

Social Factors Affecting Development of Marriage in Pre and Post-oil Era in Gulf Countries

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The main objective of this chapter is to monitor, describe, and analyze the social factors development of the state of marriage in the gulf countries. The chapter focuses on providing an integrated description of the institution of marriage, while taking into account the past and current conditions of the images and types in which social factors affected the marriage institution.

Gulf states share some common cultural, social, economic, and environmental factors that have been key determinants of various phenomena since their establishment as independent states, marriage has interacted with these commonalities, meaning the institution of marriage has been affected by the same factors in each one of these states. Perhaps the most prominent common factor between Gulf states is how their production pattern transformed from rural production dependent on limited natural resources—which contributed to the continuity of their traditional lifestyle—to the industrial pattern directly dependent on the discovery of oil in the mid-twentieth century—which helped them step out of their local isolation and made them, in one way or another, an integral part of the global economic system, increasingly exchanging impact and effect with global events over time.

In light of this, the chapter adopts a developmental and functional approach to analyze the institution of marriage and the phenomena associated with it, based on an analytical dualism of stability and change, given that these countries have experienced two distinct eras:

1. Pre-oil, when social and economic life was continuous and stable, with hardly any significant social changes. This is why the institution of marriage continued—in numbers and style—as it had always been in these countries.
2. Post-oil, when all these countries marched towards development, followed by continuous changes in all aspects of social, economic, and cultural life, deeply affecting the institution of marriage and all aspects of marital life.

Hence the approaches adopted by this chapter to describe and analyze all marriage related phenomena, through this analytical dualism that looks at

each phenomenon in its pre-oil state, before describing and analyzing its current state. This is based on data from marriage-related statistical reports issued by these Gulf countries or by international regional institutions. It also relies on the results of scientific studies in the Gulf discussing the issues and phenomena associated with marriage. All of this culminates in the chapter at hand, which has tried as much as possible to provide an analytical description of the institution of marriage in the past and the present. In general, it becomes clear that specific structural factors—including the Gulf states' high ranking in the Human Development Index (HDI), the rate of urban growth, and the percentage of women participating in the workforce—have reflected on both the crude and general marriage rates. Other relevant phenomena are also reflected, such as rising age at marriage, declining consanguineous marriages, increasing heterogeneous marriages, and the emergence of different types and forms of marriage previously unknown to the Arab Gulf states.

One of the most notable issues addressed by the chapter is the universality of marriage in Gulf states. In the pre-oil era, marriage was a universal phenomenon, in the sense that all members of society—men and women—were linked through marriage, but this past reality has changed. Current marriage rates show that a segment of men and women remain unmarried at older ages, possibly due to structural factors, such as expanding education, rising costs of marriage, and men's tendency to marry outside their home countries.

The structural transformations that took place in Gulf states, such as urbanization and migration (internal and external), have contributed to the transformation of marriage from the endogenous consanguineous type to a more exogenous one, with an increasing tendency to marry outside the circle of relatives in the family or the tribe, especially in urban centers. Marriages have even emerged that no longer take into account the founding values of the institution of marriage, such as heterogeneous marriages, non-Gulf brides (or what are known as cross-national marriages), and Gulf women marrying immigrants to their countries. New and unprecedented types of marriage have also emerged, such as *misyar* ("visitor's" marriage) and the like. These changes brought along a wide range of challenges and problems, forcing legislative institutions to enact laws regulating such marriages and protecting the rights of the parties involved.

One of the radical changes that have taken place is that of age at marriage. Men and women used to get married at young ages, but education and post-graduation work, along with the rising costs of marriage, have forced many people in the Gulf to postpone marriage. It has become common for men to

get married at 28, and women at 24 and older. In some cases, they could be in their fifties and still unmarried.

Marital relations have witnessed many changes, shifting from intimacy, stability, and family cohesion to estrangement, discord and family disintegration. This has resulted from the differences imposed on some families by the challenges of daily life and the shift from the extended family model to that of the nuclear family. The marriage decision, therefore, has changed from a collective decision made on the level of the extended family to an individual decision made by the person involved to meet his/her own individual needs and aspirations, often leading to the breakup of the marriage at the slightest obstacle before the nuclear family. Divorce has seen an alarming and unprecedented rise, and problems have arisen in terms of raising the children, alimony rights, and other issues, which have eventually led to the issuance of many laws and the creation of administrative structures—such as divorce or family courts—across the Gulf in a bid to combat and contain them.

The chapter also covers the issue of labor and its effect on marital life. Expanding education—especially for women—and the rising development plans in Gulf countries, which seek to end—or at least reduce—their reliance on foreign labor, have led to new legislation and the opening of the labor market to women. Gulf countries have begun to witness a continuous growth of Gulf women's empowerment in the workforce, which has extended even to the security and military sectors. The chapter notes the impact that the increasing participation of women in the workforce has had on the institution of marriage. Several studies have shown how work has had many positive effects on women and their families and societies. Yet the studies have also pointed out a wide range of problems facing working married women, affecting their marital harmony, child-rearing, and increased dependence on domestic servants.

Because migration is a phenomenon particular to the Arab Gulf, especially migrant workers, who make up 30–80% of the population, depending on each country, the authors of the chapter have taken into account the role of external migration in marriage issues, namely, the emergence of heterogeneous marriages (of mixed nationalities, religions, and languages). Internal migration in the Gulf, particularly from rural areas to urban centers, has also played a significant role in shifting consanguineous marriages to exogenous ones.

Since Arab Gulf states have only experienced limited military conflicts, such as the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait or the current war between the Arab Coalition forces and the Houthis in Yemen, this issue has been absent from the social literature on the impact of war and conflict on marriage in the region.

Naturally, there is an exception in some countries in the region that have been affected by large numbers of displaced families from neighboring countries, such as Syria and Iraq in particular. According to social media, some young men from the Gulf have sought to marry girls from these families.

In general, the institution of marriage in the contemporary Gulf states has undergone radical changes, and will possibly witness further changes as a direct outcome of globalization and its implications for many social, economic, cultural, and political systems. At the moment, Gulf countries are witnessing more updates in their systems, as well as increasing empowerment of women in the public sphere. This fulfills the urgent needs of the society while also facilitating the integration of these societies with the current changes in today's world.

Marriage Context

Marriage in the six Arab Gulf countries, taking into account their cultural, historical, social, and developmental context. Naturally, these determinants and their impact on marriage issues vary depending on the circumstances and conditions experienced by the Gulf states. Needless to say, these six Gulf countries share many of the same characteristics, circumstances, and conditions that formed them and shaped their current state with its various social, economic, and political aspects. They have overcome their geographical and economic isolation from the rest of the world and integrated with the world economy and its surrounding social and technical developments, which has made them a crucial part of the world economic order. Therefore, it is only natural to take into consideration the economic, social, and cultural conditions that prevailed prior to the development and change era (particularly in the 1960s and 1970s) that resulted from the discovery of oil in these countries and their investment in social and economic development. Therefore the analytical approach to marriage in these countries requires a distinction between two distinct eras: The first is the era preceding the discovery of oil and the investment of its revenues (1960–1970), which some researchers call the stability era. The second is the era extending from 1970 onwards, which can be called the era of development and social change. The reference to this analytical dualism is repeated frequently (directly or indirectly) in many social studies that have examined social issues and phenomena in the Arab Gulf over the past few decades (Al Rumaihi, 1974; Al Saif, 1990). Therefore most of the analyses we have made in this chapter are based on this dualism, as well as functional analysis (Functionalism) of the interaction and interconnection of social systems and phenomena (Ritzer, 2010). Hopefully this theoretical and desk review will lead to identification of the structural and cultural factors

affecting the phenomenon of marriage. As mentioned above, the social factors and determinants of marriage vary greatly depending on the two eras mentioned earlier: pre-oil and development, and post-oil and revenue investment in developing the social, cultural, and economic environment of the six Gulf countries. Therefore, we will address these factors and determinants in two separate groups: one that highlights the social factors affecting Gulf marriages in the 1960s and 1970s (pre-oil and development era), and another that focuses on the specific social factors of marriage in the oil discovery and investment era (post-1970s), in which the Gulf states experienced the first periods of development and change.

Social Factors Affecting Marriage in the Pre-oil and Development Era

A number of factors affecting marriage in GCC countries stem from the fabric and culture of Gulf society, with its customs, traditions, and norms that have been passed on from one generation to another. These factors continue to affect marriage, even after losing an essential part of their strength in the present time, especially among the civilized and educated segments of society, and reflect on many marriage-related issues. In this regard, the key factors affecting marriage, which were entirely dominant in the GCC's pre-oil and development era, can be summarized as follows

Parity

According to some field studies, Gulf parents search for several important qualities when their sons/daughters are getting married. One of the key qualities is the social status of the family of the groom or bride, which is considered an inherited socio-cultural status. This quality was essential when choosing a spouse during the traditional stability era, and it has continued to be essential during the era of change. High social status in the Gulf means being related to one of the well-known Arab tribes in Arabia. On the other hand, a person is considered to have low social status if he/she is not related to any of these tribes, and they are called "non-tribals" among other names, depending on the country.

In most cases, tribal families do not marry from non-tribals, regardless of their job status and wealth. Yet during the era of change there have been cases of marriage between the two sides, mainly tribal men marrying non-tribal women. The idea was that marrying down does not affect a man's status, or the status of his children, since the decline of social status is caused by the father, not the mother. Gulf society tolerates a man who marries a foreign woman, but strongly opposes a tribal man marrying a non-tribal woman. In the Gulf, it is difficult for a tribal woman to marry a non-tribal man, because when a woman

marries down, it negatively affects her social status as well as her family's, since the household and the children take the father's name and status. This phenomenon has continued to be rooted among the new generation, especially among tribes. However, during this period some young men seem to commend tribal people and praise those who marry non-tribal women for their ability to break this deeply rooted social norm against the will of society (Al Aboush, 2016).

It is worth mentioning that the urbanization experienced by most Gulf communities has led to the rise of marriages between tribals and non-tribals, in contrast to the pre-oil and development era. In fact, there has been a rise of what can be described as "heterogeneous marriages" in terms of nationality, race, religion, and language.

Marriage Education

In the generation of today's fathers and mothers, marriage was primarily based on the collective sense of the family, and in accordance with the wishes and aspirations of the family seniors. Therefore the type of marriage prevalent at the time gave the elderly, the grandparents, and the parents the right to determine the fate of their sons and daughters and to control their choices in marriage, which were generally predetermined in light of the prevailing culture and customs that underlined endogenous marriage in order to preserve tribal integration and ensure that wealth remained within the circle of relatives. Thus the marriage expectations of sons and daughters were shaped and formulated in light of these constraints. For them, the right choices were what their grandparents and parents saw fit in the context of the extended family. Any deviation from these expectations faced strong reactions, such as imposing *hajr* ("reserving a bride and banning her from marrying anyone else") on any girl who refused to marry her cousin. It might even escalate to violence against the rogue girl who rebelled against the traditions and customs of the tribe.

However, it is a largely different matter in the era of change. Some social studies have discovered a trend among younger generations in the Gulf who have a different outlook on marriage in the modern age. The situation has changed due to various cultural and social circumstances, and marriage has become a matter of independence among sons and daughters, who now have marriage ambitions and needs that differ completely from the needs, wishes, and requirements of their parents. This has led to issues like irreconcilable differences and divorce, which can be attributed to the fact that parents continue to prepare their sons and daughters for marriage in their own manner and based on the social circumstances that they went through in their own time, hoping their sons and daughters will play the same marital roles they did.

Some parents still believe that their daughter's marital success lies in her growing accustomed to being a man's subordinate in any case, as he has the upper hand, and if she wants to live in peace, she cannot oppose him or criticize his behavior. For these reasons, during their family education, some daughters are taught the value of patience and endurance around men, while sons are taught the value of courage, boldness, power, and control over women, as well as their rightful superiority, even if it comes with mistreatment. For some, and from the very beginning, Gulf culture has robbed women of the right to criticize their husbands' behavior and attitude. As a result, some wives have become unable to continue being married to husbands who exercise their superiority with mistreatment and hostility (Almraah.net, 2011).

Choice in Marriage

The issue of choice in marriage has been a subject of interest for social researchers whose studies focus on the family system and the changes that have taken place in family structure, forms, roles, functions, and inter-family relations. This interest stems from choice in marriage being the first step towards the formation of a family, affecting its continuity and compatibility, as well as its effectiveness in educating and raising children, among other family functions in society. Some studies have even found a correlation between choice in marriage and the extent of stability, family disintegration, or divorce, which emphasizes the importance of choice in marriage and its subsequent implications for the new family's life. It is understood that choice in marriage was made under what is known as "arranged marriage," where the seniors or the parents in the extended family chose a wife (often a cousin) for their grandson or son. This was the prevalent type of marriage in the Gulf's pre-oil and development era, given the dominant tribal nature of Gulf societies at the time, as well as the great influence of the tribe. In Oman, for example—in which modernization began from 1970 onwards—the aspects of marriage in traditional Omani society (pre-1970) and modern Omani society vary significantly. Marriages in traditional Omani society used to be based on blood kinship, and they took place within the tribe, i.e., between cousins, relatives, or members of the tribe. The agreement would be reached between the families, and the bride had no say in the marriage. Dowries at that time ranged between 100 and 300 Indian rupees. In the same context, according to another study (Al Sadani, 1984), the two parties (the bride and groom) only saw each other on the night of their wedding. An engagement would typically last for a few weeks or months, during which preparations were made for the wedding, which would be held in a series of celebrations that could last an entire week.

Similar rituals continue to take place today as customs and traditions in some areas of the Sultanate.

Endogenous marriages (within the same tribe or even the same family) were the general trend in Gulf countries. Preference was given to cousins as grooms. In fact, some traditions would not allow girls to marry anyone but their cousins, in what was known as *hajr*. Under the *hajr* system, a man could reserve his cousin for himself and ban her from marrying anyone else. In some cases, a man could be criticized for not marrying his cousin, and could even be accused of incompetence for failing to convince his uncle that he was worthy of his daughter. However, this habit has declined significantly in contemporary Gulf societies, and is currently limited to a few tribes, given the social changes that have taken place in the Arab Gulf.

In the post-oil and development era, many social studies have shown that choice in marriage and its associated family systems has been greatly influenced in Gulf society. When development plans began in Gulf societies, individuals and communities found themselves faced with new circumstances. Development programs provided an opportunity for cultural friction, increased educational opportunities for both men and women, and raised income levels for individuals. Work structures changed with the emergence of new occupations, with women stepping outside their homes for specialized jobs and independent income. The programs and projects of social and economic development also helped Gulf society to open up to Arab and foreign societies through modern transportation and communication and advanced technology, leading to a decline in the power of social control and education over individuals in Gulf societies. This openness created conflict and contradictions in values, standards, thought, and behavior between generations. Under these changing circumstances, families could no longer maintain an acceptable level of social control, especially when their sons and daughters began to choose their life partners. These families eventually granted their sons and daughters the freedom to choose their partners, provided that the choice was approved and accepted by the family. The social mobility of individuals in Gulf society during this contemporary era—based on economic changes and cultural openness—increased their mobility outside their tribal circles. The development programs implemented at the time gave individuals the opportunity to engage in social relations with other individuals and groups outside the circle of relatives, which weakened their families' involvement in their lives and limited it to a small circle. Consequently, new key trends in the family life of individuals emerged, namely a tendency among young men and women to marry outside the circle of relatives (Al Beleihy, 2015/1437). In this context, a number of studies on choice in marriage note a

higher percentage of young people preferring to marry outside the family. According to these studies, 55.2% of Kuwaiti youths and 48.7% of Omani youths said they preferred to marry non-relatives (Al Nasser & Suleiman, 2007), while 61% of Saudi university students prefer to marry outside the family and do not support consanguineous marriages (Al Gharib, 2008). In addition, 53% of Qatari youths said they did not favor marrying from their tribes or groups (Al Ghanem, 2010). This confirms the emergence of a trend among Gulf youths who prefer to avoid endogenous marriages (from the tribe or the family), which could be attributed to the continuous decline of tribal influence in contemporary Gulf society. Yet there is still a significant number of youths who prefer endogenous or consanguineous marriages.

In general, there are many different criteria or considerations underlying choice in marriage. In Saudi Arabia, Al Juwair's study (1995)—which sampled 230 Saudi university students—showed that the difficulty of marriage choice is one of the key factors delaying marriage. Other factors include finishing their education and the high costs and responsibilities of marriage, as well as high dowries, low family income, and, finally, the desire to marry a Saudi woman. The study also revealed other factors that contribute to the delay of marriage to a lesser extent, namely the influence of immigrants on Saudi youths, the insistence of parents and extended family members that they marry their relatives, the lack of adequate housing, traveling abroad, and the media.

In the UAE, a study (Al Motawa'a, 1991) sampled 548 elementary, preparatory, secondary, and university students with the aim of exploring their problems, including those related to their preparation for marriage. According to the study, the most important problem for both young men and women was high dowries, as well as the inability to choose a life partner and their parents' control over their choice.

In Oman, a study conducted by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (1984) revealed that 16% of women and only 3% of men were forced to get married without having a choice. However, these numbers are being reviewed based on new data since the 1980s.

In Kuwait, some social studies have addressed the issue of choice in marriage, including Al Shallal's (1998) study, which sampled 150 unmarried participants, both men and women, aged between 30 and 50 years old. The study, which aimed to identify the participants' marital preferences and the social, psychological, and economic reasons behind them, found that three-quarters of them preferred to marry a Kuwaiti national. In terms of qualities they looked for in a life partner, religion came first, followed by family connections, strong personality, appropriate age, and success. As for social

obstacles to marital choice, participants said they were mainly set by parents, in addition to failure to find the right partner in terms of social status. These obstacles rank first among the reasons behind delayed marriage in Kuwaiti society. In the same context, another study on choice in marriage in Kuwaiti society (Al Nasser, 1995) found that the majority of those sampled preferred to marry Kuwaiti nationals, and that marrying someone of another nationality had many pros and cons, including high rates of celibacy and child-rearing issues. In another study, Hussein (1987) addressed delayed marriage in Kuwaiti society. The study, which sampled 195 young men and women, partly tackled some aspects of choice in marriage. It found that failure to find the right life partner constituted a key reason behind delayed marriage. A study by Al Zhufairi et al. (2001) addressed the ways in which life partners were chosen in Kuwaiti society, aiming to find out whether the choice was voluntary or compulsory, and to identify the variables affecting the process of choosing the partner. The study, which sampled eight hundred male and female divorcees, found that 28.6% of participants got married through parents and friends, followed by kinship (18.9%), work (11.6%), friends (11.4%), and modern communication technology like the internet (10.6%), in addition to a few cases who got married through neighbors and matchmakers. The study also found that 68.1% of the participants were married with the consent of both parties, while 13.9% of marriages took place with one party being forced. The most important grounds on which the parties based their decision to marry were ranked as follows: General appearance (59.8%); Religion and morals (46.5%); Intellect and personality (33.6%); Kinship (22.3%); and Social status (20.8%).

A survey of 526 Qatari youths (189 men and 337 women) on marriage trends (Al Ghanem, 2010) found several criteria for choosing life partners, including:

1. Love: 71% preferred to marry someone they loved;
2. Religious commitment: 64.3% agreed on the need for religious commitment in their life partner;
3. Appearance: 46.8% of male participants, and 17.5% of females, agreed on the appearance criterion;
4. A university degree was one of the requirements needed in a life partner, said the participants;
5. A compatible tribal level (40%);
6. A compatible financial level (60%).

High Costs of Marriage

The dowry and its associated financial costs represent the amount of money that men in Gulf societies pay to women and their families to seal a marriage

contract. The dowry is considered a cultural phenomenon of the Gulf culture and social structure. In each Gulf country, the wife's dowry and marriage costs are based on religious values stemming from the society's religious system. They are also a part of customs, traditions, and norms that are deeply rooted in the cultural system of Gulf society. This means that the dowry paid to a woman is one of the marriage conditions laid down by Islam. A small dowry and a simple declaration and celebration of marriage are part of Islamic tradition (Al Sana'ani, n.d., p. 256). However, the culture of Gulf society, and its customs, traditions, and norms, have forced individuals and families to pay exorbitant amounts of money to the wife and her family without any conditions from them. This high dowry prevailed among families in the pre-oil era, and it remained high—along with the marriage costs—even during and after the 1970s, a period that witnessed social and economic changes due to the emergence of oil and the associated radical development in all areas of Gulf societies. There are those who believe that high dowries paid by the suitor to the bride fulfill a social function and go in line with the social reality of each era. In the pre-oil era, when Gulf society was still traditional, high dowries fulfilled a social function, forcing the wife to be patient with her husband and his family, without having the right to object to how they treated her. The high dowry also served to emphasize the financial status of the husband and his family in the eyes of his wife and her family. As for the era of change, the social function of high dowries was merely to support the man and his social status before the woman and her family. Therefore keeping dowries high has reinforced the high status of Gulf men, while also making sure women feel inferior to men in terms of social status (Al Saif, 1989/1410, p. 177).

Generally speaking, the costs of marriage in the Gulf—dowries, wedding preparations, house expenses—are some of the highest compared to other societies. And despite the lack of scientific studies on the financial cost of marriage, there have been media reports on the estimated value of dowries and marriage costs in some Gulf societies. According to the website Raseef22 (Raseef, 2016), dowries in Qatar range between 50,000 and 150,000 riyals, and can reach up to 300,000 riyals in some families. In Saudi Arabia, dowries can sometimes reach 250,000 riyals, which has prompted officials to set a limit of 50,000 riyals for dowries to unmarried women. This is in addition to wedding costs and preparing the couple's house, which is covered entirely by the groom. In the UAE, costs range between 500,000 and one million dirhams (Al Sharif, 2017).

The high cost of dowries and marriage in Gulf societies has undoubtedly been one of the reasons why men are reluctant to marry, raising the general rate of celibacy and delayed marriage for GCC women over 35 years old to 35%

(Al-Arabiya, 2018). In this context, a recent Saudi study has found that high dowries and marriage costs have raised the number of unmarried women in the Kingdom to four million (Al Khalaf, 2015), compared to 1.5 million in 2010. These findings are supported by an earlier study conducted by the Saudi Ministry of Planning in January 2011, which set the number of unmarried women over 30 years old at 1,529,418, while married women accounted for 2,683,547 out of the total of 4,572,231 women in the study. This prompted the intervention of official institutions and civil society organizations in order to combat the rise of dowries, which was held directly responsible for a high rise in celibacy rates over marriage costs. In this regard, official Saudi bodies began to take serious steps to solve the crisis of delayed marriage among youths, especially with dowries sometimes exceeding 250,000 riyals (US\$66,000), aside from the costs of the wedding, which could sometimes involve more than one function, costing up to 200,000 riyals (US\$55,000). Husbands might also have had to cover additional costs of up to US\$30,000 to meet family and tribal demands, in addition to the costs of jewelry, gold, housing, furniture, and post-marriage celebrations. Among these Saudi efforts, for example, were steps taken by government bodies to reduce delayed marriage among both men and women by addressing high dowries and limiting expenditure on weddings in some areas. In Mecca, a document setting a cap on dowries was introduced, limiting the amount for new brides to 50,000 riyals, and 30,000 riyals for women re-marrying. Other institutions in other areas of Saudi Arabia have introduced similar measures (Al Jaafari, 2017).

In Kuwait, recent official statistics indicated that the number of women who were unmarried for financial reasons had reached 30%, adding that young men were also beginning to delay marriage for financial reasons, resorting instead to foreign women, as in the majority of Gulf countries. The costs of marriage began with a dowry ranging between 4,000 and 10,000 dinars, in addition to “mandatory” gifts like perfume, diamonds, gold, and clothing, which could cost over 10,000 dinars (about US\$35,000). These costs added up, taking the total cost of marriage to more than 40,000 dinars (US\$140,000). A diagnostic study of the social status of youths in Kuwait (Al Sharif, 2017) found that 60% of them were unmarried, suggesting that level of income was the hidden reason. Meanwhile, 48% of Kuwaiti women blamed spinsterhood on men marrying foreign spouses, while 58% of Kuwaiti men blamed high dowries.

In the UAE, a study conducted by a charitable fund on the future prospects for single men and women found they numbered ninety-eight thousand in 2015 due to the costs of marriage. Due to high dowries and marriage costs, the celibacy rate reached 75% of women of marriage age, which prompted the authorities to intervene and limit dowries to 50,000 dirhams. However, some

families do not adhere to this limit, with dowries reaching 500,000 dirhams, not including wedding costs (150,000 dirhams) and jewelry (60,000 dirhams), making a total of around US\$200,000, which makes it impossible to pay off the expenses in the case of loans (Sabr, 2015).

A survey on marriage trends among youths found that the majority of male participants (69.4%) might delay marriage due to high dowries and costs (Al Ghanem, 2010). In one of the responses on the policy level, Qatar's Population Policy 2017– 2022 included among several actions to increase its population “introducing dowry and wedding cost reduction in educational curricula,” as well as “issuing legislation to endorse the Marriage Fund” (Permanent Population Committee, 2017). Meanwhile, Oman (*Erem News*, 2017) and Bahrain (*Al Wasat*, 2016) both had the same issue of high dowries, which reflected on the rise of delayed marriage and celibacy rates among men and women, prompting official and social responses to limit the crisis and facilitate marriage.

Several other reports have also focused on celibacy rates and linked them to exorbitant dowries in Gulf societies, showing that celibacy rates in Kuwait and Qatar were caused by high dowries and marriage costs based on Gulf traditions, in addition to many families refusing to allow their daughters to marry immigrants. In Saudi Arabia, the celibacy rate among women of marriage age has reached nearly 45%, also due to exorbitant dowries and high marriage costs that discourage many young men from marriage. Meanwhile, in the UAE, celibacy rates reached 75% due to high marriage costs, as well as many young men marrying foreign women (Almrsal, 2017).

As demonstrated above, Gulf societies suffer the most in terms of marriage costs, high dowries, and costs related to wedding and housing preparations. However, the value of dowries varies from one Gulf country to another. Qatar and the UAE have the highest dowries, compared to Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

To address this problem, most Gulf countries have adopted some kind of mechanism to help young people get married, such as specialized charities and NGOs. In Saudi Arabia, these charities and civil society organizations can be found all around different cities and provinces. One of the oldest of these charities is the Ibn Baz Foundation for Marriage and Family, which dates back forty years and currently helps two thousand young men and women get married every year (Ibn Baz, n.d.). Another organization is the UAE's Marriage Fund, which was established in 1992 and operates under the Ministry of Community Development to offer assistance to young people and encourage them to get married. In Qatar, the Efaf project has been offered by the Sheikh Thani Bin Abdullah Foundation for Humanitarian Services (RAF Foundation) since 2001 to encourage young people to get married. In addition, both Qatar

and Kuwait offer government aid to young people seeking marriage (Al Ghanem, 2003, p. 210).

In conclusion, it can be said that despite official and unofficial efforts in Gulf societies to contain the issue of high dowries and marriage demands, the financial cost of marriage in Gulf culture continues to rise. This reality has led Gulf men to marry foreign women, in order to avoid the high costs associated with dowries and other marriage requirements (Masr Al Arabia, 2015).

Social Factors Affecting Marriage in the Post-oil and Development Era Development and modernization have also led to several factors that have had important and radical effects on marriage, as follows.

Education and Marriage

Education is one of the structural factors that have affected life in GCC countries. Compulsory education on the one hand, and the expansion of university education and beyond (which came in the form of comprehensive development in the region) on the other hand, created new social conditions and constituted an important factor of social and economic mobility, leaving a deep impact on many marriage-related aspects, especially among Gulf women. Recent data on married people in the region (Statistical Center for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf [GCC-STAT], Dashboard, 2018) indicate a significant rise in their levels of education. In 2015, the percentage of husbands with secondary education was 36.56% in Bahrain, 45.37% in Qatar, and 25.47% in Kuwait, as shown in Table 1.1. Meanwhile, the percentage of husbands with post-secondary education was 44.38%, 37.84%, and 53.88% respectively.

As for Saudi Arabia, Table 1.2 shows that the percentage of secondary education reached 28.68% among husbands and 27.66% among wives. Meanwhile, postsecondary education (non-degree diploma, university degree, postgraduate diploma, masters, Ph.D.) was 40.11% among husbands and 29.98% among wives.

Table 1.1 Level of education of husbands in some GCC countries, 2015

Level of education	Bahrain		Qatar		Kuwait	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Illiterate/Reads and writes	108	1.89	23	1.11	20	0.18
Elementary	220	3.85	118	5.70	183	1.68
Middle/Preparatory	761	13.31	213	10.29	2,041	18.77

Secondary	2,090	36.56	931	45.37	2,770	25.47
Post-secondary	2,537	44.38	783	37.48	5,859	53.88
Unspecified	1	0.02	1	0.05	1	0.01
Total	5,717	100.00	2,069	100.00	10,874	100.00

Table 1.2 Saudi population aged 15 or more, by gender and level of education

Level of education	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
Elementary	410,380	9.94	382,601	9.26
Middle	452,849	10.97	445,156	10.77
Secondary or equivalent	1,183,860	28.68	1,143,280	27.66
Non-degree diploma	361,572	8.76	184,960	4.48
University degree	1,163,849	28.20	1,022,445	24.74
Postgraduate diploma	25,522	0.62	6,059	0.15
Masters	75,772	1.84	18,580	0.45
Ph.D.	28,464	0.69	6,491	0.16
Other*	425,102	10.30	923,091	22.34
Total	4,127,370	100.00	4,132,663	100.00

Source Population Characteristics Survey 2017, General Authority for Statistics, Saudi Arabia

These two tables show the rising percentage of couples with post-secondary education, such as postgraduate diplomas and university degrees, in Kuwait followed by Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. This means that the continuously improving levels of education among both men and women must impose a new social reality with its own implications for the institution of marriage in the region.

Despite the above, education among Gulf women continues to face a number of challenges, primarily early marriage (before the age of 18), which often results in girls dropping out of public education at an early age. This highlights the lack of equal opportunities between males and females in terms of marriage and education in Gulf societies. Males in the Gulf are more fortunate than females, because they can seek marriage at any age and educational level, whether during general education or university. Females, however, find it more difficult to seek marriage as their educational level progresses, as Gulf culture places more value on the wife's young age, which forces girls in advanced levels to accept suitors even if they are not completely

satisfied with their traits and features. Girls may settle on their terms to avoid getting older and missing the opportunity of marriage. In addition, families prioritize marriage over higher education for their girls, as they believe the older the girl is, the fewer marriage opportunities she will have. The outcome is that the majority of girls are married at early levels of education in the Gulf. The education of women and their economic participation in the workforce in GCC countries is considered to be among the biggest catalysts of change in Gulf societies. Advanced education opportunities and participation in the labor market have provided women with mobility that was not as available in the past, thus allowing them to have social, financial, and mental independence. All of these educational and work-related factors combined have led to an unprecedented rate of divorce in the Gulf.

Official data from Kuwait for the year 2007 showed a direct correlation between rising divorce rates and wives' higher level of education. Where wives were illiterate the divorce rate was only 1%, but this percentage rose to 10% if the wife had primary education, 18% if she had preparatory education, and 18% if she had secondary education (Babnet, 2010).

Kuwaiti Justice Ministry statistics indicated a rise in marital disputes and divorce rates among educated couples in 2015. In the same year, the ministry's family counseling department reported that the percentage of men with preparatory education who sought the department's services reached 26%, followed by men with university degrees (23%). As for women, the percentage was 27% for secondary education, followed by 26% for university degrees (Al Qahtani, 2013).

According to a social study that analyzed the content of a Saudi website specializing in marriage, most women demand university education as a condition for their potential partners, while men demand secondary education as a minimum requirement when choosing a wife (Al Wasat, 2017).

In a study on the criteria for choosing a spouse among Omani and Kuwaiti youths, education was found to be a key factor, ranking second in importance. It was also found that women insisted more on the partner's education compared to men (Al Dhalea, 2015/1437).

In Qatar, a study carried out by Al Ghanem confirmed that 70% of young men and women demand that their partner hold a university degree (Al Ghanem, 2003, 2010; Al Nasser & Suleiman, 2007).

A study on marriage choices in Saudi Arabia revealed that young men preferred to marry educated women, but not with a higher or equal level of education compared to their own (Al Moussa, 1986/1407). Social studies have also shown that for Saudi men, the potential wife's level of education ranked lower than religion, morality, the family's social status, and family relations (Al

Gharib, 2008; Al Muqbil, 2003). It was also found that the most common condition set by women in Saudi marriage contracts was that they should be able to complete their education.

Nearly thirty-five thousand male and female Twitter users from different Gulf countries tweeted using the Arabic-language hashtag *#وش_شرطك_قبل_الزواج* (“What’s your pre-nuptial condition?”), in one of the biggest conversations about marriage conditions on social media, with participants ranging from religious scholars to cultural and social elites from the Gulf, as well as a large number of young men and women of all ages. Many married people also joined the conversation, with women speaking about the extent to which their husbands honored their premarital commitments, especially in relation to allowing them to finish their education, over which they said their husbands broke their promises (Sami, 2017).

It can be noted here that demanding education as an important premarital condition is attributed to more people seeking university education, especially women, who outrank men in the number of university students in most GCC countries. Seeking education as a criterion in potential marriage partners is also important because it serves as a point of compatibility between the spouses. The couple’s educational compatibility helps increase understanding and cooperation between them. A partner’s high level of education allows him/her to have a better job, which ultimately improves the family’s living standards.

Parental Interference in Marital Life

Since marriage, in Gulf society, is arranged and supervised by the families of the couple, the most important factors affecting it lie in marital problems resulting from the parents’ interference in the couple’s life and personal decisions. This interference, to which one of the spouses eventually submits, often comes from a relative, particularly the mother, whether of the husband or of the wife. The prevalence of this behavior has led to the emergence of popular proverbs, including “A mother-in-law will always be a nag, even if she descended from heaven.” This interference may exacerbate existing marital problems between spouses and bring the parents into them, which allows for further interference by relatives and an escalation in the conflict between the husband and his family and the wife and her family. Each party will be forced to take their son/daughter’s side, thus turning the issue from a dispute between husband and wife into a family conflict that cannot be contained or controlled, which often leads to family rifts and divorce. In this regard, many studies confirm that “parental interference in marital life” is considered one of the leading causes of divorce in the Gulf region. In another study on marriage

issues in Kuwait (2002) it was found that “parental interference” ranked third among causes of divorce. Divorce data collected by the Marriage Fund in 2000 found that 66.2% of divorce cases were caused by “parental interference.” According to a study that asked three hundred divorced men and women in the Gulf about the reasons behind their divorce, “parental interference” in the couple’s affairs and decisions ranked second (22.4%). Meanwhile, in an analysis of 440 Gulf men married to foreign women in 2001, which focused on the reasons why they chose to marry a foreigner, 112 said they married foreign women to avoid the interference of parents in their marital life (Al Saif, 1989/1410, p. 260).

It can also be noted that parental interference in marital life has become more frequent over the past few decades. It became associated, in particular, with women’s desire to finish their education after marriage, as well as their work and monthly income. Because of that, marriage contracts began to include conditions relating to the spouses’ rights in order to prevent any future disputes on the matter, allowing women to benefit from their newly granted rights.

Social Media

Gulf families’ use of social media networks, and their preoccupation with virtual groups and following updates, have led some spouses to lose interest in one another, whether in terms of maintaining appearance, meeting emotional needs, involvement in family decisions, or solving family problems. The use of social media has also driven some spouses to pick up unwelcome behavior regarding communicating with their partners and listening to them. In addition, these conversations with virtual groups and the search for entertainment and updates have affected some couples’ interaction with their children, in terms of upbringing, education, entertainment, and health (Al Saif, 1986/1436, p. 256). The extensive use of social media, which opened the door for direct communication between men and women, has had negative effects, including unprecedented patterns of behavior and relationships. In recent years there have been several social studies and reports that documented—in one way or another—the negative effects of social media on the family (Almaaref, n.d.).

Social and Economic Disparity

The economic and social status of each spouse reflects their upbringing and affects their marriage preferences and their awareness of marital duties and treatment. Their experiences in their own families constitute a frame of reference that determines their marriage choices from the very beginning, as

well as their awareness of the value of marital life. Economic dealings are considered to be among the important factors in a stable marriage, which depends on each spouse's ability to understand their common economic ground and set priorities. Success in meeting each other's needs depends on how content each of them is, as well as their ability to deal with any financial challenges that come their way (Mahgoub, 1998, p. 65).

Some disputes may arise within a family due to the couple's financial situation. Ibrahim (2002, p. 24) notes that difficult economic circumstances experienced by the spouses have a negative impact on their marital relationship, and may result in behavioral and psychological disorders for both of them. These circumstances may also make the couple more vulnerable to other life challenges. Economic struggles affect marital emotions related to warmth and hatred, and in turn affect the relationship between the spouses and their marital instability. Conger et al. (1992, p. 529) assert that economic pressures have a negative impact on marital life, making the couple more pessimistic and depressed and less emotionally stable, and therefore affecting their marital harmony.

Al Aamer (2000, p. 63) notes that the family and cultural background of each of the spouses may be among the key reasons behind their incompatibility, especially amid emerging new media and a declining family cultural awareness between spouses. Hence it was imperative to emphasize the importance of similar cultural and family backgrounds between spouses, disparities in which later become the source of many marital disputes and conflicts, which in turn lead to an atmosphere of bickering and tension in a marriage.

Fahim (2002) points out the social factors that negatively affect the life of couples, such as the interference of relatives in their lives and family matters, comparing the living standards of each other's families, comparing a wife's household management and cooking skills to those of her mother-in-law, or the wife's feelings that her husband does not take care of her the way her father took care of her family. Fahim adds that some problems lead to the breakup of a marriage or create a rift in it, such as routine and boredom, which can gradually drain a marriage of mutual passion and love, setting the scene for quarrels and marital disputes.

It should be noted here that during the pre-oil and development era, economic conditions were not of great importance when choosing a partner for marriage, given the predominance of endogenous marriages, which meant that couples seeking marriage most probably belonged to the same socio-economic segment and therefore did not take the economic factor into account as a determinant of marriage. However, this does not mean that wealthy people

in the Gulf, under GCC social life prior to the oil and development era, did not have the opportunity or the ability to marry women outside their family and kinship circles. However, in the era of development and change, economic disparities began to play a clear role in marriage. Women preferred wealthy men, unless they had flaws that negated this preference, while men preferred wealthy women, unless they had other traits that could ruin the advantage of wealth. Scientific research has shown that men who belong to high-status families and have wealthy fathers prefer to marry women of the same professional, social, and economic level. And when individuals try to marry partners belonging to a high social class, it indicates another pattern of “interclass” marriage, in which individuals try to obtain the best possible benefit for themselves and their children, both financially and socially (Judith, 1983).

Some scientific studies have shown that women are more concerned with the economic level of a life partner, as they are more insistent on a man’s status, occupation, and income as key factors in deciding whether or not to choose him (Rajceki & Rasmussen, 1991). But “wealth alone” should not be the determining criterion in marriage choices. It is not wise for a woman to agree to marry a young man simply because he has plenty of money. Similarly, it is not wise for a young man to marry a girl simply because she is wealthy. From an Islamic point of view, the minimum level of wealth is “sufficiency,” in the sense that a man has enough to cover his marriage costs and support his wife and children to lead a decent life based on the general society to which they belong. In fact, Islam requires that a man be able to support his family in order for the marriage contract to be valid. However, the power of financial means in contemporary life has made people desperate for material wealth, with people being judged based on their wealth, not on having enough to support themselves without needing help from anyone. And with the growing role of materialism in people’s lives, many men have begun to prefer wealthy women, or women who have a job that offers financial remuneration and thus contributes to their living expenses, while women prefer wealthy men (Brown et al., 1996). It should be noted that these purely material preferences contradict the predominant culture in Muslim societies, where culture and religion dictate that the husband is responsible for supporting the family. In reality, a woman’s inherited wealth makes her the preference of many men, especially those who want to gain easy wealth, although it is not permissible for a man to tap into a woman’s wealth beyond that which she willingly offers. A man who is completely adherent to the prevailing social culture would not favor a woman simply because she has wealth, because money should not be the only reason for marriage. Preference should be given to a woman of honor

and dignity, who spends her wealth on her family without treating them like a charity. In addition, a wealthy woman who seeks marriage usually takes her time to ensure her suitor's main motive is not to take over her wealth.

Work and Marriage

Work is considered to be a social phenomenon that has been associated with humans for as long as they have existed and has since intersected with many of the surrounding human phenomena. Survival and remaining active required humans to work hard in order to fulfill their sensual and social needs. In addition, humans' output from work is what shaped their social status and identified many of their social and class-based relationships with those around them.

And perhaps one of these is marriage. Gulf men, especially during the era of development and change in contemporary Gulf societies, have not usually sought marriage until they have secured a livelihood through work, they being primarily responsible for covering the dowry and supporting their wives, along with all the associated expenses. Women's participation in work was expected as part of traditional life in the region. Productivity in rural societies was determined by the division of traditional labor assigned to each person based on their age and gender. Women worked within the homogeneous traditional context of rural communities, in which everyone knew each other.

As urbanization expanded and populations moved from rural areas to urban communities following efforts to achieve comprehensive development in the GCC, each country experienced significant mobility and merging between different social segments and areas within the six countries. People no longer knew each member of their community, and work became mostly limited to men, while large segments of women stayed at home as housewives. As educational opportunities opened up across GCC states, women were gradually able to engage in work outside their homes, with rates increasing at the present time to levels unprecedented for the GCC. Women's engagement in new jobs has become more noticeable by the day, going beyond typical women's work in education and health to also include the security and military sectors. Gulf countries' governments have pushed for these radical changes to reduce the risks of dependence on foreign labor and to invest in local human resources and potential.

While women's work within the framework of traditional Gulf life did not cause any trouble or additional burdens on married Gulf women, as all members of their extended families contributed equally to productivity and household chores based on their age and gender, this changed completely later on. With urban expansion, the extended family turned into a nuclear one,

mostly limited to a husband, wife, and their minor children. This left married women to bear all the household burdens, in addition to their work outside the home. It also meant that married Gulf women working outside the home faced myriad challenges that reflected on many considerations related to marriage, stability, and marital harmony.

Below is a brief review of social studies in the six Gulf countries that have tackled different aspects of the work phenomenon in relation to marriage.

First of all, it is worth mentioning that these studies addressed specific issues in married women's relationship with work. One focused on evaluating the factors that motivate women to work and the reality of the female workforce within the overall national workforce. A second highlighted the problems and challenges resulting from married women's labor, and a third focused on the role of work in empowering married women and raising their social status.

Al Zhufairi (1996) focused on the reality and motives behind women's work in Kuwait and found that these motives were not all economic, as in some other societies. He showed that other motives, in addition to the financial aspect, included self-fulfillment, securing the future, achieving personal goals, and psychological motives such as proving their ability to produce and work, all of which are real incentives for women to work outside the home. His study also showed the openness and acceptance within Kuwaiti society of women's work outside the home, allowing them the freedom to choose their specialization and the type of work that suits them. This freedom, however, remains restricted by conditions including avoiding work associated with men, as Kuwaiti women have no desire to engage in men's professions and trades, such as mechanics or electricians, and they tend to take jobs that do not require contact with men.

Despite the general agreement that responsibility for the family is shared between men and women, there is a general and almost unanimous agreement on the roles of men and women in the home, as in all other traditional societies. Al Zhufairi's study confirmed that hiring maids/ servants plays a clear role in encouraging women to work and facilitating their family lives. The absence of servants/maids, however, does not stop many from carrying out their work, which provides them with faith in the future, self-confidence, and financial independence.

A study by Al Falassi (2001) on the status of Emirati women working in the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs found that Emirati women constituted 36.6% of employees at the ministry. This rate rose with the rise of female graduates. It also found that the women:men employment ratio had stood at 167:64 in the past five years, that Emirati working women's contribution

increased from 3.4% in 1980 to 13% in 1995, and that the proportion of female employees at the ministry rose to nearly 40% in 1998. Women's interest in working at the ministry is due to criteria consistent with their tendencies, including the office work pattern, the limited working hours, and a preference for government work over other sectors, in addition to the limited relationships within a confined geographical and institutional framework. The study underscored the limited number of women in leadership positions, with only one woman for every seven men, or a ratio of 12.5–87.5%. In administrative managerial positions, there was only one woman for every 24 men, or 4–96%. The study also highlighted factors affecting female workers at the ministry, including customs, traditions, values, and avoiding interaction with men, in addition to men's view of working women and their blocking of all openings that might make women demand work, as well as the impact of the geographical factor, according to which women working away from their families is considered unacceptable.

A study by the Supreme Council for Women in Bahrain (2014) addressing the reality of Bahraini women in the media sampled 62 Bahraini women working in public and private media organizations in Bahrain, both foreign and Arabic, including press, TV, broadcasting, public relations, and advertising agencies. Broken down by marital status, the sample came out as follows: 46% married, 42% single, 37% married with children, and 60% without children. In terms of the nature of their work, the study showed that 37% of Bahraini women in the media held leadership positions within their organizations, while 55% of the respondents faced difficulties in their media work, most notably long working hours.

A study by the Arab Women Organization in cooperation with the Supreme Council for Women (2013) on the reality of the workforce in government organizations in Bahrain found that women made up 47.8% of public sector employees in 2011, compared to 52% men, which constitutes a high rate compared to other GCC countries.

A study on the problems faced by working women in Kuwaiti society (Al Wasat, 2015a, 2015b) found that around 87% of women work one shift until 2 pm, while 9% work one shift until 4 pm, and 3% take on a double shift. This means that women largely prefer one shift ending at 2 pm in order to have time for family obligations (if married) or to enjoy their social life (if single). The study indicated that women's representation varied according to job category. For example, the rate of women in the 'officer' category was 84%, compared to 64% for men. Meanwhile, 13% of women worked as 'head of department' or 'supervisor', and only 1% as 'administrative manager' and above. The study attributed the high rates of women in lower job categories to their social status

and prioritizing their families, which affected their work and promotion prospects.

The study found that with regard to working women bearing responsibility, 80% of women noted that working women's capabilities and ability to bear responsibility and hold public positions were ignored, and 72% of men agreed. It also indicated that 65% of husbands were understanding of their wives' working and helped them with managing household tasks and raising the children. Forty-nine percent of women agreed with this, giving an overall rate of 52%, whereas 17% of men and 12% of women disagreed, for an overall rate of 14%, which shows that husbands were understanding of their wives' work circumstances.

A survey on women's work in the UAE (Family Development Centers, 2016) asked respondents what they thought about the state's support for working women through its laws on maternity leave, and how fair it was in its support of women. It found that 46% thought these laws effective, as they provided sufficient support to working women, and considered the existing labor laws in place as fair, while 54% of respondents thought the laws to be weak and unfair to working women.

In terms of the second issue addressed by studies on married women's work, namely, the problems and challenges arising from it, several Gulf studies have revealed a host of negative aspects. Al Rashidi (2006), who examined positive and negative aspects of women's work, concluded that women's work was marred by drawbacks resulting from their inability to balance work and household demands due to poor planning and for personal reasons.

In terms of marital relations, the changing status of working women, their feeling of independence, having the freedom of choice, and their liberation from family and social constraints, have given rise to a sense of self-reliance and desire for control, which can harm marital relationships and therefore become a source of rifts on the women's side. This can result in men developing feelings of jealousy of their wives doing well and succeeding at work, which is evident in the high level of marital disputes of different forms, including psychological divorce. This is where the two spouses live in the same house but have no intimacy, yet their fighting increases, turning their marriage into an empty shell and a formal relationship that only continues due to the pressure of norms and the spouses' fear for their reputation and social status. Rising divorce rates across Arab societies are thus a clear indicator of disturbed family and marital relations, and serve as a warning of grave consequences for family and community stability, as divorce has a negative ripple effect in relation to the upbringing and future of the children. Working women's neglect of their husbands and being occupied for long hours at work followed by exhaustion

at home, as well as their need to rest during this free time and inability to communicate with their husbands, all lead to creating a distance between the two, which negatively affects their mental state. Al Rashidi (2006, p. 7) points to the results of a study conducted on working married women, who reported a number of these negative effects. Eighty-four percent of respondents said “My absence upsets my husband when he is at home”; 42% said “My husband loses his temper when I talk about my work problems”; 23% said “My husband feels hurt when I leave him alone during severe illness”; 22% said “My husband worries when I postpone having another child”; 12% said “I get on my husband’s nerves when I want to have a say in important family matters”; and 9% said “My husband gets angry when I ask for his help with household tasks like cooking, washing the dishes, and doing laundry.”

To study the social obstacles facing women working in the health sector, Al Zahrani (2010/1432) sampled 400 female hospital workers in both the public and private sectors in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Her findings showed that children’s needs affect working women’s performance, and that hospital work doubles their roles in hospital and at home. It also showed that contact with men at hospitals and during nightshifts constitutes a difficulty for female workers. A large number of the respondents complained that they faced harassment from male coworkers. They also blamed the stigma associated with female healthcare workers on the belief that their work does not conform with the moral values of Saudi society.

Regarding job satisfaction among female hospital workers, it was found that creating shift schedules based on their personal and social circumstances was one of the factors contributing to their satisfaction, whereas the night shift system forced them to give up their work at the hospital. In addition, lack of involvement in decision-making affected female workers’ job satisfaction.

A study on the problems faced by working women in Kuwaiti society (Al Wasat, 2015a, 2015b) found that 63% of female employees face unease, harassment, and implicit or explicit verbal sexual harassment. The study warned against the negative impact on their marriages and raising their children, especially with regard to financial disagreements between working women and their husbands.

It found that 44% of men and 17% of women said women were constantly subjected to harassment, while 26% of men and 48% of women thought there was active harassment of working women, bringing the total of those who thought harassment occurred to 74% of men and 52% of women, for an overall total of 63%. The results also revealed key differences between men and women’s opinions on the extent of harassment that women are subjected to, attributing this to women being ashamed to mention the harassment they

experience; even if what is said does not refer to them specifically, they either forget it or ignore it and do not bring it up with other female colleagues, whereas men usually speak about what they notice or hear with their colleagues.

In terms of working women's financial relationship with their husbands, the study concluded that around 48% of men and 33% of women believed it had a negative impact on their marital lives. Meanwhile, 43% of women and roughly 30% of men thought women's work and salaries had no effect on their relationships, which means that 53% thought that women's work had a negative impact on marital harmony, while 49% thought it had no impact at all.

As for children, 54% of men believed women's work negatively impacted childrearing, while 27% of women denied this, given that men linked it to other factors, notably the availability of maids/servants. Other surveys have shown that women's work raises the negative impact of maids by 93% for men and 82% for women, with an average of 87%.

The study also showed that 92% of men thought women did not contribute to the family's financial burdens, while 8% of men thought women contributed by 25% or less. Meanwhile, 84% of women said they contributed to financial burdens in good faith and at their own initiative, and a further 16% of women admitted to contributing at the husband's request. The study suggested several reasons for the differences between men and women in terms of financial contributions, including men's shame over such contributions and having different understandings of family financial burdens. Women see these burdens as including their personal expenses, which should be covered by their husbands, but men see these personal expenses as having nothing to do with family burdens.

In a study on women's work in the UAE (Family Development Centers, 2016) 47% of respondents said women's absence from the home due to work was among the reasons for family problems, while 46% considered women's work essential at the present time. In addition, 52% stated that women's work affected their care, duties, and role in the family, while 40% thought women's work had a negative effect on their familial duties. Meanwhile, 8% said women's work did no harm and did not affect their main familial duties; 47% said women's absence was among the reasons for family problems; and 37% said their absence from the home was the main reason for familial problems.

The third area of study focused on the advantages of married women's work, and its role in empowering them and raising and strengthening their social status. Abdelfattah (1990) sought to identify the level of job satisfaction depending on psychological needs, as well as the link between psychological

needs and teaching job satisfaction among women working in Dubai's elementary schools. Her study found differences between married and unmarried teachers in terms of their personal and social satisfaction, which was greater among experienced married teachers. There were also differences in terms of psychological needs related to submission, order, reviews, autonomy, control, self-blame, and empathy, which were also greater among experienced married teachers.

Al Otaibi (1993/1414) attempted to identify the familial and social impact of work outside the home by educated married women with children on marital relations and child-raising. She sampled 365 educated working and non-working mothers, and found no difference in the performance of the two groups in any aspect related to participating with husbands in decision-making. Her study also showed that women working away from home had neither a negative nor a positive impact on their marriages or understanding of each other's burdens or participation in housework. Regarding the impact of women's work on childcare and nutrition, the study found no difference between the performance of educated working and non-working women and that both were inclined to bottle feed their babies. It also found that working women spent less time with their children due to the nature of their work than non-working women.

As for the impact of women's work on the social upbringing of their children, the results showed that women's work contributed to their reliance on maids to raise the children. The study also found that working women were more likely to guide and direct when addressing children's mistakes. As for the impact of their work on their view of pregnancy, the results showed that their work had a negative impact on the size of the family and a positive impact on the use of contraceptives.

Al Souyan (2000/1421) conducted a comparative study on the impact of wives' work on their participation in family decision-making, sampling 385 working and non-working wives from Riyadh with various levels of education. The study revealed the active impact of the wife's age variable on her participation in decision-making on some family-related issues, like deciding the number of children and seeking the wife's approval when making certain purchases, meaning that the older the wife, the more the husband consults her, which reflects the wife's increasing experience and maturity with age.

The study also showed a correlation between the wives' education and their husbands' approval of their work outside the home. However, there was no correlation between the wives' educational level and their participation in family decisions relating to the children's education, upbringing, and naming. A link was found between the nature of the wives' work and their husbands'

keenness to consult them and approval of their work outside the home. Meanwhile, there was no link between the nature of the wives' work and their stance if their husbands did not consult them. In addition, the study noted the role of the wives' work conditions in increasing understanding between spouses. There was no statistical evidence of a connection between the variable of wives' work conditions and their husbands' consulting them. The study revealed that spouses make decisions together regardless of the length of their marriage. It also found a statistically significant correlation between the length of the marriage in years and husbands' acceptance of their wives' taking the initiative to establish social relations with other families. There was also a statistical correlation between the number of children and husbands' consulting their wives when making certain purchases. The study found no link between wives' participation in family decision-making and a number of other variables, including the wives' work, their employment level, their family status, and their husbands' economic and social status.

Al Rashidi's study (2006) on the positive and negative aspects of women's work found advantages that included increasing nationwide economic development and benefiting from experienced and educated women, in addition to "Saudiizing" female jobs. Women's work fills their free time, especially with the availability of new technology that helps save time and effort on household chores. Work also gives women a sense of value to the community as they become an active pillar in the country's development. The study found a host of other advantages and disadvantages related to women's work, including raising the family's income, increasing the level of their welfare, and plugging income gaps for many families. In addition, women's work added to the family's economic power, enabling them to achieve a better life.

Al Sulaimi (2008), who sampled 400 working, married Saudi women, found a link between a family's socio-economic variables and the economic role of working women and marital harmony. She also found statistical differences in the economic role of working women in terms of some socio-economic family variables. However, there were no statistical differences in marital harmony between working women who contributed and did not contribute to household expenses.

Al Aan and Al Zhafri (2012) showed that Omani working women have fulfilled their psychological and social needs. They found that the women's most fulfilled human need was self-acceptance, while the least fulfilled was mental security. They showed that family needs were the most fulfilled, and social responsibility the least. Moreover, their results indicated differences in psychological needs based on the total salary of the working woman. It was

also found that the level of fulfillment among women working in the public sector was higher than it was among women working in the private sector. Meanwhile, levels of need were not affected by other variables like age, experience, number of children, or educational qualifications. The authors concluded their study with a number of recommendations and suggestions that fed into meeting working women's needs, contributing to their development, and tapping their abilities.

These studies generally confirm that women's work has strengthened their social status and power to an extent that led to them being involved in making family decisions with their husbands, meaning that husbands' decisions are no longer unilateral. They also generally show the ability of working Gulf women to contribute to the workforce while largely avoiding any negative impact on their families.

Studies on the work of married women in the Gulf have made several recommendations and offered strategic views targeting the difficulties they face that limit their engagement in the labor market. There is no doubt that addressing these difficulties would lead to increased participation by Gulf women in the workforce, which will— in the medium and long run—help lessen and alleviate the near-total dependence on non-national workers, both male and female. Among these studies is that of Al Rashidi (2006), which confirmed that overcoming the problems related to women's work will require extensive, diligent effort and the participation of several parties in the community. It will also center on developing women's personality and the concept of work. In addition, it will require work to change stereotypes about the roles of women and men in family life, as well as the drafting of new laws on women's work that take into consideration their family responsibilities.

All of this would contribute to creating a positive atmosphere for dealing with the negative aspects associated with women's work, including:

1. Female employees should be allowed to start work slightly later than official working hours in all government departments, even if only by one hour, so that their guardians can drive them to work.
2. Proper means of transportation, such as metro stations, should be established.
3. Female employees should work fewer hours so that their work day ends before men's and they can return home and finish their household tasks.
4. Women should not be assigned night shifts.
5. Maternity leave should be extended to three months and women should be granted breastfeeding breaks after their return to work in order to properly nourish and raise their children; nurseries should also be established at the workplace.

6. Young women in universities should be educated about the importance and goals of their work, besides the material gains.
7. Ministries of labor and social affairs should contribute to increasing women's charities to achieve social and economic development.
8. The hierarchical structure of female employment should be amended by creating jobs with shorter hours and allowing greater flexibility for attendance and absence, in addition to part-time and full-time employment.
9. If women are seeking work and income to help their husbands with family expenses, it is recommended that husbands receive salary increases so as not to need their wives to work; there should also be a salary increase based on the number of children.

Al Sulaimi (2008) made a set of recommendations on the importance of preparing women for marriage and for the labor market. The most notable was to design compulsory guidance programs for young brides-to-be to help them learn the importance of managing their future families' financial income, and ways to deal with husbands and achieve marital happiness. Training programs should also be held for working wives to learn the effect of their economic role on marital happiness and harmony. Al Sulaimi also suggested producing TV programs aimed at creating general awareness among working wives about the importance of their economic role and its impact.

The study by Bahrain's Supreme Council for Women (2014) also concluded with a set of recommendations on providing mothers working in the media with a suitable working environment and hours that suit the specific nature of women who respect their family commitments as mothers. These included not having them work late at night or being placed on a shift-based system, in order to enable them to carry out their various tasks and duties to the best of their abilities.

The study by the Arab Women Organization in cooperation with the Supreme Council for Women (2013), on the reality of the workforce in government institutions in Bahrain, also concluded with a set of recommendations seeking to find a qualitative balance in fair government appointments to select national competencies among men and women, as well as to bridge the gap within ministries and institutions where there is a clear workforce imbalance. Its recommendations included finding fair systems and methods to allow career progression for men and women based on their qualifications and experience, as well as encouraging women to continue to work and providing them with support to balance their family and job duties.

The study on problems faced by working women in Kuwaiti society (Al Wasat, 2015a, 2015b) focused on overcoming difficulties arising from married

women's work, such as extending the period of childcare to four years, facilitating unrestricted family care leave for working women, allowing them to enjoy a partial salary, amending working hours for wives and mothers and replacing them with either set hours per day or full workdays three times a week, building childcare centers for preschool children near workplaces, and extending leave for married working women who have children.

The Family Development Centers study (2016) on women's work in the UAE emphasized, in its recommendations, the importance of establishing nurseries in all government institutions, lowering the retirement age for women, amending maternity leave to serve working women, amending retirement laws to allow women to carry out their principal duties of caring for their children until they reach school age, and reducing dependence on maids and the consequent negative impact on children and families in general.

Migration and Marriage

Migration is considered one of the demographic processes (fertility, mortality, and migration) with the deepest impact on the population in all six Gulf countries. In terms of volumetric impact, the rate of immigrants to GCC countries ranged between 29% (Oman) and 89% (UAE) in 2010 (Table 1.12). The rate of immigrants to Gulf countries has continued to be substantial: in 2016, the rate ranged between 37% (Saudi Arabia) and 70% (Kuwait). Some sources indicate that the rate of immigrants in Qatar and the UAE currently stands at approximately 80% of the total population (Ana Hawa', n.d.).

Immigrants in the GCC continue to constitute a demographically, socially, and economically distinct segment from the indigenous population of the six countries. Analysis and comparisons between citizens and immigrants in terms of demographic issues and socio-economic indicators reveal a wide range of differentiation between the two groups.

Perhaps the most important issue in this context is that the presence of such large numbers of immigrants has provided an opportunity for social mergers through marriage between citizens and immigrants. As we noted earlier in this chapter, this has resulted in the passing of a number of statutes and laws to regulate such marriages in all Gulf countries.

The impact of international migration to GCC countries is not limited to what has happened during the past six decades. In the pre-oil and development era beginning from the 1960s, Gulf peoples mixed with others in neighboring countries through the migration of people seeking a livelihood from the east (India and Southeast Asia), north (Iran, Iraq, and the Levant), and west (Egypt, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa). In addition, there were *hajj* and *umrah* pilgrimage groups that flocked to Mecca and Madina from all

corners of the Islamic world over the centuries. This affected the cultural, demographic, and urban blending of these two cities as they embraced immigrants from Muslim countries who settled there and never returned home after performing their pilgrimages. Thus these segments became a large part of the population and urban scene in Mecca and Medina (Al Khalifa, 1989/1410).

Table 1.12 Rate of immigrants to GCC countries as percentage of total population, 2010–2016

Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
UAE	89	–	–	–	–	–	–
Bahrain	54	51	50	51	52	53	53
Saudi Arabia	31	32	32	32	33	36	37
Oman	29	39	42	44	43	44	45
Qatar	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Kuwait	64	65	65	66	68	69	70

Source GCC-STAT

Internal migration has also been ongoing in the six Gulf countries, especially since the 1960s. The implementation of comprehensive development projects in the GCC resulted in rural-urban migration, with the population moving to promising urban centers to improve their economic and social conditions. This, perhaps, is what distinguishes these trends from the internal migration patterns experienced by the peoples of the region prior to the era of comprehensive development, when tribes would move from one territory to another, for either environmental or economic reasons (Ibn Bishr, 1982), as in the migration of Arab tribes from central and northern Najd to Iraq due to famines and droughts that hit the area in the past century, or as a result of occasional tribal conflicts that forced some tribes to relocate.

Either way, internal migration from villages to cities contributed to social blending with the urban dwellers, and it became possible for people to marry outside of their group or tribe. This led to a shift from consanguineous marriages to exogenous marriages, allowing city residents to marry outside their family circle or tribe. On the other hand, this shift also contributed to the rise in divorce rates. While endogenous marriage was associated with rare divorces in the pre-oil era, exogenous marriage resulted in unprecedented rates of divorce, and customs and traditions such as reserving a cousin for marriage no longer played any role in family cohesion and protection.

Marriages between citizens and immigrants constitute one of the phenomena most associated with the effect of migration on marriage. To

identify the reality of marriage between citizens and immigrants, we look into the rates of this type of marriage in the Gulf per thousand people during the period between 2001 and 2016. The rate of these marriages has been calculated based on marriage contracts in which one of the spouses is a citizen and the other is an immigrant. It is found that the rate of these marriages is declining, and has ranged between 0.05 per thousand people in Saudi Arabia in 2016 to 1.16 in Kuwait in 2009. The substantial differences between GCC countries by year: Kuwait is ahead of all other GCC countries in terms of the high rate of marriage between citizens and immigrants in all years, except for 2001, when Bahrain topped the list with a rate of 1.05, compared to 0.84 in Kuwait. It can also be noted that the rate peaked in Kuwait in 2009, reaching 1.16 per thousand people, before dropping gradually to reach 0.81 in 2015.

Qatar ranked third in terms of the highest rate between 2001 and 2009, reaching 0.39 and 0.27 per thousand respectively. The rate peaked at 0.58 in 2004, before dropping gradually and eventually reaching 0.19 in 2015. Oman ranked second in 2010 with a rate of 0.37, gradually dropping to 0.19 in 2015, then rising slightly to 0.24 in 2016. As for the UAE, the rate peaked at 0.15 in 2002, before dropping steadily to 0.07 between 2007 and 2010. In Saudi Arabia, the rate was 0.16 in 2011, before jumping to 0.51 in 2014 and then dropping to its lowest at 0.05 in 2016. It must be noted here that the rate of marriage between citizens and immigrants not only reflects a general trend towards these marriages, but also largely reflects the official laws that regulate them. These laws are known to be generally strict, albeit more tolerant towards men marrying immigrant women than towards women marrying immigrant men, and perhaps the graph above highlights this issue.

The ratio of men married to non-citizens vs. women married to non-citizens, it can be noted that this ratio has increased significantly in Kuwait, where the average in 2001–2015 was about 239 Kuwaiti men per hundred Kuwaiti women. The ratio ranged from 206 Kuwaiti men per hundred Kuwaiti women in 2001 to 330 Kuwaiti men per hundred Kuwaiti women in 2008. In general, this means that there is one Kuwaiti woman married to a non-citizen for every two Kuwaiti men married to noncitizens. Bahrain ranked second with an average ratio of 174 Bahraini men married to non-Bahraini women per hundred Bahraini women married to non-Bahraini men. The ratio was 67:100 in 2002 before rising to 329:100 in 2008. In Oman, the average ratio was 102 Omani men married to non-Omani women per hundred Omani women married to non-Omani men. The ratio ranged between 93.38:100 in 2011 and 83.22:100 in 2014, before rising to reach 128.11:100 and 136.95:100 in 2015 and 2016 respectively.

In Saudi Arabia, the average ratio was no more than 62 Saudi men married to non-Saudi women per hundred Saudi women married to non-Saudi men. The ratio shows a gradual decline, to 19.69:100 and 34.95 in 2014 and 2016 respectively. Despite the limited number of years for which data are available on nationality-based heterogeneous marriages in Saudi Arabia, it can be said with a fair degree of certainty that there are far more Saudi women married to non-Saudi men than Saudi men married to non-Saudi women. It can also be said that Saudi women are more likely to marry non-citizens than their Gulf sisters. This can be attributed to cultural and geographical factors, as Saudi Arabia has long borders with all five GCC countries—while the rest of these countries have borders only with Saudi Arabia, except for Oman and the UAE—thus allowing families and tribes residing in those areas to marry citizens across the border. On the other hand, the inter-population migrations that occurred in the countries of the region in the 1960s and 1970s also formed cultural factors, which could explain why Saudi women tend to marry non-Saudis. It is familial and tribal homogeneity that explains these observed differences in ratios.

Marriage Amid the Conflict and War

The social life system in societies under raging war and conflicts is exposed to many changes that affect all aspects of life, and marriage is no exception. This dimension of marriage literature has significantly captured the attention of researchers, who have studied the impact of war on family and marriage demographics, including issues of fertility and early marriage. One study (Cetorelli, 2014) on the impact of the 2003–2011 Iraq war on fertility showed that low fertility rates, which existed before 2003, were further depressed during the war. Most of these low rates were among less educated women, which could have also been a result of poverty. The study indicates the possibility that birth control among married people has won significant consideration through the availability of family planning services since the regime was changed and the curfew ended. On the other hand, the period after 2003 witnessed a sudden change in fertility among younger people. After the beginning of the war, fertility among teenagers saw a sharp increase due to the spread of early marriages, which came in reaction to the harsh security situation and a rise in conservatism across Iraq. Among the impacts of the war that directly reflected on marriage was the lack of security, especially the actual and anticipated risks of sexual harassment of women, along with the return of sectarian, tribal, and other conservative forces. This prevented many women from taking part in public life or even leaving the house without being accompanied by a male relative. In this context, the rise in women's willingness

to accept early marriage due to the lack of alternatives is understandable. Families under these pressures considered early marriage the best way to protect their girls and the family honor. The study (Cetorelli, 2014) also notes an increase in early marriage after 2011 as a result of the new escalation of sectarian violence and rebellion following the departure of the last remaining US troops. It is worth mentioning here that the war-driven move towards early marriage raises concerns, as it is well known that women who marry as teenagers tend to settle for lower living conditions and face higher risks of infant mortality when giving birth, as well as deteriorating health conditions for themselves and their children. The harmful impact could double if we take into consideration the reality that these phenomena are common among women with lower levels of education. In contrast, the spread of early marriage and childbirth among women of secondary or higher education was relatively low and never saw an increase in Iraq after 2003.

As for the Gulf, there are no statistics or information on the subject, simply because none of the six countries has ever experienced conflicts or bloody wars that reflected on the institution of marriage, except for Kuwait, which was invaded by Iraq in the 1990s; however, no studies were found to have been carried out on the impact of war on marriage there. Moreover, there have been no studies on the impact on marriage of the involvement of the coalition forces, which included the majority of GCC countries.

Nevertheless, some Gulf countries have seen a large influx of families due to violence taking place in neighboring countries, particularly in Syria, Iran, Iraq, and Palestine before that. According to social networks, a growing number of young Gulf men have been marrying women from these families under the influence of internet websites and social media that have promoted this type of marriage since war broke out in these countries (Ajel, 2015). To date, there are no official statistics in any Gulf country reflecting the extent of these marriages or their characteristics that could be used to survey their reality and different interactions.

Conclusion

Gulf countries share common social, cultural, economic, and environmental factors that were the basic determinants of the phenomena that have emerged there since their establishment as independent states. Marriage, therefore, has interacted with these common factors in all Gulf countries without exception, and the marriage institution was influenced in each Gulf country by the same factors.

Among the most notable common factors in Gulf countries is the shift away from rural production patterns, which depended on limited natural resources

and contributed to the continuity of a traditional style of life, to industrial production patterns that are directly dependent on the discovery of oil in the middle of the last century. These conditions helped Gulf countries to abandon their domestic isolation and made them, one way or another, an integral part of the global economic system, which led to these countries exchanging impacts and influences with the global course of events.

This chapter built a developmental and functional approach to explain the marriage institution and related phenomena depending on the analytical duality of stability and change. It also took into account how these countries went through two main eras:

First: The pre-oil era, when social and economic life was continuous and stable, with hardly any significant social changes, which is why the institution of marriage continued—in numbers and style—as it had always been in these countries; and Second: The post-oil era, when all these countries marched towards development, followed by continuous changes in all aspects of social, economic, and cultural life, deeply affecting the institution of marriage and all aspects of marital life.

Hence the approaches this chapter relied on to describe and analyze all the phenomena related to marriage through an analytical duality, which looked at each phenomenon as it existed prior to the oil boom and then described and analyzed its current condition through marriage-related statistical reports from Gulf countries and international regional institutions, as well as the results of scientific studies across Gulf countries, to discuss marriage-related issues. All of this work has culminated in this chapter, which has tried as much as possible to offer an analytical description of the past and present state of the institution of marriage.

Perhaps the most striking aspect covered by this chapter relates to the universality of marriage in Gulf countries. During the pre-oil era, marriage was a universal phenomenon, meaning that all community members, men and women, were linked by marriage. This old reality has changed, and current marriage rates show that a segment of men and women remain unmarried until a much later age due to structural factors like expanding education opportunities, high marriage costs, and men's tendency to marry from outside the country.

These structural changes in Gulf countries, like urbanization and internal and external migration, have contributed to changing the types of marriage from endogenous and consanguineous to exogenous, increasingly moving away from the circle of relatives within the family or tribe, especially in urban areas. Other marriage types have emerged without taking into consideration many of the values needed as a foundation for the marriage institution.

Heterogeneous marriages have also emerged, and marrying non-Gulf women has become popular among men, and vice versa. Moreover, new, unprecedented types of marriage have also emerged, including *misyar* ("visitor's") and *misfar* ("traveler's") marriages, among others. With these changes have come a host of challenges, and legislative authorities have issued laws to regulate these marriages and preserve the rights of the parties involved.

Other radical changes include the marriage age. People of both genders previously used to marry at an early age. Factors like education, work, and high marriage costs have led many in Gulf countries to postpone marriage. It has become common for men to get married at the age of 28 and women at 24 and older.

Marital relations have also undergone many transformations, including shifts from family intimacy, stability, and cohesion, to estrangement, disharmony, and disintegration. This has been caused by disagreements resulting from the challenges that some families face in daily life, as well as the transformation from the extended family model to that of the nuclear family, and the fact that marriage and its continuation have changed from being a collective decision made by the extended family to an individual decision aimed at meeting individual needs and aspirations, which often leads to the breakdown of the marriage at the slightest obstacle within the nuclear family. This has led to unprecedented divorce rates, as well as the emergence of problems related to child-rearing, alimony, and other matters, giving rise across the Gulf to legislation to combat and contain these challenges.

The transformations in terms of work and how it reflects on marriage, as higher education among women and the Gulf countries' expansion of development projects and attempts to minimize the foreign labor force have all led to the enactment of legislation and the opening of the labor market to the female workforce. Gulf countries continue to expand efforts to empower Gulf women to work, even in the security and military sectors. The chapter also observed the consequences of increasing women's participation in the labor market on the marriage institution. A number of studies have noted the positive effects of women's work on their lives, families, and communities. However, they also found a wide range of problems arising from married women's work, affecting marital harmony, child-rearing, and dependence on maids/servants.

Given that migration plays a special role in Gulf countries, with labor migration accounting for around 30% or more of the population in most of these countries, the chapter took into account the role of external migration in marriage, which has given rise to heterogeneous marriages in terms of nationality, religion, and language. Internal migration and rural-to-urban

relocation have also had a profound effect on the shift from consanguineous and endogenous marriages to exogamy.

In general, the marriage institution in the contemporary Gulf countries has been subjected to radical changes that could increase even more as a result of globalization and its repercussions on social, economic, cultural, and political systems. Gulf countries are currently undergoing further modernization to adapt to pressing societal needs, which will facilitate the integration of these communities within today's global developments.

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