THE PROGRESS OF DEMOCRACY IN THE STATE OF KUWAIT
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Fourth enlarged and revised edition 2011
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October 2011
In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, Most Merciful
“Democracy we know deepens the essence of citizenship and affiliation to homeland; it promotes national enteracyrests; illustrates national solidarity... unite not divide ... reconcile not divide,... construct not demolish. Democracy emphasices commitment and discipline; rejects chaos and frivolity; it calls for toleration, moderation and denies extremism and fanaticism.”

“from the speech of His Highness The Amir”
Shaikh / Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

(On the occasion of the inauguration of the 1st session of the 13th legislative term of 31st May, 2009)
His Highness, Shaikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah
The Amir of Kuwait
May Allah bless him
“The history of the State of Kuwait testifies that this small country has always overcomed misfortunes and ordeals thanks to God and the solid unity of its people behind its successive leaders”

“From the speech of His Highness the Crown Prince”

Shaikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

(At the National Assembly on the occasion of the people’s pledge of allegiance as the crown prince on 20 February 2006)
His Highness Shaikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah
Crown Prince of State of Kuwait
May Allah bless him
We, Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah
Amir of the State of Kuwait

Being desirous of consummating the means of democratic rule for our dear country; and,

Having faith in the role of this Country in the furtherance of Arab nationalism and the promotion of world peace and human civilisation; and,

Striving towards a better future in which the Country enjoys greater prosperity and higher international standing, and in which also the citizens are provided with more political freedom, equality and social justice; a future which upholds the traditions inherent in the Arab nature by enhancing the dignity of the individual, safeguarding public interest, and applying consultative rule yet maintaining the unity and stability of the Country; and,

Having considered Law Number I of 1962 concerning the system of Government during the period of transition; and,

Upon the resolution of the Constituent Assembly;

Do hereby approve this Constitution and promulgate it

The Amir ratified the constitution on 11th of November 1962. It was published in the Kuwait Gazette on 12th of November 1962.
Speaker of the Constituent Assembly
and Speakers of the National Assemblies
Speech of His Excellency, Speaker of the Constituent Assembly

For presentation of the draft constitution to His Highness the Amir

Your Highness, our Amir,

It is a great honor for my colleague members of the Constitution Committee and myself to present to your Highness on this historic day on behalf of the Constituent Assembly the draft constitution that Your Highness decreed. This constitution is based on democratic principles and inspired from the actual life in Kuwait.

Peace, mercy and blesses be upon Your Highness
Abdullatif Thunayan Al-Ghanim
Speaker of Constituent Assembly
(1962-1963)
Abdul Aziz Hamad Al-Saquer

Speaker of the National Assembly for the first legislative term (1963-1965)
Saud Abdul Aziz Al-Abdul Razzaq

Speaker of the National Assembly for the first legislative term (1965-1967)
Ahmad Zaid Al-Sarhan

Speaker of the National Assembly for the second legislative term (1967-1970)
Khaled Saleh Al-Ghoneim

Speaker of the National Assembly for the third and fourth legislative terms
(1971-1975)
(1975-1976)
Mohammad Yousef Al-Adsany
Speaker of the National Assembly for the fifth legislative term (1981-1985)
Ahmad Abdul Aziz Al-Sadoun

Speaker of the National Assembly for the sixth, seventh and the eighth legislative terms
(1985-1986)
(1996-1999)
Jassem Mohammad Al-Kharafi

Speaker of the National Assembly for the ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth and the Thirteenth legislative terms
(2003-2006)
(2006-2008)
(2008-2009)
(2009 - until the date of this issue)
Freedom and human dignity are the most invaluable values for humanity. The peoples who surpassed us on this track were involved in aggressive intellectual and political wars in order to achieve these goals; an example the democratic regimes that the rights of their nationals take into consideration and preserve their dignity.

In Kuwait -this small country-the spirit of democratic practice has begun since 1752, when the society agreed at that time to nominate Al-Sabah Family as rulers of the State of Kuwait through what was known as unanimity and consultation. The rule of the ruling family took a democratic path similar to what is known nowadays as election. The majority of the State of Kuwait’s population agreed on the ruler who would rule this small and simple society. In this way, Kuwaitis achieved their target without being coerced to be governed by a certain ruler. This pledge of allegiance was the first pillar in the foundation of Kuwait’s democratic regime.

The Kuwaiti people were the first GCC people to elect a legislative council in 1938. It is the people who, immediately after independence in 1961, worked for establishing the foundations of the institutional rule. This way, the tribal society was transferred to the State’s society with its integrated political regime consisting of three powers: legislative, executive and judicial. Also, State of Kuwait is the first state in the Arabian Peninsula to have its own constitution and an elected national assembly which forms a strong pillar of democracy with all its dimensions and meanings.

The constitution of Kuwait provides the regulations for ensuring wide popular participation in the issues of rule and control over the executive power and the basic freedoms of citizens. It has specified such roles and duties that ensure equilibrium among the three powers, legislative, executive and judicial.

The National Assembly has succeeded to be the democratic tool that gave a chance to all people to express their views and participate in decision making. It has been successful as real legislative institution that has produced for the Kuwaiti society the political institutions and mechanisms which participated in the progress of the development of the State of Kuwait.

The most salient feature of the democratic practice in Kuwait is the continuous spirit of close integrity even during the gravest circumstances of tension and crises. This applied to the state and regime. This close integrity is specially incarnated during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait when the Kuwaitis declared in Jeddah conference in October 1990 their stable stance as one bloc behind their legitimate
leadership. This spirit was manifested also during the crisis of transference of rule after the death of Shaikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, may his soul rest in peace, on 15th of January 2006 when members of parliament agreed on the dismissal of Shaikh / Saad A-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah as Amir of the State of Kuwait due to health condition and in application of article three of the Emirate Succession Law. Subsequently, the National Assembly unanimously nominated the then-Prime Minister His Highness Shaikh / Sabah Al-Ahmad to become the Amir of the state on the 29th of January 2006.

State of Kuwait has a plentiful record of political participation. Intellectuals and politicians should consider and evaluate the Kuwaiti experience from the Arabic and Islamic perspective not the western which emphasizes specific standards and conditions for the democratic practice. Rather, it should be evaluated according to fair standards and bases taking into consideration the social, cultural, political and religious dimensions in order to have an evaluation.

Those who reigned over the country throughout different decades have pledged to adhere to dialogue, understanding and consultation as a methodology to achieve stability and legitimacy. Thus, the Kuwaiti democratic experience is stems from the beliefs of the Kuwaiti Muslim People and from its unique history and environment. These factors formed a distinctive democratic practice that includes diverse opinions and attitudes as practiced in an atmosphere of freedom, kindness, tolerance, consultation and sovereignty of law.
Chapter One

Kuwait: Emergence to Independence

- Kuwait Emergence (1716).
- Kuwaiti people’s pledge of allegiance to Al-Sabah Family (1752).
- Rule in Kuwait and activation of consultation principle (1750-1896).
- Political experiences before independence (1896-1960).
The map of brothers Otenz, Amsterdam at early eighteenth century, showing ultimately clear borders. The name (Cathema) Kazema is written to refer to Kuwait territory.
Emergence of the State of Kuwait (1716):

Kuwait territory was known in the past as “Kazema”. Its port held the same name. It was located to the northern west of Kuwait bay. The human existence in the region dates back to more than four thousand years, as shown by the fossils and the remains of monuments found in the region. However, the real emergence of the State of Kuwait as a community began in the early eighteenth century, specifically in 1716, when some families and tribes termed as of “Al-Otoob” settled there. They were a mix of several tribes including Al-Sabah, Al-Khalifa and Al-Jalahima in addition to many other tribes and a group of Bedouins who came from Najd in the Arabian Peninsula. Before them came Banu Khaled who had the power and hegemony in relation to protection of the region and its citizens. Banu Khaled had a “Kout” which means a small fort in the region known as Al-Qorain to the south of Al-Joun. From this, State of Kuwait took its name which is the diminutive form of the word (Kout) known until now.

Because of its commercial location, its excellent port for anchorage of ships and for its location near the diving areas for pearls, State of Kuwait was a terminal for the travelers coming from the countries of Fares and countries between-two rivers region to the east and center of the Arabian Peninsula. It was the trade route between the Indian Ocean countries, Al-Sham countries and Europe.

Kuwait people’s pledge of allegiance to Al-Sabah Family (1752):

In 1752, Sabah Ben Jaber, known as “Sabah I” was nominated by the Kuwaiti people to rule according to the Arabic and tribal norms to manage the affairs of the City, and resotre disputes that may arise among citizens. Thus occurred due to the people’s need for a leadership to manage their affairs, as their activities expanded on land and sea. In view of major immigration waves to Kuwait, the Kuwaiti People realized the necessity to preserve their entity and country. At that time, their choice of Al-Sabah Family as rulers of the State of Kuwait was once a crucial issue. With the immigration of tribes and families and the transfer of trade route to Kuwait after the Persians got hold of Basra in 1775, Kuwait started to develop from a small village into an active city and a commercial port linking the East and the West. The instability of conditions in Iraq and the region of Fares created a state of commercial and political gap resulted in the emergence of Kuwait as a vital port. With the development in Kuwait, a dire need emerged for the existence of a legitimate leadership capable to ensure the protection of the society and its interests and represent it before the neighbor bodies and societies. Al-Sabah Family held presidency after pledge of allegiance by the Kuwaiti People. Afterwards, the rule has continued in this Family to be inherited by the oldest and wiser until now. According to the customs of the Arab tribes, the process of choosing a ruler goes through two basic phases: nomination and pledge of allegiance.
The first phase: Nomination of ruler:

The principal prerequisite that a ruler has to fulfill is the relationship of kin, i.e. he must be a member of Al-Sabah family. However, the transference of the position is not necessarily transferred from a father to his son, but rather from the most wise person to the following most wise person within the Family. This rule was applicable until the reign of Shaikh Mubarak Al-Sabah (1896 – 1915) who confined the rule only to his descendants.

The second phase: Kuwaiti people pledge of allegiance to the ruler:

According to the Arabian tribal customs and in application of a common tribal rule that has been applicable since 1752 (the year of nominating Shaikh Sabah Bin Jaber known as “Sabah I” as the Amir, the other Shaikhs and the leading persons of the country come on the next day following selection and nomination to pledge their allegiance after requesting him to establish justice and equality among them, to consult them and not act unilaterally, and to manage the country’s affairs according to the settled rules. Then he pledges for the same upon the condition that they must be loyal to him and enforce his judgments.
Rule in Kuwait and application of consultation principle (1752-1896):

We cannot determine that the starting date of parliamentary history in Kuwait is the date of establishment of the Constituent Council or the election of the first National Assembly. Rather, we should notice that the original democracy spirit is deeply rooted in the Kuwaiti society and reflected in the behavior that governs the relationships between the ruler and the ruled since the emergence of the State of Kuwait. The relationship between the leadership and the people is governed by deep rooted Arabic values and ties.

Even before the Arab region knows the democratic application in its familiar forms and shapes, State of Kuwait was since emergence naturally disposed for consultation, communication and congregation among members of its small society through the Dawaween, that are in fact small local parliaments common at the districts of old Kuwait. There, those with opinions and those commonly consulted used to exchange their views. This had led to the expansion of these Dawaween to become common almost at every house. They are always held for gathering members of Kuwaiti families with their neighbors and friends. The subjects being discussed are open in all fields of interest to the citizens: financial, economic, social, political and other. This is a Kuwaiti incarnation of the spirit of democracy with a Gulf Arabian flavor.

The Kuwaiti society depended on certain economic activities related to the sea. These in turn established certain professions related to this life like travelling with sail ships, ship building and acquisition, pearl trading, etc, in addition to another basic activity which is pearl diving. The social categories working in these activities had the initiative for claiming the application of political and economic reform as they were the most capable classes of society to offer financial support to the ruler and his political regime so that he could perform his required role.

In addition, the commercial nature of Kuwait society created political and social balances and put certain restrictions on the possible abuse of power.

Because of the financial capabilities of some traders who formed an economically effective category of the society, the ruler was keen on consulting them. In this way, power was transferred from a ruler to his successor within Al-Sabah Family smoothly and easily. With this transfer, certain features developed for a political regime that depends on consultation and aims at establishing, supporting and enhancing democracy. Naturally, the country may witness certain exceptional conditions in certain phases of its development from an emirate into a state in view of difficult regional challenges.

Reading the history of rule and its relation to democracy is a reading of the meanings of development of the rule regime towards democracy. On the other hand, there are the events that accompanied transfer of power from one Amir to another within the honorable Al-Sabah Family since Sabah I in 1752, to Sabah IV...
Rotation of rule of the Emirate and activation of the consultation principle: 1752-1896

The Emirate of Kuwait was ruled since the mid eighteenth century until 1896 by six rulers as follows:

1- Sabah Ben Jaber   (Sabah I – 1752-1762)
2- Abdullah Ben Sabah  (Abdullah I – 1762-1815)
3- Jaber Ben Abdullah  (Jaber I – 1815-1859)
4- Sabah Ben Jaber    (Sabah II – 1859-1866)
5- Abdullah Ben Sabah  (Abdullah II – 1866-1892)
6- Mohammad Ben Sabah (Mohammad I – 1892-1896)

So, over one and a half century (1752-1896) all six rulers of Kuwait clinged to the consultation principle and consulted the people of Kuwait in all matters related to administration of their affairs. The justice of the Amir and the integrity of the judge were two guarantees against injustice or despotism.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Ruler Name</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sabah Ben Jaber (Sabah I)</td>
<td>(The first Shaikh of Kuwait 1752-1762)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Abdullah Ben Sabah (Abdullah I)</td>
<td>(1762-1815)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Jaber Ben Abdullah (Jaber I)</td>
<td>(1815-1859)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Sabah Ben Jaber (Sabah II)</td>
<td>(1859-1866)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Abdullah Ben Sabah (Abdullah II)</td>
<td>(1866-1892)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Mohammad Ben Sabah (Mohammad I)</td>
<td>(1892-1896)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Mubarak Al-Sabah (Mubarak I)</td>
<td>(1896-1915)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Jaber Al-Mubrark (Jaber II)</td>
<td>(1915-1917)</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Salem Al-Mubrark (Salem I)</td>
<td>(1917-1921)</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Ahmad Al-Jaber (Ahmad I)</td>
<td>(1921-1950)</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Abdullah Al-Salem (Abdullah III)</td>
<td>(1950-1965)</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Sabah Al-Salem (Sabah III)</td>
<td>(1965-1977)</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Jaber Al-Ahmad (Jaber the Third)</td>
<td>(1977-2006)</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Saad Al-Abdullah (Saad I)</td>
<td>(2006)</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Sabah Al-Ahmad (Sabah IV)</td>
<td>(2006)</td>
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</table>
The political experience of Kuwait before the independence (1900-1960):

The most prominent feature at the beginning of the eighteenth century related to Kuwait’s internal affairs may be that Shaikh Mubarak Al-Sabah and his two sons Shaikh Jaber (1915-1917), Shaikh Salem (1917-1921) faced exceptional conditions affecting the country and the region shortly before and during the First World War (1914-1919). However, consultation was again adopted at the beginning of the reign of the tenth ruler Shaikh Ahmad Ben Jaber Al-Sabah (1921-1950). Afterwards, it developed with the issuance of the constitution and establishment of the Parliament in the reign of the deceased Shaikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah (1950-1965), as follows:

(7) Mubarak Al-Sabah (1896-1915):

the aspiration of the independence of Kuwait as an independent Emirate was the main motive for Shaikh Mubarak to take hold of power by force in 1896, at a time when the external affairs were characterized by instability and disorders with aggressive fights between the two empires (the falling Othman Empire and the rising British Empire) for putting the region under their political and economic hegemony. Shaikh Mubarak was a statesman characterized with sagacity, smartness and strength. He began his reign with concluding a protection agreement with Britain on 23rd of January 1899. Afterwards on May 1899, he established a customs system for collecting taxes at 5% of the value of all imports including those coming from the Turkish ports. He also compelled the ships coming to Kuwait to undergo inspection.
- In 1911, he introduced into Kuwait modern medical services in the American hospital for the first time and in the same year he established Al-Mubarakya school.
- In 1912, he established a wireless telegram line and the first maternity hospital.
- In 1913, he granted a privilege to the British for exploration of oil.
To sum up, Shaikh Mubarak preserved the entity of Kuwait and preserved its political independence.

(8) Jaber Ben Mubarak (1915-1917):

As the first son of Shaikh Mubarak, his reign lasted only for fourteen months. During this period, trade flourished between State of Kuwait and Sham countries under such conditions dominated by indulgence of the European countries in the First World War.

(9) Salem Ben Mubarak (1917-1921):

He followed the same track of his father and his brother. During his reign, Al-Jahraa battle took place on 4th of April 1920 when Kuwaitis bravely defended their land and preserved its unity. He died on 27th of February 1921.
(10) Ahmad Al-Jaber (1921-1950):

Shaikh Ahmad Al-Jaber began his rule when he was 35 years old. He was duly prepared for the rule. It is noteworthy that he received pledge of allegiance from the first Shura Council in Kuwait in April 1921 which consists of 12 members from the distinguished personalities of the country. He wrote down for them a written pledge that all the rulings shall be based on consultation and Islamic Sharia. But this Council did not last for more than two months as disputes occurred among the members. The Council was automatically dissolved.

At the beginning of his reign, Shaikh Ahmad Al-Jaber used to sit every day at a public place in order to receive complaints personally from the Kuwaiti people and to settle them.

The Municipal Council 1930:

The first election experience in this small community began with the establishment of the Municipal Council in 1930. At that time Kuwaitites were seeking to set up basis and measures for developing and serving their Country. Kuwaitis chose through (limited) election a council comprising 11 members, one permanent president and a director. Members and the director shall be elected every two years. Members hold weekly meetings to discuss their points of view related to the needs of the people and the city, and the most important works to be conducted in the fields of education, security, health, constructions, etc. By virtue of the provisions of the second article of the Municipality Law, the Council was chaired by a member of Al-Sabah Family.

After the Municipality Elections, there were other elections of the Education, Health and Endowments Departments in (1936). These had great effects on increasing awareness of the principle of consultation and participation in the organization of the State’s Affairs through its institutions.

The duties of the Municipality developed and its specializations became diversified. It was like a micro cabinet conducting the duties of all ministries as such duties were as simple as the Kuwaiti society at that time.
The Progress of Democracy In The State of Kuwait

The first and second legislative councils (1938-1939):

In the year 1938 and under the impact of internal and external conditions, Kuwaitis considered the necessity to participate in the rule in a more representative and democratic way in order to make reforms in many political, social and economic fields.

Within the efforts exerted for establishing a legislative council, some of the traders established an assembly named “the National Bloc”, the objectives of which were as follows:

1- Claiming for the establishment of a legislative council based on free and fair elections.

2- The council shall have all necessary authorities for organizing the affairs of the Emirate.

Members of the Bloc chose three representatives to present a message to Shaikh Ahmad Al-Jaber including their desire to participate in running the State’s affairs based on pledge of allegiance and consultation between the ruler and the ruled. Development in different aspects of life necessitated the adoption of consultation principle. The ruler agreed to fulfill their desire and decided to run elections. This was approved also by his Deputy Shaikh/ Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

On the next day following the Amir’s approval of running election, a list of 320 voters was prepared. They were invited to vote in the elections in which 14 of nearly 20 candidates won. Shaikh Abdullah Al-Salem was elected as the President of the Council.

After starting its duties, the Council drafted Kuwait constitution in the first week of July 1938, which specified the powers of the legislative council. This draft had received unanimous approval of the members and was submitted to the Amir for ratification on 9th of July 1938.

- Although the text of constitution of (1938) was brief, it included important constitutional principles like the principle of the people’s sovereignty and the nation is the source of powers. The Council was granted full legislative power and extended financial power in addition to the right to ratify international treaties and agreements.

- The Council formed several committees such as the Committee on Political Affairs, the Committee on Financial and the Committee on Education. The First term witnessed many achievements as at least ten new governmental departments were established including the Financial, Police, Security, Passports Departments, etc.
The first legislative council did not last for long time, as it was affected by some conditions that in the end resulted in its dissolution.

That said, this experience affected the democratic history. This attempt was a much more developed trial than the preceding one in 1921 as it was initiated by an organized movement with an integrated program and as this phase was related to external Arab factors and issues.

About four days after the dissolution of the Council, more than one hundred invitations were distributed to some citizens inviting them for meeting morning on the next day for deliberation concerning the election of the new legislative council. This led to holding an extended meeting attended by a large number of the distinguished personalities including members of the former legislative council who did not attend the meeting. Through the extended meeting, they discussed the affairs related to the next election and agreed on unification of the nation’s word and adoption of the constitution that was approved by the Ruler during the first legislative council. In addition they agreed on increasing the people’s representatives so that they may reach the number of twenty members.

The elected members unanimously agreed on choosing Shaikh / Abdullah Al-Salem as President of the Council who thanked them for such confidence. He invited them to work for enacting a constitution to be ratified by the Ruler before the Council could resume its activity.

On the 2nd of January 1939, members of the Council held a meeting in order to discuss a draft constitution for ratification thereof after including a modification that gives the Ruler a right to dissolve the legislative council if it causes such public riot in the country that is too hard to solve amicably. The decision for dissolution shall include a decree for running election within one week. After the Council’s approval thereof, the draft constitution was sent to the Amir for ratification, but the ruler refused the draft and proposed another constitution that he considered more suitable for Kuwaitis.

Upon difference in opinions, the Amir issued on March the 7th, 1939 a decree for dissolving the second legislative council which had not started yet its works.

Political developments until independence:

Whatever how big were the abovementioned political problems, they were overshadowed by the most important event, i.e. discovery of one of the biggest oil tanks in the world in the State of Kuwait at Borgan in April 1938, and export of the first shipment thereof on 30th of June 1946 at the end of the Second World War. With the discovery of oil, the Iraqi greed for Kuwait began. Internally, there began the Kuwaiti constitutional thought, especially as education and culture received the major part of expenditure after the flow of oil resources.
(Founder of the Constitution)

- After the death of his cousin, the deceased Shaikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Shaikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah took hold of power on 29th of February 1950. During his reign, State of Kuwait had gained its independence and was transferred from an emirate into a state. In addition the Constitution of the State of Kuwait was issued.

- In this period, there were many local, regional and international factors that led Kuwait to gain much pace towards completion of the steps of its real independence with more national calls claiming for independence of Kuwait and termination of the British protection. On the regional level, the Arab nationalist movement urging Arab countries to rebel, gain independence and end their relationship with the imperial countries affected the internal conditions of Kuwait. In addition, Kuwaitis have innate desire to have more deep relationships with all Arab Countries and States and participate in different activities of the Arab League in order to gradually prepare for having membership. On the international level, there was a deterioration of the British position as after the end of the Second World War, it was no more the Empire from which the sun never sets. Its position had deteriorated on the scale of international balance of powers. Therefore, Britain had become incapable to preserve its special position in Kuwait. Consequently, other countries got involved in the dispute arena for the region and its wealth notably USA and Soviet Union. Then, the final outcome of all above mentioned considerations was Kuwait independence and termination of the British protection. Then, Amir of Kuwait Shaikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah exchanged with the British High Commissioner two very important historical memoranda, an event that ended directly with termination of the Agreement of 1899 and declaration of the ultimate independence of the State of Kuwait on June 19th 1961.


- State of Kuwait joined the United Nations in 1963. There was exchange of complete diplomatic relationships with Iraq, Soviet Union and East Europe Countries.

- In this way, State of Kuwait became after few months a full member of the Arab League and was prepared for shift into democracy. A new journey had started after independence by turning directly towards the parliamentary regime.
In the name of Allah, the Most Powerful

We inaugurate the first session of the National Assembly marking the start of the constitutional era in the independent State of Kuwait at this juncture which is one of the links of our emerging Country’s path to its highest objective. I’m pleased to congratulate you for the people’s trust in you by electing you to represent them and repeat my recommendation to you (as a father to his children) to be careful for unification of this Arab Country which is sticking to its religion and traditions. I’m pleased also in this blessed day of our country’s history to swear by Allah Almighty to respect the constitution and laws of our Country and to protect the freedom of the people, their interests and wealth and to protect the independence of the Country and integrity of its territories.

God guides to the best.

Shaikh Abdullah Al-Salem making the constitutional oath at the first session of the National Assembly in 1963 by virtue of the provisions of the Constitution though he had spent 13 years in power.
My dear people,
Praise to God who provided us with this chance in this juncture of the history of our venerable people to achieve our hopes to draft a constitution of the country, based on proper democratic foundations and compatible with our traditions and responsive to the desires of our nation.
While we bless today this step and issue the constitution, we thank you all for your sincere efforts and spirit of sincere brotherhood during your works. We pray to Allah to make us successful for our prosperity.
Chapter Two

Constitutional rule and parliamentary life 1961-1991

- Constitution of the State of Kuwait
- Democratic practice crises (1976 and 1986)
- The solidarity between people and leadership during Iraqi invasion on Kuwait
Chapter Two
The constitutional ruling and the Parliamentary history (1961-1991)

The major popular support that has been shown for the deceased Amir of Kuwait Shaikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah at the time of the independence crisis, in addition to the Iraqi threat at that time and the people’s claims for political reform... all are considered motives that paved the way for adopting the parliamentary regime. So, the Law No. 1/1962 has been enacted which included the principal articles of ruling in the transitory period from the regime of Emirate to the State. That was as a provisional constitution to be applied through the period before enacting the permanent constitution. The Law transferred the assignment of enacting the permanent constitution to the Constituent Council that was formed of twenty members chosen by election in addition to eleven Ministers who were all members of Al-Sabah Family. Mr. Abdul Latif Mohammad Thanayan Al-Ghanim was elected as a President of the Constituent Council, Dr. Ahmad Mohammad Al-Khateeb was elected as a Deputy President of the Council.

The Constitution of the State of Kuwait

The constitution is the basic law of the country that specifies the bases of the society and State, organizing its authorities, their formation and activities and the rights and duties of citizens. The Constitution is considered an important development in the relationship between the State and the Citizen, as it makes the country subject to Law as the basic Law of the country.

The constitution of the State of Kuwait that was enacted in 1962 is a written strict constitution. Because it determined special conditions and procedures for its amendment and revision more strict and complicated than that conditions stipulated in relation to the ordinary laws. Concerning its establishment and the way in which it was formed, it was a contractual constitution between the ruler and the people.

The constitution tried to achieve equilibrium between the parliamentary and the presidential regimes in a dual regime. Of the features of the parliamentary regime that the President of the country is not responsible and his self is beyond offenses because he holds authority through his Ministers, in addition to adoption of the flexible separation between authorities which establishes a kind of cooperation between them. On the other hand the features that are similar to the Presidential regime are as follows:

1- It did not ultimately adopt the customary parliamentary regime that strictly compels choosing the Ministers from the Parliament Members, rather it permitted the choice of the Ministers from the Parliament Members and others.

2- The formation of any new Ministry does not need the confidence of the National
Assembly, rather it needs the confidence of the Country’s President (Amir).

3- There is no provision stipulating that the whole Ministry shall be abolished by a decree of no confidence issued by the National Assembly.

4- The Ministry shall be accountable before the Country’s President (Amir), as the Prime Minister and the Ministers are jointly accountable before the Amir.

The Constitution of the State of Kuwait consists of (183) articles and explanatory notes. These articles have been divided into five basic parts including: the State and the ruling regime, the principal bases of the Kuwaiti society, the public rights and duties and the authorities and competences of:

A- President of State
B- The legislative power
C- The Executive power
D- The Judicial power

In addition to a fifth part about the general and provisional provisions.

Therefore, the year 1962 is the year in which the State of Kuwait started its first constitutional steps towards the democratic way and adopted this principle in its political regime, that was at the same time the reign of His Highness Amir / Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. The first elected representative council had concentrated on reform and organization of the country whether in the economic, security or administrative fields and establishment of the bases of a modern country. Shaikh / Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah died on 24th November 1965 while the representative council was in the mid of the first legislative term.


Shaikh / Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah held power over the Emirate on 24th November 1965, in his reign the following events took place in the history of the democratic life of the State of Kuwait.

- Kuwait University has been established and inaugurated in 27th November 1966.
- A group of important Laws were enacted like:
  - The Law organizing registration of births and deaths.
  - Law of advocacy.
  - The Law of the Legislative Court Establishment.
  - Oil assuring Laws.

- His Highness issued an Amiri Decree for dissolving the National Assembly in the fourth Legislative term on 29th August 1976 because of absence of cooperation between the two authorities.

- By dissolving the National Assembly – for the first time – the representative life of Kuwait came to a stop for four years and a half from September 1976 to March 1981.
(13) Jaber Al-Ahmad (1977-2006):

- Shaikh / Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has been called as His Highness the Amir on 31st of December 1977 that was the same day in which his precedent Shaikh / Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah has died.

- On 24th August 1980, the Amir issued a decree inviting the National Assembly for a meeting through no longer than the end of February 1981.

- On 16th of December 1980, an Amiri Decree No. 99/1980 has been issued to re-divide the electoral constituents that became 25 departments rather than ten only, so that each department shall be represented by two representatives.

- The elections that had been run in February 1981 resulted in 35 members of the prior council (the fourth) winning and involving 15 new members. The fifth Council (9 March 1981- 19 January 1985) has been presided by Mr. Mohammad Yousef Al-Adasany.

- **This Council has enacted many laws including:**
  
  - The Law of Establishment of Bait Al-Zakat.
  - The Law of Establishment of the Public Authority for Civil Information.
  - The Law of Establishment of the Public Authority for Applied Education.
  - The Law of Establishment of the Public authority for Minor Affairs.
  - The Anti Drug Law.
  - The Law of Establishment of the Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources.
  - The Law of Establishment of the Public Authority of Cash Reserves Investment.

- The fifth Council completed its constitutional term (the fifth legislative term) which lasts for four calendar years; the last convention was on 19th of January 1985.

- On 9th of March 1985, His Highness inaugurated the sixth legislative term of the National Assembly after running the elections for the Council on 20th of February 1985, that elected Mr. Ahmad Abdul Aziz Al-Sadoun as a President thereof. Through its short life, this Council could enact the Law of Detonators Crimes and the Maternity Leave Law, as a result of the deteriorating relationship between the two authorities, and for preserving the national unity, the Council was dissolved on the 3rd of July 1986.
The two crises of the Democratic practice (1976-1986):

- The experience of the democratic practice in faced some problems and crises, rather, before it becomes naturally grown and developed, it needed to go through certain effective and essential terminals through its history.


- The constitutional parliamentary life stopped twice: the first time was in 1976, as the Assembly was dissolved and there was a suspension of certain provisions of the Constitution. The state of constitutional emptiness lasted for more than four years, during which the government cancelled the idea of amending the Constitution because of the people’s objection. The second crisis, was in 1986, as the Assembly was dissolved again and there was a suspension of enforcement of the Constitution amid a popular rebels and pressures demanding the return of the parliament.

- In regard to the regional considerations and factors that formed the features of the second parliamentary crisis in Kuwait, its noticable that Iraq was involved in its long war, with Iran. The political and security threats that affected Kuwait was caused by this war one of the basic factors that ended the parliamentary experience on a provisional basis, in addition to the Iraqi invasion to Kuwait on the 2nd of August 1990 and suspension of all forms of natural life until the liberation in the 26th of February 1991.
The integration of the people with the leadership after the Iraqi invasion on Kuwait:

The Kuwaitis proved to the whole world – after the Iraqi invasion on Kuwait on the second of August 1990 – that the relationship between the Kuwaities and their rulers is special and solid, that is as a parent-child relationship, a deep rooted one, a relationship extended for more than three hundred years. The stance of the Kuwaities facing the Iraqi invasion expressed one man stand. As the invasion was a crucial test for the consultation system and democracy in Kuwait. History will incise the prominent role of the champion of liberation the deceased Shaikh / Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem, – the Crown Prince and the Prime Minister at that time – in gathering Kuwaities outside the country during the period of invasion and his efforts exerted to provide the financial and living needs until that misfortune ended and the liberation was achieved.

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Jedda, public conference was convend in October, 1990, during which the ruler met with his people during the misfortune of invasion, both parties pledged to unify and support each other to work according to the constitution of 1962 to build the after-invasion-Kuwait, so that it will become more powerful and more benevolent. The political leadership, after liberation of Kuwait on 26th of February, 1991 determined the date of October the 5th 1992 as the selected date for the elections of the National Assembly and for resuming the parliamentary life again.
Abdullah Al Salem hall after the aggressive invasion

Kuwait oil wells set on fire
Democratic Experience in Kuwait since liberation (1991-2011)

- Resumption of parliamentary life
- Separation between premiership and crown prince position
- National assembly pledge of allegiance to Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed as The Amir of Kuwait
- 2009 National Assembly, Kuwaiti women reaches parliamentary seat
- His Highness the Prime Minister on the dais
Chapter Three
Democratic experience in Kuwait since liberation (1991-2011)

during the brutal Iraqi invasion on the 2nd of August 1990, the cabinet of Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem continued to run the state affairs from Al-Taif City in Saudi Arabia until after liberation on 26th of February, 1991. In April 1991, an Amiri decree was issued to form a new cabinet for the reconstruction and building era.

Resumption of parliamentary life (1992)

On the 20th of October 1992, the parliamentary life was resumed after suspension for more than 6 years. The seventh national assembly chaired by Mr. Ahmed Abdul Aziz Al-Saadoun started to practice its legislative and supervision tasks. The outstanding laws enacted during the seventh legislative term (1992-1996) were as follows:

- The law on Public fund protection
- The law on Judiciary independence
- The law on Ministers trial
- The law on Hard debt
- The law on Social housing welfare
- The law on Execution penalty for trafficking smugglers
- The law on Sex segregation
- The law on disabled care

- For the first time in the history of Kuwait parliamentary assemblies, a human right committee was formed among the committees of Kuwait national assembly during that term.

- On 20th of October 1996, the eighth legislative term of national assembly was opened under the chairmanship of Mr. Ahmed Abdul Aziz Al-Saadoun. During this term, a set of laws were enacted, notably:
  - Law on amendment of private sector employment
  - Law on ratification of chemical weapons innovation, production, storage and use prohibition and destruction agreement
  - Law on credit and saving bank capital increase
  - Law on Kuwait affiliation to world intellectual property organization foundation agreement
  - Law on ratification of international atomic energy agency privileges and immunities agreement
  - Law on expatriate medical insurance and fees payment against medical services.
- Due to the deadlock between the two powers, an Amiri Decree was issued
in May 1999 to dissolve national assembly.

- The new assembly started the functions of the ninth legislative session chaired by Mr. Jassem Mohamed Al-Kharafi on the 17th of July 1999 and continued until the 30th of June 2003, i.e. full constitutional term (four years). During this term, a set of laws was enacted, notably:
  - Law on Intellectual property rights.
  - Law on National manpower support.
  - Law for permitting non-Kuwaitis to acquire the shares of Kuwaiti shareholding companies.
  - Private universities foundation law.
  - Law on regulation of direct investment of foreign capital in the State of Kuwait.
  - law on Anti-money laundry.

- The ninth legislative term started on 17th July 1999, chaired by Mr. Jassem Mohamed Al-Kharafi. During this term, eight interpellations were filed and the cabinet resigned on 29/01/2001. Afterwards, a new cabinet was formed in February 2001. Both cabinets were chaired by His Highness Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah.
Separation between premiership and crown prince position

- On the 13th of July 2003, the premiership and crown prince position were separated for the first time where His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was commissioned as prime minister and His Highness Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah retained the crown prince position.

- On the 19th of July 2003, the tenth legislative term started under the chairmanship of Mr. Jassem Mohamed Al-Kharafi and lasted for three years only when it was dissolved by an Amiri Decree for the assembly dissolution on 21st of May 2006.

- During this legislative term, the assembly drafted some laws, notably:
  
  - Law on treatment of GCC nationals same as Kuwaitis with respect to acquisition of lands and buildings in Kuwait.
  - Law on recognizing of Kuwait Municipality
  - Law on law on organizing sport professionalism
  - Law on amendment of national assembly election (permitting women to involve in politics)
  - Law on press and publishing

- On the 15th of January 2006, the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah died and whereas Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem was the then crown prince, he was acclaimed by the cabinet as the Amir of Kuwait.
A session of the National Assembly
The National Assembly played an effective role through exercising its constitutional powers during rule transition crisis that occurred following demise of the late Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on January 15th, 2006. On that day, the Council of Ministers proclaimed the Crown Prince Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah as the Amir of the State as stated on the first paragraph of article 4 of Amir Succession Law (1) .

Due to his medical conditions that would prevented him from assuming ruling burdens, Council of Ministers decided to activate the constitutional procedures set forth in Article 3 of Amir Succession Law pertaining to the Amir’s lack of health ability to exercise his powers. As council of ministers announced that His Highness the Amir lacks such ability, the matter was presented to the National Assembly which unanimously agreed, in its session held on 24th of January 2006, to depose His Highness Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah from the Amir position.

Due to vacancy of Crown Prince position at that time, the Council of Ministers exercised the functions of state president pursuant to article 4 of Amir Succession Law and decided to recommend Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for the position of the Amir of the State of Kuwait. In its session held on 29th of January 2006, the National Assembly unanimously recommended the allegiance Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as the Amir of the state. His Highness took the constitutional oath before the National Assembly in a special session held on the same day.

On the 7th of February, 2006, His Highness recommended Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as the Crown Prince who took the constitutional oath before the National assembly in its session held on 20th of February 2006.

Thus, National Assembly confidently and diligently put an end to rule transitory crisis and exercised its constitutional role by applying the articles of the constitution and Amir Succession Law.

1-Article 3 of Kuwait Amir Succession Law No. 4 issued on 30 April 1964 sets forth: “it is a condition for the Amir to exercise his constitutional powers that he shall not lack any of the conditions to be met by the Crown Prince. If he fails to meet any of these conditions or lacks health ability to exercise his powers, the Prime Minister, after verifying the same, shall put the issue before National Assembly immediately to discuss it in a secret session. If National Assembly conclusively establishes lack of condition or ability mentioned above, it shall decide, by majority of two-thirds of members comprising it, to transfer exercise of the Amir powers to the Crown Prince on temporary basis or transition of state presidency to him permanently.
The Progress of Democracy In The State of Kuwait

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah
At the National Assembly after pledge allegiance as the Amir of the State on the 29th of January 2006

His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah
At the National Assembly after pledge allegiance as the Crown Prince on the 20th of February 2006
The circumstances of the smooth transition of state leadership to His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah clearly reflects, as we have seen, such special characteristics of Kuwait democratic experience that subsequently took deep dimensions that acquired it more power and vitality.

The following are the most significant political events that occurred during such critical era of Kuwait progress in the course of freedom, democracy and development:

- On the 9th of February 2006, the first cabinet was reconstituled and chaired by His Highness Sheikh Naser Al-Mohamed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, which only remained for 143 days, as it faced in the national assembly what would be called a new wave of democratic expansion, where the number of interpellations during the tenth legislative term reached seven, interpellations, the last led to national assembly dissolution.

- On the 17th of May 2006, three national assembly members interpellated His Highness the prime minister on the issue of election constituencies (this was the first precedent in the history of Kuwait parliament as the interpellation motion was presented for the prime minister, not a minister in the cabinet). The interpellation was not discussed due to the issuance of Amiri Decree on 21st May 2006 dissolving the national assembly because of lack of cooperation between the two powers. Furthermore, a decree was issued to hold the national assembly election on the 29th of June 2006.

- The new national assembly headed by its speaker Mr. Jassem Mohamed Al-Kharafi initiated the activities of the 11th legislative term on 12th of June 2006 and lasted until the 19th of March 2008. During such period, many laws were enacted, the most important are:
  
  - Law on Redetermination of electoral constituencies.
  - Law on Zakat and shareholding companies’ contribution to state budget;
  - Law on Regulating work in Kuwait Olympic Committee and Sports Clubs;
  - Law on Sports Clubs financial aid;
  - Law on Competition Protection;
  - Law on Social Welfare for the Aged;
  - Law on Visual and Audio Media;
  - Law on concerning amending certain provisions of Kuwait Income Tax decree No. 3 of 1955;
  - Law on conversion of Kuwait Airways Corporation into a shareholding company;
  - Law on BOT operations regulations.
During the 11th legislative term, national assembly addressed seven interpellations to ministers of information, health, oil, finance, Awqaf & Islamic Affairs and education. During such legislative term, the second cabinet of His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al Mohamed Al-Sabah resigned on 4th of March 2007. Positive atmosphere between the government and national assembly did not last because of the rising parliament's demands concerning some issues such as: salary increase, loan write-off and cessation of removing transgressions against state property. The Amiri Decree No. 82 of 2008 dissolved the national assembly and parliament elections was scheduled on 18th of May 2008.

On the 1st of June 2008, national assembly headed by its speaker Mr. Jassem Mohamed Al-Kharafi initiated the activities of 12th legislative term with a government led by His Highness Sheikh Naser Al-Mohamed Al-Sabah. This assembly is the first to be elected as per five constituencies system for which law no. 42/2006 was enacted whereby Kuwait transformed from 25 to 5 constituencies. In this legislative term, national assembly legislated some laws including:

- Law on establishing a fund for tacking insolvent citizens to banks and investment companies;
- Law on guarantee of deposits in local banks in the State of Kuwait;
- Law on medical examination for people intending to marry before consummation of marriage.

The cabinet of His Highness Sheikh Naser Al-Mohamed lasted only for eight months. On 18th of November 2008, three members addressed a second interpellation to His Highness the prime minister after which the government submitted its resignation on 25th of November 2008 and was accepted on 14th of December 2008.

As the fifth cabinet of His Highness Sheikh Naser Al-Mohamed initiated its business on 12th January 2009, it was faced with three interpellations, all of them were in March 2009.

The government resigned due to lack of cooperation and then Amiri Decree no. 8 was issued on 18th of March 2009 to dissolve national assembly.
National Assembly of 2009 and women's parliamentary representation:

- Kuwaiti people elected, four women among its 50 members, they won seats for three electoral constituencies, the first, second and third constituencies. Therefore, 2009 National Assembly established a new roadmap and vision for women role, not only in parliamentary activity, but also in political, social and economic life of Kuwait.

While Kuwaiti women took up high positions in public administration and occupied effective positions as minister, university president, ambassador and undersecretary. However, in 2009 women gain parliamentary membership and not through nomination but through direct free elections and via ballot boxes.

- On 29th of May 2009, the 27th cabinet in political history of Kuwait since independence and the 6th government led by His Highness Sheikh Naser Al-Mohamed Al-Sabah was formed.

- On 31st of May 2009, first ordinary session holding of the 13th legislative term was inaugurated with Mr. Jassem Mohamed Al-Kharafi serving as speaker.

- On 8th of June 2009, one member of the National Assembly addressed on interpellation to the minister of interior then ten members signed a demand of no-confidence against the minister, but the ballot result was in the minister’s favor.

- On 27th of October 2009, second ordinary session of the session 13th legislative term was inaugurated. During this legislative holding phase, national assembly, in cooperation with the government, accomplished set of important economic and social laws, including the following:

1. Law No. 6 of 2010 concerning private sector labor securities;
2. Law No. 7 of 2010 concerning the establishment of market authority and the regulating securities activities;
3. Law No. 8 of 2010 concerning the rights of people; with special needs.
4. Law No. 9 of 2010 concerning issuance of development plan for the years 2010-2011-2013/2014;
5. Law No. 37 of 2010 concerning organization and operations of privatization program;
7. Law No. 39 of 2010 concerning establishment of Kuwaiti shareholding companies to undertake construction and execution of electrical power and water desalination plants in Kuwait;
8. Law No. 40 of 2010 concerning establishment of one or more Kuwaiti shareholding companies to undertake design, execution, operation and maintenance of laborers' cities under BOT system;
9. Law No. 49 of 2010 concerning contribution and support for small and medium private sectors in Arab world;

10. Law No. 50 of 2010 concerning amendment of certain provisions of law no. 47 of 1993 on housing welfare;

11. Law No. 51 of 2010 establishing a fund for tackling insolvent citizens to banks and investment companies;

- This assembly realized great achievement by approving a set of highly critical laws economic, financial and social. By this, Kuwait would start a new phase of development and progress and shift to highly prestigious financial and commercial hub in the region.

- Furthermore, national assembly performed its supervisory role given the number of interpillations addressed to several ministers in the 6 governments of Sheikh Naser Al-Mohamed Al-Sabah, the questions of no-confidence and letters of non-cooperation as well as, questions, discussion requests and proposals during sessions.

Kuwaiti women have become parliament members
His Highness Prime Minister ascending the dais
(a Development in democracy practice)

- In this legislative term, on 15th of November 2009, in an unprecedented political parliamentary event, His Highness Prime Minister ascended national assembly dais for the first time in Kuwait history in activation of the constitution provisions. The government managed to pass the interpellation addressed by one of the member concerning “the expenses and cheques of the Prime Minister’s diwan” by renewing trust in His Highness and rejecting the demand of non-cooperation.

- On 13th of December 2010, His Highness Sheikh Naser Al-Mohamed Al-Sabah ascended the dais for the second time within one year in a interpellation addressed by three members of national assembly concerning the issue closed of “violation of the constitution and infringe on freedoms”. In a closed session held on 5th of January 2011, trust was renewed in His Highness again and the demand of non-cooperation was rejected.

- It is worth mentioning that on 8th of May 2011, more than six weeks after resignation of the government, the 7th government of His Highness Sheikh Naser Al-Mohamed Al-Sabah took the constitutional oath before the Amir of the state to start a new phase of legislative and governmental work concurrently with implementation of the largest ambitious development plan of the country up to this date.
Photo of National Assembly during National Day celebrations
The Progress of Democracy In The State of Kuwait

National Assembly and Parliament Members Building
Conclusion

The observer of progress of democracy in Kuwait since the emirate era until the present time in which the constitution and sovereignty are ruling would realize that Kuwait has experienced and practiced democracy and consultation since its beginning in Dawaween. The ruler and his people were in permanent and continuous meetings almost daily, these small parliaments were substituted at a later stage by the National Assembly which is the grand house for the people representatives.

Consultation was the approach and technique used to enhance the relationship between the ruler and citizens. Kuwait democracy is an outstanding experience characterized with its authentic Arabic and Islamic values where individuals dissolve within the group and everyone is seeking a better life dominated by better life characterized with harmony, peace and tranquility.

Thus, the parliamentary and political life goes on in an atmosphere of democracy where citizens enjoy freedom of expression, selection and self-determination. The absolute beneficiary is the homeland ... Kuwait.
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OCTOBER 2011