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Topic : **Emerging Patterns of Political Participation in the GCC States: A Case Study of Kuwait**

ABSTRACT

Keywords: Political Participation, Tribalism, Rentierism, Diwaniyya, Liberalisation, New Media.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have more common geographical, political, religious, cultural and economic characteristics among the Arab world countries. These states inhabit small but fast growing population and the demographic profile is not only growing younger but more educated. Democratisation and liberalisation of the GCC states has always been a topic of interest since last few decades for both policy makers and political scientists. For policy makers in the western world in general and United States (US) in particular the belief that a more liberalised GCC states would be conducive for the American and western interest in the region. Their works have failed to capture and assess the regions particular democratic practices and the dynamics of political changes and their manifestations in terms of political and cultural specificity. Also there are variations in different Gulf countries with respect to social practices cultural peculiarities affecting the level of political participation in them. In other words, a broad brush painting with putting the developments happening in the different Gulf States in a common basket casts a shadow over the credentials of the analysis by failing to evaluate the nuances of emerging patterns of political participation as forces of

change in the region interact with traditional ones and find new equilibrium in each country specific to its situation.

Political participation is the participation in the process of government by a substantial numbers of private citizens (as distinct from public officials or elected politicians) to play a part in the process by which political leaders are chosen and government policies are shaped and implemented. Discussions on political participation and democratization, whether in the Gulf region, West Asia or any other region, ignored the broader theoretical approach to conceptualise and methodological considerations. Discussions and debates on political participation has been index to conceptualisation of democracy and have been shaped by the western experience of democracy. This approach creates a problem in non-western societies such as those of the Arab world. Evaluation of societies only from the perspective of democratic transition fails to give cognisance to the basic elements in the society as well as the significant changes it has undergone.

Therefore, the study applied Hebermas's view of political participation as “discursive politics” and Foucault's idea of participation as micro politics of resistance are the postmodern theories. Their conceptualisation of political participation in the sphere of discourse and resistance are particularly useful to understand the change in the societies where Weber's notion of "traditional authority" still holds. Political participation has considerably widened in GCC states countries, partly thanks to the old and new social and political institutions, but even more so because of the increased access to information and freedom of expression brought about by the Information Communication Technology (ICT) revolution. At the same time, some of them have informal institutions of political participation like Diwaniyya, Majlis and Jalsa that builds public political sphere. Therefore, this study examined various patterns of political participation in the region, which interact with traditional ones and find new equilibrium in each country specific to its situation.