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**Development and Anti-Corruption
in the Era of Reforms in the GCC
States**

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Abstract

This paper examines the negative correlations that governance-related indicators and “democratic” parliamentary politics have with political freedom and why democratic political institutions have not worked well in promoting good governance, through the case of corruption in Kuwait. Analysis of cross-national quantitative data shows a positive correlation between democracy/democratization and less corruption, but, in the earlier stages of democratization and during intermediate democracy, corruption can erupt. Through empirical observations, this paper examines the following hypotheses: (1) the timing of the establishment of an effective enforcement agency affects the outcome of anti-corruption policy; (2) competitive elections incentivize vote-buying to allow the government to preserve the status quo; and (3) media freedom exposes corruption and amplifies corruption perceptions through the electoral campaigns of the opposition.

Keywords: GCC, Development, Anti-Corruption, Democratization, Kuwait

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1. Introduction

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), have been seeking to implement reform policies to break away from an oil-dependent economy and society under the National Vision for about a decade. They have attempted to promote economic diversification and foreign direct investment (FDI) to develop the private sector, thereby creating new jobs, especially for the younger generation. At the same time, they have attempted to put financial burdens, such as by removing subsidies and introducing a value-added tax (VAT) to stop further government expenditure, which are painful for citizens. Under the influence of the Arab Spring in 2011, the governments of the GCC states have faced demonstrations criticizing issues such as corruption, poorly performing bureaucracies, and insufficient job opportunities. Since the drop in oil prices in 2014, the fiscal situation has become increasingly challenging, and there is an urgent need to control expenditures and secure alternative revenue sources.

Aware of these public complaints, the governments of the GCC states have attempted to improve their accountability, transparency, and performance to gain credibility and avoid further democratization. Qatar and the UAE, both of which are financially well positioned, have achieved economic growth and high scores on governance-related indicators, such as the World Bank's World Governance Indicators (WGI), the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of Transparency International (TI), and the World Economic Forum's Index. Conversely, Bahrain, Oman, and Saudi Arabia, with their tight finances, have suffered from poor economic growth and have been struggling to raise their ratings on governance-related indicators. Kuwait, however, has been unique in comparison with the other GCC states. Despite its supposed fiscal space, Kuwait has been slow to take up reforms, suffering poor economic growth, and its governance-related indicators, except "Voice and Accountability," have been stagnant. This fact raises some questions in the dimension of implementing governance in the GCC states (Table 1, Figure 1, 2).

Table 1. Correlation Matrix of the GCC

	Kuwait	Bahrain	Oman	Saudi Arabia	UAE	Qatar
Financial condition per population	High	Low	Low	Low	High	High
Indicators of governance	Low	Low	Low	Low	High	High
Progress of reform policies	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Formal institutions, elections, parliament	✓ Strong Competitive	Δ Limited Limited	Δ Limited Limited	× None None*	× None** None*	×*** None None
Political freedom	High	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Informal institutions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

*Consultative assembly with no legislative power for members

**Half of the members elected by the electoral college vote approved by the government

***Formal institution exists; however, elections have been postponed

Figure 1.

WGI: Voice and Accountability
(Percentile rank)

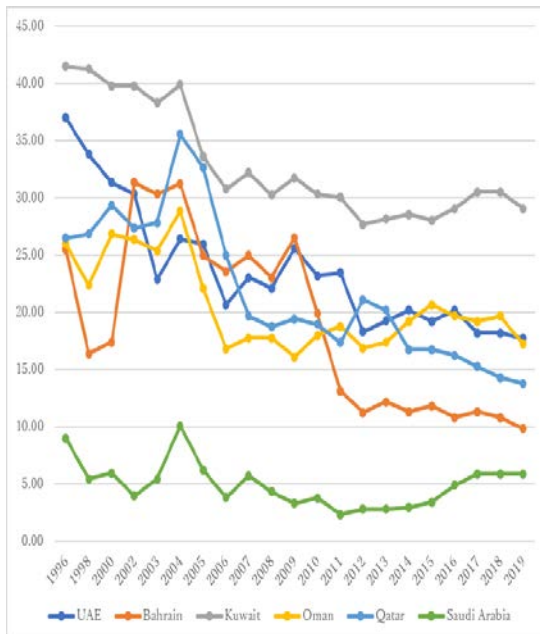
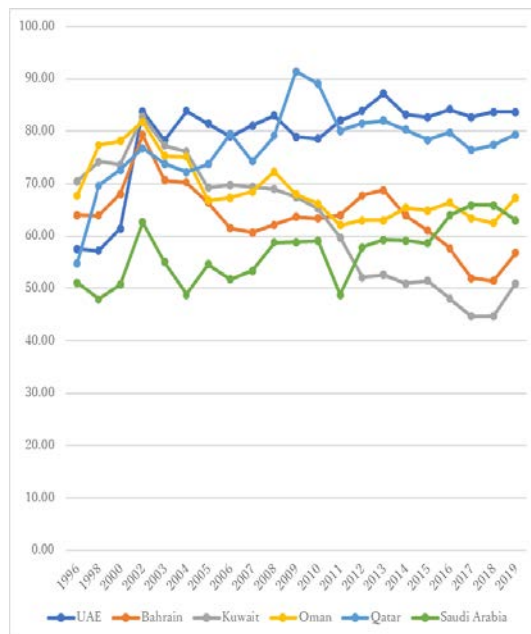


Figure 2.

WGI: Corruption Control
(Percentile rank)



Compared to other GCC states, especially Qatar and UAE, Kuwait suggests a negative correlation can be observed between governance-related indicators and political contestation and liberalization. Kuwait is one of the most politically free, democratized countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), let alone the Gulf states, with institutional guarantees of political participation by the people through relatively competitive elections and parliamentary politics and media freedom. These facts lead to questions about why there is a negative correlation between governance-related indicators and “democratic” parliamentary politics with political freedom and why democratic political institutions have not worked well to promote good governance.

Regarding governance-related indicators, this paper focuses on corruption (e.g., through CPI and the WGI’s Control of Corruption), which typically affects economic growth and government performance, is easy to observe and operationalize among governance-related indicators, and offers accumulated cross-national quantitative analyses in relation to democratization. In addition, the anti-corruption policy of the GCC states started after the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in 2003 and shares almost the same content as the GCC’s common agenda. Based on the above, this paper is organized as follows: The second section reviews preceding studies to identify the positioning of the case of Kuwait, derives hypotheses, and presents the logic of the argument: In intermediate democracies, (1) timing of the establishment of an effective enforcement agency affects the outcome of anti-corruption policy, (2) competitive elections incentivize vote-buying to allow the government to preserve the status quo, and (3) media freedom exposes corruption and amplifies corruption perceptions through the electoral campaign of the opposition. The third section examines these hypotheses through empirical observations.

2. Anti-Corruption in Kuwait as a Case of Intermediate Democracy

The negative correlation between the reputation of governance-related indicators and political contestation and liberalization in Kuwait has been explained in the intra GCC political and social context, which often emphasizes the lack of leadership of shaykhs occupying high positions of ministries and the absence of meritocracy in bureaucracy and describes the parliament as the source of all obstacles and a bed of systemic corruption (Biygautane 2015). The parliament of Kuwait is recognized as the only actor in a complex web of ruling dynasties, bureaucrats, and the private sector, and most

members of parliament (MP) have based their constituency on workers in the public sector. Such MPs prefer to preserve the status quo, and they have no incentive to reform policies to bring up private sectors and attract FDI (Louër 2013). Their main interest is the fair and equal allocation of oil wealth benefits. Therefore, they oppose the government's development projects because they suspect that corruption might result, enriching ruling family members at the expense of the state's resources (Tétreault 2009). In Kuwait, institutions and opportunities for public expression are guaranteed, and it is possible to express dissatisfaction with the concentration of business interests in the hands of the ruling family. In the UAE and Qatar, it is only the lack of such institutions and opportunities that prevent public expression; the essential nature of their societies and ways of thinking are no different from those of Kuwait (Herb 2009).

The negative correlation between the reputation of governance-related indicators, especially corruption, and political contestation and liberalization in Kuwait seems to contradict the findings of many cross-national quantitative analyses (i.e., as democratization progresses and governance improves, corruption decreases). However, when contrasting Kuwait's positioning in terms of levels of democracy, the compatibility with the finding that corruption erupts in intermediate democracies or in the early stages of the democratization process can be assumed (Sun 2004; Rock 2009). In terms of Kuwait's level of democratization, with a Polity IV score of -7, it has been classified as an autocracy since 1992. By contrast, the Freedom House Report classifies it as partially free in both political rights and civil liberty, third only to Tunisia and Lebanon since 2012 in the MENA region. When comparing scores of Democracy Indices of Varieties of Democracies (V-Dem) with newly developing democracies in the third wave, Kuwait is approximate to the early stages of the transition process of democratization and some intermediate democracies.

In studies showing that corruption erupts in the early stages of democratization and intermediate democracies, the significant independent variables are the timing and extent of the establishment of democratic institutions. The development of democratic institutions that enforce governance and anti-corruption measures at an early stage of transition effectively reduces corruption, and the turning point for the reduction of corruption appears within 10–12 years (Rock 2009). In addition, competitive elections have not been found to have a significant effect on corruption reduction by themselves; however, when competitive elections are held after democratization under weak institutions (i.e., where enforcement of the institutions is not strictly enforced), vote buying based on clientelist relationships with the ruling party of the old regime is

stimulated, which spreads and increases corruption (Saha, Gounder, and Campbel 2014; Boehm 2015).

Media freedom has also been found to be an important variable in the process of increasing corruption and even the perception of corruption and in decreasing corruption after a turning point as democratization progresses. Under the liberalized media, to which the opposition is allowed access equally to the government, opposition parties have criticized the clientelist support-raising relationship, which was established by the former ruling party and accepted under certain social customs, as corruption in their election campaigns, making corruption visible and punishable by defining the scope of the corruption (Fell 2005). The empirical evidence shows that corruption decreases as democratization progresses in this manner.

From the discussion of previous studies regarding the transition from increased to decreased corruption in the early stages of democratization and intermediate forms of democracy, the following hypotheses can be derived in light of observable events in Kuwait.

- (1) The timing of the establishment of an effective enforcement agency affects the outcome of anti-corruption policy.
- (2) Competitive elections have incentivized vote buying to allow the government to preserve the status quo.
- (3) Media freedom exposes corruption and amplifies the perception of corruption through the electoral campaign of the opposition.

The next section examines these hypotheses by empirical observations.

3. Anti-Corruption and Political Contestation in Kuwait

The Timing and Process to Establish Nazaha

Kuwait took almost a decade to establish an effective enforcement agency designed to curb corruption. The country was one of the first to sign UNCAC in December 2003, after which it ratified the treaty in February 2007 together with Qatar following the UAE. However, Kuwait was slow in its establishment of the Public Authority for Anti-Corruption (hereafter referred to as Nazaha) as the government agency in charge of

policing this abusive practice as defined by the UNCAC. That is, except for Oman, which responded by reorganizing its existing Board of Audit, Kuwait founded a new agency (i.e., Nazaha) in February 2016, the last among the members of GCC (Table 2).

Table 2. Anti-Corruption Entities in the GCC

	Kuwait	Bahrain	Oman	KSA	UAE	Qatar
UNACA signature	2003	2005	2014	2004	2005	2005
UNACA ratification	2007	2010	2017	2013	2006	2007
Entity for implement UNACA,	Public Authority for Anti-Corruption (NAZAHA)	The General Directorate of Anti-Corruption and Economic and Electronic Security	State Financial and Administrative Audit Institution (SFAAI)	National Anti-Corruption Commission (NAZAH A)	Supreme Audit Institution (SAI)	Administrative Control and Transparency Authority
Affiliation	Independent	Ministry of Interior	Independent	Independent	Independent/ Federal	Independent
Year of establishment	2016	2014	1970/ adapted 2017	2011	1976/ adapted 2011	2011
CSO for AC adapt to UNACA	Kuwait Transparency Society (KTS)*	Bahrain Transparency Society (BTS)*				Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Center (ROLACC)
Year of establishment	2005	2001				2011
Note	*Authorized local representative of TI	*Not authorized local representative of TI				

With regard to the reactions of Kuwait in comparison with those of other countries, the government's initial response was earlier than those of the other GCC governments. The country's parliament also proactively fought corruption, with the first draft of a law that mandates the UNCAC-compliant establishment of an anti-corruption agency proposed to the legislature in July 2007 (KTS 2007: 11). The law was passed as a parliamentary bill with the support of the Kuwait Transparency Society (KTS), which

was established as a civil society organization (CSO) and local representative of TI in 2005 (KTS 2007: 11). Upon Kuwait's ratification of the UNCAC in 2007, the opposition-led reform of the electoral system and women's suffrage was realized in the parliament of 2006, and the provisions of the Assembly Law and the Press Law that restrict the activities of opposition parties were ruled unconstitutional. The momentum for reform was growing, but the parliamentary bill was not scheduled during the session because it was not recognized as a high priority.

Thereafter, the bill to establish Nazaha was tossed around amid the turbulence of parliamentary politics. The 2006 parliamentary was dominated by a coalition of opposition blocs, which put pressure on the government to win greater political freedom and interrogated ministers on acts of corruption in the public sector; such acts included fraudulent handling of public funds, bribery, and the issuance of falsified financial statements. Because of a motion of non-cooperation filed against Prime Minister Nasir Muhammad al-Ahmad al-Sabah, Emir Sabah Ahmad al-Sabah dissolved the parliament in March 2008 and held elections in May that year. However, these elections, held under a new electoral system, were again dominated by the opposition coalition bloc. The conflict between the government and the opposition coalition deepened. The Emir dissolved the parliament in March 2009 and held elections anew in May that same year. Government-supported MPs regained momentum and were equally matched with the opposition. In the 2009 parliament, the bill to establish Nazaha was submitted as a government bill and conveyed to the parliamentary committee for examination in May 2010. The problem this time around was the continuing resistance from the opposition, which claimed that the establishment would be insufficient to curb corruption in government and the public sector.

It was not until 2011 that the establishment of Nazaha as an independent authority was seriously debated in parliamentary sessions, during which intervention by the judiciary was demanded, thus adding further to the confusion. During a cabinet session, the bill was concluded as a government-proposed bill, with the aim of clearly demonstrating the government's stance on combating corruption in accordance with the UNCAC. The proposal was then elevated to the chairperson of the parliament. However, opposition MPs opposed the bill because Nazaha was evaluated as being insufficiently competent to investigate and prosecute and was criticized as a mere tool for government posturing. In response, the government issued and enacted Law No. 24/2012 on 19 November 2012, in relation to the establishment of Nazaha, on the grounds of the Emir's urgent decree during the absence of the parliament. The parliament was already

dissolved twice that year. In June 2012, the constitutional court adjudged as unconstitutional the legal procedures for dissolving the former parliament of 2009 and nullified the parliament of February 2012. The parliament of 2009 was thus revived, but the Emir again dissolved it in October. In accordance with the constitution, newly elected MPs in the December 2012 elections discussed the Emir's decree, approved it as the law mandating the establishment of Nazaha on 21 June 2013, and agreed on the appointment of the agency's chief. The setting up of the actual body spanned two more years because during that period, the government's legal fight with the opposition about the interpretation of Nazaha's authority to investigate and prosecute was ongoing. This situation prompted referral to the Supreme Council of the Judiciary and the government's special committee of justice. At last, the government approved Nazaha as having the same authority and independence as the State Audit Bureau and transferred officials from the latter to the former, which started full-scale operations in April 2015.

Once Nazaha began its operations, the legal dispute over its autonomy and authority to probe and prosecute cases continued. Opposition MPs, legal activists, and some advocacy CSOs (e.g., KTS) called for the granting of greater autonomy and authority to Nazaha. Nevertheless, some legal motions were filed to resist this initiative. On 20 December 2015, the Constitutional Court ruled Nazaha unconstitutional and ordered its dissolution. The ruling mentioned that Law No. 24/2012 does not fulfill the condition of urgency and that the constitution mentions only the State Audit Bureau as an independent authority. Shocked unexpectedly, officials of Nazaha lost their jobs and were forced to leave office. Soon after, the government submitted a new bill designed to re-establish the agency, and it was approved in the parliament as Law 2/2016. Nazaha could resume its operations.

Contrary to other GCC states, which can legislate the establishment of an anti-corruption agency by edict of the monarchy after coordination within government, Kuwaiti governance is characterized by a very complicated political process, implying the need for a momentum to preserve the autonomy of Nazaha and push the enhancement of horizontal accountability from the opposition, as encouraged by the conditions of the international convention and advocacy CSOs. It can also be argued that the Kuwaiti government has been excessively busy in dealing with this involved process (partly because of its own making) in the implementation of anti-corruption measures and the improvement of its governance indicators, which has led to a lower rating. The fact that there has been improvement in indicators since 2018 shows that the political process surrounding the establishment of the Nazaha has calmed and that

Kuwait is now ready to take anti-corruption measures seriously.

Competitive Elections and Incentive of Vote-Buying

Vote buying is illegal, and it is a topic that makes headlines during every election in Kuwait. Vote buying is prevalent because first and foremost, there are no legal restrictions on campaign funds; they can be acquired as long as donors have the money to spare. Second, the size of the target is relatively small, and this has two implications. Since the National Assembly (parliament) is composed of only 50 elected members, the number of MPs subject to majority manipulation is small, and the number of votes required to win is also small. Third, the authorities have not been proactive in cracking down on vote-buying.

Regarding the number of MPs in the National Assembly, ministers appointed by the Emir are also allowed to participate in the voting of bills in the same capacity as elected MPs, except for the vote of confidence. According to the Constitution, the maximum number of ministers should not exceed one-third of the 50 elected members, and at least one of the ministers should be appointed from among the elected members. Therefore, 18 members, less than a majority of the popularly elected members, are sufficient for the government to have a majority to pass the necessary bills. However, if the opposition wins more than 33 seats in the election, the government will not be able to maintain its majority in the parliament (This is what happened in the February 2012 elections).

Regarding the number of votes required for a win, from the 1981 to the 2006 elections, the constituencies were divided into a two- to three-square-kilometer residential block unit separated by a main road, and the number of votes needed for an individual to be elected was not large, about a minimum of 300. In this electoral system, a large number of constituencies were allocated to tribal settlements so that tribal representatives loyal to the Emir would have a majority. In addition to this, it seemed that even in the urban constituencies, the government provided campaign funds and other support to candidates. This was done so that members who were obedient to the government could be elected. This was one of the reasons behind the opposition-led reform of the electoral system in 2006, in which electoral districts were consolidated to raise the number of votes needed to win.

The electoral system that took effect from the 2008 elections onwards,

consolidated the previously 25 electoral districts into five districts with a quorum of 10 each and a limited voting up to four. Under this system, the disparity in votes per electoral district was reduced from a maximum of six to a maximum of two, and the number of votes required to be elected rose significantly to at least several thousand, making the election more competitive. Although the candidates' cost burdens increased, vote buying did not subside. According to some media reports, candidates spent huge amounts on their campaigns: estimates for the 2008 elections claim candidates spent 50,000 KWD (almost 200,000 USD) to 500,000 KWD (2,000,000 USD) on a single campaign with some candidates spending considerably more (KTS 2008: 40). There is no obligation to disclose the details of expenditures, but they include the cost of renting a temporary hall for meetings that will also serve as the campaign office for about a month during the election period, catering for feasts, production of campaign goods to be distributed to the participants of the meetings, advertising for newspaper and TV spot commercials, and cell phones and laptops for the campaign staff. Although we were not able to confirm this directly, we also received information that in addition to the aforementioned cell phones and laptops, gaming devices and branded bags were distributed to students as payment for their votes.

The results and experiences of the 2008 elections and the subsequent 2009 elections have revealed that the increased contestation of elections has led to increased parliamentary political activism, in other words, increased scrutiny and criticism of the ability to implement policies and the finances of the government and the ruling family. However, it has also escalated vote buying due to majority manipulation on the part of the government. As a result of the changes in the electoral system, the tribal populations, which constituted the majority of voters, became more politically active in their own right and increased their various demands to the government. The tribes held by-elections, which are prohibited by the election law but had not been cracked down on by the authorities, to select interest representatives and consolidate their votes. The coalition of Islamists and the Popular Action Bloc (PAB), a parliamentary bloc of resource nationalists, had a majority in the parliament due to the participation of tribal representatives. They demanded a policy of distribution and cash benefits and opposed the government's plan to introduce foreign investment in development, arguing that it would be a breeding ground for corruption and result in the uneven distribution of wealth, given mostly to a few business elites associated with the ruling family. They violently confronted the government, demanding that the parliament committee exercise its right to investigate government corruption and interpellate the Prime Minister and other ministers, and this resulted in the dissolution of the parliament by the Emir in less

than a year.

Since the 2009 elections were held only a year after the previous elections, the leading candidates faced difficulties in securing funds for their campaigns. Therefore, there was a high incentive for the government to form a majority in the parliament by providing funds to candidates who declared their support for the government. The government began to crackdown on by-elections in the name of proper law enforcement to put pressure on tribal candidates while at the same time financially supporting leading government-backed candidates and consequently creating a majority of government-supported MPs. During and after the election, opposition MPs questioned Prime Minister Nassir Muhammad al-Sabah about allegations of the fraudulent use of public funds, including allegations of campaign financing to some government-supported MPs. When it was reported in September 2011 that 16 MPs were under investigation for receiving governmental funds, people began to demand for the resignation of Prime Minister Nassir¹. When the Constitutional Court suspended the interpellations of the Prime Minister submitted by opposition MPs, some opposition MPs rushed into the parliament building with demonstrators to criticize the Emir, and tensions reached an extreme, forcing Prime Minister Nassir to resign. Emir Sabah Ahmad al-Sabah appointed Jabir Mubarak al-Hamad al-Sabah, the deputy prime minister and defense minister, as the new prime minister and dissolved the parliament, but the situation was grim for the Emir and the government.

The February 2012 elections turned out to be tough for the government, with the opposition, a coalition of Islamists and the PAB, winning 34 seats. The government began an aggressive crackdown and formed a special task force during the election to uncover vote buying. This was, of course, due to the fact that the alleged actions of Prime Minister Nassir were widely condemned, and the government needed to show some kind of response. KTS also encouraged this crackdown, encouraging citizens to provide information and report cases to the authorities for investigation. In the December 2012 and July 2013 elections, when the opposition coalition boycotted participation in the elections, the voting method was changed from a limited number of four votes to a single non-transferable vote. This led to an increase in vote buying by new candidates looking to enter the race. The media coverage of vote buying has shifted from warnings and expressions of concern from intellectuals to reports of cases where vote buying has been uncovered, suggesting that the authorities are taking appropriate

¹ In fact, there have been demonstrations by young people, known as the “The fifth wall,” since August 2011 demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Nassir.

action to uncover the problem.

Summarized in terms of vote buying and electoral contestation, the government's incentives for vote buying initially became greater as elections became more competitive. This is because competitive elections made it difficult for the government to maintain its numerical advantage, and at the same time, there was no cap on campaign financing. However, the opposition became stronger as a result of competitive elections, and this prompted the government to shift its reluctant stance on the crackdown on vote buying to a more proactive one in response to growing criticism. Although this recent crackdown is actually a result of Prime Minister Nassir's overreach in the 2009 elections, there are signs that civil society monitoring, such as the efforts of KTS, is beginning to have an effect. In addition, the demand for vote sellers was not so much about wealth as shown by indicators, such as GDP per capita, as it was about the relative inequality within the society.

Free Media, Campaign Strategy, and Corruption Perception

As mentioned earlier, Kuwait is one of the most politically free countries in the MENA Region, and media freedom is also high. Just as the 2006 parliament, which composed the opposition majority, changed the electoral system to a more competitive one, it also deregulated the media in 2007. Licenses issued to newspapers were opened to new papers, and the number of Arabic-language daily newspapers increased from five to a maximum of 14 at one point. This enabled various political and social groups in the country to have their own media and to see their opinions expressed through comments and columns by intellectuals representing each group. In addition, the daily newspapers representing the political groups that make up the opposition coalition, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafists, PAB, and Liberals, have played a role in making the problems of the government and the grievances of the citizens visible in response to government criticisms from opposition MPs representing each group.

Media freedom in Kuwait is based on the freedom of speech, which allows criticism of the prime minister and other ministers appointed by the emir to be free, although criticism of the emir is taboo. Therefore, criticism of the government can easily become a point of appeal to voters by incumbents and candidates for election. Regarding incumbents' other achievements, such as MPs' proposed bill, it is difficult to pass to the plenary session after committee review because the government's bills take precedence. In addition, for things that take time for prior coordination and progress,

such as the results of infrastructure development, it is difficult to show the results to voters in a visible way, partly because of the short intervals between elections. In contrast, the fact that the media will have a record of the attention that statements drew in the plenary session is a powerful means of visualizing and communicating the results of achievements to voters. In particular, the submission of interpellations to ministers and the prime minister attracted a great deal of media attention. Whether submitted individually or jointly with high-profile MPs, the impact is great, and the point of appeal to voters is significant. The number of submissions (including advance notice) has increased significantly since the 2006 parliamentary session².

Although there is no shortage of corruption in the government and public sector, the large amount of freed media coverage and corruption by opposition MPs seeking achievements that appeal to voters have made allegations of corruption visible. Simultaneously, the establishment of Nazaha and the activities of CSOs, such as KTS, have led to the monitoring of the investigation and detection of corruption. In the context of the local business elite, the submission of interpellations and criticism of corruption by opposition MPs is perceived as an obstacle to the government's development and reform policies, such as stopping government development projects. However, from the opposition's perspective, the fact remains that corruption is high and the government is not doing enough to address it. Although there have been setbacks in 2012, such as tighter restrictions on the media and the arrest of MPs who criticized the Emir, opposition MPs continue to criticize corruption. The improvement in the government's anti-corruption efforts, such as the establishment of the Nazaha and collaboration with the KTS, are signs of improvement.

Conclusion

Empirical observations confirm that the case of Kuwait is in line with previous studies' findings of a relationship between democracy/democratization and corruption as a feature of early-stage democratization and intermediate democracy. In Kuwait, the 2006 electoral reforms led to more competitive political scenarios, but anti-corruption measures were adequately addressed during this period, resulting in stagnant scores on

² According to the Constitution, interpellation is a preliminary step to the submission of a vote of confidence and can be submitted with the signature of a single MP. After the interpellation, a vote of confidence can be proposed with the joint signatures of 10 MPs. If the proposed vote of confidence is rejected (i.e., no confidence is confirmed), the minister is considered to have resigned.

the index. The change to more competitive elections provided incentives for the government to continue vote-buying in order to maintain its majority, leading to funding for lawmakers who were willing to pay the costs but also leading to the government ultimately destroying itself. The free media exposed actual corruption and amplified perceptions of corruption through the opposition campaign's appeals for change. The revitalization of parliamentary politics beginning in 2006 caused significant turmoil and increased corruption for nearly a decade, but the government's shift to a more serious anti-corruption stance in collaboration with CSOs is a sign of future improvement.

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