

Axes of Connection and Intersectionality in the Saudi-Kuwaiti Relations in the Era of Al Sabah and Al Sa‘ud

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Abstract:

Research studies on the interdependence of nations highlight the presence of axes or factors that unify nations and lead to cooperation and agreement. Examples of the factors include historical and economic powers, internal and external threats, psychological features, shared interests, and political systems. In terms of the Saudi-Kuwait relations, several unifying links vary in type and effect (direct and indirect) and espouse strategic and geopolitical dimensions that relate to the regional security systems and futures of both nations. To proceed with the discussion, this article will examine the direct factors that intersect to consolidate the Saudi-Kuwaiti relations, such as language, religion, origins, history, demographic composition, and geographical location. It also aims to underline the influential role of those factors in accelerating the process of development that has brought prosperity to both countries. This presents a good example to be followed by other countries to build international peace and cooperation and emphasises the importance of preserving those links for the welfare of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Keywords: Saudi-Kuwaiti relations, axes, intersectionality, unity, history, cooperation.

1-Introduction:

For many historians, the reign of Al Sabah family in Kuwait has coincided with the establishment of the first Saudi State. However, it is possible to analyse the nature of the Saudi-Kuwaiti relations since the independence of Kuwait in 1961. Because the ultimate goal of their foreign policy is to fulfil national interests, both countries act in accordance with the axes or links that connect them. Those links intersect at many levels and can be traced back to hundreds of years. Besides, they are best understood in their historical context that has evolved since the establishment of both countries many centuries ago. Therefore, this article examines the unifying axes from ahistorical, political, and social perspective and argues that they create coherent, interconnected patterns of communication within a solid framework of national cooperation and agreement. Regarding the historical dimension of the Saudi-Kuwait relations, that is central to the argument, it focuses on the presence of seven links, namely land and origin, language, religion, common history and one destiny, neighbourhood, and brotherhood. They strengthen the fraternal bonds between Saudi and Kuwaiti peoples and contribute to the preservation of international peace and security.

2-The Unity of Land and Origin:

The unity of the land is represented in the Arabian Peninsula, particularly between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. It refers not only to a contiguous land shared by both countries but also to a whole area that, along with the countries of the Arabian Peninsula, is not divided by natural or industrial obstacles.¹ This makes it easy for Saudi and Kuwaiti peoples to move around and communicate (e.g., to exchange goods). Besides, it unifies both nations in ties of kinship that help to bridge differences and conflicts.

Of importance is that the unity of land goes beyond the geographical dimension to include a cultural one that is integral to the structure of both societies. In other words, the geographical element has integrated nomadic and urban lifestyles due to climate and topographical similarities. This accelerates the process of cultural melting and shared political

¹-Taha Saiyyd Ibrahim Al-Dasuqi, Majlis Al-Ta'awn Al-Khaliji: Dirasa Qanuniyya Tahliliyyafi daw' Al-Qawa'id Al-'Amma li-l-Munazamat Al-Duwaliyya (Beirut: Dar Al-Nahda Al-'Arabiyya, 2004), P.55.

consciousness.¹ Linked with the unity of land is that of origins. It is argued that the historical formation of nations goes back to the presence of a clan that shares one origin, merges into one cultural entity/single race, and settles in a certain land. Besides, similarities in physical characteristics, such as the shape of the skull, the nose, and skin colour, constitute a unifying factor between those who share them. This has always been the starting point for the formation of nations that stresses the presence of predominant race in every nation. Integral to the formation of nations is the interplay of variables that constitute shared physical features (e.g., facial contours), intangible characteristics (e.g., moral values) and other apparent/hidden ones². These variables include shared life patterns on one land, climate, models of interaction with the natural environment, work, etc.

In the Saudi-Kuwaiti context, the origins of both peoples are deeply rooted in history. They settled in the region 40,000 years ago and their origins could be traced back to the clans that lived in the Arabian Peninsula in Najd and Al-Ahsa, such as 'Anazza, Shammar, Al-Ma'adid (Bani Tamim), Bani Hajar, the Muslim family and other tribes.³ Sharing the same origins resulted in the homogeneity the Saudi and Kuwaiti peoples in terms of bodily features. It also created a distinct bond of lineage, Islamic spiritual unity, and cultural belonging (Arabism) that largely affected their social homogeneity.⁴ This is manifested in the presence of shared principles, traditions, and ways of responding to external threats⁵.

1-Nur Al-Din Hatum, NahwAl-Wahda al-'Arabiyya (Cairo: Ma 'had al-Buhuthwa-l-Dirasat al-'Arabiyya bi-Jami 'at al-Duwal al-'Arabiyya, 1969), p. 18.

2-Muhammad Al-Mubark, al-'Uma wa-l-'Awamil al-Mukawinna la-ha (Beirut: Dar Al-Fikr, 1975), 35.

3-Hashim 'Abda Hashim, Al-Dawr al-Sa 'udiyy fi al-Khalij: Sijil Watha 'iqi Tahlili li-Mustaqlbal Duwal Majlis al-Ta 'awn al-Khaliji (Riyadh: al-'Isra' li-l-Khadamat al-'I'lamiyya, 1993), p.13.

4-Yusuf Abu Al-Hajaj, Duwal al-Imarat al-'Arabiyya al-Mutahida: DirasaTahliliyya li-Malamihaha al-Hama (Cairo: Ma 'had al-Buhuth wa-l-Dirasat al-'Arabiyya, 1978), p.1-2.

5-Yahya Hilmi Rajab, Majlis al-Ta 'awn li-Duwal al-Khalij al-'Arabiyya: Ru 'yya Mustaqbaliiyya, Dirasa Iqtisadiyya (Kuwait: Maktabat Dar Al-'Uruba, 1988), p.21.

3-The Unity of Language:

Language has many definitions. Webster Dictionary, for example, defines language as “a systematised means of conveying thoughts and feelings by using idiomatic signs and gestures, especially voiced expressive sounds”.¹ Likewise, Oxford dictionary describes language as “a system of sounds and writing that a person uses to express their thoughts”.² Both definitions underline the importance of the phonemic element in the process of communication and the presence of sounds in every language to distinguish one word from another.³ However, the meaning of language in terms of the Saudi-Kuwaiti relations goes beyond the representation of sounds.

Along with the unity of land and origins, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait share a linguistic heritage that consolidates their relations and structures their societies.⁴ Both peoples speak Arabic and use it as a tool of understanding and communication. Sharing the same language has thus become an integral part for sharing cultural and historical tradition, thereby establishing a bridge between the present, the past, and the future of both countries.⁵ From another perspective, Arabic language has been associated with Islam and the Holy Qur'an that is revealed in Arabic. Furthermore, it expanded during the era of Islamic conquests and was used to write the science and literature of the Islamic world and understand the history of ancient civilizations.⁶ This made Arabic the language of the civilised world for many centuries. Of importance is that learning Arabic is a duty for every Muslim because it helps them learn about their religion, perform prayers, recite the Qur'an, read literature, etc.

Nowadays, Arabic language is divided into three types: classical language (the Qur'an, hadiths, and ancient literature), fluent language (the language of press, television, and official

1-Merriam Webster Dictionary (Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1991), p.673.

2-Oxford Word Power (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.425.

3-'Abd al-Razzaq Sulaiman AbuDawud, Usus al-'Alaqa al-Makaniyya al-Siyasiyya: Muqadima fi al-Jughrafia al-Siyasiyya (Jeddah: Dar Hafez, 2000), p.318.

4-Muhammad Al-Ghazali, Haqiqat al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya: Dirasa 'Ilmiyya fi al-Mujtama' al-'Arabi (Cairo: Maktabat Dar Al-'Uruba, 2005), p.115.

5-Abu Dawud, Usus, Pp.316-17.

6Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Rahman al-Rabi', al-Lugha al-'Arabiyya fi al-'Asr al-Hadith (Riyadh: Jami' at al-'Imam Muhammad bin Sa'ud al-Islamiyya, 1995), p.11.

conversations), and colloquial language in all its different dialects and multiple accents.¹ Saudi and Kuwaiti societies share the first two types but differ in the third one due to differences in expressions and their connotations, sounds, pronunciation, and morphology. Nonetheless, the Saudi Eastern Province (e.g., Dammam, Dhahran, and Jubail) shares with the Kuwaiti society many aspects of the third type.² This suggests that Arabic language is the cornerstone for communication and understanding between Saudi and Kuwaiti peoples. It is one of the strongest and long-lasting links and it creates an atmosphere of harmony and collaboration, thereby unifying the peoples of the two countries.

4-The Unity of Religion:

The principle of one religion, on many occasions, is essential for creating solidarity among the members of a particular group. This is manifested in the Saudi-Kuwaiti context, where both countries share not only one language and origin but also one religion: Islam. They have sought to preserve the unity of religion as it strengthens the cohesion of their societies and brings peace for their peoples in this world and in the afterlife.³ Since its advent, Islam has founded its laws on the ideal that religion is a social matter that deals with personal and social forms of behaviour.⁴ This is one reason why religion continues to have an increasing influence in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

In its various patterns and orientations, Islam is one of the axes that guide the behaviour of both nations and unites the intellectual, political, social, and psychological aspects of their lives.⁵ This makes religion a key factor upon which both nations base their structures and create harmony in their thoughts, spirits, and visions. Furthermore, Islam has created a unique civilization that guided Saudi and Kuwaiti peoples to unite their goals and express loyalty to their leaders and homelands. Examples of the impacts of religion include the emergence of various forms of mental, psychological, and environmental interaction on one hand, and socio-economic, legislative, and cultural similarities between both peoples on the other. Islam is also

1- Ibrahim Jum'a, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabi, 1960), p.75.

2- Hasan Ghazala, Translation as Problems and Solutions: A Textbook for University Students and Trainee Translators (Amman: Konoozal-Ma'rifa, 2012), p.55.

3- Hatum, Nahw al-Wahda, Pp.22-23.

4- Al-Ghazali, Haqiqat, p.123.

5- Abu Dawud, Usus, p.311.

the fundamental pillar for establishing connection and rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Besides, an inclusive religion does not tolerate differentiation between its followers. Accordingly, it is possible to view Islam in the Saudi-Kuwaiti context from a broad perspective that goes beyond the narrow meaning of the word. Thus, Islam is not only a faith but also a way of life shaped by the interplay of social systems, cultures, histories, values, and all that gives a comprehensive view of the human existence.¹ This makes Islam the cradle of their civilizations and the source of their knowledge. Any contempt or enmity against Islam is also an attack on both countries and a shattering of their unified existence.²

5-The Unity of Shared History and Destiny:

History is written by the intersectionality of various events and epochs, wars (whether they are victory or defeat), facts and myths, etc.³ because the history of the Arabian Peninsula is part of the Saudi and Kuwaiti history, the incidents that constitute their history are similar. Sharing one history and destiny is another important factor that unites Saudi and Kuwaiti nations. For both peoples, their psychological formation originates from a shared history or memory that connects the past with the present while realising that the latter is largely influenced by the former.⁴

Because their history is an expression of a shared past and present, the two nations realise their collective identities and take (national) pride in their history that is also a manifestation of self-pride. If one examines the events that took place in the Arabian Peninsula and were celebrated by history, it becomes clear that the two countries have lived according to a common history. Relations rooted in history and based on reciprocal feelings of goodwill, affection, loyalty, and cooperation link their leaderships and peoples. Moreover, the shared history goes beyond religious, linguistic, and socio-political dimensions due to the familial links between Al Sabah family in Kuwait and Al Sa'ud family in Saudi Arabia.

Those links facilitate a dialogue of understanding, concord and mutual respect that has spanned through decades and is translated into close connections, and shared history made

1- Al-Mubark, al-'Uma, p.61.

2- Ibid., p.62.

3- Ibid., p.48.

4-Hatum, Nahw al-Wahda, p.20.

by (grand) parents and preserved by children. With the passage of time, the links are becoming more stable due to the efforts of Saudi and Kuwaiti leaderships. Therefore, the Saudi-Kuwaiti history espouses a process of political, social, and economic congruence that originates from the similarity of their status quo.

6–The Unity of Neighbourhood:

The unity of neighbourhood also plays a crucial role in strengthening Saudi-Kuwaiti relations and nations. Geographically, Kuwait is located in the northeast corner of the Arab Gulf and bordered by Saudi Arabia from the south.¹ As for Saudi Arabia, it is bordering Kuwait from the north. This geographical element facilitates interaction between Kuwaiti and Saudi peoples.²

As mentioned earlier, the peoples of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait believe in Islam and implement its teachings in their daily lives. This makes them aware of the rights of the neighbour legislated by Islam and encourages them to act according to Prophet Muhammad's words that "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should not hurt his neighbour, and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should entertain his guest generously".³ Clearly, this hadith underlines the rights of the "neighbour" that Islam honours and recognises; hence, it encourages Muslims to be good to their neighbours and fellow citizens. Examples of neighbourly rights include charity in deeds and words, sharing joys and sorrows, paying visits in case of illness, offering help and advice to resolve problems, and seeking reconciliation between fighting neighbours.

The Prophet once said that neighbours are three types: "a neighbour who has one right, and he is really the lowest of neighbours, a neighbour who has two rights, and a neighbour who has three rights, and he is the best neighbour. As for the neighbour who has one right, he is a polytheist, bears no family kinship and has the right of neighbourliness. The neighbour who has two rights is a Muslim neighbour and has the right of Islam and neighbourliness. The one who has three rights is a Muslim neighbour who hastens right of neighbourliness, Islam, and empathy".⁴ Situating the Prophet's words in the Saudi-Kuwaiti context, it is evident that both

1-Ibrahim bin Fawzan al-Fawzan, *Duwal al-Khalij al-'Arabiyya* (al-Qassim: Matabi' al-Qassim, 1998), p.341.

2-Rajab, Majlis, p.25.

3-Imam al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari* (London: Darussalam, 1999), p.1611.

4-Ibid., p.1612.

nations are entitled to three rights: the right of neighbourliness by virtue of geographical location, the right of Islam by virtue of shared beliefs and the right of kinship by virtue of the intermarriage between the two peoples.¹ Therefore, neighbourhood between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait is an influential bond that unites both nations within a solid framework of harmony, empathy, and cooperation.

7-The Unity of Brotherhood:

The word “brother” or “brotherhood” refers to individuals who have the same father and/or mother. In Saudi and Kuwaiti cultures, many people use the phrase “my brother” to address someone they do not know or someone who has no familial connection with them. This usage implies that they treat other people as if they were brothers as an expression of respect.² However, ties of brotherhood between the two countries are more important and sublime than the narrow sense of the word.

Brotherhood among their members is one of the pillars upon which Islamic nations build their societies. Similar to religion, the strong belief in brotherhood unites all Muslims and creates harmony and rapprochement among them. Besides, it has the potential to go beyond family kinships and blood relations to encompass a wider socio-cultural and political brotherhood. This applies to the Saudi-Kuwaiti brotherhood that establishes a dialogue of cordial respect and cooperation. It also governs their relations, determines their rights, and guides their decisions.³ This explains why both nations have espoused the bond of brotherhood and acknowledged its role in instilling ideals of empathy and cooperation in their peoples. Accordingly, brotherhood is a requirement for reviving solidarity between the two states in the form of mutual support and concord.⁴ Their fraternal relations are supported by proximity and neighbourhood and reinforced by a shared interest in achieving prosperity and progress on

1- Taha 'Abd Allah al-Afifi, Haq al-Jar (Cairo: Dar Al-I'tisam, 1979), Pp.20-21.

2- Mahmud Babil, M'ani al-'Ukhwafi al-'Islam wa-Maqasidiha (Mecca: al-Sahafawa-l-Nashr bi-RabitatAl-'AlamAl-'Islami,1985), p.12.

3- Mustafa 'Abd al-Wahid, al-Mujtama' al-'Islami: Ahdafih wa da' aimah, 'Awda' ih wa khasa' isih fi daw' al-Kitab wa-l-Sunna (Beirut: Dar Al-Jil,1974), p.44.

4- Mani' bin Hamad al-Juhani, al-Tadamun al-'Islami: al-Fikrawa-l-Tarikhwa-Dawr al-Mamlaka al-'Arabiyya al-Saudiyya (Riyadh: Markaz Faysal li-l-Buhuthwa-l-Dirasat al-'Islamiyya, 1999), p.12.

multiple levels. It is a brotherhood of belief not only lineage and of faith that is translated into different yet shared areas of life. This empowers the Saudi-Kuwaiti relations and surpasses the obstacles and threats they encounter.¹

8–Conclusion:

Every nation has its characteristics and specificities; however, it is possible to integrate those features to connect neighbouring peoples. This is manifested in the case of Saudi and Kuwaiti peoples because they share the same religion, language, and history among other connections. The mutual socio-political and economic fundamentals of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have also contributed to the preservation of international peace and security. This is evident in two scenarios: a) the Saudi leadership's support of international rights and legitimacy to liberate Kuwait from the Iraqi regime during the reign of Saddam Hussein, and b) the subsequent cooperation to maintain the security and safety of the Gulf.

Besides, the events in the Gulf, starting with the Iranian Revolution and ending with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, have created a shared worldview between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. This added a new dimension of strategic coordination to their relations and resulted in unprecedented cooperation in all domains. Consequently, the establishment of the Cooperation Council for the Arab Gulf States took place in 1981 to fulfil the aspirations of the Gulf nations for over twenty-four years. In brief, one might stress the influential role of the Saudi and Kuwaiti leaderships who have espoused multiple empowering links to achieve interdependence and progress. Their connected relations are marked by a peculiarity or specificity originating from shared concepts, visions, beliefs, and philosophies derived from Islam. As for the fraternal atmosphere that governs Saudi-Kuwaiti relations, it creates a discourse of communication and understanding to address political issues in Arab and Islamic nations. Indeed, the Saudi-Kuwaiti unity is exceptional; no two countries in the world have strong links with each other as do Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Therefore, it is important for both nations to preserve and strengthen those links to achieve mutual welfare and prosperity.

1- 'Abd Allah al-Sharafi, *Huquq al-'Ukhwa fi Allah 'ala daw' al-Kitabwa-l-Sunna* (Riyadh: Dar al-Hadith al-Khayyria, 1997), 26.

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