

The impact of political reform on the stability of the state of Kuwait since 2010

Stability of the
state of Kuwait

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Abstract

Purpose – The study aims to deal with three theoretical approaches to answer the research question: Does political reform in rentier States (Kuwait as a model) lead to political stability? The first approach: Following the steps of political reform in rentier States leads eventually to political stability. The second approach: Political stability in rentier States does not necessarily lead to political reform. The third approach: In rentier States, the decisive factor in interpreting the correlation between political reform and political stability requires explaining other intermediary factors.

Design/methodology/approach – David Easton's input-output model: Easton defined the political system as the interactions related to the authoritarian allocation of values in society, that is, the distribution of resources by decisions adopted by individuals, and provided a framework for analysis of the political system in which it sees an integrated circuit of a dynamic nature that starts with inputs and outputs feedback, input and output. Inputs refer to the effects of the environment on the system. Outputs are the effects of the system on the environment, which are the decisions and policies taken by the system to meet the demands. Reverse feedback is the flow of information to the system about the results of its actions, the results of its decisions and policies. Generate new inputs in the form of a demand or support, and the system's feedback feeds a kind of movement.

Findings – It can be said that the future of the rentier state is particularly dangerous in the Arab countries where the problem today is the sharp drop in oil prices, which requires the need to enter into the stage of major transformations and work to bring about fundamental changes and enter into radical constitutional, economic, political and social reforms before turning them from the state rent to countries that lack political stability.

Research limitations/implications – The aim of this research is to present a theoretical study of political reform. The study began to consolidate the concept of political reform, which was and still is the goal of many political and social reform leaders and movements, in addition to being a major topic in political theories. Reform can be carried out by violence and by peaceful change. In any case, reform remains a humanitarian need that cannot be ignored or avoided, because the alternative is worsening and deteriorating political and social conditions.

Practical implications – The Arab Spring revolutions set many challenges for the Arab countries. These countries had to start political reforms. The State of Kuwait was one of the most important rentier countries that, after the Arab Spring revolutions, was concerned with ensuring that individuals and groups exercised their political rights through political participation in decision-making. It guarantees the human existence of society and protects it through the law and its legislation, and grants rights and freedoms and does not oppose it.

Social implications – Political reforms lead to accommodating the demands of the opposition, increasing the political participation of citizens, activating the political role of women, activating the role of civil society and increasing political mobility.



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Originality/value – The importance of the research paper is to emphasize the term rentier state and confirm the importance of reform in rentier countries and the paper asks whether the expansion of political rights, citizenship and participation will lead to stability or instability in these countries.

Keywords Kuwait, Democracy, Political stability, Political reform, Political system

Paper type Research paper

1. Theoretical framework

1.1 Introduction

Kuwait is one of the most rentier countries ready for reform. This paper presents the impact of the political reform on stability in Kuwait during the period after the Arab revolutions since 2010. The reform demands in Kuwait were not surprising. They were the result of political conflicts that preceded this period. The protests were not as demanding to change the regime as in other Arab countries, but it was only a pressure on the government and strengthening of the influence of the opposition under the existing regime.

1.2 Research problem

The State of Kuwait is taking serious steps towards political reform. The study will raise a number of issues in the context of the central question:

Q1. “Is political reform leading to stability or instability in the State of Kuwait in the period after 2010”?

Sub-questions:

Q1.1. Does the expansion of political rights lead to political stability in Kuwait?

Q1.2. Does the promotion of citizenship values lead to political stability in Kuwait?

Q1.3. Does political participation lead to political stability in Kuwait?

1.3 Purpose

The study deals with three theoretical approaches to answer the research question: Does political reform in rentier States (Kuwait as a model) lead to political stability?

The first approach: Following the steps of political reform in rentier States leads eventually to political stability.

The second approach: Political stability in rentier States does not necessarily lead to political reform.

The third approach: In rentier States, the decisive factor in interpreting the correlation between political reform and political stability requires explaining other intermediary factors.

1.4 Concepts

A rentier state: It is a state that derives all or a substantial portion of its national revenues from the rent of indigenous resources to external clients. The term rentier state has been used since the twentieth century to refer to countries rich in natural resources such as oil and gas but can include countries rich in financial instruments such as reserve currency, and countries that rely on strategic resources, such as military bases (Mahdavy, 1970).

Political stability: Jan-Eric Lane, Svante asserts that there is no systematic methodological definition of stability (Jan and Svante, 1999). But general and simple definitions can be relied on. Political stability depends on two elements: no chaos system, which means the absence

of violence, force, coercion or break with the political system, and *political reform*: The Webster Dictionary of Political Terms (1988) defines political reform as “improving the political system to eliminate corruption and tyranny”. Political reform is the cornerstone of good governance (Webster’s New World Dictionary, 1988).

1.5 Previous literature

A study entitled “Democratic Transformation and Political Stability”.

The study mentions a situation of political instability in Kuwait in two decades, despite political reforms. This is due to several considerations, some of which are internal, mainly related to the internal demands and the official response to them. Others are related to regional conditions and international changes.

The study shows that the size of disagreement between the ruling regime and the opposition forces in Kuwait does not exceed the form of government, accountability of ministers, date of elections, activation of institutions and the expansion of freedoms. The opposition in Kuwait is complementary to the regime, not an alternative to it, which is consistent with what “William Zartman” put in his famous research entitled “opposition as a pillar of the state”: the use of opposition as an independent variable to explain the sustainability of the Arab state in general and the Gulf in particular (Ezz El-Arab, 2015).

1.5.1 A study entitled “*political reform in contemporary Islamic thought*”. The book has reviewed a number of the most important groups, centers and personalities and analyzed their discourse. It was written in the introduction: The past five decades witnessed flourishing of the Islamic movements politically, socially and culturally. They became active in the internal, regional and even international equations. The Islamic clash with society and politics generated a large number of supporting and opposing attitudes and led to widespread debates. The most important of which are whether contemporary Islamic thought carries within it a “political alternative” better than the current reality; whether it represents a qualitative addition to the currents and political movements on the scene; and a state of regression. One of the main problems in the media is that it cannot clarify Islamic ideas on any issue, which is what happens with Islamic ideas of political reform. But in the midst of this wide-ranging map of visions, ideas and perceptions of political reform in contemporary Islamic thought, there seem to be major approaches that bring together intellectuals, writers, groups and Islamist groups (Aburman, 2009).

1.5.2 A study entitled *Kuwait democracy (History–Reality–Future)*. The study shows that democracy leads to political stability. One of the most important elements of democracy is the existence of a living constitution that establishes institutions and mechanisms. It provides legal and public opinion guarantees, which are expressed by social organizations from political parties, unions, associations and free and fair media (Taher and Saudi, 2011).

1.5.3 A study entitled *the political system of changing societies*. The book deals with changes in political systems and institutions. Huntington assumes that these changes occur because of the disturbances that arise within the political and social system.

Huntington criticizes the theory of modernization because he thinks that its argument that change and economic development are the two main factors responsible for establishing stable and democratic political systems is a cracked argument. Instead, it focuses on other factors such as urbanization, literacy, social mobilization and economic growth. He stresses that these factors are not very much linked to political development; although he sees them as interrelated, but distinct (Huntington, 1993).

1.6 Approach: approaching systems analysis

1.6.1 David Easton and the model of input-output. Easton defines the political system as the interactions related to the authoritarian allocation of values in society. It is the distribution of resources by decisions adopted by individuals, and provided a framework for analysis of the political system in which it sees an integrated circuit of a dynamic nature that starts with inputs and ends with outputs, with feedback connecting both.

Inputs refer to the effects of the environment on the system. Outputs are the effects of the system on the environment, which are the decisions and policies taken by the system to meet the demands. Reverse feedback is the flow of information to the system about the results of its actions, decisions, policies, demand and support. Feedback is a kind of movement.

1.7 Findings

It can be said that the future of the rentier state is particularly dangerous in the Arab countries, where the problem today is the sharp drop in oil prices. There is a need to enter into the stage of major transformations and work to bring about fundamental changes and enter into radical constitutional, economic, political and social reforms before turning them from the state rent to countries which lack political stability.

1.8 Research implications

The aim of this research is to present a theoretical study of political reform. The study begins to consolidate the concept of political reform, which was and still is the goal of many political and social reform leaders and movements, in addition to being a major topic in political theories. Reform can be carried out by violence and by peaceful change. In all cases, reform remains a humanitarian need that cannot be ignored or avoided, because the alternative is worsening and deteriorating political and social conditions.

1.9 Practical implications

The Arab Spring revolutions set many challenges for the Arab countries. These countries had to start political reforms. The State of Kuwait was one of the most important rentier countries that, after the Arab Spring revolutions, was concerned with ensuring that individuals and groups exercised their political rights through political participation in decision-making, protecting them by Law and its legislations which grant rights and freedoms.

1.10 Social implications

Political reforms lead to the absorption of opposition demands, increased political participation of citizens, activation of the political role of women, activation of the role of civil society and increase in political mobility.

1.11 Value

The importance of the research paper is to emphasize the term rentier state and confirm the importance of reform in rentier countries and The paper asks whether the expansion of political rights, citizenship and participation will lead to stability or instability in these countries.

2. Concepts of political reform and stability

2.1 The concept of political reform

Political reform is a process of radical and partial modification and development in the form of governance or social relations in the state within the framework of the existing political

system, and by the means available. In other words, it means developing the efficiency and effectiveness of the political system in its environment, both internally and externally.

Ibn Khaldun says of political reform: "The conditions of kings and strong states do not budge nor destroy their construction, except the strong demands that are made by the nervousness of tribes and clans" (Al-Jabri, 2018).

Ibn Khaldun uses the term Al-Omran to achieve the partial measures necessary for political reform by taking into account the ruler's interests and the lack of favoritism or mediation and the use of money for the good of the people and giving them their rights (Ibn Khaldun and Al-Darwish, 2004).

Ibn Taymiyya views political reform as a peaceful pressure on political power for its legitimate responsibilities (El hosini, 2016).

Rachid Reda says that the absolute power holder is more able to reform if he wants, but he rarely does. Reform brings prosperity to the nations (Reda, 1994).

Ibn Taymiyyah has great efforts with regard to the issue of state and political renewal, which is the basis of the state building. Stability, sustainability of life, general security and prosperity bring political reform according to Ibn Taymiyyah (Konakata, 1994).

Refaa Tahtawi confirms that political reform is the pursuit of urbanization and modernity, and leaves the methods of imitation and freedom from intellectual and sectarian stalemate.

Rashid Reda confirms the concept of comprehensive reform as a starting point in his political vision, and calls for the five types of reform: religious, moral, social, scientific and political.

There are several indicators of political reform:

First, freedom is the process of political reform and the greatest value and fundamental to achieve the actual sovereignty of the people who govern themselves through political pluralism that leads to the circulation of the authorities. It is based on respect for all rights in thought and organization and expression of opinion for all, headed by elected legislative institutions and independent judiciary. The government is subject to constitutional and popular accountability and political parties of different ideologies (Abboud, 2007).

Second, to ensure freedom of expression in the press and the audio, visual and electronic media. To rely on free elections, centralized and decentralized, to ensure the circulation of power and the rule of the people, and to achieve the maximum possible decentralization that allows communities to express themselves and unleash their creative potential in the context of their cultural specificities that contribute to human progress in all areas. This includes the elimination of corruption in a framework that emphasizes good governance and the promotion of human rights in accordance with international covenants, foremost of which are the rights of women, children and minorities, the rights of the accused in criminal trials and the guarantee of humane treatment of State authorities with its citizens. This is common among democratic communities (Al-Mansoub, 2006).

Third, the state respects the constitution. Its articles should not contradict the model of the political system sought by society and must comply with international human rights instruments. This means that the provisions of the constitution reflect the changes and developments that have already occurred, which necessitate the need to rectify the constitutional situation by amending articles that contradict the real democratic requirements and remove the gap between the texts of constitutions and the objectives of society in democratic development (Al-Tweissi, 2011).

A clear separation between legislative and executive powers.

Fifth, renewing the forms of governance to ensure the rotation of power through peaceful means periodically. The modern state is a state of institutions and Law.

Sixth, free periodic elections that safeguard democratic practice, guarantee non-monopoly of power and set a time limit for taking power.

Seventh, abolition of the principle of imprisonment or detention due to opinion, and the release of such prisoners who have not been justly tried or sentenced ([Aburman, 2009](#)).

There are five important conditions that significantly affect the chances of political reform:

- (1) *Military and police control by productive personnel*: Unless the military and police are under the full control of democratically produced personnel, democratic political institutions are not expected to arise or remain. Perhaps the most serious internal threat to democracy comes from leaders who possess the greatest means of physical oppression: Army and Police ([BaniSalama, 2019](#)).
- (2) *Democratic and cultural beliefs*: Where all countries are exposed to deep political, ideological, economic, military and international crises. Thus, if a democratic political system has to be able to overcome the challenges and instability caused by such crises, the achievement of a stable democracy is not just sailing in good wind. It also means sailing at times in stormy wind ([El-Erian, 2005](#)).
- (3) *Lack of foreign anti-democratic control*: Democratic institutions are less likely to arise in a country vulnerable to interference by another country hostile to the democratic government.
- (4) *Society and a new market economy*: The economy of market capitalism necessarily generates inequalities in the political resources available to different citizens. Economically unequal citizens are unlikely to be politically equal. At the same time, however, we cannot escape from the conclusion that the economy of market capitalism, the society it generates and the economic growth it creates are all favorable conditions for the emergence of democratic institutions
- (5) *The weakness of multiple subcultures*: The emergence and persistence of democratic institutions are more likely in a highly homogenous state and less in a country with highly divergent and conflicted cultures. Those who embrace a particular culture often view their political demands as a matter of principle and as a result are crucial and non-negotiable. However, in a sound democratic process, the settlement of political disputes needs negotiations and compromise ([Mohamed, 2014](#)).

2.2 The concept of political stability

The term political stability consists of the word stability and its political description. The word stability in the Arabic language comes from settled, man in place, proved and managed.

Stability is characterized by the relative absence of change in the components of the political system, the low level of continuity in political development, and the absence of social forces and political movements that seek to introduce fundamental changes in the political system ([Mohamed Din, 2015](#)).

Arend Lijphart limits political stability to four elements:

- (1) keeping the system;
- (2) civil order;
- (3) Legitimacy; and
- (4) Effectiveness.

The advantage of this definition is that it poses a fundamental problem, namely, that stability is system-based or democratic.

According to some, a stable democratic system is a political system whose democracy is stable. However, the term “stable democratic system” can be understood in the sense of a stable but democratic political system. The term “unstable democratic system” can be understood in the sense of corrupt political elite ([Dahl, 1998](#)).

2.3 Theoretical trends in the definition of political stability

- *Behavioral school*: According to this school, stability corresponds to the absence of political violence. The stable political system is that system of peace and obedience to the law in which political and social changes occur and the process of decision-making is in accordance with institutional procedures, not a result of violence.

From this specific concept of political stability, we find that it is not correct to use violence within a single society, whatever the circumstances, to achieve political goals, and that reform in this case should be only by civilian means.

- *Functional building school*: This school is based on government buildings and on the ability of political institutions to adapt to changes in the environment and to respond to the challenges posed by this environment.

Gabriel Almond tackles the concept of political stability based on functional path, as this behavior sees its model in a living being that tends to adapt, balance and stabilize. The imbalance is an emergency that needs to be rectified and the adaptation of this organization or political system is evidence of vitality ([Shalabi, 2001](#)).

- *The school of systems*: This school starts from the method of systemic analysis. According to the school, political stability is synonymous with the rule of the system. It also means the ability to adapt to new conditions and variables. Political stability refers to the objectivity of institutions and structures in society. The neutrality of the service and production establishment that means the power fluctuations and the separation of these institutions from the political game at home and abroad, and not to exploit them to gain self-positions to avoid making these institutions non-independent tools ([Bakdi, 2012](#)).

In the light of the views of these three schools, political stability can be defined as “a disciplined gradual change process characterized by a decline in political violence, increased legitimacy and efficiency in the system’s capabilities” ([Meyer, 1994](#)).

Political stability can be defined as a procedural definition of “the non-use of violence for political purposes, the recourse of political forces, groups to constitutional methods of conflict resolution, and the ability of political system institutions to respond to demands from the internal and external environment of the regime”.

Mohammed al-Ghazali believes that political stability is achieved if the leaders of the regime abide by the regime itself and obey the orders of religion through their commitment to its principles. If this is not achieved, it will lead to political instability.

This is confirmed by the “Maorde” who considers that the rule based on religion is a stable and permanent rule, characterized by stability and acceptance by the citizens.

Almond links stability, adaptation and follow-up of the model of liberal democracy, whose image emerges in Anglo-Saxon democracy. These systems are characterized by a secular culture, and a stable and unified political culture that expresses a unified national identity.

The political instability according to Ibn Khaldun means “the result of the lack of cultural homogeneity, the countries whose tribes do not enjoy political stability”.

One of the political requirements for political stability according to Max Weber is legitimacy. It is one of the most important requirements of political stability. "The ruling regime is legitimate at the point where its citizens feel that this system is valid and deserves support and obedience," he says.

Lucian Bay said that political stability requires political participation and requires the participation of a large number of individuals and groups in political life, in line with Samuel Huntington's view.

Therefore, we find that the concept of political instability is "the inability of the system to deal with the crises it faces successfully, and its inability to manage conflicts within the community in a way that can be maintained in a circle to control, and accompanied by the use of political violence on the one hand, and diminishing its legitimacy and efficiency on the other hand". This definition recognizes that the existence of contradiction in society with the ability of the authority in control will lead to stability, but if the Authority fails to control it, it will lead to political instability and diminishing legitimacy of the system, so that the change is acceptable by a few effects society, even though these effects are only resulting from a minority.

3. The relationship between political reform and political stability in rentier states

3.1 The first approach (following the steps of political reform in rentier states leads eventually to political stability)

According to this approach, large sums of money in rentier countries help to consolidate political reform and reduce the need for recourse to repression. In such situations, reform practices can develop, leading to political stability.

The steps of economic reform in rentier states through the proper management of oil revenues and redistribution leads to political reform and then to political stability ([Ezz El-Arab, 2015](#)).

3.2 The second approach (political stability in rentier states does not necessarily lead to political reform)

The political reform in the rentier states is not a real reform and, therefore, political stability cannot be achieved in these countries for the following reasons:

- The authority of a State that receives and distributes the entire rentier in accordance with the principles of allegiance and the sub-national, sectarian, tribal or family affiliation. This distribution is not based on justice, equity, societal priorities and moral commitment to the poor and the marginalized.
- In rentier state, the concepts of citizenship based on the absence of discrimination and nepotism, equality in life opportunities, rights and duties and the law and also democratic political life face the possibility of the State's mismanagement.
- There is a direct relationship between the possession of power and wealth, and vice versa, as those who have power have the path to wealth. Of course, talking about the possibility of political reform, where there is a minority of wealth and power, is illogical.

This means that there is no possibility of political reform, and therefore instability in any country whose economy has an external income of one substance, as is the case for Arab oil and gas countries.

3.3 *The third approach (in rentier states the decisive factor in interpreting the correlation between political reform and political stability requires explaining other intermediary factors)*

The decisive factor in interpreting the correlation between political reform and political stability in rentier States is not to determine the effect of one on the other. This requires the introduction of other interfering factors to reach what can be described as democratic stability or a stable democratic system, especially with the presence of States with a democratic system but suffering from instability (Ezz El-Arab, 2015).

4. Kuwait is a model

4.1 *Characteristics of political reform in Kuwait*

This section measures the degree of political reform in Kuwait.

4.1.1 *The relationship between legislative and executive authorities.* Kuwait is one of the countries whose constitution expressly states that the ministry and the parliament may be combined. It states that “Ministers who are not elected to the National Assembly shall be considered members of this Council by virtue of their functions”.

Kuwait is one of the countries that has a system of separation between the legislative and executive branches, where there is a precise system of balance between the two sides. Under the Kuwaiti constitutional system, the Amir has a special position and the parliament can control the government budget (Taher, 2011).

4.1.2 *Political participation of women.* Kuwaiti women sought a serious and urgent effort to have a place in public life and had contributions that could not be ignored at the pre-discovery stage. However, after discovering it, they had a greater chance of proving themselves and serving their homeland in all fields.

Kuwaiti women formed their own associations and participated in mixed civil society organizations, such as public benefit societies, professional associations, cooperative societies and cultural committees. The first association established by Kuwaiti women is the Family Renaissance Association, which was founded in 1963. One of the most important objectives of this society was the advancement of women and the definition of their rights, as well as family and children’s affairs. The efforts of Kuwaiti women continued to expand their social activities through the establishment of more associations, such as the Women’s Cultural Association, the Islamic Welfare Association and the Bayader Al-Salam Society. The number of women’s associations in Kuwait until 2017 was about 103 associations.

Kuwaiti women participated in the elections as candidates and voters. The number of women candidates in the elections of the National Assembly in 2009 was about 16 candidates, and in 2012, they were 24 candidates. May be the reason is that the community is largely conservative (Al Shanfari, 2017).

4.1.3 *Elections in Kuwait as a mechanism for political reform.* Kuwait has witnessed the establishment of new parliamentary blocs. One of the important transformations witnessed by the Council held in December 2012 was mainly the Future Bloc, the Independent Bloc and the Block of Conservatives.

In the electoral context of the “Nation of 2013”, there was a remarkable presence of the judiciary during the pre-election phase, which was manifested in several scenes. For example, the issuance of decisions to delete candidates and return others, and the arrest of a number of candidates in more than one constituency on charges. To get involved in the purchase of votes, although all were later released with financial guarantees (Badri Eid, 2013).

The results of the Kuwaiti National Assembly elections in November 2016 indicate that the opposition won 24 of the 50 seats in the National Assembly elections (BBC report, 2016).

4.2 *Instability and challenges of political reform in Kuwait*

The model of Kuwait (depending on oil revenue) proves that the third factor is that “the decisive factor in interpreting the correlation between political reform and political stability in rentier States” requires explaining of other factors Such as internal and external economic factors.

Among these interfering factors are economic factors, internal factors and external forces. These interfering factors resulted in low level of political stability despite the political reforms undertaken by Kuwait during the study period since 2010.

These interfering factors are explained in the following points.

4.2.1 *Economic factors.* Kuwait’s rentier economy has contributed to the inability of partial political reforms to achieve political stability.

The economic factors that led to political instability in Kuwait can be summed up in two main points:

The first point: Economic imbalances and impediments to reform, including a number of sub-points, the most important of which are:

- controversy and polarization over what reform is;
- balance of interests and obstacles to economic reform; and
- absence of Kuwaiti competencies capable of reform.

The second point: Financial corruption and inequality in the distribution of income, including the following sub-points:

- financial and political corruption; and
- disparities in income distribution (Al-Anzi, 2009).

4.2.2 *Internal factors*

4.2.2.1 The struggles of the ruling family and parliament. Kuwait’s rentier economy contributed to the creation of conflicts between the ruling family and the parliament. Political life through the National Assembly became an arena for undermining political reform. Political money was used during the election period to buy votes and cast them in favor of candidates loyal to the poles of the conflict.

The conflict between the traders, whose parliament is an important tool in passing their economic projects through parliament, has increased the use of the constitution in the face of the government. They make compromises with the government as a way to anchor major business deals.

There are no values and fighting corruption committee in The National Assembly to monitor the MP’s practice and parliamentary behavior, holding it accountable and evaluating its performance.

There is a clear disparity in the political balance of power in favor of the government formed by the ruling family. No important political organization that enjoys high popularity can compete with the governmental hegemony over social, economic and political life. The government owns national wealth and oil. The government employs more than 94 per cent or people and owns more than 98 per cent of the land (Al-Azmi, 2010).

4.2.2.2 Tribal conflicts. Current studies in Kuwait’s political elections show the dominance of tribal and sectarian values over voters’ electoral practices. Electoral practices in a number of Election areas have shown the great influence of the sectarian, tribal factors in voters’ electoral behavior. The elections are not only influenced by the tribal or sectarian factor, but also trigger tribal and sectarian

tendencies and feed them, with the weak influence of political currents in the electoral processes compared to the tribe.

Election showed poor electoral programs. These elections demonstrated the great presence of the religious factor with its moral implications in voter behavior. It can be argued that there is a great weakness in the electoral culture of voters and a decline of democratic culture and values of citizenship ([Al-Rumaihi, 2013](#)).

4.2.2.3 Political opposition. Kuwait's rentier economy has contributed to successive criticisms of the Kuwaiti opposition to government austerity measures in 2016, especially raising fuel prices set by the government to counter the decline in crude oil revenues, as many of them criticized the price hike of oil products (40 to 80 per cent). The opposition demands the government to compensate Kuwaiti citizens.

The fuel crisis caused a political crisis that led to the dissolution of the National Assembly and the call for parliamentary elections in November 2016.

4.2.3 External forces

4.2.3.1 Kuwait and the Arab spring. The revolutions of the Arab Spring led to several results that affected both the process of political reform and political stability in the State of Kuwait, including:

- The political change that has occurred in the political thought of the Kuwaiti youth with the revolutions of the Arab Spring.
- The Arab spring revolutions support fundamentalist movements in the Gulf States.
- Youth understand that political dialogue between the political and religious forces that dominate the political scene in the Arab world after its revolutions is the solution to achieve the culture of democracy and its dissemination.
- The Arab Spring revolutions played an important role in raising the ceiling of the political aspirations and constitutional demands of the Kuwaiti opposition movements ([Nial, 2008](#)).

4.2.3.2 Kuwaiti–American relations. The debate within the American institutions and among the strategic thinking groups about the mechanism of dealing with the Islamists in the political reform inside Kuwait was divided into the following:

- A group warns against the involvement of Islamists in political reform, and is reluctant to use democracy for fear of leading to the emergence of Islamists to power, and repeated experience of the Islamic Revolution in Iran with its negative consequences on the USA.
- A group that encourages the involvement of Islamists in reform, and believes that the time is right for Washington to adopt the policy of accepting Islamists as legitimate in the Middle East, and to form a policy of confrontation with Islamic extremism and violence ([Al-Fadala, 2011](#)).

The interference of American institutions in political life has led to further political instability inside Kuwait.

4.2.3.3 Kuwaiti–Iranian relations. Iran has a negative impact on political reform and stability in Kuwait, and this is evident in the case of the terrorist group in the Abdali, 2015. The Ministry of Interior announced the seizure of members of a terrorist group and the confiscation of large quantities of weapons in the Abdali area north of the capital Kuwait. They were charged with several charges, such as “engaging with Iran and Hezbollah and committing acts that would harm the unity and territorial integrity of the State of Kuwait”.

In 2016, relations deteriorated following the tension of the Gulf-Iranian relations after attack on the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Tehran and its consulate in Mashhad, leading to the severance of diplomatic relations from the Saudi side and a number of other Gulf countries. The Kuwaiti reaction was less firm; it summoned the Iranian ambassador and gave him a strong protest note, in addition to withdrawing its ambassador from Iran. These measures coincided with the foreign policy of Kuwait, which has a commitment to any attack on the Gulf states by Iran, although the Kuwaiti position is the least severe among the positions of the Gulf States.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that political reform is a general and comprehensive concept, playing a major role in the process of political stability in the rentier countries. However, this stability may be eroded by interfering factors that may lead to political instability. This is the case of the Kuwaiti model, where there was great effort towards political reform. The level of political stability is low due to a combination of interfering factors: economic, internal and external.

Hence, the study comes out with recommendations, including:

- the need to allow a role to the middle class in economic reform; and
- the importance of eliminating ethnic and sectarian conflicts, so that states can achieve the political stability resulting from political reform.

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