expats in Dubai So Unique,” *The Economic Times*, August 15, 2015, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/nri/nris-in-news/what-makes-indian-expats-in-the-uae-unique/articleshow/48493885.cms> (Accessed March 25, 2017).

Dubai authorities pursue informal policies of segregation in the other direction, by guiding local Emirati citizens to other spaces in Dubai. In 2014, the Dubai government gifted one-hundred plots of residential land, worth \$554.5 million, to local citizens in Dubai. Most of these plots were in predominantly Emirati areas, such as Jumeirah and Umm Suqeim, in West Dubai.⁷⁵ Importantly, the conditions associated with these land gifts stipulate that the lands are intended solely for personal, residential use and could not be resold – not least to foreigners.⁷⁶ In this way, authorities crystallize socio-geographic segregation along national lines.

Civil Exclusion

Civil exclusion will be discussed in terms of the ways documentation requirements reassert the “temporary” status of Indian middle-class migrants in Dubai, thus ensuring that any inclusion they may experience is merely transient. Unlike in the case of the *bidoon*, where an almost total denial of documentation is used to create this exclusion, stringent documentation requirements are used to achieve the same goal among all Indian migrant populations in Dubai, the middle class included.

The *kafala*, sponsorship, system is perhaps the most effective tool for controlling migration in the Gulf countries. Through this system, any new migrant worker being employed is directly sponsored by a local citizen and is excluded from national labor laws. As a result, migrants fall under the purview of the Ministry of Interior rather than the Ministry of Labor; the police, rather

⁷⁵ “Dubai Authorities Gift \$554.5 Million Worth of Lands to Local Citizens”, *Armenia News*, July 17, 2014, <https://news.am/eng/news/219416.html> (Accessed March 25, 2017)

⁷⁶ “محمد بن راشد يصدر مرسوما بشأن رهن الأراضي الممنوحة في إمارة دبي” [Mohammed Bin Rashed Issues Royal Decree Regarding Selling Gifted Lands in the Emirate of Dubai], *Emarat Alyoum*, November 15, 2016, <http://www.emaratalyoum.com/local-section/other/2016-11-15-1.946023>

than employment contracts, therefore have authority to arbitrate disputes involving them.⁷⁷ Importantly, this system effectively creates a “rotating labor pool that could be rapidly imported during periods of economic growth and later expelled if or when times grew harder”.⁷⁸ The low barriers to employment and dismissal emphasizes their temporariness, which is particularly important in disincentivizing cultural and social participation or assimilation on the part of middle-class Indians.

Even for non-worker populations residing in Dubai, including the children of workers and foreign students in higher education institutions, legal presence in the country relies on short-term, renewable visas. In the case of second-generation foreigners in the country, many of whom are born to Indian migrants, the state does not offer birthright citizenship and eliminates any attachment to their birthplace through constant visa requirements. In fact, once a male child reaches adulthood, he can only stay in the country if he obtains his own residency visa; this requires either permanent employment and employer sponsorship, or pursuing higher education on a student visa. Once students graduate, their only recourse is permanent employment.⁷⁹ The uncertainty this policy creates propagates the sense of temporariness.

The lack of citizenship also implies that middle-class Indians, but also all migrant populations, are effectively excluded from certain positions and workplaces informally reserved for nationals. Strong incentives for hiring nationals, combined with stringent limits on hiring

⁷⁷ Froilan T. Malit Jr. and Ali Al Youha, “Labor Migration in the United Arab Emirates: Challenges and Responses”, *Migration Policy Institute*, September 18, 2013, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/labor-migration-united-arab-emirates-challenges-and-responses> (Accessed March 24, 2017)

⁷⁸ Ulrichsen, *The Gulf States in the International Political Economy*, p. 179

⁷⁹ Vora, *Impossible Citizens*, p. 149

expatriates, create a dual labor market situation. In other cases, an explicit “Emiratisation” policy in certain industries specifies a minimum number of locals to be employed and distorts the merit-based employment process. Importantly, this introduces the concept of hierarchical citizenship which creates gradations of inclusion, a phenomenon which will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

Social Exclusion: Demarcating and Isolating Public Spaces

Social spaces can create and propagate exclusion by homogenizing the groups of people who occupy them. Social segregation between migrant and local populations confirms distinctions on the basis of national identity – a point that educational institutions and consumer spaces can vividly illustrate.

Middle-class Indians construct and achieve a strong “Indian” identity not only through residential proximity; citizenship-based segregation in educational institution becomes critically important to their sense of distinction as well. Firstly, the inability of children of foreign parents to enroll in public schools, which are reserved exclusively for Emirati students and are free for them, crystallize the initial local-foreigner divide. This represents a formal exclusionary policy by the government. At the same time, a desire for cultural preservation on the part of Indians, combined with economic limitations that make enrolling in more expensive, “Western” style schools impossible for many middle-class Indian migrants, drives most students in this segment to nationality-based schools that reaffirm the identity of their parents’ country of origin. Because “students in [these] private schools are not taught in Arabic, have little sustained interaction with

Emiratis, and learn Emirati culture and history only as outsiders to that culture and history”, their exclusion becomes tangible.⁸⁰

This exclusion extends beyond educational institutions, but also into what Neha Vora dubs “consumer citizenships”⁸¹. Discrepancies between the types of consumption exhibited by middle-class Indian migrants and the local population demonstrate the mutual exclusivity of local-foreigner discourses. This situation essentially leads Indians in Dubai to shop in predominantly Indian venues. Whereas the locals’ spectacle of consumption is characterized by luxury foreign brands, the middle-class’ economic beliefs around wealth generation and preservation, combined with considerations surrounding limited disposable income, have driven them to exclude themselves from such performances. Importantly, the respective spectacles of consumption are intended to reinforce notions of rootedness and temporariness; whereas many Indian migrants will choose to rent apartments and use taxis, locals will flaunt villa and car ownership to emphasize rootedness.

In public consumer spaces, such as malls and parks where people can theoretically congregate without having to pay and contact between foreigners and locals occurs, exclusion and de facto spatial segregation can occur by erecting monetary barriers. In short, prices can keep people apart – in this case, not only Indians from Emiratis but also Indians from the “expat bubble” of affluent foreigners. In malls, for example, the spectacle is focused on spaces that require purchases, such as coffee shops; in certain public parks, especially those located in the

⁸⁰ Vora, *Impossible Citizens*, p. 157

⁸¹ Vora, *Impossible Citizens*, p. 136

predominantly Emirati western part of the city such as Zabeel Park, entry fees are required.⁸² In such spaces, the increased cost, when compared to an unchanged benefit, excludes certain populations – including middle-class Indian migrants who tend to practice financial prudence with the goal of saving for the long term.

Embracing Exclusion: A Dual Identity

In fact, what Western media often calls Dubai’s “expat bubble” suggests an insularity and separation that local Dubaians themselves do not necessarily perceive negatively. Though some have argued the lack of inclusion is merely an artifact of the population imbalance between local citizens and foreigners, I contend that middle-class Indian migrants consciously embrace exclusion because of their own self-perception as migrants. In other words, through their social behaviors middle-class Indians confirm their distinction from Emiratis, wealthy foreign residents, and low-income migrant workers alike.

For middle-class Indians, their embracement of exclusion is, firstly, the result of a self-perceived temporariness of their life in Dubai; these migrants view their decision to migrate as a solely “economically driven choice that would not be made if enough well-paying jobs were available in home villages or neighboring cities”.⁸³ As a result, preserving their native cultural values and identities – in preparation for an eventual return – becomes more important than cultural assimilation. In fact, the need for cultural assimilation is reduced by restricting oneself to nationality-based social groups. State tools such as short-term renewable visas create an uncertainty necessary for discouraging cultural assimilation, too. In this way, the state narrates

⁸² Vora, *Impossible Citizens*, p. 138

⁸³ Vora, *Impossible Citizens*, p. 11

migrants’ “participation in Dubai’s market as a means rather than an end, thereby disavowing any belonging to the Emirati nation”, a narrative the migrants themselves willingly accept.⁸⁴

Secondly, critical to middle-class Indian migrants’ acceptance of their tenuousness and their denial of a right to belonging is a self-perceived “choice” to do so. In addition to the economic “choice” of coming to Dubai, which Neha Vora argues is rooted in middle-class attraction to the neoliberal market freedoms the city offers, migrants also have a choice – and the means – to return to their hometowns, and this reaffirms their temporary and transient status.⁸⁵ Unlike low-paid migrants in Dubai, for example, middle-class Indians in the city presumably keep their passports – their employers do not confiscate them – and have the financial resources to fund their return home while supporting their families during frictional unemployment, thus confirming the notion that they could leave at any time.⁸⁶ The disavowal of citizenship merely becomes a tool to ensure this “choice” does not become a right to claim belonging or to the state. Even in terms of being excluded – be it physically or from social and consumer spaces – this is, once again, portrayed as a choice; desires for cultural preservation and disposable income considerations aside, middle-class Indians may choose to live elsewhere. Similarly, they may choose to partake in the type of consumption in which local citizens engage. Informal and formal state policies simply encourage certain behavior over others. By contrast, the *bidoon*’s pursuit of inclusion in Kuwait must be understood in their assertions of a lack of choice over their fates and current condition.

⁸⁴ Vora, *Impossible Citizens*, p. 121

⁸⁵ Vora, *Impossible Citizens*, p. 11

⁸⁶ Ulrichsen, *The Gulf States in the International Political Economy*, p. 186

Through this desire to preserve the native identity, but also because of the voluntary acceptance of their multifaceted exclusion, Indian migrants in Dubai begin to exhibit a sense of dual-belonging; inclusion becomes defined through their occupation of shared urban space – the city – but it is an incomplete sense of belonging due to visible and practiced exclusion. The notion of an urban belonging is affirmed by Dubai Indian migrants’ tendency to nuance their identities; when abroad, they identify as being “from Dubai” rather than from the nation (UAE), and identify as firstly being Indian, but clarify where they grew up or work.⁸⁷ In this way, they affirm their “in-betweenness” and parochial status.

⁸⁷ Vora, *Impossible Citizens*, p. 154

VI. Creating and Practicing the *Khaleeji* Identity: What it is, is what it is not

Throughout this analysis, I have outlined experiences of exclusion for two specific populations: the *bidoon* of Kuwait and middle-class Indian migrant workers in Dubai. I contend that local, native identities – that is, the Kuwaiti and Emirati identities – crystalize around their exceptions and exclusions, and it is through the production of these divisions that the parameters of local identity among Kuwaiti and Emirati citizens is confirmed. The same dichotomies confirm a broader, transnational Khaleeji – that is, Gulf citizen – identity found in the constituent states Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. These dichotomies, I propose, are how the imagined Khaleeji identity and community are created.

In the context of severe demographic imbalances towards foreign populations in many of the Gulf states, clear and pervasive divisions combined with strictly policed boundaries of citizenship function to “[homogenize] the heterogeneity of ... [populations] by constructing a common ‘outside’ all [locals] could identify with”.⁸⁸ This required “fabricating immediately recognizable identities to differentiate Gulf Arabs from the mass of foreign workers”.⁸⁹ This created what Miriam Cooke calls a “Gulf Arab brand”, one that is regionally similar but also distinctive enough to broadcast national characteristics and differentiate the Gulf Arabs from their counterparts.⁹⁰ I will use the analysis on exclusion to explore the physical and psychological aspects of this “brand”, and how this state-sponsored discourse of “khalijiness” helps form the imagined identity.

⁸⁸ Al-Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed*, p. 179

⁸⁹ Miriam Cooke, *Tribal Modern: Branding the New Nations in the Arab Gulf* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), p. 12

⁹⁰ Cooke, *Tribal Modern*, p. 67

Physical and Performative

The importance of the physical aspect of the Gulf Arab brand lies in it being the most visible determinant of identity, which, as Cooke argues, is critical for immediate identification. It will be discussed in terms of the ways citizenship is practiced to create a spectacle for outsider consumption and easy identification, especially in spaces where local citizens come in close contact with non-locals. This will be discussed in terms of dress, language, and consumption behavior.

National dress in the Gulf Arab states, the *thoub* for men and *abaya* for women, is important in “[signaling] not only the nationality but also the privileged status of Gulf and Peninsula Arabs. It marks their difference from outsiders”.⁹¹ Local citizens find this especially important in countries such as the UAE – and specifically Dubai – where the local population represents the minority, but wants to assert its authenticity and dominant ethnic class.⁹² In the process of constructing social boundaries to their imagined communities, national dress becomes the passport to entry. It follows, then, that Emiratis find non-nationals wearing the local dress to try to “pass off as nationals, hoping that they would get preferential treatment” concerning as it represents a sort of infiltration.⁹³ It is in this context that the difference between the *bidoon* and Indian migrants’ attitudes towards national dress must be understood; reinforcing their struggle for inclusion, the *bidoon* of Kuwait adorn the national dress like their Kuwaiti counterparts, while middle-class Indian migrants, given their desire for cultural preservation and acceptance of exclusion, do not.

⁹¹ Cooke, *Tribal Modern*, p. 124

⁹² Cooke, *Tribal Modern*, p. 125

⁹³ Cooke, *Tribal Modern*, p. 126

Linguistically, Gulf Arabs speak *khaleeji*, Gulf, Arabic in their everyday interactions. Although the various dialects are mutually intelligible, each has distinct national features that can quickly identify the speaker's nationality. While the *bidoon* of Kuwaiti may speak the modern, urban Kuwaiti dialect, their native dialect is the bedouin Jahra.⁹⁴ Indian migrants in Dubai, on the other hand, speak little to no Arabic, and it is therefore the urban Emirati and Kuwaiti dialects that become the performed markers of *khaleeji* identity. This dialect is used in many *khaleeji* cultural and media productions, including soap operas that air during Ramadan and national day songs. Both represent important participatory practices of the *khaleeji* identity.⁹⁵

Finally, the modes of consumption that the state allows local citizens to achieve, and therefore exhibit, become a formative part of *khaleeji* identity. Welfare benefits, state handouts, and preferential hiring grants Emiratis and Kuwaitis greater disposable income, allowing them to engage in the consumption of luxury goods and services, most notably of products for which cheaper, equally effective alternatives exist. Amidst a global trend by airlines to eliminate first-class cabins on aircraft, for example, the Gulf carriers remain committed to expanding and improving their offering. In fact, Emirates grows its first-class capacity by around six percent annually, encouraged by what it cites as strong local demand.⁹⁶ Economic persecution of the *bidoon* and limited disposable income among middle-class Indians in Dubai make such consumption significantly more difficult, and thus the *khaleeji* identity emphasizes a sense of exclusivity in this sphere by simultaneously amplifying a sense of entitlement.

⁹⁴ Anonymous Interview with a *bidoon*, interviewed by Khaled Abdulkarim, Philadelphia, PA, February 28th, 2017.

⁹⁵ Cooke, *Tribal Modern*, p. 136

⁹⁶ "Emirates leads premium segment", *Emirates*, July 31, 2014, <https://www.emirates.com/media-centre/emirates-leads-premium-segment-to-go-out-at-1230pm> (Accessed March 26, 2017)

Psychological: A Khaleeji Nationalism

In this imagined community, the nationalism exhibited by its members is ‘inward-facing’; in other words, it is a chauvinism towards non-nationals rooted in an ethnocracy and a sense of ethnic exclusiveness.⁹⁷ This “civic ethnocracy” essentially results in “a societal downgrading of those nationals without pure descent”, and the exclusion of the *bidoon* and Indian migrants is largely rooted in such sentiments.⁹⁸ In fact, the *bidoon* may opt to undergo DNA testing to affirm tribal lineage to “[determine] citizenship and concomitant entitlements to a share in the oil wealth”.⁹⁹

Such attempts at social engineering are extrapolated to the preservation of ethnic purity (as determined by tribal blood). In Kuwait and the UAE, for example, the state provides “financial incentives for a national male to marry another national as his first wife. Such intra-national marriage is further encouraged by the patriarchal feature of denying nationality to the children of a national woman who marries a non-national”.¹⁰⁰ This remains the case for children born to Kuwaiti mothers but *bidoon* fathers, even though they suffer slightly less persecution than children born to two *bidoon* parents.¹⁰¹

Citizenship as a non-binary outcome

Although the practices of exclusion, performative citizenship, and a *khaleeji* psychology collectively play a pivotal role in demarcating and broadcasting the boundaries of formal

⁹⁷ Patrick, “Nationalism in the Gulf States”, p. 20

⁹⁸ Patrick, “Nationalism in the Gulf States”, p. 23

⁹⁹ Cooke, *Tribal Modern*, p. 29

¹⁰⁰ Patrick, “Nationalism in the Gulf States”, p. 23

¹⁰¹ Anonymous Interview with a *bidoon*, interviewed by Khaled Abdulkarim, Philadelphia, PA, February 28th, 2017.

citizenship, it is worth noting that obtaining legal citizenship is a non-binary outcome. There are, what I call, gradations of inclusion; among “citizens, “locals”, are the most privileged group ... [and] the government deploys multiple logics of citizenship that provide differential privileges and access to wealth accumulation for different groups”.¹⁰² In Kuwait, for example, first-class citizens are those whose ancestors were inside the first territorial boundary surrounding Kuwait City. They are the only class of citizens who enjoy full political rights, while second-class, naturalized Kuwaitis are only allowed to vote after thirty years of residence in Kuwait. It is also significantly easier to revoke citizenship from second-class citizens.¹⁰³

Similarly, in the UAE, possessing a *Kholasat Qaid*, a Family Book, that affirms ethnic ancestry (and, more importantly, blood purity) is used to determine the class of citizenship you belong to. Citizens who hold a Family Book receive preferential access to state welfare, including subsidized housing and handouts. Those who do not, including naturalized citizens and children born to Emirati mothers but foreign fathers, may be prohibited from enrolling in premier public universities, for example.¹⁰⁴ Citizens who do not possess a Family Book also cannot vote or participate in national legislative elections.¹⁰⁵ In this way, the government disenfranchises and excludes a segment of an already small population, effectively restarting a process of identity formation among a much smaller, ethnically proximate imagined community. This, I contend,

¹⁰² Vora, *Impossible Citizens*, p. 97

¹⁰³ Al-Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed*, p. 178

¹⁰⁴ Sultan AlQassemi, “Book that Proves Some Emiratis Are More Equal than Others”, *The National*, February 7, 2010, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/book-that-proves-some-emiratis-are-more-equal-than-others#full> (Accessed March 26, 2017).

¹⁰⁵ الإماراتية كيفية وشروط الحصول على الجنسية الإماراتية، [Procedure and Requirements for Obtaining Emirati Citizenship], Muhamah Net, September 24, 2014, <http://www.muhamah.net/answer/9911/الإماراتية-كيفية-وشروط-الحصول-على-الجنسية>

triggers a vicious cycle that reduces the state's notion of a "pure" identity to tribal ancestry and racial privilege.

VII. Conclusion

In February 2017, during Kuwait's annual National Day celebrations, Ooredoo – a leading telecommunications company in Kuwait – released its song “What’s Your Story”, which it “dedicated to the beautiful Kuwaiti spirit and people”. The song highlighted Kuwaitis’ distinctive accent, kindness, prosperity, and fine taste – not least in food. The song was an instant success; in less than a week, it had gained over three million views on YouTube. Interestingly, the main protagonist of the video, Abla Fahita, is Egyptian. Furthermore, the song is performed by Balqees, a naturalized UAE citizen of Yemeni descent.¹⁰⁶

The Kuwaiti persona in the video is defined in the presence of, and against, an “other”. This mirrors a phenomenon that I contend is present in Kuwaiti, Emirati, and Gulf Arab societies more broadly. I consider the “other” to be excluded populations, and in this paper, I explore the two examples of the *bidoon* of Kuwait and middle-class Indian migrants in Dubai. These two seemingly disparate populations experience similar, a multi-faceted exclusion that has spatial, civil, and social dimensions. Together, formal and informal state policies, along with a range of self-imposed practices, create the exclusion in question.

For the *bidoon* of Kuwait, exclusion is largely a state construct, and is propagated through both formal and informal policies. Kuwaiti authorities act upon pre-existing vulnerabilities in the *bidoon* population, such as their limited monetary abilities and a lack of documentation, to usher them to the periphery of Kuwaiti society and everyday life. Physically, the *bidoon* live in the

¹⁰⁶ “What’s Your Story” is Ooredoo’s Gift to the Kuwait People”, *Al Rai*, February 19, 2017, <http://www.alraimedia.com/ar/article/economics/2017/02/19/746460/nr/kuwait> (Accessed March 31, 2017).

outskirts of the city, close to the desert and consistent with the bedouin-wanderer narrative the state tries to impose on them. Civically, the *bidoon* lack many or all forms of legal documentation, thus automatically deeming them ineligible for many opportunities, including free public education and employment. Finally, socially, policies inhibit them from interacting with the national citizen population in many public institutions, namely in hospitals and schools. Ultimately, the *bidoon*, despite representing around a tenth of the Kuwaiti population, “do not exist. They have been dehumanized and rendered invisible by government policies coupled with pervasive social stigmatization”.¹⁰⁷

For middle-class Indian migrants in Dubai, exclusion takes internal and external forms, and manifests itself in everyday divisions. Physically, this class of Indian migrants inhabit certain areas that were historically associated with them during the city’s early days. Civically, excessive and stringent documentation requirements create uncertainty and reinforce their temporariness as both a state of being and state of mind. Finally, socially, informal and formal barriers exclude this population from certain types of performative citizenship, namely consumption and dress. In this way, Indians in the city “narrate and perform a belonging to Dubai within a state of permanent temporariness”, and exclusion becomes a formative, and accepted, part of their identity.¹⁰⁸

By creating these exceptions and exclusions to society and life, the Kuwaiti, Emirati, and more broadly Gulf or “khaleeji” identities crystallize. They create divisions that demarcate how these identities are created, practiced, and reinforced. This makes social engineering a viable goal for the Kuwaiti and Emirati states, and provides the necessary social capital for the creation of an

¹⁰⁷ Bedoon Rights, “About Us”, <http://www.bedoonrights.org/about/> (accessed March 31 2017)

¹⁰⁸ Vora, *Impossible Citizens*, p. 3

imagined identity, and an identity-based community, among the local citizen population. Khaleejis, Kuwaitis, and Emiratis thereby turn inward rather than outward in expressing their nationalism. Their nationalism, in other words, is an introspective affair.

In the context of a growing disproportion between the sizes of local and non-local populations, wherein citizens have come to perceive the latter as a “cultural threat”, attempts at national homogenization through the propagation of a singular identity have essentially equated ethnic membership with state loyalty. Despite their relative newness on the world stage, Gulf states and state institutions have been at the forefront of this identity-building process, with the example of formal citizenship representing the key legal instrument exercised to effect it. The rise of the state as the supreme arbiter of national identity has remained successful and sustainable during times of abundant budget surpluses, wherein identity has remained inextricably linked to access to welfare benefits by “[asserting a] unique right to citizenship and exclusive entitlement to national wealth”.¹⁰⁹

At a time when tightening national budgets from falling oil revenues pose numerous challenges to governments and citizens alike, the ability of Gulf governments to continue arbitrating and promoting a singular and inflexible idea of identity comes into question. Although the privileged status this identity bestows upon its holders gives it some rigidity, the loss of many “privileging” welfare benefits – the uncertainty, for example, of the state’s future ability to guarantee free health care and schooling to citizens – undermines this identity’s power. This situation may create space for new types of identities – whether religious, race-based, class-based,

¹⁰⁹ Cooke, *Tribal Modern*, p. 12

or otherwise – to assert themselves. It is when these alternative identities come into conflict with the incumbent state-sponsored identities that a credible threat to the state’s “stability and viability in the face of major economic, political, and social upheaval” arises. Furthermore, as the tension between a desire for homogenization in the context of an increasingly heterogeneous cosmopolitan society grows, many Gulf states may be forced to revisit the category of “citizen” as the determinant of “social status, belonging, and access to rights”.¹¹⁰As Benedict Anderson asserts, passports are becoming “less and less attestations of citizenship, let alone of loyalty to a protective state, than of claims to participate in a labour market”. In a city like Dubai, which has been resolute in its desire to become the world’s leading knowledge and skill-based economy, attracting and retaining entrepreneurs, scientists, academics may require offering them a greater sense of permanence and integration through naturalization.

¹¹⁰ Vora, *Impossible Citizens*, p. 13

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