

# Clientelism Within the Arabi- an Gulf States and Beyond: A Comparative Study

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*Abstract* Clientelism is a widespread phenomenon, often resulting from preexisting socioeconomic conditions such as inequalities, government dominance over the economy, and deficiencies in political institutions. State formation ushered vote buying into clientelistic behaviour and reinforced brokerage systems. This work synthesises the existing literature to examine theoretical aspects of clientelism and its applications in four regions, while providing comparative frameworks. A key conclusion is that each individual country exhibits distinct clientelistic, brokerage and vote buying behaviour, yet stays within fundamental parameters of the phenomenon.

Keywords: Clientelism, Vote Buying, Brokerage, Political Economy, Welfare State GCC, Arabian Gulf, Argentina, Taiwan, Benin

## Introduction

State formation is an enduring task. Its purpose is to improve institutional efficiencies and set policies and standards for development. Yet, certain cultural and societal tendencies persevere that could affect development. Clientelism, is a social structure where exchanges of services occur among a patron, an entity of higher social status, and clients, who are of lower status, remains intact within contemporary settings. While state formation yielded new institutions and bureaucratic processes, it also affected the clientelistic behaviour and its mechanisms. The purpose of this article is twofold: first it briefly recounts some theories of clientelism and second, it relates applications of the social

phenomenon from around the world, with emphasis on comparing clientelistic systems. This work begins by describing the fundamental concepts of clientelism; by noting formations of the relationships and mechanisms. Additionally, the work recalls factors that induce clientelism, with reference to specific socioeconomic conditions.

Outlining the factors that influence clientelism provides a fundamental context for comparative analysis. Once general principles of clientelism are understood, then recounting clientelistic systems in South East Asia, Africa and South America eases the basis for comparative analysis. Furthermore, by studying regional examples of clientelism readers may appreciate the prevalence of the social phenomenon and its augmentation due to cultural characteristics.

The selected time frame of each regional examination is the period following state-formation. Emphasising contextual analysis in this period – especially with the introduction of electoral competition – provides valuable insights on clientelistic dynamics in changing environments. Lastly, this work examines clientelistic behaviours in the Arabian Gulf states. The social phenomenon is not only prevalent in the noted region but also intricate in form and practice. The discovery of oil and subsequent establishment of welfare states furthered clientelism dynamics and penetrated societal relations in the Gulf States. Introducing elections in the Arabian Gulf states resulted in familiar global clientelistic behaviour.

The work concludes that clientelism reacted to developments because of state formation and the introduction of elections. Factors permeating clientelism are social inequalities and divisions (including ethnicity and gender), low productivity and competition for state resources. Instances of vote buying increases if countries witnessed clientelism. For instance, political sympathies in Southern America are more likely to influence vote-buying behaviours than other regions. The introduction of elections widened patrons' client base, as competition for new state resources intensified. Omitted demographics from clientelistic systems often attempt to seek legitimate alternatives. In Benin, women and youth are typically omitted from clientelistic systems. Their frustration catalysed efforts to vote for electoral candidates who run campaigns based on policy platforms rather than resource redistribution. Vote buying in the Arab Gulf states is far more lucrative compared to other regions, yet less intricate in its organisational efforts. The Gulf States demonstrate an intricate application of clientelism.

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telism, as personal relations necessitate accomplishing bureaucratic tasks, engaging in economic activities and socioeconomic progression. Prior to examining applications of clientelism, understanding its principles and theories is required.

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## Theoretical Framework of Clientelism

According to Scott, political experiences in the developing world can be categorised into two models: the horizontal and primordial models. The former is based on the Marxist notion of class conflict to help explain a nation's efforts at modernisation following colonialism. This model was most effective in analysing social changes occurring in rural areas. The primordial model emphasises identity dynamics, such as ethnicity, religion and language, as the primary source of societal conflict, where isolated groups compete for power. Nonetheless, both frameworks were inadequate in analysing political activity in the developing world, where clientelism is susceptible.

Informal power-groups are located at the centre of political activities in the developing world, where patron-client factions utilise instrumental social ties that characterise political processes.

Typically, patron-client structures consist of a main power figure (patron) that can provide economic incentives and security to his personal followers (clients); in return, the patron can expect loyalty and personal assistance from his clients. For example, if a patron intends to run for political office, he could ask his clients to campaign on his behalf in familiar areas.

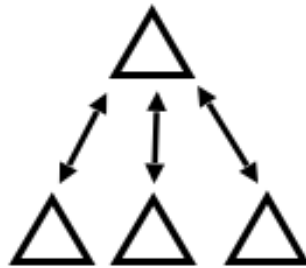
Patronage systems advance personal exchanges within patron-client ties. Prior to national independence in the developing world, patronage systems were traditional and limited in scope. Usually, involving patrons' direct control over property and clients' provision of labour and other rent paying services in return for basic needs. However, for informal groupings to remain relevant the institutionalisation or the means of indirect exchanges that safeguard an individual's security, wealth and status suffer. In other words, patron-client ties replace deficiencies in state institutions, laws and shared values.

Personal exchanges are fundamental in patron-client ties. Scott argued that such transactions underpin patron-client relations, and allow these ties to exceed traditional kinship systems, where social hierarchies were previously limited to identities such as ethnicity and religion.

Although, the patron is the primary beneficiary from the relationship, mutual reciprocity does exist. As benefits move upward within social networks in authoritarian relationships, patron-client ties allow benefits to move downward towards clients as indicated in Figure 1.

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**Figure 1: Reciprocity in Patron-Client Ties**



*Source: Scott (1972)*

The direction of the arrows indicates the flow of benefits. Regardless of the presence of reciprocity, the patron typically is the recipient of increased benefits in the relationship. The exchange of benefits differentiates patron-client ties from authoritarian and coercive relationships, where little reciprocity occurs.

Although reciprocity does exist within patron-client relationships, there is potential for coercion as well. Introducing coercion within a patron-client relationship increases the probability for a loss in patron legitimacy and thereby reducing the capacity for affective bonds. In some instances, explicit coercion is not necessary; instead, legal institutions and their convictions may act as a coercive mechanism.

Institutionalising coercive mechanisms is only possible if the patron ascends to a prominent state position, whereby their influence extends to the judiciary. Incumbents can legally exert pressure to their clients through legal channels, as opposed to traditional threats and other forms of personal punishment.

Although coercion might appear common in patron-client ties, it often narrows the scope and hinders the durability of the relationship. There are key discrepancies between patron-client ties and relationships of pure coercion, where the latter may not be able to link individuals of different socioeconomic status.

Expanding or introducing coercion in a clientelistic relationship will affect bargaining dynamics, primarily by reducing the patron's reciprocity to their clients.

Instances exist where coercion does not affect clientelistic relationships, such as clients that have no patron alternatives, especially if the latter directly controls their means of subsistence.

In contrast, state modernization allowed clients to enhance their bargaining position.

### *State Level Clientelism*

State formation ushered new developments within clientelistic dynamics. Traditionally, clientelistic mechanisms were limited to community or locale levels, thus resulting in a homogenous clientele with limited ethnic and social diversity. There are four important transformations in patron-client relationships following state formation: (1) improved client's bargaining position with a patron, where client's resources could be utilised for electoral campaigns; (2) promoted vertical integration of patron-client structures from communal level to central government; (3) assisted in the creation of new patron-client pyramids and politicized old ones; (4) contributed to the survival of opposing patron-client pyramids found at communal levels.

Patrons observing such transformations identified novel opportunities.

One opportunity was the introduction of electoral competition. Engaging in political elections provided access to valuable government resources, which are crucial in sustaining patrons. Although the benefits that came from competitive elections were evident for patrons, clients also gained new political resources, such as wielding individual votes and campaigning volunteerism to improve clients' bargaining position. Clients that have little to offer patrons are capable of providing voting services for their patron, thereby empowering, in varying degrees, clients to turn their votes in their favour.

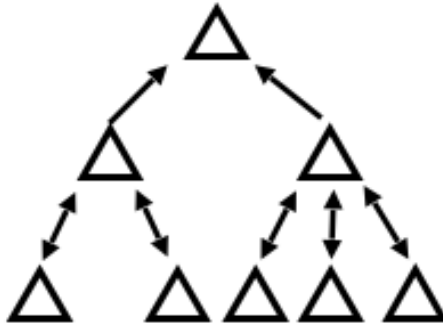
Furthermore, elections caused patrons to become more dependent on social approval from their client networks, as clients' approval determines their fate at the polls.

In this regard, coercion is no longer a viable option for patrons to utilise as competition among patrons intensified, thereby necessitating patrons to maintain local power, thereby theoretically improving clients' bargaining position.

In addition to voting, clients have other new capacities to exploit. Clients may provide political services such as canvassing or act as political agents for patrons, which may create additional patron-client linkages as presented in Figure 2.

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**Figure 2: Multi-tiered Patron Client Ties**



*Source: Scott (1972)*

Clients assuming the role of political agents essentially engage in brokerage activities. Moreover, clients seeking services and resources from a patron must transact with brokers.<sup>1</sup> The role of brokers will be further discussed in the subsequent sections.

### Regional Examples of Clientelism

Although many Western political scientists have attempted to classify political experiences in the developing world along traditional models of association and conflict,<sup>2</sup> clientelism left a resonating impact within political processes and structures in Asia, South America and Africa.

The “political office” introduced new state resources such as public funds, employment and decision-making capabilities while elections incentivised patrons as a means to develop and safeguard their clientelistic interests. Naturally, their clientele networks provided the starting point for patrons seeking support for political office. Patrons depended on vote buying within their clientele networks as means to improve their chances of electoral victory. Some instances necessitated sophisticated organisations to facilitate vote buying endeavours. The usual targets of vote buying organisations are low-income rural

voters, as seen in Argentina and Taiwan. The latter epitomised vote buying organisations, where political parties assume the patron role and provide favoured districts and individual clients with government resources and employment in return for political support. While this arrangement appears straightforward, the operation is meticulous and costly.

Vote buying organisations are machines powered by multiple cogs. In order to determine successful vote buying campaigns, the following factors are required: (1) campaign managers with intimate knowledge of the local consciousness; (2) campaign brokers utilising trusted social networks; (3) a sizable budget; (4) mechanisms to avoid vote-buying redundancies; (5) judicial protection, which evidently depicts the complexity of the electoral fraud. Taiwan's experience refined vote buying to its subtlest details.

Vote buying campaigns begin with political parties setting-up branches in townships and employing campaign managers familiar with the local population. Campaign managers attempt to influence their staff which, in turn, rely on their personal relations with town constituents to ascertain their votes. While Taiwan utilises personal relations as an instigator of vote buying operations, Argentina implements a similar system, with the addition to gauge vote selling likelihood. Argentine campaign operatives rely on personal relationships and intricate observational techniques to deduce whether a vote was sold. Methods for operatives to estimate a person's likelihood of selling their vote include observing their target's participation at political rallies, voting polls and their eye-contact behaviour with campaign operatives. Furthermore, interpersonal skills are fundamental to run successful vote-buying organisations, especially for campaign brokers that must penetrate individual Taiwanese villages, as they represent the day-to-day operative for vote buying campaigns. Brokers are the grease that help cogs move. They leverage their social ties with individual towns to buy votes. In Taiwan, trust and brokers are inseparable. They are the preferred means to defeat secret ballot voting, avoid embezzlement and reduce vote buying redundancies. In addition to trust, Taiwanese brokers must intelligently address the needs of constituents and purchase their votes without negatively affecting social ties. While Argentine brokers adhere to similar needs, they can rely on political sympathies for vote buying appeals. Historically, low-income demographics developed affinity for the Peronist party, which succumbed to

limited generational effects, rendering the demographic an ideal target for the party. Therein, brokers can improve the odds of vote buying by making political ideological appeals, a unique trait to their Taiwanese counterparts. While brokers are indeed important for vote buying operations, time management is also crucial.

Cogs must turn in synchronicity; the same applies for vote buying operations. Taiwanese politics epitomises the advantages of time management in such operations, where budgeting necessitates timing considerations. Typically, Taiwanese campaign managers measure target vote buying rates for each district, in order to avoid wastefulness and insulting voters (such as offering meagre hand-outs). In contrast, targeted voters of Argentinian vote buying operations are likely to be dependent on hand-outs (maybe in the form of agricultural equipment and products), resulting in an advantageous bargaining position for brokers. Once these rates are calculated, timing factors in. Embezzlement often occurs if the last monetary transfer arrives late or before polling, witnesses are necessary to monitor each monetary transfer; illustrating that timing is a key determinant for successful vote buying activities. However, without judiciary assistance, vote buying organisations can be vulnerable.

Judicial protection ensures vote buying continuity. Personal relations are the essence of attaining said form of protection. In Taiwan, political incumbents, typically, establish close connections with the judiciary and provide protection when called upon; however, if an incumbent is voted out of office, then previous judicial protection arrangements are lost as well. Thereby, incumbents are motivated to remain in political office, as it ensures continued access to state resources, which judicial protection safeguard. Other methods include face-to-face communication and reducing paper trails, if these measures prove successful then judicial protection becomes a 'last line of defence.' Although similarities in vote buying systems are evident, they still tend to vary from region.

Benin exemplifies the African vote buying experience. Factors underlining clientelism and vote buying are similar to other regions, which will be discussed in the subsequent section. Typically, African voters prefer candidates that engage in private transfers rather than public policy platforms, revealing the propensity of clientelism in elections.<sup>15</sup> Men are typically the primary recipients of private transfers from patron incumbents, including public employment opportuni-



ties.<sup>16</sup> Unlike Argentina, where gender and generational discrimination were not as apparent, Benin witnessed an unprecedented response from those excluded from clientelistic systems.

Generally, clientelistic redistribution in Benin excludes women and youth. Because of their omission, youth and women are receptive to public policy messages.<sup>17</sup> This behaviour demonstrates foundations for democratic development, as it could imbed society with a culture of democracy.<sup>18</sup> While incumbents redistribute state resources to their clients, women are concerned with health and social programmes.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, exclusion from clientelistic systems may enhance social conscientiousness and mobilise support for public policy programs. Typically, voters in Benin believe incumbents to be more credible at delivering goods than challengers; that belief is compounded if the incumbent influences distributive policies.<sup>20</sup> While gender and generational exclusion supports pursuit of alternative political economic models, conditions that influence clientelism suggest the issue deeply rooted.

## Factors Influencing Clientelism

Clientelism thrives in socioeconomic disparities. The four factors that influence clientelism are: (1) low productivity and socioeconomic inequalities, (2) social and ethnic divisions, (3) large state economic policies and (4) political participation surpassing the development of political institutions. The following section will further investigate the root factors of clientelism as means to better comprehend the social phenomenon.

### *Low Productivity and Socioeconomic Inequalities*

Clientelism is a symptom of socioeconomic disparities. Singer, clarified poverty's role in clientelism in addition to other identified factors like weak democratic institutions, short democratic experiences and large state economic presence facilitating redistributive transactions.<sup>21</sup> Each dimension has potential remedies to curb clientelistic behaviour by correcting economic deficiencies, yet correspondingly the dimensions can be exploited to guarantee the continuation of the redistributive model. Therefore, analysing the root causes of clientelism is appropriate.

Socioeconomic inequalities allow patrons to identify and acquire clients. Robinson and Verdier (2003) note that at 'low income level cli-

ents' political allegiance is cheaper to buy with employment offers.<sup>22</sup> For incumbent patrons, clientelistic redistribution is both attractive and effective in gaining support during elections, especially if they can make credible offers to clients, as opposed to non-clientelistic opponents. The latter can either provide narrow clientelistic offers or operate on potentially less successful policy platforms. If social inequalities compound with low productivity and poverty, then symptoms of clientelism arise, creating further disparities, thereby increasing clients' dependency on patrons.<sup>23</sup>

State-level redistribution, based on personal connections, reveals clientelistic prevalence. The reallocation of state employment and resources reinforce deficiencies in productivity, thereby, allowing incumbent patrons to control economic affairs without pressures to reform. With this in mind, patrons are committed to prolonging clientelistic systems by stagnating economic reform and productivity.

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### *Social and Ethnic Divides*

Ethnic divisions and clientelism go hand-in-hand. In fact, such divisions permit clientelism to thrive.<sup>24</sup> At the communal level, ethnicity facilitated the identification of primordial groupings creating simple patron-client links. A patron begins seeking clients from his immediate community where personal relationships are central within the ties. As a patron's resource-base grew, so did his redistributive ability, allowing him to transcend multiple communities and ethnicities for potential clients. Although ethnic divides were essential in simple clientelistic structures, its impact receded with emergence of resources following state formation as patrons expanded their client bases and intensified patron competition for clients.

Communal clientelistic redistribution transferred to a national scale. State resources and electoral competition further intensified favouritism and reinforced familiar clientelistic behaviours. Ethnic-based parties are more likely to emerge when political competition derives itself from patronage systems.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, patrons that are unsuccessful in expanding their client base are likely to continue ethnic favouritism through political competition, guaranteeing a monopoly of government resources and fomenting further ethnic divisions.

### *Competition for State Resources*

Clientelism is also prominent among states with holistic approaches

to the management of economic affairs. Specifically, if political incumbents are able to directly influence the distribution of state resources, then clientelism will be further reinforced on a national level.<sup>26</sup> While this notion may not be an underlying symptom of clientelism, it reveals a consequence and evolution of the social phenomenon through control of state resources via elections.

Patrons rely on promises and favouritism in electoral campaigns in order to determine success. Client voters expect that incumbents they vote for will deliver state resources based on personal individual ties,<sup>27</sup> thereby indicating the stakes involved for patrons and clients alike in electoral competition. Although state formation introduced electoral system in some regions, practice of clientelism evolved.

### *Political Participation Exceeding Development*

Younger democracies are more prone to clientelistic behaviour than developed ones. Huntington argued that when political participation surpasses political institutionalisation, it results in unstable democratic experiences.<sup>28</sup> Stable democracies involve electoral competitors operating on policy platforms, campaign promises and accountability to constituents in order to gain credibility. In contrast, such attributes are in their infancy in younger democracies and political competitors may seek smaller groups of voters or patrons who, in turn, can make promises to his clients.<sup>29</sup> Thereby, younger democracies facing deficiencies in political institutions are susceptible to clientelism, which may influence policy-making processes.

Political competitors are likely to become brokers of patrons in young democracies. This is due to their reliance on patrons and the likelihood that state resources will service narrow clients than the broader public.<sup>30</sup> Electoral competitors have no choice but to seek patrons in order to appear as credible candidates to voters, however, this results in surrendering policy influence. Moreover, the situation reinforces difficulties in developing political institutions necessary to advance democratic practices where political candidates operate on policy platforms.

### **Clientelism in the GCC States**

Clientelism remains socially relevant in many parts of the world. The six member states that comprise the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which include Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia

and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) continue to experience the social phenomenon. However, the GCC states practice alternative forms of clientelism compared to the other regions. Clientelism was deeply rooted in the noted region and stipulated as part of a social contract, as opposed to being a reaction to deficiencies in political institutions, while the discovery of oil and gas evolved the socioeconomic model. The post-oil period reinvigorated social contract talks in GCC states contract and reinforced clientelism.

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### *Post-Oil State Formation in the Arabian Gulf*

Oil and gas reshaped state-society relations in the Arabian Gulf. The wealth that resulted from mineral extraction in the region realigned bargaining positions among ruling families and citizens. In addition, revenues from oil funded various institutions and organisation that helped modernisation efforts resulting in establishing rules and governments and the advent of the welfare states.<sup>31</sup> Essentially, these processes reformulated the social contract. The welfare state required allegiance to the state – or ruling establishment. Yet in contrast, the discovery of oil permitted social mobility and established direct relations between ruling families with its citizens.<sup>32</sup> The emergence of the welfare state pronounced two elements key to the understanding of contemporary clientelism in the Gulf. First, realignment of social relationships, where individuals can compete with traditional tribal-centric social dynamics. Secondly, state resources resulted in new forms of loyalty, as citizens would compete for their access.

Public sector employment is integral to welfare states. State employment guaranteed citizens with job and income security. In fact, growth in public employment is a means of state redistribution of oil revenues.<sup>33</sup> In this regard, public employment is a natural symptom of welfare systems, in addition to provision of free education and health services. However, there are severe consequences to such employment policies. Bulging state administrative channels may reach to a point of inaccessibility. This common scenario in the GCC states exasperate simple tasks by ineffective formal channels, while providing opportunity for some to exploit.

### *Clientelism and the Role of Brokers in the GCC states*

The GCC states, to varying degrees, exhibit clientelistic behaviour. Ordinarily, clientelism thrives in states where imbalances of resourc-

es between state and society exist.<sup>34</sup> State-societal imbalances broaden when redistributive policies render state channels redundant. Therefore, intermediaries in such imbalances serve as missing links between the state and citizens.<sup>35</sup> Missing links between state and society assume the role of brokers. These individuals have personal connections to state apparatuses able to efficiently process tasks and procure services that would otherwise be unattainable.

Brokers assume a prominent role in Gulf welfare states and are markedly different from their traditional counterparts by the sheer variety of services they offer.<sup>36</sup> In addition to contacts in inaccessible administrations and influential individuals, brokers offer pragmatic solutions as well. They may offer acquiring important information, expediting commercial registrations, booking instructors for driving licenses, facilitating menial application processes.<sup>37</sup> Therein, Gulf brokers offering variety of services demonstrate monetization prospects. State-level clientelism in the Arabian Gulf created ideal environments that proliferated the uses of brokers, which can be considered as clientelistic systems within a larger one. Thus, heavy commercialisation of Gulf brokerage is a unique trait from other examples of clientelistic behaviour, in addition to the variety of services and forms of brokers.

Variety is the spice of life when it comes to Gulf brokerage. While their counter parts in Asia and Africa typically assumed roles such as mediators and lobbyists for political entities, Gulf brokers, on the other hand, operated within usually legal frameworks to facilitate everyday tasks. Traditional Gulf brokers were usually sheikhs of royal families who acted as gatekeepers with direct access to high-level royal individuals, who have access to coveted resources.<sup>38</sup> Traditional brokerage branched out beyond royal family members. Individuals within traditional merchant families, personal secretaries and advisors of influential peoples could be gatekeepers, as long as access to individuals who controls or influences important resources are maintained.<sup>39</sup> Although gatekeepers represent a traditional class of brokers in the Gulf, new forms of the role appeared in welfare states systems.

Trails of breadcrumbs can be useful in a maze. Especially when that maze is a brimming bureaucracy frustrating simple processes, a unique situation compared to other regions. The paper pusher, or Mu'aqqib, who knows their way around a bureaucracy can expedite petty administrative processes and is important facilitator of day-to-day processes. Such services include expediting rubberstamping processes, acquiring

visa transfers and extensions and leaking and trading administrative documents.<sup>40</sup> Paper pushers invest considerable time and resources to establish relationships within immigration and customs administrations and labour agencies,<sup>41</sup> epitomising brokerage monetisation.

Gulf paper pushers also service the private sector. Private entities strive to gain insights and knowledge to successfully bid for government business in the Gulf and seek local solutions.<sup>42</sup> Some private companies employ “government relations” staff, specialising in accessing various government agencies that directly deal with independent Mu’aqqibs.<sup>43</sup> It is evident such measures directly correlate to consequences of welfare state systems and provide opportunities for Mu’aqqibs to exploit. In fact, without the facilitation of Mu’aqqibs, typical administrative tasks would stagnate. While paper pushers specialise within the realm of administrative processes, another form of brokerage operates within a different field.

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### *Contractual Brokers*

Competition for state resources resulted in creative opportunities. Contract brokers expand upon the functions of paper pushers. Their primary services include provision of exclusive information for bureaucratic decisions and government contracts; usually conducted by well-connected local firms targeting foreign or less-connected companies.<sup>44</sup> Such business activities reflect Gulf business culture, as personal ties are a necessity. In fact, contract broker engage in a variety of fields.

Gulf brokerage extended beyond exclusive information and personal connections services. Recently, the most lucrative venture is visas for expatriates. GCC labour markets are heavily regulated. Businesses must get permission to “import” foreign labour through government-granted visas (or labour permits); additionally, expatriate workers are unable to transfer between employers without the consent of their current sponsor.<sup>45</sup> These circumstances provide brokers with an opportunity. Thus, “free visa” trading has sprouted as result of weak labour administrations.

The term “free visa” is misleading. The process involves a sponsor receiving excess labour permits, due to a combination of personal connections and questionable documentation processes, two skills commonly employed by brokers.<sup>46</sup> “Imported” labourers are then resold through informal markets via “free visas” to other employers who could not access formal labour bureaucracies,<sup>47</sup> thereby, exemplifying

both the brokerage skill sets and their creative monetization efforts.

### *Private Sector Clientelism*

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Theoretically, the private sector is independent from its public counterpart. However, in the GCC states, the private sector is closely intertwined with the state. Structurally, Gulf private sectors are suited for patronage, where highly diversified and influential family-owned conglomerates are prevalent.<sup>48</sup> Relations between merchant families and political elites are historic in nature. Such families built extensive relationships with local elites granting them access to high-level decision-makers.<sup>49</sup> In fact, some state policies institutionalised patronage by instilling the agency system.

The agency system is an institutionalised practice in the Gulf business environment. Retainers and government contracts incentivise and directly reward Gulf merchant families who serve local sources seeking to fulfil imported goods or services<sup>50</sup> through the agent system. Correspondingly, Gulf elites can monitor economic developments from foreign entities while allowing individual state elites to provide privileges to selected clients with little oversight. In this regard, individual state elites act as intermediaries as they continue to engage and develop their own clientelistic network. Furthermore, local agents can steer investment decisions of foreign partners to the potential benefit of patrons.

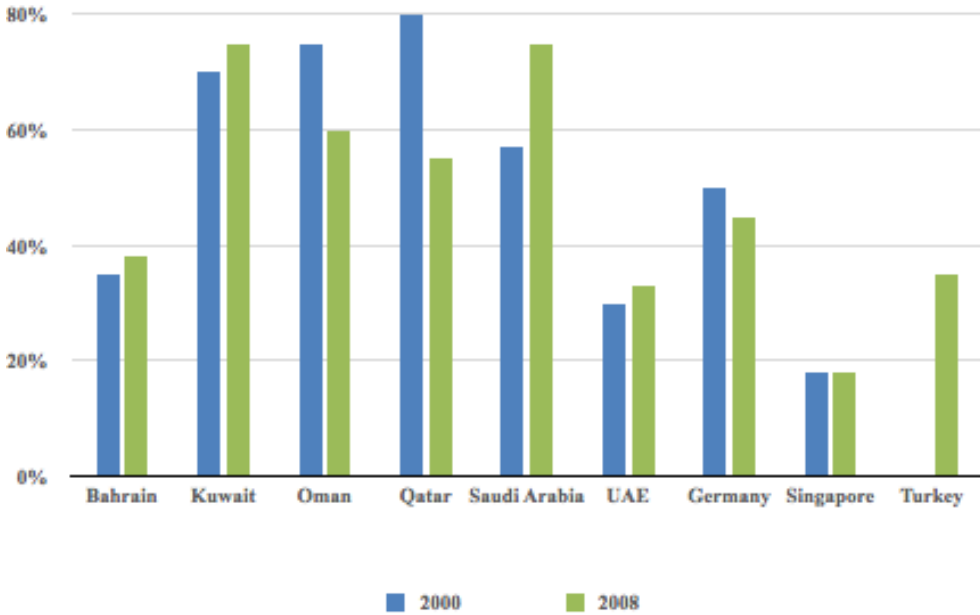
The presence of Gulf merchant families in the private sectors is reminiscent of historical engagement with elites. Merchant families gained security for their economic activities while political elites benefited financially and ensured their loyalty.<sup>51</sup> The GCC states with large economic bases permitted merchant families to gain government contracts for a variety of projects, due to the mentioned historical ties.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, these dealings suggest that GCC private sectors are intrinsically linked to the state.

GCC private sectors were primary state recipients during the oil boom period of the 2000s. Hertog correlated the impact of state spending and size of business activity. The expansion of GCC business activity is primarily derived from public expenditures both directly, through large government spending, and indirectly, via expenditures on public salaries increasing consumption levels in the economy.<sup>53</sup> This translates into a direct association between both sectors. The association is attributed to a deficit in private (international) demand for

services provided by GCC private sectors,<sup>54</sup> thereby, reinforcing private sector dependencies on public expenditures. Table 1 illustrates state the percentage of state spending in non-oil GDP for GCC and other notable states.

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**Table 1: Share of Government Spending in Non-oil GDP**



*Source: Hertog (2011)*

This table indicates an overall strong presence of GCC state activity in private enterprises. While GCC private sectors consist of unique attributes resulting from welfare state behaviour and government spending, other familiar forms of clientelism prevalent in the world also occur in the GCC states.

*Vote Buying in Kuwait: An Example*

Vote buying may be as old as the ballot box itself. The act of vote buy-



ing is both prevalent and a meticulous operation in Africa and Eastern Asia. The phenomenon is evident in the oldest parliamentary experience in the Arabian Gulf region. Kuwait's parliamentarian history dates back to 1963 and its experience led to prolonged periods of crises. Kuwait's domestic political turmoil is rife with electoral fraud.

Kuwaiti vote buying mirrors the affluence of its people and the estimated cost of purchasing one vote in Kuwait ranges between \$1000 to \$10000 (USD)<sup>55</sup> and there have been reports that some women can be enticed to sell their votes in return for designer handbags.<sup>56</sup> The cost of vote buying in Kuwait is staggering compared to other noted regions; however, the essence of the electoral fraud is the same. Kuwaiti authorities continuously attempt to curb the illicit practice. The Gulf state attempted to moderate electoral fraud by reducing the number of voting districts from 25 to five, thereby diminishing the effect of vote buying.<sup>57</sup> Islamic religious figures have also attempted to thwart vote buying by issuing edicts (fatwas) forbidding it.<sup>58</sup> The involvement of religious figures indicates the prevalence of the vote buying in Kuwait and measures needed in order to deter the fraudulent activity.

## Conclusion

The emergence of clientelism is a direct result of socioeconomic deficiencies. The phenomenon thrives in conditions of productivity deficiencies, social disparities and competitive environment for access to state resources. Traditional patron-client dynamics were initially limited to land ownership and serfdom dyads, where bargaining power skews towards patrons. Yet, as clientelism reached national levels, once untouchable patrons began competing amongst themselves for new resources.

State formation paved the way for new opportunities for patrons to seize. Government institutions and state resources slowly replaced traditional land-labour clientelistic dynamics. However, in certain cases, patrons required electoral victory in order to access state resources. This slightly skewed bargaining power towards clients, as their votes elicited patrons to accommodate their improved bargaining status. However, candidates running election campaigns on policy platform may ostracise themselves, as incumbent patrons are perceived as more credible in delivering resources to specific districts. Clientelistic behaviour in election is not only global in nature, but also diverse.

Although clientelism is a global phenomenon, individual countries

imprinted unique characteristics on it, especially with the introduction of elections. Vote buying in Taiwan necessitated well-run organisations. Utilising influential brokers accustomed to specific villages enhanced vote buying success rates, in addition to meticulously timed payment methods to ensure funds are not wasted. Argentina's vote-buying experience reveals that political sympathies go a long way. Clients are willing to cast their vote to certain political parties due to ideological sympathies, even if the party's policies adversely affect them. In Benin, women and youth usually remain outside patron-client relations, therefore they likely to respond positively to policy platforms messages, as a solution to their exclusion. While clientelism is global, some regions culturally depend on it for leadership legitimacy, thus normalising the practice in society.

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Clientelism in the GCC states is deeply rooted within its social fabric. The phenomenon operates on a daily basis, where certain administrative procedures stagnate without it. Following the discovery of oil and national independence resulted in the formation of welfare state systems, to varying degrees, which evolved existing state-society dynamics. GCC states provided free healthcare, schooling and education in addition to guaranteed public employment, in return for support and loyalty, a familiar clientelistic arrangement. In fact, public employment caused the sector to burgeon, further hindering administrative accessibility. In this instance, welfare states derived another layer of clientelism.

Brokers are synonymous with the GCC states. Prominent merchant families assumed this role prior to the discovery of oil. These families pledged their loyalty to ruling tribes who in turn, provided protection of their economic activities. In a contemporary setting, brokers provided less socially connected individuals with access to inaccessible state channels, tipped off companies for government decisions and provided foreign businesses with expertise to engage in local economic activities. Vote buying also occurs in the Arabian Gulf states. Kuwait's experience with the fraudulent activity mirrors of its affluence and adheres to the same objectives of the fraudulent act.

Although clientelism is a global phenomenon, distinct properties are evident. Vote buying occurs in all of the noted regions. All examined regions required, to various degrees, social familiarities for the activity. In Taiwan, vote organisational efforts are necessary, due to potential judiciary and financial risks involved. Ideological appeals go

a long way in Argentina, political sympathies are often ingrained in its vote buying behaviour; while in Kuwait, cash hand-outs and luxury goods suffice. The role of brokers vary globally; brokers are vote buying organisational intermediaries in Taiwan, while in the Arab Gulf region brokers provide practical uses for less-connected individuals and companies.

Contrasting clientelism illustrates its worldwide prevalence. The phenomenon is evident in almost all continents each containing individual traits. The welfare states that comprise the GCC evolved their clientelistic behaviour. The discovery of oil led to overflowing state coffers, where competition for said resources ensued. This competition embedded additional layers of clientelistic behaviours, via brokers, within an already clientelistic welfare state!

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