My Tribe, My Nation, My World

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02 January 2025

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Abstract

In recent years, I witnessed an increasing number of discussions and conversations with colleagues, friends and relatives about the tribe and its role in society. Even within my personal circle, given the fact that I belong to tribe, I have repeatedly listened to discussions on how much we as a "tribe" need to prove our origins and identity, and how important it is for us to determine who is in and who is out.

1.1 A Walk Down Memory Lane

In recent years, I witnessed an increasing number of discussions and conversations with colleagues, friends and relatives about the tribe and its role in society. Even within my personal circle, given the fact that I belong to tribe, I have repeatedly listened to discussions on how much we as a "tribe" need to prove our origins and identity, and how important it is for us to determine who is in and who is out. Indeed, as human beings, we crave bonds and attachments; however, the tribal instinct is not only an instinct that drives the need to belong and include, but also an instinct that drives the need to exclude. Such questions and discussions often carry me back to my childhood, where I lived in a small village and studied in a public junior school for girls, in which most students were members of my tribe.

In the first six years of primary school, my classes constituted of six students only, four from the same tribe, while one was Egyptian and the other Palestinian. This demographic distribution reflected how different areas in Qatar were subdivided into smaller villages, or frij (neighbourhood), based on bloodlines. It is often stated that if one wants to know who lives in a certain frij, village or town, one should visit the main mosque or school to gain a general idea of the local inhabitants or social groups that dominate the area.

My daily trip to school where the majority of students and teachers shared the same lineage and kinship engulfed me with a sense of security, a feeling of being welcomed, and a perception of solidarity with the other students. However, this feeling changed once I moved to a secondary school located in the city where I became a minority member among others, making me feel less confident about myself. On the first day of school, the teacher asked us to introduce ourselves, and when my turn came, she mockingly said, "You are from Iran; there is a place in Iran called Kurdan and your tribe came from there." The teacher then broke into laughter, and at that moment, I thought that perhaps I was indeed from Iran as she claimed. However, I still felt livid as she laughed loudly in front of other students, attempting to make me feel inferior to others, especially when she used her tribal name to establish the hierarchy of status and structure of power. I ended up fighting with her which got me kicked out of class. If this classification of people based on tribal affiliation occurs at the school level, one can only imagine what may be happening at the social, national, and regional levels. In light of this, I came to realise that just as my tribe gives me reasons to act in certain ways, the tribe also gives others reasons to act in different ways towards me. More importantly, I realised that tribe membership is the basis for maintaining status

hierarchies, and, as such, it can trigger rejection and abuse from others, just as it triggers respect and access to power structures.

These examples from my childhood and adolescent years highlight the notion that tribal identity has always played an important role in Qatari society, not only on a personal level but also on the political, social, and economic levels. This is illustrated by the recent resurgence of emphasis on tribal ancestry in several Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. It must also be acknowledged that the tribe, in the context of the Gulf countries, has played a critical role in bestowing legitimacy upon the monarchies that govern the region today. Moreover, the processes of nation- and state-building in these countries have been dependent on garnering a strong sense of allegiance and loyalty from the tribes. However, the tribes have been affected by the sweeping developments that have influenced the region, including rapid modernisation, the wars in the Gulf, the Arab Spring, and most recently, the 2017 Gulf crisis. These events have tested the existence, structure, functionality, and relevance of the tribe within the modern state and on regional levels in multiple ways. In some cases, moreover, tribes have been at the core of the sociopolitical challenges facing the state.

Repeatedly bombarded by memories and triggered by questions pertaining to individual, tribal and national identity, I found myself gravitating toward pursuing research focusing on the tribe and its role vis-à-vis state and society, and eventually in writing this book. My focus was on studying how the revival of tribalism affects nation-building and state legitimacy in the GCC countries, especially in Qatar and Kuwait. I was also driven by my curiosity to explore the social and political dynamics in the relationship between rising tribalism and the modern state and to investigate how regimes and individuals in countries such as Qatar and Kuwait perceive the rising intensity of tribalism and how they respond to and interact with it.

1.2 The Tribe Still Matters

The centrality of the tribe in the lives of nomadic groups in the Arabian Peninsula can perhaps be best depicted in the poetry of the pre-Islamic poet Qurayt bin 'Anif al-Anbari al-Tamimi. Al-Tamimi, a member of the Bani Tamim tribe, suffered the loss of 30 camels in a raid by his tribe's rivals, Bani Shayban. His desperate appeals for help were ignored by the elders of his tribe, which by his standards and the general tribal norms and conventions at the time was shocking. However, aid came from his relatives, the tribe of Bani Mazen al-Tamimi, who recouped 100 instead of 30 camels. It was in their praise that he recited his famous lines:

> Had I been one of Bani Mazen, my camels would not have been violated,
>
> By the bastards of Bani Shayban,
>
> Rough men would have come to my aid,
>
> If a madman even thought of committing foul play,
>
> They are people who at the sight of evil,
>
> Will march to it, single and herds
>
> They never ask a brother appealing in crisis,
>
> To provide evidence of his suffering [al-Zarkali, 2002, my translation].

Such poetry, and probably many similar oral works by pre-Islamic poets, are associated with one of the most established norms in Arab tribal societies, namely the obligation of a tribe to stand up for and relentlessly support their own at times of crisis, without questioning whether they are right or wrong. This was a simple social rule that carried substantial political consequences for the tribes of Arabia, one that established and induced a strong and reliable sense of security among the members of the tribe and thus contributed to the tribe's strength and cohesion (Heard-Bey, 2008, pp. 11–12).

Despite the central role of the tribe in the sociopolitical and economic systems of the Gulf region, most of the available literature on the subject has focused on the tribe before and during state formation, as well as the period that followed independence in GCC countries. However, as far as the revival of tribalism, especially in the 1990s, the subject has attracted very little interest, especially with respect to its political implications. The general view has been that while the tribe played an important role in establishing and reinforcing state legitimacy and the political order, the relevance of

its role has diminished as it was replaced by the state as the central authority holding monopoly over political, economic, security, and other functions. The tribe as a concept, however, has not only endured the onslaught by the state, but it has also thrived, especially with the declining legitimacy of the state since the early 1990s. Moreover, the revival of tribalism has in itself may have become a factor that undermines the legitimacy of the state. The existing literature, however, offers very little information and few explanations on this issue.

For example, in *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, Crystal (1990) studied the transformational shift in the relationship between rulers and the merchant class as a result of political and economic developments in the region. Crystal (1990), moreover, addressed the relationship between state and society from a political-economic perspective, arguing that new alliances emerged in GCC societies as a result oil revenue inflow, which in turn transformed into reinforced regime legitimacy and stability. The relationship between state and society in the GCC region, however, has mostly focused on dynamics from a "rentier state" perspective, that is, a transactional relationship between rulers and citizens that is based on oil revenues, and where citizens receive substantial welfare benefits in return for their loyalty to the state and rulers without any opportunity for political participation. In this framework of analysis, however, the role of the tribe is rendered insignificant. Hence, this framework does not offer an understanding of how and why the revival of tribalism has occurred.

In contrast, in *State and Society*, Khaldoun al-Naqeeb (1990) argues that the tribe was not necessarily at conflict with the state, and that the process of the nation state did not undermine the tribe, but rather, it actually reinforced the tribe and its role in the political system. Al-Naqeeb (1990) introduced the concept of "political tribalism" to trace the tribal origins of political legitimacy of the state in the Gulf countries. Political tribalism is not limited to kinship or lineage ties, but rather, it is a system that provides the bases of group cohesion, services as an organising principle through the allocation of group resources and the rules of categorical inclusion or exclusion in the group, and represents a popular mentality that governs all forms of political relations in society. While al-Naqeeb (1990) was instrumental in developing the notion of political tribalism, his work was not comparative and has not been updated to capture the revival of tribalism in the decades that followed.

In tracing the evolution of the tribe-state nexus, it seems that tribe and tribalism did not only play a visible role in the formation of the state in the Gulf region, but also a substantial one. For example, in Kuwait and Qatar, the foundations of a modern state were based on the tribal structure and on tribal networks. Tribes were then practically mobilised and instrumentalised to consolidate power and to reinforce the stability of political systems during the second half of the twentieth century. This was attributed to and based on two factors. First, from a Weberian perspective, the state consolidated its power through kinship and tribal elements to establish state control, thus minimising any opposition and extending political power. As a result, individuals and groups were pushed to seek protection through their tribal affiliations with the

ruling families as well as through the state institutions. Second, the states in both countries were underdeveloped and in the embryonic stage, suffering weakness and vulnerability, which in turn pushed rulers to capitalise on and to exploit tribes and tribalism as a means to reinforce their legitimacy. In the long term, however, this approach backfired, leading to the re-emergence of tribalism as a contentious force vis-à-vis the state, especially after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 which represented an existential threat and shock to the Gulf rulers and states at the time.

Still, the revival of tribalism in Kuwait and Qatar, as well as in other Gulf countries, is not necessarily an isolated development. In fact, it occurs at a time where the state in many countries all over the world is weakening and facing the threat of fragility as a result of a variety of factors such as globalisation, the encroaching influence of international organisations, the rise of ethnic and other internal conflicts, and a myriad of other internal threats and stressors (Midgal, 2001, p. 251). In fact, while globalisation has offered states an opportunity to benefit from opportunities to expand their economies, it has also triggered fears and threats on the political, social, cultural and economic levels (Clement & Springborg, 2010).

1.3 The Many Meanings of Tribe

Despite the extensive discussions of the tribe as a social concept, a final definition remains elusive as it seems to vary over time and with geography. According to Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddimah, the tribe represents the collective social, political, and economic framework that preceded the urban context. He defines the tribe as an organisation "that obeys its own inner laws" (Ibn Khaldun, 1967, p. 259). Within this organisational context, the essential link between individuals and a particular tribe is shared kinship and group consciousness (Heard-Bey, 2008, p. 12). This is explained by what Ibn Khaldun and his disciples, such as Abu Ya 'rub al-Marzouqi, Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri, and 'Ali 'Abd al-Wahad referred to as the 'asabiyya, or group solidarity and cohesion, a powerful glue that brought the members of the collective tribe together to act as a single human body (Ibn Khaldun, 1967, p. 263). An example that explains the complexity of 'asabiyya is depicted in the old, famous Bedouin apothegm: "I and my brothers against my cousin; I and my cousins against the stranger." (Barakat, 1993, p. 184) However, while Ibn Khaldoun emphasised the importance of 'asabiyya as the power that brought the members of the group together alongside "the natural virtues and fighting abilities of the rural tribes," and despite the relevance of kinship and lineage as critical factors in defining the tribe (Ibn Khaldun, 1967, p. 264), he also considered al-ard (territory) as an equally critical factor contributing to the strength, cohesion, and superiority of the tribe.

Interestingly, while kinship and lineage seem to have been dominant factors in defining the tribe, this may not have been based on reality as much as it perpetuated a shared myth that strengthened the sense of belonging among tribe members. Religion, for example, seems to be a prominent factor at play in this context. In reflecting on Ibn Khaldoun's work, Ritter (1948) argued that religion was an ideology that strengthened 'asabiyya. In contrast, Von Kremer (1927) argued that Ibn Khaldoun considered religion merely as an ideology that contributed to tribal solidarity and cohesion.

Philosophers such as Karl Marx, have also attempted to develop an understanding of the tribe as a notion and of its position in the models of transformation within Western civilisation, particularly in the republics of Athens and Rome. The tribe, according to Marx, did not undermine the transformation of Athens into a liberal democratic republic. To the contrary, the tribe was a fundamental factor that made the transformation successful and contributed to the class-based democracy model that prevailed in that republic through the division of labour within the tribes vis-à-vis their relationship to the city (Marx, 1979, p. 244).

Likewise, according to Weber, the tribe constituted a phase that preceded the state. Prior to the state, the tribe existed as "a stateless, segmentary social group characterized by a myth of common lineage and bound together by linear loyalties" (Weber, 2008, pp. 160–161; Tibi, 1990b, p. 131) and which acted as "autonomous estate functionaries." The modern state, on the other hand, argued Weber, constitutes "an institutional association of rule, which within a given territory has succeeded in gaining a monopoly of legitimate physical force as a means of ruling, and to this end has united material resources in the hands of its leaders, after expropriating all the autonomous estate functionaries who previously controlled them in their own name" (Weber, 2008, p. 160). Similarly, Durkheim proposed the notion of "mechanical solidarity" in reference to the tribe, which he perceived as a social organisation of egalitarian descent groups (Durkheim, 1933, p. 278).

Thus, whether by kinship, lineage, religion, or any other ideology, classical authors did not seem to have agreed on the definition of the tribe, especially when taking into consideration the wide diversity of tribal structures and systems across various regions of the world.

More recently, Richard Tapper (1990) pinpointed at least three distinct concepts of the tribe held by anthropologists. The first concept is the definition of the tribe as a primitive society, in contrast to the state as the manifestation of modernity. This view, widely held in Western colonial thought, was based on linguistic and other common cultural factors shared by tribe members or ethnic groups (Tapper, 1990, p. 50). However, this definition has been widely contested, as it places the tribe within a primordial context and ignores the fact that the tribe and the state have, in many regions and cases, been very closely intertwined (Eickelman, 2001, p. 119).

The second definition, provided by British social anthropologists such as Evans-Pritchard, portrays the tribe as a political group defined by centralised authority and by dispute-settling mechanisms that are shared among the members of the group (Tapper, 1990, p. 50). This definition, however, does not acknowledge the critical role of kinship and lineage in bringing members of the group together, in which wealth, privilege, and status necessarily regulate the political relations.

The third definition is based on the idea of the tribe as an indigenous entity in relation to identity, unity, evolutionary scheme, and a "segmentary lineage system" in which kinship and descent play a critical role in its social and political organisation (Tapper, 1990, p. 50). This concept may perhaps be more applicable to tribes in the Middle East, especially in regions such as the Arabian Peninsula, where kinship and lineage are the focus of social and political organisation.

However, it may be challenging to reach a definition that is applicable to the many variations of tribal structures in the various regions spanning different periods of history. Nevertheless, three important considerations must be noted in the context of studying tribes in the Arabian Peninsula. First, kinship and lineage remain critical to the tribes of the region, although to varying degrees (Tapper, 2009). Secondly, the shared mechanisms of settling disputes have always been important for the tribes of

the region. Thirdly, as Tapper (1990) highlights, it would be unrealistic to position the tribe at odds with the state or to claim that the tribe is opposed to the notion of modernity represented by the state, especially in the context of the Middle East, where the formation and the survival of the state has often hinged on its ability to deal with the tribes and to gain their approval and support. This view has also been echoed by Hudson (1977, pp. 56–57), who argued against the identification of the tribe as primordial in the Middle East, claiming that "it is too easy to assume that modernisation is performing an assimilationist melting-pot function in the area." As such, Dale Eickelman (2016, p. 226) argued that "tribes in the region have always co-existed with the state," and while their relationship may at times reflect a significant degree of conflict, this cannot be depicted as a conflict between the pre-modern and the modern society.

1.4 Tribalism and the State: Sociological and Political Theories

Before addressing the relationship between the tribe and the state, it is important to refer on the literature on the state, the processes of nation and state-building, the legitimacy of the state, and the relationship between society and the state in general. To start with, several perspectives exist on explaining the state, specifically the culturalist, rationalist and institutionalist views. The culturalist perspective based on the works of Geertz (1973, 1980) and Thompson (1974) perceives the state as theatre, where a country's politics reflect the design of its culture (Geertz, 1973). According to Migdal (2001, p. 239), "Modern states are made of multiple agencies and bureaus with widely different tasks and interests. The forces pulling them in different directions—regional demands, interest groups leverage, international pressures—are tremendous." According to the system-dominant structuralist perspective, the coherence of the state depends on its ability to follow its own interests. Interestingly, Goldstone (1991) attempted to provide an explanation for the reasons that lead to state failure based on this perspective, arguing that states "crack" when they face a financial crisis, when the elites in society are torn by divisions, and when the social and political environments in a society provide opportunities for popular groups to mobilise. However, this perspective as Migdal (2001) argues, suffers a fundamental weakness as it removes agency from the hands of the state and of society.

The institutionalist approach, on the other hand, focuses on the rational goals of leaders and institutions in the state to explain the institutional path of the state but pays little attention to the impact of culture (Migdal, 2001, p. 245). Moreover, Migdal (2001, p. 250) argues that while the modern state presents itself as the ultimate authority over society, in reality, this authority is often tempered or even fractured by the nature of encounters that the state has with different cultural and social forces in society. Migdal (2001, p. 251) also argues that the state in the twenty-first century has been fractured and embattled by globalisation, divisive ethnic conflicts, and the growing power of supranational entities, all of which have undermined the myths of national unity that states had previously claimed.

Likewise, Mitchell (2018, p. 81) argues that "The popular Weberian definition of the state, as an organisation that claims monopoly within a fixed territory over the legitimate use of violence, is only a residual characterisation," and that traditional state-centred approaches to defining state suffer a serious weakness as they perceive the state as an entity that is separate from society. The state, according to Mitchell

(2018, p. 95) is not a "freestanding entity" that is opposed to society as a separate entity, even if the distinction exists.

Two important processes that are relevant to the state as an entity are state formation and nation-building. State formation can be defined as a process by which states emerge in relation to societies, and this process may be influenced by the political, economic, cultural and historic conditions and circumstances that vary from one state to another (Bayart, 1993). Nation-building on the other hand can be defined as the deliberate processes and efforts by which a state attempts to unify the people and members of its society such that the country remains or becomes politically viable and stable in the long term, whether these processes involve reliance on national myths of imagined communities or the processes of building national institutions among others (Bendix, 1996; Anderson, 2006).

Both state formation and nation-building constitute critical processes in determining the stability of the state in the long term. However, another important factor is the ability of the state to maintain its legitimacy in the eyes of its own society. Lipset (1959, p. 86) defines legitimacy as "the capacity of a political system to engender and maintain the belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate or proper ones for the society." Legitimacy, moreover, is not constant and is subject to the changing relationship between the state and the components and actors that constitute its society. For example, state legitimacy is vulnerable to questioning, not as a result of the fragility of state institutions per se, but rather, as a result of the absence of constructive linkages between state institutions and society (Clements et al., 2007, pp. 50–51). To achieve legitimacy, states can pursue multiple strategies which according to Hudson (1977, p. 2) include symbol manipulation, providing economic benefits to the people, enhancing traditional patterns and state coercion.

The implication of mainstream Western political analysis suggests that the tribe is a social and political entity through which individuals develop and express a strong sense of identity, and in which they fulfil certain duties and obligations in return for collective benefits, such as security and better opportunities to achieve prosperity. This analysis, however, considers the tribe to be a traditional unit that is essentially opposed to or at conflict with the modern state and its ideology. Hobsbawm (1997), for example, suggested that conflict between traditional tribalism and modern nationalism is a fundamental factor in weakening and undermining state formation and statehood. Khoury and Kostiner (1990) expressed a similar view in their characterisation of the tribe as the major pre-modernist structure responsible for the inadequate formation and building of states in tribal regions, such as the Middle East. They attribute this to the fact that the hierarchical order of the tribe is fundamentally based on coalition and kinship, two variables that are too narrow and restricted to include other social units and groups in society within a modern state.

This approach, however, has been widely discussed and challenged by several political scientists and sociologists. For example, Tapper (2009) argued that there is no causal relationship between nomadism and the tribe as an organisation, and that no

universal features are shared among all tribal structures. Tribes can take many forms; for example, they may be based on pastoral economies or characterised by nomadic or semi-nomadic movements, whereas other characteristics may or may not involve organisation around descent and centralised chieftains. Hence, tribalism is a complex notion that cannot be limited to a single aspect, such as traditionalism or nomadism, because as globalisation theorist Paul James (2006) put it, tribalism defines the way of being for certain communities. Moreover, while kinship and coalitions may represent a prominent aspect of tribalism, the construct is far more complex and may encompass other variables, such as complex systems of reciprocal exchange, economic means of production, cultural values, and the implications of an identity.

In studying the relationship between tribalism and the modern state in the Middle East, Layne (1994) argued that placing the tribe at odds with the modern state tends to distort reality. More importantly, she opposed the notion which considers tribalism to be static, arguing instead that it is not only dynamic, but constantly changing and adapting. In Jordan, for example, she argued that the notion of homeland or nation is not undermined or weakened by tribalism or the existence of multiple tribal identities within the state, but rather that both homeland and nationalism are defined and reinforced by tribalism.

In this respect, Caton (1990) reflected on multiple models that attempt to explain the tribe-state relationship in several tribal communities, such as the Nuer studied by Evans-Pitchard (1940), the Atlas tribes studied by Gellner (1990), the Kababish studied by Asad (1970), and the tribes of Yemen (Phillips, 2011). In these cases, the state apparently needs the tribe to maintain social order, but at the same time, by exploiting the tribe in this manner, the state eventually undermines and weakens the foundations of the tribe as a social structure, possibly leading to chaos. Phillips (2011, pp. 49–50) concluded in her study of the relationship between the tribe and the state in Yemen that the state depends on the tribe to maintain order since it lacks a monopoly over public coercion, but at the same time, the relationship of patronage between the state and the tribal sheikhs eventually undermines the authority and legitimacy of the sheikhs, leading to their failure to attain order.

While seemingly radical, Layne's (1994) argument about the dynamic nature of tribalism and tribal identities, and the role that tribalism plays in reinforcing the sense of cohesion within a society is not new, nor is it limited to societies undergoing social and political transformation towards modern statehood, such as Jordan. French sociologist and post-modern philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard (1970) suggested that identities in post-modern societies are not only dynamic but also highly susceptible to modern mythology and meta-narrative, which are propagated through modern media, and ultimately define new meanings and values in life, as well as new traditions that are shared by certain members and groups in society. The tribe, therefore, seems to exist in both pre-modern and post-modern societies. The difference may merely be in the means of communication and the sources of myths and cultural values. Likewise, Barth (1969) argued that tribal or ethnic identities do not necessarily thrive and survive in

isolation, but are rather dynamic, even when they involve certain social processes of exclusion.

1.4.1 Tribalism and the State in the Arabian Peninsula

The survival of the monarchical Gulf states in their absolutist form is sometimes presented as an exceptional phenomenon in the modern world, resulting primarily from the interference of oil and the formation of rentier economies (Herb, 1999). This suggests that had it not been for the emergence of oil wealth, these states would not have been resilient or even capable of surviving the winds of change that have repeatedly swept through the region over the years (Herb, 1999, pp. 3–4). This view is in line with the hegemony analysis proposed by Ayubi (1995, p. 454), who applies a neo-Marxist theory to the state in the Middle East and argues that the ruling families in the Gulf are stable as a result of their oil-based economic autonomy from society. Yet, Ayubi further suggests that these states are weak because they lack Gramsci's elements of hegemony, and thus they lack the ability to develop a genuine political philosophy that propagates throughout society and manifests itself in the daily life of its citizens (Ayubi, 1995, p. 449).

Ayubi's analysis suggests that for all their strength, stability, and resilience, the monarchical states of the Gulf are structurally weak, and their assumed stability is attributed to the fact that their societies are significantly dependent on the state. In this context, three implications can be identified with respect to tribe and tribalism. First, while the tribe may still be relevant on the cultural and social levels, it is of little or declining relevance with respect to the state, partly because the state is autonomous from society, at least economically, and partly because the tribes and other components of society are substantially dependent on the state. Secondly, this view suggests that the weakness of the tribes vis-à-vis the state results in a fluid and dispersed social structure in which tribal affiliation and kinship are also weakened. However, this suggestion seems to ignore the ability of the ruling families in the Gulf to reinforce their legitimacy and develop extensive social and political alliances through marriage and tribal relations in society (Khuri, 1980, p. 9). The third implication is the suggestion that kinship and the cultural and political dimensions of the tribe are weakened to the point that they do not contribute to the political philosophy of the state. To the contrary, al-Naqeeb (1996, p. 21) argued that the process of state-building in the GCC region may have actually contributed to strengthening tribes and the traditional ways of political and social behaviour based on kinship and patronage rather than undermining them.

Peterson (2007), on the other hand, argued that the states in the Gulf have attained resilience and stability by harnessing the power of kinship. This resonates with Ibn Khaldun's (1978, p. 123) perspective on dynasties, specifically in the involvement

of ruling family members, not only in actually contributing to the process of government but also in expanding and reinforcing kinship through building ties with tribes through marriage and business relations. Hence, ruling family members are appointed to key and sensitive positions in the state and, on the social level, the ruling family extends its legitimacy and ability to gain loyalty through building alliances by kinship and intermarriage with other tribes. In this context, tribes manifest both weaknesses and strengths vis-à-vis the political system and the state. As Gellner (1990) points out, on the one hand, they enjoy strength and influence because they remain critical components for maintaining sociopolitical order in the system, but on the other hand, tribes have no control over the economy, security forces, or the military, which minimises their relevance and influence in the political system.

Overall, it seems that the classical characteristics of tribalism, specifically kinship, loyalty, and coalition, have all become institutionalised in the modern states of the Gulf region. As Herb (1999, p. 3) put it, the ruling families have transformed themselves into "ruling institutions," and this system not only includes the ruling family at the top of the hierarchy and at the critical junctions of the state but also the tribes, although in varying degrees. Likewise, Yom (2014) argued that the monarchies of the Gulf enjoy substantial legitimacy because of their ability to simultaneously combine traditional values, tribal practices, and religious leadership. The result is a mode of dynasticism in which the members of the ruling family are not only represented as heads of the state but also are active components in reinforcing the state and its institutions on the political, administrative, and social levels. In the latter sense, ruling family members play an important role in bringing the tribal fabric of society together in the process of expanding the tribal alliances and coalitions that prevent the emergence of any real resistance to its rule.

1.4.2 Tribes, Tribalism, and the State in Kuwait and Qatar

Many tribes of the Arabian Peninsula appear to share a common history and values, and even ancestry and blood ties. Moreover, the GCC states exhibit many similarities on the political, social, and economic levels, with respect to the status and role of the tribes and of tribalism in the formation of these states. It is not surprising, therefore, that the debate over tribalism and whether it contributes to or impedes state-building and modernisation has been raging in most Gulf countries since the 1960s and 1970s (al-Kandari, 2010). On the one hand, the tribe is presented as a social unit that is incompatible with modern statehood and the concept of citizenship, as it allegedly fuels divisiveness and undermines the loyalty of citizens to the state (Barakat, 1993, p. xii). On the other hand, tribalism is also touted as a cultural attribute and a source

of diversity that contributes to national and social cohesiveness in the Gulf states (Barakat, 1993, p. xii).

Despite these apparent structural, political, economic, and social similarities, and the fact that the debate over tribalism and its relation to statehood and state-building continues in both states, tribalism is not necessarily perceived in a similar manner. As this book reveals, subtle, yet significant differences in the recent histories, structures, and political economies of Kuwait and Qatar may have contributed to substantial differences in how these states perceive tribalism, in the nature of the relationship between the state and the tribe, and in the political implications of the state policy towards tribes and tribalism.[1]

Kuwait and Qatar recognised naturalisation and citizenship rights a decade apart, the former in 1920 and the latter in 1930. In both cases, many who arrived after these cutoff dates were perceived by Hadhar (the traditional merchant families) as Bedouin, which is a blurry classification rather than an objective distinction. For example, many Bedouins were not nomadic in their lifestyle and often shared the same ways of life as the Hadhar, as well as their values and lifestyles. However, the term Bedouin is specifically used in reference to the tribal families that arrived after the cutoff dates, in a way affirming their lower social status vis-à-vis the Hadhar. In fact, many of the Hadhar and Bedouin families descend from the same tribe, although from different clans, whereby one clan may have settled earlier than the cutoff date, hence becoming recognised as Hadhar, while their kin from another clan arrived are recognised as Bedouin merely because they arrived after the cutoff date. According to Cole (2003, p. 262), a clan constitutes of several lineages sharing a common ancestor, whereas a tribe often constitutes of multiple clans. Moreover, while one belongs to a tribe, most of the everyday life affairs are conducted at the clan level.

It is worth mentioning, moreover, that many of those who were unable to prove their permanent residence prior to the cutoff dates could have failed to do so merely as a result of negligence, ignorance of the procedures, or other factors (al-Nakib, 2014). It is not surprising, therefore, that many Hadhar and Bedouins in Kuwait, for example, could be first-degree relatives who share similar kinship and lineage (al-Nakib, 2016, p. 26). Another significant category that is worth noting in this respect is the stateless, also known as the Bidoun (meaning "without" or "without nationality"), many of whom are tribal groups with affiliations to "Northern tribes" (Parolin, 2009; al-Ghabra, 2014; Fisher, 2015; Beaugrand, 2018). According to Beaugrand, Northern tribes are "the tribes roaming the desert of Hamad, Hajara and the Syrian Jazira, whose territory stretched into the south, in the desert of Najd and Qasim in what is now Saudi Arabia." (Beaugrand, 2018, p. 4). Many of the Bidouns have probably been denied citizenship,

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[1] It is worth mentioning that figures on the demographic structure and the demographic representation of tribes in Kuwait and Qatar are highly confidential. This is particularly the case in Qatar where an official at the Qatar Planning and Statistics Authority vehemently refused to provide any figures under the pretext that such data cannot be shared with the public. This issue is considered a highly sensitive political subject in both countries.

not because of their inability to prove permanent residence in Kuwait, but more as a result of their questioned political loyalty (Beaugrand, 2018, p. 31). The Bidoun situation is not limited to Kuwait, where their population is estimated at 93,000, but applies to Qatar as well, which has an estimated population of 1200 Bidouns (Fisher, 2015, p. 2).

In contrast, the tribes that migrated from the mainland Arabian Peninsula in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries seem to have been more welcomed by the state in Kuwait and were eventually naturalised and granted Kuwaiti citizenship. The state also welcomed the Bedouin tribes through naturalisation under the 1959–1960 laws to ensure their political support and to keep the merchant class in check (Herb, 2016). Moreover, prominent members of these tribes were also staffed in the public sector and in the military and security apparatuses, especially given their unwavering loyalty to the ruling emir. In addition to this, the Bedouin tribes were accommodated in the urban outskirts and enclaves around the city and were even encouraged to be political players in the Parliament as a means to undermine any opposition to the emir (Crystal, 1989).

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Hadhar of Kuwait often looked down on the Bedouins with suspicion (al-Nakib, 2016, p. 28). They were, after all, major actors in ensuring that the merchant class could never regain the political power that it had once enjoyed for centuries before oil was discovered (al-Nakib, 2016, p. 142). Accordingly, the accusations frequently made by the Hadhar that the state in Kuwait favoured the tribes and encouraged tribalism as a means of dividing and conquering, and to prevent the rise of any real opposition to the ruling family, were understandable (Longva, 2006).

In Qatar, the Bedouin tribes were also welcomed by the state, although in a different context. To start with, given the continuous population movements that characterised Qatar in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Al Thani were not a ruling family among peers (Rahman, 2005, pp. 8–9). Rather, they were a dominant tribe with a significantly large population which enjoyed political clout through alliances and marriage with other tribes. More importantly, while the ruling family of Qatar suffered economic and financial challenges in the pre-oil era, its members were economically active and to a great extent autonomous from the relatively small and weak merchant class (Anthony & Hearty, 2002). Moreover, while the ruling family enjoyed full economic independence with the discovery of oil, new tribal alliances were formed, paving the road for prominent tribal members to play a far more influential role in society, through economic influence and the opportunity to expand wealth. On the political level, however, the Al Thani family maintained almost full control of the state and its most sensitive positions, which suppressed or discouraged any challenge to their authority by other clans (Crystal, 1989, p. 428).

The dimensions of political alliances and political economy highlight a significant difference in how tribalism is perceived in Kuwait and Qatar. In Kuwait, the divide between the Hadhar and Bedouins can be understood in the context that tribalism was possibly encouraged by the state, at least in the early period of state-building

that followed independence, partly to reinforce the political position and status of the ruling family, and partly to undermine the political position of the traditional merchant class (al-Ghabra, 2014). It is also in this context that the merchant class and the Hadhar in Kuwait have perceived the tribal groups, to which they refer as Bedouins, with suspicion and unease. The latter were welcomed as loyal supporters to the ruling family as the social contract between the ruling family and the traditional merchant class and Hadhar had witnessed rapid transformation following the discovery of oil (al-Ghabra, 2014).

In Qatar, tribalism does not seem to be have been perceived through this problematic prism by the traditional merchant class. In part, this is attributed to the recent history of demographic and population movements in Qatar, the weakness of the merchant class on the political and economic levels, and the dominant power of the Al Thani ruling family, despite the fact that the arrival of the ruling family in Qatar is far more recent in comparison to the arrival of the Al Sabah family in Kuwait.

The policies of the state toward the tribe and tribalism in Qatar and Kuwait in the decades that followed independence have left significant marks on processes such as state-building and on the outcomes of these processes today. According to Longva (2006), the tribe has been at the centre of state-building in the Gulf countries, specifically through a process she refers to as the nationalisation of the tribe. In Kuwait, the state welcomed and empowered Bedouin tribes by naturalising them, providing them with accommodation around Kuwait City, and by assigning them to the most important and sensitive posts in the public sector as well as in the military and security forces. In one way or another, the integration of the tribe was thus part and parcel of the process of state-building. However, al-Nakib (2014) argued that the state's strategies for the integration of tribes in Kuwait were not necessarily effective, especially in the long term. While the role the Bedouin tribes played in supporting the ruling family was effective in the 1970s and 1980s, by the 1990s, these tribes had begun to shift their support to the opposition. Although they had been integrated into Kuwait society, their movement to the opposition was an expression of their discontent with their status, a demand for more rights, and an attempt to access more resources in society.

The failure may have been in the integration process itself. For example, one of the ways in which the tribes were integrated was through providing them with accommodation around the city, but decades later, this strategy has resulted in creating overcrowded neighbourhoods that suffer substandard infrastructure and which marginalise resident communities (al-Nakib, 2014). Hence, what was acceptable for these tribes in the 1950s and 1960s was no longer so in the 1980s and 1990s. Accordingly, the revival and rise of tribalism in Kuwait may not only be about cultural identity and political participation alone, but may reflect the demand for more rights associated with citizenship.

In Qatar, the revival of tribalism is also noticeable despite the differences in circumstances. For example, while the demand for political participation in Kuwait has

contributed to fuelling tribal sentiments and demands for representation, this was far from being the case in Qatar until 2021, when the first Shura Council elections were held. However, as Fromherz (2012, p. 7) pointed out, the tribes in the Qatari context are not limited to the Bedouin tribes, but refer to one's family or extended tribe, as "the fundamental determinant of an individual Qatari's social position and future." Hence, the revival of tribalism can be perceived as the means through which individuals not only seek access to resources in the system, but, most importantly, social prestige, which is made possible by the opportunity to climb the social ladder and attain some degree of power.

1.5 Significance and Contribution

The revival of tribalism in the GCC countries, including Qatar and Kuwait, is manifested in the intensified expression and celebration of tribal identities, the heightened awareness of tribal identities, and occasionally in the form of social, political, and economic conflict and/or cooperation along tribal lines. More importantly, while most GCC countries have embraced the revival of tribalism as a form of cultural diversity and as a means of connectedness to shared history and national identity, in many cases, the GCC states have not yet decided how the revival of tribalism should be perceived and addressed. In fact, some governments perceive the revival of and rising tribalism as a major setback to the processes of nation- and state-building, especially in light of the radical ethnic, tribal, religious, and sectarian sentiments that have swept through the region since 1990. Other governments perceive this phenomenon as a strategic tool for surviving, negotiating and accommodating between state and society in the light of unprecedented sociopolitical changes and developments.

Thus, it is important to identify the extent to which the role and status of tribes today differ from what they it to be in the early decades that followed independence. The use of the term "revival" in this research does not in any way imply that tribalism had disappeared at any point in the past. Rather, it refers to the strength and intensity of tribalism in contrast to the early post-independence period in the 1970s and 1980s when tribalism was looked down at as primordial and opposed to modernisation. Although the tribal structure has always existed, the renewed intensity of tribalism is taking on many complex forms of interaction and exchange between the states and society. Thus, unlike the 1970s and 1980s when tribal affiliation was increasingly ignored and berated, since the 1990s, it has been regaining its importance and relevance as a significant factor in the decisions of young and educated citizens, even in matters such as selecting their future spouses. On a broader level, the rising intensity of tribalism is also seen in national events, such as the National Day celebrations and elections in Qatar, both representing opportunities for tribes to engage in heated contests to assert their identities, lineages, and distinction from other tribes and social groups. However, the revival of tribalism is not limited to these symbolic and social expressions. It also seems to be part of a process of institutionalisation, especially within the major tribes, in which tribal "consultation councils" promote the identities and interests of tribe members, much like the way in political parties and interest groups tend to function.

In the 1990s, multiple seminal works were published on the relationship between the tribe and the state in the Gulf. For example, one of the most notable works is Jill Crystal's book *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and*

Qatar in the 1990s in which she presented an insightful discussion on Gulf rentier states and the shifting power between the state and merchants in Kuwait and Qatar. Another valuable contribution at the time was Michael Herb's *All in the Family* which provides a useful analytical framework to the understanding of politics in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states and also offers alternatives to reinter economy theory as he argues for placing monarchism as a political institution at the centre of any explanation of Gulf politics. Since the 1990s, however, there have been very few valuable contributions to the comparative literature on GCC states concerning the tribe and tribalism or the relationship between the tribe and the state. A few other works have also addressed relevant issues such as state formation and state-society relations such as *The Merchants* by Michael Field which focuses on the shifting historical fortunes of major Gulf merchant families; Rosemarie Zahlan's *Making of the Modern Gulf States* which constitutes a compact historical summary of state creation in the GCC monarchies although it falls short on discussing structural developments; and Steffen Hertog's *Princes, Brokers and Bureaucrats* which provides a historical account on the formation of bureaucratic structures and the resulting shifts in state-society relations in Saudi Arabia.

It must also be noted that many previous works in the literature have focused on the impact of oil on tribes and the state as well as on state-society, discussing social, economic and urban transformations, while others have focused on either the transformation in the relationship between rulers and merchants or the survival of monarchic regimes. However, the interrelationship between the political system and the tribe has received little or no attention at all. Moreover, the revival or reawakening of tribalism has also been ignored in recent studies despite its growing intensity since the 1990s. Interestingly, there have been a few useful works published in recent years that cover the relationship between state and tribe, although outside the Gulf region. Most notable in this respect is the work of Lisa Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya: 1830–1980*, in which she analyses the impact of state penetration in these two countries during the pre-colonial Ottoman era, which resulted in undermining kinship and tribal ties, replacing them with networks of clientelism (Anderson, 1986, p. 95). Anderson's analysis echoes similar developments in the relationship between the state and tribe in the early years following independence in Qatar and Kuwait where the state replaced the tribe as the provider of economic, social and other services to the public, but it does not offer any insights on the revival of tribalism as it is seen today. A similarly valuable work is Peter Evans' *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation* in which he argues that development is undermined by the scarcity of bureaucracy rather than by its prevalence and where he defined embeddedness as "a concrete set of connections that link the state intimately and aggressively to particular social groups with whom the state shares a joint project of transformations" (Evans, 1995, p. l59), thus setting up a promising framework for the study of the dynamic relationship between the state and the tribe and other components of society.

Given the limited studies and analyses of the dynamic relationship between state and tribes in the GCC and the lack of literature to explain the factors contributing to the reawakening of tribalism in the region, this book attempts to address this gap, specifically by focusing on the following dimensions:

- Tracing and illustrating the ways in which tribe and tribalism have been deployed and redeployed to meet political and social projects.

- Analysing the factors contributing to the intense revival of tribalism in the context of strong centralised states rather than weak or failing states, an issue that, to the researcher's knowledge, has not been covered by the literature before.

- The role and impact of tribalism on state legitimacy and on the process of nation-building have been well-studied. However, the impact of the revival of tribalism remains understudied in states which are supposed to be highly centralised and where the nation does not seem contested, such as Qatar and Kuwait. This study will shed light on this new phenomenon and on its implications for state legitimacy as well as on the processes of nation- and state-building.

1.6 Research Methods

Research is greatly facilitated by the selection and use of a good methodology. However, the biggest challenge that most researchers face is identifying an appropriate and effective methodology that will enable them to achieve their research goals. In the field of political sociology, researchers face many different challenges. One major issue they face is in identifying and knowing their position in dealing with human behaviour on the individual and social levels. Human behaviours and interactions are not always easy to predict, identify, explain, and verify, not to mention that they are subject to change. Change can happen abruptly or over a long period of time, for reasons that may be obvious or vague and mysterious. In addition, researchers in a specific field often deal with controversial issues. One such issue pertains to the revival of tribalism in countries of the Arabian Peninsula, which presents a number of immediate challenges. Addressing the issue of the revival of tribalism was challenging in itself, as this subject has not been widely studied or documented. In fact, as far as the GCC countries and societies are concerned, the revival of tribalism has only recently been highlighted, mostly in the media, and by a few analysts and researchers, amidst general controversy in relation to the definition, scope, and impact of this phenomenon.

1.6.1 Author's Positionality

As a Qatari woman conducting research in two Gulf countries, I had to pay special attention to my positionality on the subject that I am studying and its relevant issues. This is particularly true since I am a woman who comes from one of the biggest tribes in Qatar. Additionally, I was also aware of the need to maintain my objectivity while investigating the history and the relationship between the tribe and the state, especially when taking into consideration that the subject of the study is on the revival of tribalism and tribal fervour. Hence, a major challenge that I went through as I conducted my research and completed this book was not only to maintain my objectivity, but also to act as an impartial observer and to put aside any stereotypes or pre-existing notions that I might have had as a citizen and a member of a tribe.

On the other hand, as a woman, I was also aware that my ability to collect data and to conduct interviews was compromised for two reasons. The first is my gender, which immediately meant that I had to face many traditional restrictions in contacting and interviewing males, not to mention the restrictions on attending men's groups and majlis. While I was able to overcome these difficulties by employing the help and

support of family and friends who facilitated the interviews at several majlis councils, I still had to be careful not to cross social barriers regarding communication, the limitation on insisting on answers, or the questioning of inconsistencies if any, in the information given by an interviewee. Meanwhile, I also had to put aside my worldview as a woman and to keep the focus on the subject matter. Yet, while my gender was at times an impediment, at others, it actually allowed me to have quick and direct access to female interviewees who were forthcoming and fully supportive once I was successful in building rapport with them.

Another issue that I was aware would have an impact on my positionality was the so-called Khawaja complex, that is, the superior foreigner complex. In Qatar, a local researcher, let alone a woman, is associated with a negative stereotype because of the prevailing belief that foreign researchers, especially those from European or Western origin, are more competent. Hence, I had to maintain the highest level of earnestness and professionalism in my appearance and demeanour, and asserting mutual respect with the individuals I interviewed.

Interestingly, when I returned in Qatar in 2017, and although I had been out of the country for less than two years, I felt like a foreigner. People were stressed out over the GCC crisis and the fears concerning an impending Saudi invasion, and the concern that the whole state of Qatar was facing an existential threat. Having been away during the whole period when the crisis erupted, I faced difficulty in relating to the anxieties and fears expressed by others, that is, until I started listening to people more carefully, especially before starting the interviews. For example, I realised that several interviewees wanted to talk about the crisis and to discuss it as part of their answers despite the fact that this subject was not relevant to the research, and I had no choice but to respect their will.

In addition to all this, I had to take into consideration that when interviewing individuals who belonged to tribes other than mine, they would be reluctant to speak out openly about their experiences or to express their views. To overcome this hurdle, I had to make it clear from the very beginning that my study was academic in nature at a foreign university, and to make my interviewees feel comfortable that I maintained an objective position with respect to the questions and topic.

Ironically, things were much easier in Kuwait with respect to addressing issues pertaining to my positionality. To start with, I had almost no knowledge of tribal politics and dynamics whatsoever, and more importantly, in the eyes of my interviewees, I was simply the friendly and oblivious outsider who knew nothing and who had no stake in any issues. As a result, maintaining my objectivity was much easier because I was simply curious to know. At the same time, people were much more willing to open up and speak out without any reservations because they saw me as a harmless outsider, and they were more generous with details because they wanted me to have a full understanding of the context. Still, I was fully aware of the fact that I had to leave any beliefs and expectations that may be related to Qatari tribes. I trained myself

carefully to treat Kuwait as a completely foreign country, even pretending that I had never been to the Gulf before.

All in all, I think I had a successful experience in managing my positionality and in making sure that whatever thoughts, beliefs, and previous experiences I had before starting the study, had no implications on my work, whether in making assumptions, in conducting the interviews, or in collecting data.

1.6.2 Case Type, Scope, and Boundaries

The main purpose of this comparative study is to develop an in-depth understanding of a specific phenomenon in two different contexts, Qatar and Kuwait. In other words, its aim is to study the phenomenon in both contexts and to identify the similarities and differences in these two contexts, and to reflect on the potential causes and factors that may be responsible for such similarities and differences.

Furthermore, the comparative case study in this context is limited to a number of specific boundaries. The first set of boundaries relates to interrelationship between the political system and society in Qatar and Kuwait, although it is possible to refer to other systems and societies in other countries. Secondly, the cases under investigation are limited in terms of time, since they cover a specific period of history from the turn of the twentieth century to the present, that is, the period before and after state's independence, with specific emphasis on the period after the 1990s as the turning point. This latter period witnessed a significant and rapid revival of tribalism, during which the tribe started to regain its relevance, and sometimes its social and political power, although often on the basis of a new understanding of the tribe.

On the other hand, there are no strict limitations on the nature or type of variables and factors that the case covers during the investigation of the phenomenon at hand. For example, while cultural factors are the most important factors contributing to the rise of tribalism, other types of factors are involved, including the political and social ones, which also contribute to understanding the phenomenon.

The researcher's choice to opt for a comparative study is justified by multiple factors. To start with, politicians, intellectuals, journalists and even citizens have been complaining about the rising intensity of tribal division in different Gulf countries. Yet, the intense revival of tribalism remains a new phenomenon that has not been studied and that is still subject to debate. What is evident, however, is that it is taking place all over the Gulf region. At the same time, while tribes and the context in which they have emerged and evolved in the region seem to share many common characteristics on the surface, they also reflect fundamental differences at those levels which further complicates the efforts to develop a framework to study and understand tribes and tribalism in the region. One possible solution to overcome these complications is to use a comparative approach where the researcher compares two or more cases that

have some level of similarity, which allows to compare the similarities and contrast the differences, hence the choice of Qatar and Kuwait for the study.

Other factors were also involved and instrumental in making the choice of a comparative approach focused on Kuwait and Qatar. First, as a Qatari citizen who is very concerned by and interested in the process of tribal revival and its manifestations, I found this subject highly significant and relevant on a personal level. At the same time, while Qatar and Kuwait share many similarities in a number of areas, such as their small population size, demographics, and tribal structures, the two countries also have significant differences, which will contribute to enriching the study. For example, while Kuwait has experienced significant democratisation over the years, Qatar has undergone minimal political reforms of this nature. Yet, tribal revival seems to be strongly evident in both societies. This implies that tribal revival is not the result of the slow pace or limited scope of political reforms in the GCC countries.

Additionally, while Kuwait and Qatar share a number of common attributes, they also stand in contrast to their much bigger and more densely populated neighbour, Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the tribes and ruling families in both countries share another attribute, namely their migration from the mainland Arabian Peninsula. Even on the economic level, the two states are characterised by a number of similar characteristics. For example, both relied heavily on the pearling industry until its collapse in the late 1930s (Anthony & Hearty, 2002, pp. 129–130). Eventually, both states shifted to resource-based economies, with Kuwait relying on oil while Qatar relied first on oil and later on natural gas. On top of this, both states are characterised by very small indigenous populations relative to the massive numbers of foreign expatriates and workers residing in their territories (Al-Shehabi, 2015b).

Given the scarcity of published literature on the subject, the diversity of available definitions and views, and the high relevance of context, a case study seemed to be the most appropriate approach, specifically a comparative one. According to Yin (2004, p. 13), the case study approach is an appropriate choice when context is highly relevant and when the phenomenon is contemporary and embedded in a real-life context. More importantly, when multiple case studies are involved in the designed case study, this allows the researcher to conduct cross-national comparisons or to draw conclusions on the same phenomenon as it is manifested in more than one country or region.

Similarly, Ritchie, Lewis and Elam (2006, pp. 82–83) underscore the importance of the case study approach when the researcher is investigating a phenomenon on which multiple and diverse perspectives exist. They further argue that this approach permits the researcher to study complex social phenomena and to "unpack meanings" that may or may not be immediately evident, to draw new ideas, to expand existing concepts and to develop the relevant theories. Likewise, Ponelis (2015) argues that a case study allows the researcher to build or test theory, or to do both at the same time, hence engaging both in inductive and deductive methods simultaneously. Therefore, the use of a comparative approach in a case study design contributes to enriching the researcher's ability to investigate the phenomenon from multiple perspectives.

Yin (2004) also highlighted the advantage of using multiple cases in a case study, but pointed out the need for caution when selecting the cases. Still, it is possible to select cases that are very similar to confirm findings or those which are apparently very different to study the phenomenon from various angles. In this case, Kuwait and Qatar share a number of similarities. For example, they are both small countries with small populations; they both have deeply rooted and visible tribal communities; they are both ruled by ruling families that have established their legitimacy through kinship and tribal ties; and both countries have witnessed an intense revival of tribalism. At the same time, the two countries are different in a number of ways. For example, Kuwait has a history of parliamentary democracy and elections whereas Qatar lacks such institutions and experience; and the trajectories of state-building were different in the two countries. Hence, the purpose of this comparative approach is to study the revival of tribalism in the Gulf region by understanding the factors contributing to and fuelling this phenomenon in two countries that share several similarities but are also different in other ways. This offers the researcher the opportunity to develop more insights and a better understanding of the phenomenon, its underlying causes, and its manifestations, which in turn is useful when attempting to derive conclusions about the phenomenon under study.

1.6.3 Data Collection

The phenomenon of the rise of tribalism may be associated with a wide variety of behaviours and activities that may not necessarily be documented in a formal or even in an informal way. Thus, extensive fieldwork was conducted intermittently from October 2017 until April 2019, divided roughly into two months in each country and during which I relied on interviews and personal observations. Interviews enable the researcher to seek data from a variety of experts or subjects involved directly or indirectly in the phenomenon under study.

Interviews are an important method of data collection in case studies, especially as they enable researchers to access the insights and perspectives of experts or individuals who may be involved directly or indirectly in the phenomenon under study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001, p. 267) for example argue that interviews "enable participants to discuss their interpretation of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view." This is highly relevant when investigating a phenomenon that is highly contextual and embedded in culture as well as in perceptions and behaviours. Two categories of interviewees were recruited for this study based on the type of data sources needed. The first category constituted academic researchers and Gulf experts from relevant fields such as sociology, political science, and Gulf history. The second category included individuals who were directly involved in the phenomenon under investigation such as tribe members, individuals associated with tribal groups and activities, politicians and cabinet members, parlia-

ment members, students, and tribal sheikhs and chiefs. The purpose of interviewing these individuals is to gain access to their unique insights on relevant issues and to explore the potential motives, if any, that may be motivating them to fuel the revival of tribalism.

It is also worth mentioning that interviews were conducted either in English or in Arabic, and they were all face-to-face interviews. All interviews were conducted after acquiring verbal approval from the interviewees. The researcher avoided asking for a written approval because in the cultural context, individuals tend to be reluctant to speak freely upon signing written forms.

In all, a total of 55 interviews were conducted between October 2017 and December 2019. Of these, 28 interviews took place in Qatar, including with a tribal sheikh, a judge, professors of sociology and political science, female members of a tribe, a former member of the Shura Council, and a number of scholars, democracy activists, and university officials, mainly at Qatar University and Hamad bin Khalifa University. 27 interviews were conducted in Kuwait with several political science, media, and history professors, historians, political activists, a prominent TV presenter, history students at Kuwait University, several individuals with pronounced tribal affiliations, and a former Parliament member who was known for his tribal affiliation and who had been jailed on the basis of "threatening the political order."

The interviews focused on the perceptions of the interviewees on the following issues:

- The relationship between the tribe and the modern state.

- How the role of the tribe has changed since independence vis-à-vis the state.

- The tribe as an alternative to political parties, and the extent to which it is used for political representation or participation.

- The relationship between tribal identities, national identities, and citizenship.

- The role of the state in tribal revival and how it is responding to it.

- The impact of tribal revival on the state, individuals, and women.

I began my first fieldwork experience in October 2017, starting in Kuwait, and I was able to obtain appointments with several high-profile subjects who were willing to provide considerable information and fundamental insights concerning the research. At the beginning, I thought it would be a rough and challenging experience, as I was not familiar with the country and did not have a network of family members and friends in Kuwait. However, I was able to locate participants, with the valuable assistance of my supervisor, whose help and support greatly facilitated the contact and relationships with them. Another important factor which boosted my fieldwork efforts was that participants were willing to engage in interviews, expressing generosity,

support, eagerness to share information, and openness in sharing their stories and opinions.

I also attended several sociopolitical events and ceremonies, including two weddings, Kuwait University students' union elections, and a liberal movement gathering. I began interviewing participants on a regular basis and interacting with several prominent figures in the country, such as tribal members, political activists, members of Parliament, and professors of sociology, media, history, and political science. One of the most important experiences I had during this period was visiting a male diwaniyya, which, as a Qatari woman, I had never experienced before. I was surprised when one of the interviewee's friends invited me to attend their daily gathering. As a woman, it was very challenging to interact with men from the Bedouin and Hadhar tribes. However, despite the short visit, I was able to complete several interesting interviews, which provided me with a rich understanding of different perspectives. I was impressed by the degree of transparency and freedom of speech the men in this group had towards the issues.

After three weeks in Kuwait, I travelled to Qatar for my second fieldwork experience. Despite the fact that I had prepared myself for it, it was very challenging because of the ongoing GCC crisis and embargo, and it was difficult to interview people during this politically charged and sensitive period. This crisis had started on June 5, 2017, when Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE and Egypt formed a hostile coalition, severed their diplomatic ties with Qatar, and imposed an embargo on land borders and airspace. This was a highly tense period for most Qataris, especially as propaganda from the coalition pictured Qatar as a hostile neighbour and spread rumours about a possible military invasion. There were also real fears about serious economic repercussions since Qatar was cut off from the GCC market and its ability to import goods and food products was undermined. On top of this, there were fears that Saudi Arabia would attempt to instigate tribal tensions and divisions as it had done in the 1990s by inciting tribal groups that belong to bigger tribes that extend into Saudi Arabia, such as al-Ghufran tribe (al-Kuwari, 2019, p. 45).

However, as a member of Qatar University, I was able to begin interviewing members of academia from Qatar University and the Qatar Foundation who provided valuable help in organising and scheduling interviews. Moreover, I used my family and friend connections, which was instrumental for gaining the confidence of participants, especially since Qatar is a small country and social reputation and status are highly important. My father and uncle are well-connected among the tribesmen through business and intermarriage, and this enabled me to interview tribal sheikhs and tribesmen. Besides the interviews, I observed and participated in the National Day celebrations of 2017 and 2018, which were different from previous National Day celebrations as the tribal ceremonies were permanently cancelled by the government following the embargo imposed on Qatar in 2017, possibly to calm tribal divisions and to fortify national unity.

In December 2018, I started the second phase of my fieldwork, this time beginning in Qatar. I observed Qatar's 2018 National Day celebration and noticed the militarised nationalism which the state promoted among citizens to enhance social cohesion by displaying military symbols through parades, public speeches, and clothing. Besides attending the National Day ceremony, I was able to attend and observe three weddings as well as the local musical performance known Shila which is traditionally played at weddings. The Shila is a traditional Nabati poetry that has been performed for centuries by the Bedouin tribes of Arabia and which is highly valued as an instrument of expressing and boasting tribal identities and affiliations.

In December 2019, I visited Kuwait for a second fieldwork and I was fortunate to directly observe university elections. My involvement with the students was very productive and provided me with an excellent overview of how individuals interacted and participated through the process of elections, especially since I had not had the chance to observe the major parliamentary elections in 2016. Along with the interviews, including one with a Kuwait University professor and his wife with whom I had a fruitful conversation about elections, marriage, tribalism, and the role of women, I was able to attend two weddings in Kuwait, which offered me the opportunity to interact with young tribal women and to understand their perspectives on the research topics, especially marriage. In the last week of my visit, I had the most exciting experience of visiting a women's diwaniyya and listening to the heated and vibrant discussions. I spent a fruitful time exploring the diverse perspectives of daughters, mothers, and grandmothers of various (Hadhar and Bedouin) backgrounds, as well as the evolving habits and traditions in society in relation to gender differences. Those conversations enabled me to reflect on how tribal cultures and traditions (or tribal inheritance in general) reproduce themselves and flourish in modern GCC societies.

In April 2019, I decided to return to Qatar and observe the 2019 municipal election campaigns. Fewer participants were involved in these elections in contrast to 2015. This may be explained by the fact that, following the blockade in 2017, people were far more concerned by the ongoing crisis and less so by elections. Consequently, only 800 candidates ran for election, and the electoral campaigns were mostly conducted online and on smartphones. Traditional forms of communication and physical interaction between the candidates and citizens were therefore minimal. During the electoral campaigns, I was able to interview a few candidates and citizens, concluding my fieldwork with the realisation that the Central Municipal Council has made no significant progress since 1999.

There generally is a lack of documents or documentation related to the phenomenon of the revival of tribalism in Qatar and Kuwait—probably because of the sensitivity of this subject. However, I collected recently published documents, reports, and academic papers on tribes and tribalism (in Arabic and English), namely government reports that cover demographic patterns and tribal activities. Also, informal documents relating to the activities or status of some tribes have been collected.

I have gathered primary source material in Kuwait during visits to the National Library of Kuwait, Kuwait University Library, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyya organisation, Kuwait Financial Centre (Markaz), and Ibtkar Strategic Consultancy; and, in Qatar, at the Qatar National Library, Qatar University Library, Qatar's Ministry of Education, and Qatar's Ministry of Development, Planning and Statistics. Although these resources provided important documents, I found a substantial number of more important documents and reports at the British National Archives and Kew Gardens Archive, as well as the Old Library at the University of Exeter, which included historical facts and information about the tribes in Qatar and Kuwait.

Many of the materials relating to tribes and tribalism have been produced in audio-visual format, especially as documentaries and television programmes broadcast by the national media, websites, blogs, and other social media, which can be accessed through public and commercial archives, both online and in libraries. These documents have been extremely useful.

1.7 Book Structure

This book is divided into six core chapters. Immediately following the introduction to this work, the second chapter explains the relationship between the tribe and the emergence of the modern state in Kuwait and Qatar and identifies the geopolitical and tribal factors that contributed to the rise of the ruling families in these two states. In Chap. 3, the discussion focuses on the transformation of the state-society relationship with the discovery of oil and the flow of oil revenues, a development that significantly tilted the power dynamic in favour of the ruling families, even to the point of redefining the nature of the relationship between the ruling family and other political, economic and social actors in society. Chapter 3 also discusses the major challenges to the power of the ruling families in both countries during the 1950s and 1960s, especially the rise of Arab nationalism which undermined the legitimacy of the ruling families and ultimately led to the efforts to exploit the Bedouin tribes to attain political gains and undermine the opposition in Kuwait.

In Chap. 4, the emphasis is on mapping the political scene in Kuwait and Qatar after the failure of Arab nationalism and the position of tribal elements within this context. The chapter also discusses the divide-and-conquer strategies applied by ruling families to exploit tribalism to their advantage, which in turn led to detrimental consequences on nation-building and national identity, citizenship and naturalisation policies. Chapter 5, on the other hand, discusses the dynamic and consequences of the effort made by states to instrumentalise tribalism, especially following the invasion of Kuwait and the attempted coup in Qatar, and the strategies applied by both states to contain or appease tribalism as a potential threat to national unity or political stability, whether through electoral laws in Kuwait. Chapter 6 discusses the impact of the revival of tribalism and its growing intensity on everyday lives, especially the lives of women in Kuwait and Qatar, and the extent to which tribes have reasserted and expanded their role as an influential social actor. Finally, the conclusion restates the findings and reflects on the political and social outlooks in Kuwait and Qatar as the tribe asserts itself as a conservative force at a time when the new generations of citizens insist on being heard, seen and represented.

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My Tribe, My Nation, My World
02 January 2025

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