

The Policies of the Gulf Regimes in Facing of the Repercussions of the Arab Uprisings: With Application to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman Sultanate and Bahrain

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Abstract

The current study aims to scrutinize and analyze the Gulf regimes' policies in facing of the repercussions of the Arab uprisings. The research has selected four countries as case studies, which are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman Sultanate and Bahrain. In this vein, the study seeks to answer the main question: to what extent the Gulf regimes succeeded in facing the repercussions of the Arab uprisings? To answer this question, the study adopts the theoretical framework of the functional-structural approach, which has been developed by Gabriel Almond. This approach contains four main functional requirements, which are: structure, function, performance style and capabilities. The study has focused on system performance and capabilities in order to analyze the outputs, capabilities and performance of the Gulf regimes, and the extent to which the interaction of these capabilities contributes to the stability of the political system and increase its ability to adapt to changing circumstances and challenges. The study has reached many findings, the most important of which is that the Gulf countries have had the ability to face the repercussions of the popular uprisings, leading to the decline of them.

Keywords: Gulf countries, Arab Uprisings, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman Sultanate, Bahrain, Gulf Regimes

1. Introduction

The Gulf countries and the Middle East have witnessed a number of important developments over the last decade, the most important of which are the events of the Arab Spring started in late 2010. The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) considered the fall of the regimes of Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen as a political loss for them because the GCC countries were formulating the Arab collective policies with the countries of the Arab Spring. The political leadership of the GCC countries believed that the new transformations did not provide a substitute for the existing systems, but they challenged the conservative policies of the Gulf countries.

The Gulf countries were concerned about the impact of the negative repercussions of Arab uprisings on the domestic situation in the Gulf countries. They were deeply disturbed by the fall of the two Tunisian and Egyptian regimes, and feared the fall of other allied regimes. The Gulf regimes have also been upset about the regional alliances in the Middle East region where the governments won the elections in the Arab Spring countries have been classified as part of an alliance including Turkey and Qatar.

In this context, the current study deals with policies adopted by the Gulf regimes in facing of the repercussions of the Arab uprisings at the period from 2011 to 2014, with application to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman Sultanate and Bahrain. These countries were significantly affected by these repercussions. As a result, the four countries have adopted two effective policies in order to face them. These policies are: 1) the policies of the financial abundance and expansion of social propaganda program. 2) Political reform initiatives.

The importance of the study stems from the fact that the Arab region witnessed many developments at the political, economic and social levels since the outbreak of the Arab Spring revolutions. These developments posed many threats to Arab countries such as the spread of terrorism, religious extremism, terrorist organizations and non-state actors. The Gulf region was affected by the repercussions of the Arab uprisings. Therefore, the study explores the policies adopted by the Gulf countries to face these repercussions. The study also focuses on an aspect of the dynamics of the Gulf monarchies, which have long been described as traditional and conservative. This aspect is that the ability of the Gulf regimes to deal with crises and contain the effects of instability whether that stem from the internal environment of the regime, from the effects of events in other

Arab countries, or from foreign interventions. The practical importance of research is to clarify policies and actions taken or should be taken by states to address the elements of instability.

Accordingly, the research problem revolves around the main following question: to what extent the Gulf regimes succeeded in facing the repercussions of the Arab uprisings? The study is divided into three sections, which are: 1) the policies of the financial abundance and expansion of social propaganda programs. 2) Political reform initiatives. 3) Research findings.

2. The Policies of the Financial Abundance and Expansion of Social Propaganda Programs

By virtue of their rentier nature, the Gulf countries have adopted the policy of financial abundance. This policy aims to satisfy their citizens. The Gulf governments have employed their resources and huge potential to create job new opportunities estimated at 130.000. The leaders of the Gulf countries believed that this policy will prevent the transformation of such uprisings to the Gulf countries (Abdullah, 2012, p. 7).

Some argue that the financial abundance of the Gulf regimes has played a key role in blocking any demands for political reform by suggesting that economic prosperity is an alternative to political reform. This emerged clearly after the events of what was called the "Arab Spring", where the Gulf regimes were able to protect their own countries against such uprisings (Ghaith, 2015, p. 182).

The Gulf regimes have adopted the policy of financial abundance due to the strength of their economies. In 2014, the Gulf cooperation council's GDP reached \$ 1.6 trillion. Per capita average of GDP was \$ 33.5 thousand, and GCC exports amounted to about \$ 861 billion (Hussein, 2016, p. 3).

Human development statistics reveal that the royal countries are among the highest countries in the Arab countries in terms of human development rates compared to the republic ones. According to the human development indicators in 2014, Qatar ranked 31, Saudi Arabia ranked 34, the United Arab Emirates ranked 40, Bahrain ranked 44, Kuwait ranked 46, and Oman ranked 56.

In addition to, countries, which have enormous exports of oil and natural gas and have been able to exploit such resources to obtain revenues, are the ones that avoided the outbreak of revolutions of the so-called Arab Spring, and such revolutions were limited to some Arab countries that do not have such oil wealth. This is confirmed by the World Bank's World Development Indicators which indicated that per capita income in most countries in which revolutions broke out in 2011 is less than per capita income in the Gulf countries. For instance, per capita income in Qatar and the UAE reaches five times of per capita income in Arab countries in general, and it increases in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Oman. Although per capita income in Bahrain exceeds the level of that in the Arab countries, Bahrain is not a major oil exports in the Arab Gulf region (El-Sayed, 2015, p. 41).

In fact, the Gulf regimes have responded quickly during the outbreak of revolutions by meeting popular demands. They have adopted a proactive approach to face the repercussions of the Arab uprisings. The financial situation and economic abundance enabled them to pump more money to meet popular demands without forcing to make political concessions. They have spent a lot of money on social allowances, housing, the added incentives and improving the living conditions of their citizens (Salama, 2015, p. 71).

2.1 Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia comes at the top of the most important oil countries. Its global oil reserve reaches 261.8 billion barrels. The percentage of the global production is estimated at about 25%. The volume of oil production is more than 10 million barrels per day. Recently, Saudi Arabia has adopted an economic vision aimed at diversifying economic activity, tending to follow the free economy, increasing reliance on oil and joining the World Trade Organization.

Externally, Saudi Arabia has provided financial aid and grants to Bahrain and Oman estimated at about \$ 20 billion paid over ten years, which known as the "Gulf Marshal". Domestically Saudi Arabia has adopted an unprecedented domestic spending policy after the Arab revolutions. The Kingdom has allocated more than \$ 100 billion for local spending in the first months of 2011, affirming the ability of the Saudi government to face the challenges of the Arab uprisings. In addition, the Royal Court of Saudi Arabia announced that Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz ordered a wide-ranging social package worth \$ 130 billion. These royal grants include: 1- An increase in wages in the public sector. 2- Granting a two - month salary for all civil servants and military personnel. 3- A monthly stipend for all students of public education. 4- A monthly allowance for the unemployed. 5- Setting a minimum wage for Saudis in the public sector estimated at SR 3,000. 6- Creating new military posts estimated at 60 thousand in the Interior ministry. 7- Establishing housing units amounted to 500 thousand throughout the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. 8- Increasing the maximum sum of housing loans to reach \$ 133 thousand (Al-Youssef, 2012).

2.2 Kuwait

Over the past decades, the Kuwaiti economy has relied on the oil-based rentier model. Gulf countries, including Kuwait, have benefited directly from oil revenues.

Benefit also shifted to non-oil countries through the labor market, worker's remittances, investment and tourism (Arab Human Development Report, 2009). No one can deny the role of oil revenues in supporting the social and political stability of the Gulf region. Over the past half century, the Gulf countries have not witnessed social uprisings styled to Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan or Algeria, which are called "bread uprisings".

As a result, there has been social peace in the Gulf countries for decades. Class struggle has not been existent. Also, labor struggle fed by unions or parties has not been found because these parties and unions have been banned in several Gulf countries. However, the Gulf countries have not been immune to other crises such as employment, housing and the imbalance in the demographic composition resulting from the reluctance of the native citizen to do some work. Consequently, meeting the natural rights of the people of these countries must be taken into consideration.

For decades, the political regimes of the Gulf countries have enjoyed political stability because the political culture of the Gulf's peoples is based on loyalty, obedience and social welfare (Sunitan, 2012).

With the beginning of the Arab revolutions, the Kuwaiti government was able to adapt to the status quo in the region. Proactively, Kuwaiti regime made a number of improvements from which the Kuwaiti citizen benefits. For example, the Kuwaiti regime granted each citizen about \$ 3.500 and free food for one year. Also, it has allocated \$ 70 billion to raise salaries and subsidies in an attempt to win the people's satisfaction (Al-Youssef, 2012).

The Kuwaiti government has also sought to diversify the economy by implementing privatization programs. This policy aims to transfer the governmental projects, which do not make profits, to the private sector within 3 years. Thus, the efficiency of governmental projects has been decreased intentionally by public managers with the aim of privatizing them.

The large problem from which the Kuwaiti citizen suffers is that a large sector of citizens seeks to work in the governmental institutions which pay high wages. The government employs 90 % of the workforce in the governmental sector. However, this situation will be faced by a number of challenges, which may lead the government to raise subsidies and approve taxes, widening the gap between efficiency and management and putting the government in confrontation with the Kuwaiti National Assembly (Al-Ghabra, 2016).

2.3 Oman Sultanate

Oman's income from oil revenues was estimated at 86% in 2013, which made its economy contingent upon the fluctuations of global markets. Therefore, the sharp drop in oil prices would have a considerable impact on the state budget and its ability to maintain public spending levels. As a result, the Omani government may be forced to impose taxes to deal with the challenges of falling oil prices. However, the financial aid provided to the sultanate during the events of 2011 enabled it to maintain the stability of macroeconomic stability and address key issues in the country, including inflation and the rate of job seekers.

In this vein, the Oman Sultanate raised its expected expenditure for 8th five year plan to reach OMR 54 billion. According to human development indicator issued by the United Nations Development Program in 2011, Oman's economic policies were appreciated by international organizations where it ranked the 8th in the Arab world and 89 globally.

The Omani government has addressed quickly many files related to citizens. This is due to the fact that a number of intellectuals and human rights activists filed online petition on the 40th anniversary of ascending Qaboos to the throne. This petition calls for major reforms such as the establishment of a new constitution that would lead to a parliamentary royal system, as well as taking action against rampant corruption among senior officials. To avoid the wave of Arab revolutions, the Omani government has taken the following actions: Firstly, the government has raised the minimum wage for citizens in the private sector by 43% (about US \$ 520) in mid. February 2011. Secondly, on 27 February 2011, sultan Qaboos has granted a monthly allowance about \$390 (equivalent to OMR 150) for job seekers. Thirdly, the government has provided 50,000 new jobs for Omanis in the public sector (mostly in the defense and security sectors). Fourthly, the monthly social insurance allowance for needy families and student allowances have been increased (Valerie 2015). Fifthly, the budget, which allocated to the professional development of teaching staff and related function in the field of education have been raised to be triple in order to support training programs for teaching staff and consequently improve the quality of educational performance (Bahrani Al-Watan Newspaper, 18 November 2012). This, in turn, has reflected the

steady number of students annually where the number of students in the various governorates of Oman for the academic year 2010-2011, including private schools and special education, reached 588940 students. Higher education institutions reached 5 universities and 19 collages, and the number of students, according to statistics of 2009-2010, is estimated at 33820 students by 43% (Bahrain News Agency, 2012). Sixthly, as for health care, Oman sultanate has developed its health services for citizens where the number of hospitals reached 60, including 50 hospitals affiliating to the Health Ministry, during the period from 2010 to 2011. Seventhly, the Omani government has given great attention to infrastructure, specifically roads network. The government has inaugurated a lot of major roads, including the fast Muscat road that is one of the most important developmental strategic projects in the transport sector in Muscat government (Bahrain News Agency, 2012)

2.4 Bahrain

Bahrain's government has adopted an expansionist financial policy to face decline in demand and the stagnation of many sectors, especially the sectors of domestic trade, tourism, and small and medium projects. The aims of the government are: the citizen is not to be affected by the crisis; the activation of the demand; overcoming the case of recession; finding alternatives for the private sector reluctant to investment, and the major economic sectors are not to be affected by the crisis. The government has sought to achieve these aims in spite of the possibility of the occurrence of imbalance in budget and the rise of the government's debts. The measures taken by the Bahraini regime to face its crisis will be addressed in the following points:

- On 20 September 2011, a royal decree has been issued, which stipulated the establishment of a national fund to compensate the affected citizens according to the international vision in such cases. Article (2) of the decree specified two main matters, which are: officials have shouldered responsibility and the fund has been established according to international legal principles. The Article indicated that the aim of establishing the fund is to compensate the affected citizens (Al-Shafiei, 2012). This fund has had a very positive impact on promoting trust, closing the painful past paper and achieving the foundations of justice and equity referred to in the Royal Decree.
- The Interior Minister of Bahrain announced, in the wake of the Pearl Roundabout events, a plan to employ 20,000 people. The focus was on appointing young graduates at the security apparatus. This achieves two purposes which are: employing the youth and ensuring their loyalty to the regime (Al-Yousef, 2012)
- King Hamad bin Issa forgave 25% of housing loans and ordered to pay BD 1,000 (US \$ 2652) for each Bahraini family on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the National Action Charter.
- The Ministry of Labor has efficiently managed the file of the employees, who have been dismissed from their posts. The Ministry has negotiated with the owners of companies to settle all staff conditions in coordination with the International Labor Organization and the European Parliament (Al-Hassan, 2014).

3. Political Reform Initiatives

The Gulf countries are monarchical systems and rely on the traditional legitimacy. Therefore, these systems have been able to put forward initiatives to achieve political reforms, to eliminate popular congestion, to strengthen the legitimacy of the system and its stability, and to eradicate the root causes of any possible violence. In addition, political reform is an indicative of the development of democratic process and it is also a tool through which gulf regimes can deal with all regional and global challenges.

The Gulf regimes have witnessed many transformations through which they have lost the nature of the tribal system based on absolute obedience. Consequently, the Gulf ruling elites have realized that it is necessary to give the impression of political change by adapting to the changing environment, political participation and equal opportunities in political life. In reality, the steps of political reform have varied from state to another. The Gulf countries, which have suffered from sectarian protests after the outbreak of the Arab uprisings such as Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman sultanate and Kuwait, have begun making political reforms quickly. These political reforms almost disappeared in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Accordingly, the study will address the initiatives of political reforms accrued in the afore-mentioned four countries in the following section:

3.1 Saudi Arabia

Political reform in Saudi Arabia has come after the events of September 11, 2001 in Washington and New York. The Gulf regimes have made commitments to political and social reforms, and intellectuals and activists of liberal forces and moderate Islam have pressured on their own Gulf regimes for reforms.

Initially, the reform demands took the form petitions and statements submitted to the government in the years 2003, 2004, 2007, and 2008. On 17 June, 2011, seven women led the car followed other forty women. This step

was described as a gradual evolution in the rebellion against the status quo.

The demands for reform in Saudi Arabia have two aspects. The first concerns the religious aspect and the religious establishments. Reformists demanded that the decisions of the committee for the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice should not be strict. The second concerns the political and civil rights. They are to amend the Shura council and activate its role and diversify the scientific and intellectual trends of its members, to promote the status of municipal councils, to strengthen citizenship, the civil state and the right to political participation, to modernize the political administration, to contain the religious opposition, and to reform the judicial, economic and social systems.

The Kingdom has established a reform system based on the adoption of a program of political reform represented by the basic system of governance, the Shura council, the system of Bay'ah (pledge of allegiance), the system of municipal councils and the national dialogue center. In addition, it has created further ministers such as the Ministry of Water, the Ministry of Housing, King Abdullah City for Atomic and Renewable Energy and the Supreme Petroleum Council.

In accordance with the requirements of the revolutions of 2011, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz decided on 25 September 2011 to grant women some of their political rights. He pointed out in a speech before the Shura Council that "women should be members of the Shura Council and the municipal councils as of the next session according to the rules of Sharia. We reject the marginalization of women in Saudi society in light of the scope of their work and should be in compliance with the rules of legitimacy "(the middle East Newspaper, 26 September 2011). On January 11, 2013, in an unprecedented step, thirty women were appointed in the Shura Council, including two princess, academics and civil society activists (the Middle East Newspaper 15 January 2013).

Furthermore, the domestic policy has been amended and connected to foreign policy. For instance, prince Mohamed ben Nayef bin Abdul Aziz replaced his cousin Bandar ben Sultan bin Abdel Aziz as foreign minister. Prince Mohamed supervised the two security and foreign files. His duties were focused on monitoring social media and tracking political Islam groups (Muslim Brotherhood) (Al-zaidi, 2015).

Economically, promising and vital sectors have been privatized, including the telecommunications sector, postal services, some of the facilities of Saudi airlines, the sector of water and electricity, the expansion of Yanbu's Industrial City and Jubail's Industrial City, as well as the establishment of the Capital Market Authority. Additionally, the Shura Council has played a key role in control and legislation by examining government agencies' reports and their implementation objectively and making several important decisions. More than 40 systems have been amended by the Shura Council during the Saudi talks to join the Free Trade Organization.

At the educational level, the King Abdullah project for the development of education and the preparation of modern curricula is one of the pillars of development in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the number of universities has been increased, and King Abdullah University for Science and Technology has been established.

Some summarize the demands of reformists in Saudi Arabia in the two following points: Firstly, to maintain the Saudi regime, the absolute monarchy should be transformed to the constitutional one by developing a popularly agreed constitution and an elected parliament. Secondly, some reformists, led by Saad Al-Faqih who lives in London, believe that reform is impossible with the existence of the ruling monarchical family. According to them, the monarchical rule must be eradicated and an elected popular rule must be established (Al-Hatlani, 2013).

3.2 Kuwait

The Kuwaiti regime is monarchical. It is characterized by the spirit of the tribe in the relationship between the citizen and the state, which imposes itself on the political reality, though it is not constitutionally noticeable. The Kuwaiti regime is a mix between the parliamentary and the presidential. This regime is convinced of the legitimacy and acceptance of the ruling leaders. The relationship between the ruler and the governed is based on satisfaction due to Shura and allegiance. This produced a degree of resilience in dealing with the changes and development, including the demands for political reform. In Kuwait, there are no demands or slogans as *Al-Shaab/Yoreed/Eskaat el nizam* (the people/ want/ to topple the regime), but there is a popular will to reform and develop the regime.

The demands for political reform in Kuwait aim to achieve an electoral system representing all segments of society, to pass a law that recognize the work of political parties and allow them to participate in the government formation, to separate powers, and to make the judiciary independent.

In this regard, Al-Ghabra believes that a state must accept the demands for reform because the delay in starting a serious reform project will lead to dire political and economic repercussions. Also, if the reform delayed, the political price would be very grave. Therefore, the reform requires a correct timing and a conscious leadership

(Al-Ghabra, 2016).

Some attribute the problem of political development in Kuwait to practice, whether by representatives of the people or by the ruling family, and do not attribute to the provisions of the constitution or the powers of the national assembly (Al-Youssef, 2012). In fact, the article (6) of the constitution stipulates that "the people are the source of powers". Over the past years, the national assembly has succeeded in exerting pressure on successive governments to separate the position of crown prince from the cabinet of Kuwait, to pass laws that prevent specific families from monopolizing newspaper, to provide any citizen the right to issue a newspaper (there are more than 13 Kuwaiti newspapers), and to amend the constituencies from 25 to 5.

However, this did not meet the aspirations of the reformists. They believe that the national assembly does not have the ability to form or dissolve the government or to participate effectively in following up the implementation of its government. In particular, the Kuwaiti people demanded for the departure of former Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmed Al- Sabah, raising the slogan "leave". As a result, he resigned at the end of 2011.

In December 2012, parliamentary elections were held in Kuwait after the annulment of the 14th Kuwaiti National Assembly by the constitutional court. This was due to the fact that the dissolution of the assembly was marred by constitutional errors. Despite the wave of protests in 2012-2013, a new National Assembly has been elected following the boycott of 62% of the electorate. Accordingly, Kuwait is in dire need of reform and taking into consideration its voting system in order to restore opposition participation.

3.3 Oman Sultanate

Sultan Qaboos was able to preempt the events that took place in the Arab regimes by following a number of intelligent measures. He complied with the main demands of demonstrators and carried out a number of reforms at all levels according to petitions submitted to him by the Omani people (Hassib, 2012).

Initially, Qaboos proposed a new amendment to the constitution. He issued a decree that stipulates the establishment of a technical committee of specialists in order to amend the basic law of the state, granting the council of Oman legislative and supervisory powers, in addition to the involvement of the two heads of the state council and the consultative assembly, the head of the supreme court and two of its senior deputies in the process of the conformation of the sultan's choice. This means public and judicial control over the process of succession and reduces the dominance of the military (Aal-Ibrahim, 2013).

With regard to the powers of the council of Oman, the constitutional amendment added 45 new articles to the constitution which regulate the formation of the council and the mechanism of its tasks. The new constitution allowed the council to consider draft laws prepared by the government, to propose new draft laws and review the development plans. The municipalities were not far from those amendments. Sultan Qaboos has issued a decree in 2011 that stipulate the creating of elected municipal councils in all governorates. These municipalities have been previously limited to Muscat governorate.

Regarding the legislative aspect, an important legislation came into force to protect public funds and prevent conflict of interest. In addition, a number of laws have been amended, including the penal code, the code of criminal procedure and the press and publication law.

Concerning the fight against corruption, the government passed a law to protect the public funds and avoid conflict of interests. It also extended the powers of the Agency of the Financial and Administrative Control. Furthermore, the sultanate has witnessed the multiple trials of senior officials of the state and the heads of major oil and contracting companies. They accused of bribery and the embezzlement of public funds. In early March 2011, sultan Qaboos removed one-third of his cabinet from their posts, including Ali Al-Maamari, Minister of National Economy, and Ahmed Mekki, Minister of Trade and Industry. These decisions were aimed to reaffirm the centralization of the sultanate when the matter relates to the embodiment of national unity and the fight against corruption.

The independence of the judiciary was a part of these amendments. In 2011, sultan Qaboos has declared the independence of the public prosecution, which was administratively and financially subordinates to the general inspector of policy and customs. Then, Qaboos passed two royal decrees. The first decree reshaped the Supreme Council of the Judiciary. The second transferred the subordination of the courts to the judicial inspection, and public administration to the courts (Said, 2016).

The government also has sought to lobby the leaders of protests by offering funds and positions in governmental departments but these attempts have failed. Sultan Qaboos also used tribal leaders to help restore calm. He gave gifts (in cash and kind) to leaders of tribes to ensure their loyalty to the system. For their part, the leaders of

tribes acted as state officials and mediated between the individuals of tribes and the state (Valerie, 2015).

3.4 Bahrain

Before the Arab Spring uprisings, King Hamad succeeded in creating a Bahraini Spring. He carried out a reformist project that was carefully planned and implemented without external dictates or international pressure, and with a sincere desire and free will. All Political reforms made by the King before the Arab uprisings can be summarized in the following points:

- The return of deportees from abroad.
- The general amnesty for political prisoners in February 2001.
- The annulment of the law and court of state security.
- Creating a National Action Charter. It was drafted by all sectors of the people. It is a road map towards political pluralism, democracy and good governance. It also provides a pattern in political life by promoting participation in governance and emphasizing the role of legislative, judicial and executive institutions.
- The issuance of a modified national constitution in 2002, the constitution gave the Bahraini women the right to vote and nominate for the first time in the Gulf. It also restored parliamentary life and promoted popular participation in fair parliamentary and municipal elections under international and local control in the years of 2002, 2006 and 2010.
- Promoting control over the Performance of the government through the legislative authority.
- The issuance of a decree stipulated the establishment of the Office of Financial and Administrative Control.
- Establishing political associations that serve as parties for the first time in the Gulf region which amounted to 20 associations.
- Creating trade unions which amounted to 76 unions.
- Strengthening the voluntary and humanitarian work which was reflected in increasing the number of civil society organizations to reach 574 (Al-Amer, 2015).

After the outbreak of the Arab uprisings, Bahrain's political leadership realized the importance of time element in managing the crisis, taking a series of steps and measures. It has launched several initiatives to hold a national dialogue since the outbreak of the crisis. Simultaneously, the regime called for dialogue on various occasions, which reached more than 45 initiatives from February 2011 until the end of January 2014.

The first initiative was after four days only from the beginning of events on February 18, 2011. It was rejected by the opposition. The second initiative called for "the national consensus in July 2011. The opposition participated in this initiative and then withdrew in an attempt to undermine it. Then, the crown prince called for a national dialogue on the margins of the Manama Forum on 7 December 2012, which was met with broad regional and international support and encouragement, but this initiative was met with skepticism by the opposition. In February 2013, the King called for an initiative to complete the dialogue of national consensus in its political part in which the opposition involved and then withdrew. This did not prevent the King from repeating the call for dialogue on January 15, 2014. However, the call was met with arrogance by the opposition, which is incompatible with an initiative aimed at consensus.

In addition to dialogue initiatives, the political leadership created the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICC) in cooperation with the UN Human Rights Council in order to inquire into the incidents in February and March 2011 and avoid the occurrence of such events in the future. This reflects the state's commitment to the rule of law and justice. In response to the BICI report, the King pledged to initiate reforms, and established a national commission to oversee their implementation. Specific reforms included: the revocation of arrest powers from the National Security Apparatus, legislative amendments that expanded the definition of torture and lifted time-limits for the prosecution of cases; and, the reinstatement of workers dismissed on grounds of political expression (Ulrichsen, 2013).

In addition, the political leadership has put forward many initiatives and mechanisms to promote human rights internally and externally. At the internal level, a number of loyal decrees were passed to establish several human rights mechanisms such as the establishment of the office of the secretary general of grievances at the Interior Ministry, creating an independent office of the inspector general and professional standards office in the national security services, and the reorganization of the National Human Rights Foundation. At the external level, the political leadership sought to address the shortcomings of the Arab regional framework for human rights in terms of its content and mechanisms of its implementation. This is reflected in the King's initiative to establish an Arab

Human Rights Court located in Bahrain (Al-Hassan, 2011).

Accordingly, Bahrain's political leadership succeeded in managing the crisis efficiently and firmly. It has quietly dealt with each stage of the crisis according to its challenges and requirements. In reality, the political leadership succeeded in confronting plans aiming to destabilize the security of the country, and sought the success of all national dialogue initiatives and implementing its perspectives. It also cooperated with the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry and helped implement its recommendations. It also sought, through the Bahraini diplomacy, to correct the image of Bahrain abroad. On 13 August 2013, the King has succeeded in preventing "the Bahrain rebellion movement" from holding demonstrations. He instructed the ministries to implement the recommendations of the 22nd National Council and intensified its meetings and field visits to the sites of the effective political, security, media, economic and social processes. This vision was efficient in managing the crisis with its different dimensions.

4. Research Findings

The research has explored the policies adopted by the Gulf regimes to face the dire consequences of the Arab uprisings. These policies aim to adapt to these repercussions and to contain them in order not to affect the domestic situation of such countries. The Gulf regimes have adopted two effective policies, which are: 1) the financial abundance and expanding social propaganda programs. 2) Political reform initiatives. In this context, the study has sought to answer the following question: to what extent the Gulf regimes succeeded in facing the repercussions of the Arab uprisings? To answer this question, the study has adopted the theoretical framework of the functional-structural approach, focusing on the system's performance and capabilities. By applying this approach, the researcher has found that the performance and capabilities of the Gulf regimes helped them to face the grave consequences of the Arab uprisings effectively. Accordingly, the study has reached several points of findings, the most important of which are: firstly, the gulf regimes have had the capability to face the repercussions of popular uprisings. These regimes have followed the carrot policy to deal with such repercussions by increasing grants and gifts and adopting political reforms. As a result, these repercussions have declined and the people have returned to the previous equations of governance without fundamental changes in the form of the political regime. In fact, changes have limited to legal and constitutional reforms. Secondly, the Gulf countries have played and are still playing an active role, by virtue of their financial, political and media capabilities, in facing the repercussions of the post-Arab uprisings. However, although the policies of financial abundance and political reform enabled the Gulf governments to overcome the shock of 2011, they imposed on them a set of challenges. Thus, pre-emptive policies and measures should be taken to protect them from any future shocks.

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