Civil Society in the Arabian Gulf: The State of Qatar as a Case Study

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Abstract
There have been many studies on the concepts of civil society by Western and Arabic scholars. However, a few studies have studied the concept of civil society within the State of Qatar. This research paper investigates the social and political perspectives on how the State of Qatar measures and advances itself to be labeled a civil society, not only among other Gulf countries, but also on the international platform. Additionally, in discussing related literature in Western and Islamic philosophies on the concept of civil society, this researcher looks at how the State of Qatar has historically, locally, internationally, and politically addressed such a concept. Based on semi-instructed interviews and drawing on qualitative methods, this researcher interviewed stakeholders in private and public sectors to understand the depth of their understanding of the concepts of civil society and the differences between this concept from Western and Islamic perspectives. Also, by analyzing various policy documents, this paper shows the discourse to which the State of Qatar adhered. This article identifies numerous activities and NGO charities within Qatar governmental and non-governmental organizations. The findings of the this paper suggest that the State of Qatar has a clear understanding of the concept of civil society by following and ascribing to the highest understanding of the concepts which is similar to its neighboring and international countries. This researcher believes that each community has its own ideological stance that differs from the other communities, and that a civil society consists of certain pillars, which are the political, economic, and social aspects, and that a civil society cannot exist without the existence of these pillars. Like other Gulf States, Qatar doesn’t have a real civil society which is based on independent non-governmental organizations as labor and professional unions that leads to political and social empowerment.

Key Words: Sociology, Political Sociology, Civil Society, NGO, Charity, State of Qatar, Arab World

Introduction
The concept of a civil society has become one of the most widespread concept used in the past decades, especially from the 1990s of the last century to the present. Thus, it has become the main topic of overall social and political analysis and was transformed into a political driving force, by which the advances of nations in the political sphere are measured. However, this concept still has its controversies in the fields of politics and sociology. This debate revolves around two main axes. The first one is in regard to the concept and meaning of a civil society in the Arab world. Subsequently, we find that some individuals use the concept of a civil society in accordance with that of the Western concept, which is entrenched in the western sociological perception, while others try to offer a different concept in line with the nature and characteristics of Arab and Islamic societies. The second axis is the extent of the possibility of the existence of a civil society. Do institutions and organizations that exist in the Arab world represent a civil society in terms of meaning and roles and in terms of independence from the state, or do we have a civil society in the Western sense, especially within current undemocratic Arab countries? This study will focus on two sides: the theoretical aspect, which deals with the concept of civil society through the treatise that has been discussed in Western and Arabic literature, and the field aspect, which focuses on the reality of civil society in the State of Qatar, which is not that different in nature from other Gulf and Arab states.

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Problem Statement
During the period when many organizations and non-governmental institutions exist in the Gulf states in general, and the state of Qatar in particular, controversy still exists about these institutions due to the obscurity that surrounds the latter. We find some individuals — especially the elite, who are linked to power or to these institutions — believe that these institutions represent a civil society which plays an important role in society. On the other hand, we find that some intellectuals in the Arabian Gulf do not believe that such organizations represent a civil society in the scientific essence of the word, as is the case of the West. Despite the emergence of the concept of a civil society in the state of Qatar in recent years, there still remains a prevailing uncertainty about this concept within the different sections of that society, whether as a result of ignorance of the concept itself, or a lack of knowledge of the existence of non-governmental organizations in the State of Qatar. As a result of this problematic issue, this researcher intends to conduct a sociological study that illustrates what a civil society is, in terms of concept. Also, this researcher will analyze these organizations and institutions in the State of Qatar in terms of characteristics and the roles they play.

Significance of the Study
Over the past decades, attention, as well as controversy, has grown regarding the concept of public and civil society organizations and non-governmental institutions in the Arab world, especially in the Gulf and within the State of Qatar. The core of that interest centers on the content of that concept and whether these organizations — which could be a civil society as it exists in the West — led to social and political change in these societies. Those who follow such developments on the local front, would find that there still remains an uncertainty and a lack of sufficient scientific knowledge regarding the main concept and the importance of representing a civil society. The significance of this study stems from its being designed to study the concept of civil society and establish it scientifically and systematically, either through Western theories or by what has been discussed in the Arab world. The importance of this study also lies in the knowledge that it will offer to the organizations and non-governmental institutions in the State of Qatar, such as knowledge of the characteristics and features of these institutions, that are compatible with the concept of civil society.

The Purpose & Questions of study
This study intends to explore the concept and meaning of civil society through an analysis of Arab and foreign studies, as well as what the Qatari society perceives and knows about civil society. Additionally, the study also strives to reveal the characteristics and roles of associations and non-governmental institutions, in the State of Qatar, which classifies it as a civil society, and whether a civil society indeed exists in the State of Qatar. Based on these goals, the main research questions of the study are as follows:
First: What is the meaning of civil society?
   1. How previous Arab and foreign studies have interpreted the concept of civil society.
   2. What does a civil society mean in the eyes of the leaders of non-governmental institutions, as well as intellectuals and the youth in the State of Qatar?
Second: What are the characteristics and goals of Qatari associations and organizations that are classified as civil society institutions?:
   1. The level of independence of these institutions, financially and administratively.
   2. The relationship between these institutions and the official institutions representing the state.
   3. What roles, these institutions play in the society.
   4. How much confidence is placed in these institutions?
Literature Review

The prominent role played by intellectuals during the renaissance of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries led to the crystallization and formulation of the concept of civil society, through the theories that define the relationship between a society and the state, or what was termed the “Social Contract”. The first important contribution was made by the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). Hobbes has also pointed to the social contract where freedom is voluntarily waived by the community. Thus, it was felt that civil society was a society founded on social contracting (Munroe, 2008). John Locke (1632-1704) particularly indicated this in his second letter of 1690 about the civil government. The content of his letter reflects his rational thinking, where he believes that it is the nature of humans to live in a state of freedom and equality. He perceived the community as the source of legitimacy of the state and the basis for wanting to monitor and isolate it through elections and not through rebellion and civil war (Locke, 1959; Munroe, 2008). The culmination of contributions of the social contract inspired the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's ideas (1712-1778). This is noticeable in his book, The Social Contract, which was published in 1762. Rousseau occupies a central role which makes it different from Hobbes and Locke, where the individual becomes part of an organic entity which is the community, and the state is not the dominant system as much as it is a reflection of the will of the public. As such, while the state exercises its sovereignty, in essence, it exercises the right to express the general will of the people. The implementation of the government is in effect, not just an implementation of the laws, but ultimately, the general will of the people (James, 2013 Horowitz, 1987). Therefore, a civil society is a society which is politically organized, and freely expresses the opinions of all its members without discrimination. Hegel, the philosopher, played a prominent role in the differentiation between the political echelon and the rest of society as he enforced the concept of civil society, regarding it as the most important achievement in the modern world. The social society refers to all individuals’ special interests and relationships removed from the state. For Hegel, the civil society represents this social and moral space between the family and the state. This indicates that the civil society exists after the existence of the state, because the difference between the concept of a family and state requires the existence of the state. According to Hegel, the civil society consists of a group of people who seek to achieve their own interests and goals; and also, the civil society is a society characterized by selfishness (Ashley & Ornestein, 2005). Hence, the existence of the state as a permanent observer is a must (Paffenholz, & Spurk, 2010). Hegel indicates that a civil society is that space or arena in which man moves freely to advocate for his freedom and his personal interests, as well as his own world, and this space becomes a place where all class contradictions clearly appear. In contrast, the state presents the bureaucratic space in which man is part of a society, compelled, with no freedom, and feels social island nation alienation (Marcuse, 1960). For Karl Marx, the civil society is a place for class struggle, and it includes all fields of social life before the existence of the state. It also identifies the political level of the state. Marx identified civil society as the sum of the individual’s physical relationships in a specific stage of the productive forces development or the base, which identifies the nature of the structure, including the state, ideas and beliefs (Marger, 1987; Mouffe, 1979; Berberoglu, 1990). Marx sees Hegel’s view, in which he separates society and politics, as a contradiction, since social life needs laws to organize its affairs, and authority to supervise it, whereupon the political dimension is gained. The concept of civil society took a physical dimension for Marx, as he considered it a political force against authoritarian authority. Civil society is a historical phenomenon that has existed since time immemorial. The concerned force society increased since Marx indicated that it is the opposite of the state. Marx accepted the demolition of the state, and the alternative was the social society. The Italian thinker, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), was affected by the ideas of Marx and stressed the role of civil society in resisting authoritarian power. Civil society is located between the state with its legislation and power, and the economic field (Gramsci, 1971). A civil society includes a set of non-coercive institutions, governmental and non-governmental markets and activities such as unions, schools, professional, educational and
cultural associations, political parties, and churches (Moen, 1998). A civil society is not a place for economic competition, as seen by Hegel and Marx, but rather, it is a field to compete ideologically. Gramsci believes that the victory of the workers’ revolution will achieve the ideal civil society, and the state works in its service, not against it, as in a capitalist society (Faulks, 2000). This means that, based on this concept, a civil society corresponds to the superstructure and not the infrastructure, as seen by Marx (Poulantzas, 1978). Antonio Gramsci devolved the Marxist concept for civil society through his definition for this term, in which he opposed Marx, as he viewed civil society as part of a superstructure. This structure, in turn, is divided into a civil society and a political society. The function of the first is domination through culture and ideology, and the function of the second (state) is control and coercion (Sassoon, 1982). Civil society is not antithetical to the state by necessity, or hostile to it, but the question that arises here is: what are the features of this state? If the state is based on democracy, respect for the law and constitutional institutions, there shall be cooperation and integration between it and the institutions of civil society; and if this state is a dictatorship, then the forces of the civil society become oppositional ones (Faulks, 2000). Tocqueville Alexis, in his study of American society, assures us that the democratic revolution is more important than the industrial revolution, because the existence of a democratic society which is based on equality and social justice dissolves the difference between individuals. He focused on the importance of voluntary associations, which are a reflection of democratic pluralism in American society (Orum & Dale, 2009). According to Micheletti (1995) and Milner (1997), civil society is the space, which consists of a group of organized and independent activities of the state. The organized civil society increases the empowerment of democracy, which is based on pluralism and the acceptance of the other minorities in society. Therefore, civil society consists of institutions, non-profit organizations, and non-governmental organizations. Such organizations that are not part of the formal sector of the state nor the private sector, are part of the market, and seek to profit. People working on these organization, should be volunteers (Gelatt, 1992). Civil society organizations were established to provide various services in various fields: political, economic and social. Such organizations are interested in the environment, or in providing health services or educational and cultural services. The institutions and organizations of civil society provide different services, as their mission is to achieve their establishment goals, which are to enable the community to provide the services needed without financial profit. (Anthony & Young, 1988). A civil society is that society in which the opportunity is available for individuals to form themselves. This means that the membership of social groups must be voluntary and overlapping. Individuality often rises in the complex structure of social life (Hall, 1998). Also, the fabric of the informal voluntary associations — such as families, neighbors, churches, civic groups, local schools, different cultures and charity organizations — is called social society (Feulner,1999). It supposed that civil society associations are independent from the state, although it should not operate outside the boundaries of the law (Ismael & Ismael, 1997). The existence of association, which represent civil society, is a characteristic of the democratic culture. Therefore, in Western countries, we find families, churches, neighborhood groups, professional unions, and all volunteer activities. Historically, the political parties were also part of this picture, and a part of the network that are outside the formal structure of state power (Elshtain, 1998). Neace (1999), Heinrich (2004), and Geoby (2005) assured the importance of supporting and empowering civil society organizations to achieve their objectives through the development of programs, plans and their implementation, which supports civil organizations’ ability to address poverty and its problems and to achieve social justice (al-Najjar, 2005). A civil society plays an important role in the field of social care by encouraging the participation of community members in the provision of social services, as an expression of individual needs (Bendall, 2006). Civil society organizations are based on the concepts of volunteering and charity. They provide various services in different fields. So you find that there are some organizations that provide financial and physical aid for the needy and there are organizations that care for, and focus on family issues. Some organizations care about family, and others care about economic,
educational and health fields and human rights Al-Melhem, 2003). The term Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) was used alternatively for voluntary non-governmental institutions, because their structure and mode of operation differ from that of government institutions. Non-governmental organizations are established using self-administrative initiatives, organized by a group of community members to achieve community goals to benefit the local society. So the term non-governmental organizations (or NGOs) differs from one country to another. For instance, in Arabic countries, they are called voluntary or charity organizations, while in other countries, they are known as non-governmental developmental associations (Fernando & Heston, 1997).

The Independence of the Civil Society
First: the initiatives and motivations come from the individuals who willingly participate in the voluntary work, because the intervention of the state in these initiatives and the formation of civil society associations, places these associations under the authority of the state.
Second: civil society associations must be financially independent through external financial or aids or through investment made by these institutions. The more these civil society associations are financially independent without the financial support of state, the more independency is gained for these institutions (Al-Hourani, 2003). Civil society associations and organizations must be administratively independent, and not subject to other governmental individuals, institutions, or organizations like the state (Al-Subihi, 2000; Nasser & Sa’ad, 2004). Researchers in sociology and the Public Policy Institute at Johns Hopkins University presented a set of standard guidelines which were adopted by some countries, in order to define the meaning of a society with its different nonprofit organizations. The study concluded with a set of standard guidelines that must exist in any civil society organization. These guidelines are: 1)The organization must be characterized by formality and continuity and it must not be based on temporary non-formal gatherings; 2) The organizations’ goal must not be based on profit, as the work must be voluntary; 3) The organization must not be connected to the state, but it may be supported by the state in different fields; 4) The administration must be self-governing, not by the government or any administrative assistance from an external organization; 5) The administration and the activity of the organization must be based on voluntary participation; 6) The organization must not be connected to any political party or group inside or outside the state, nor to any organization aiming for a political influence in the state but rather, the organization may have some political activities (Qandil & Ibn Nafisa, 1994).

Arab and Islamic Society
The concept of society is one of the new concepts in Arab and Islamic political thought. The interest in this concept only appeared in the last decades. Arab intellectuals were not interested in the concept of a civil society, but they discussed general phenomena and political issues in Western societies such as democracy, freedom and justice (Janhani & Ismail, 2003). The Arab Islamic society did not recognize how to differentiate between the society and the state until the nineteenth century. Some independent organizations emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, which veered away from the state, such as journals, associations and arts saloons; these independent organizations increased during the current century (Janhani & Ismail, 2003). The concept of the state and society is new in Arab political thinking, as the term “state” was found in ancient texts, but it is not related to the concept of the modern state. It is known that the Islamic regimes were called Al-Khilafah, Al-Imamah, Al-Emarah and Al-Sultanah (Ganhani & Ismail, 2003). The concept of society was not used until recently, but the Arab Islamic city has known, since middle ages, a degree of craftsmen and professional organizations, which may be considered as a society organization of some sort (Ganhani & Ismail, 2003). To sum up, it is clear that the concept of a civil society in some Arab countries does not exist in the manner in which it exists in other countries; but rather, the concept was used with its political dimension, and was used as a weapon to
resist the authoritarian state. Thus, there was a lack in studying this concept to such an extent, that it was inevitably not deeply rooted in Arab countries.

In Arab countries, some have opposed the existence of a civil society, as they believe that such organizations are connected to globalization or other foreign organizations. The Arab countries used their legislations to monopolize media, and to limit freedoms and basic rights, such as the right to form associations, unions, and to inhibit the freedom of expression (Shukur & Moro, 2003). So there are some modern associations in the Arab countries, but these associations still have a traditional, tribal, or sectarian culture. These qualities are evident, for example, when we find that many organizations are managed or have been established by a single group whose members belong to the same village or the same tribe (Zayed, 2000). As for the relationship between the state and the societal institutions, it appears as if each party seeks to gain certain advantages and aims at making the other lose power. Thus, in such a conflict, the states will prevail, especially in an Arab community where there is no space for popular democratic participation (Al-Hourani, 2003). Most Arab countries do not want a strong civil society, fearing that they will lose their prestige and legitimacy. However, the civil society, with its different associations continues to try to participate in some developmental and charitable projects, which the state has failed to achieve; and this has provided a legitimate mode for the emergence of the society, especially in the field of charity. Due to a lack of money and credibility, most Arab countries could not participate and support developmental projects or monopolize them Arab society is based on two structures — each of them opposes the other in legitimacy and existence — and at the same time they stand as an interface opposing the emergence of civil society. These two structures are: the state with its institutions and legitimacy; and the traditional structure such as kinship and clan. Therefore, we find that in tribal communities, loyalty is to the values of the tribe and nothing else (Meagel, 1995). In Arab reality, the state appears in its sovereign and authoritarian form, which depends on central power and control, while traditional structures, such as clan and tribe, are considered isolated. The civil society as a third structure rejects such isolation and is based on participation and acceptance of the other (Saad- Al-Deen, 1995). Various parties and groups did not realize that a civil society consists of many different components, and that it has existed in the Arab world for more than a hundred years, with the establishment of the civil institutions in the nineteenth century, with trade and professional unions at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the cooperative associations — all of these were considered as part of the so-called civil society (Shukur & Moro, 2003). A civil society, in terms of the concept, is a set of relationships that exist among its members on one side, and between the individuals and the state on the other. These relationships are based on the exchange of interests, agreements, differences, rights, duties, and the ability to account for the actions of the state, if necessary. In order to make this type of relationship successful, it must be formed through the institutions of a civil society, which forms the basic framework from which the state derives its legitimacy and it is, on the other hand, a way to make the state accountable, if needed (Shukur & Moro, 2003). There is a strong connection between democracy and the civil society, and it is believed to be an exchangeable relationship, where there would be no civil society associations without democracy, and no successful democracy without a powerful civil society. So, we find modern civil society believing in the values of equality, respect, tolerance and the acceptance of others. These values are the same on which democracy is based in a modern society. The civil society plays an important role in developing a democracy through the implementation of these values within the society (Shukur & Moro, 2003). Democracy cannot be achieved in any society unless there are civil society organizations based on democracy as an infrastructure for that society, and this becomes clear through the administrative system on which these organizations are based in elections, and through the role they play in the national education and the implementation of democracy values (Shukur & Moro, 2003). Some people wonder about the existence of civil society concepts in Islam. Researchers in this field confirm that the Islamic community is a civil community, as it encourages the establishment of civil societies and assures its role in building the society. The Islamic speech addressed to the nation, and Al-Medina Al
Monawwra (Madina City), during the regime of the Prophet Mohammed, was a civil state based on Islamic civil constitution, which is based on equality in rights and duties, as well as justice, regardless of origin or religion. Al-Madina included Muslims and Jews. The process of building a brotherhood relationship between immigrants (Almohajreen) and supporters (Alansaar) was an example of building a civil society capable of helping immigrants to integrate into a social and economic structure which was not linked to the state or authority (Shukur & Morrow, 2003). The Islamic Constitution, based upon the Qur’an and Sunnah called directly for the establishment of civil societies: “Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to that which is good (Islam), enjoining Al-Ma’roof (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do) and forbidding Al-Munkar (polytheism and disbelief and all that Islam has forbidden) and it is they who are the successful” (Qur’an, A’al ‘Imraan, 3:104). The speech here is addressed to the civil societies, not the authority. The goals of these societies were identified, whether they are concerned with human rights or defending the weak. So the call for Al-Ma’roof and forbidding Al-Munkar is confirmed, and this verse directly calls for the establishment of civil societies defending human rights (Morrow, 2003). Social activities, especially civil ones, are dominant in most of the Islamic and Arab societies. The most important activity is Al-Waqf (endowment) which is the assignment of money from which benefit can be derived, be it money or fruit. The endowment as Al-Bayoumi (1998) indicated, is a social Islamic phenomenon, and one of the systems defined and evolved in Islam and contributed in building the Islamic community. The endowment system was associated with some of the institutions that care for developing families, helping the poor, building hospitals, worship and educational entities. Modern Islamic civil societies were established in modern Islamic states and differed from traditional mosques and endowment institutions, taking the modern organizational form, as groups based on voluntary and non-profit principals. The first association was founded in Egypt, in 1859 — namely, the Greek Association in Alexandria, followed by the Egypt Association, established in 1875, to research the history of the Egyptian civilization; in 1878, the first Islamic civil association was founded. Thereafter, the Islamic and Coptic associations were founded. They spread their branches throughout all regions of Egypt. Islam, through its religious texts, speaks for the foundation of civil society institutions, whose foundation is not limited to Islamic institutions, but includes associations with educational and historical goals (Morrow, 2003). Some believe that there is a contradiction between the Islamic regime and civil society, as the two views are opposed. Civil society is based on rationality and depends on the methodology and laws. Societies, who believe in this direction, are trying to reconsolidate between their interests and the interests of the society, and depend on experiments, modern sciences, and legal texts maintained by the modern state, which expresses the will of the people. The Islamic state, on the other hand, derives its legitimacy from the sacred texts that do not accept the argumentation, and depends on old experiences and models that have been used for more than four centuries, not at the values level, but the daily practice level of facilitating community affairs (Janhani & Ismail, 2003). According to Sohail Aroussi (2008), some researchers perceive that the civil society concept cannot be searched for in light of an Arab Islamic community for many reasons, the most important of which are: 1) Social studies about the civil society in Arab countries concluded that there is no civil society in the Arab world modeled on the Western concept; 2) The civil society in western countries was a result of a political struggle against authoritarian states that were dominating civil and religious aspects; and 3) Civil society is based on Western concepts and ideology, which is based on the three systems of values and beliefs: liberalism, capitalism, and secularism, and they do not comply with Islamic values. The activities practiced by some groups and social forces — the so called civil societies in Islamic history before the advent of the Arab nation-state are not relevant to civil society, but rather are part of the clan and tribal communities. These activities are like activities practiced by some feudalistic families in Europe in the Middle Ages; a civil society rejects such practices. Magdy Hammad (1992) denies the existence of a civil society in Arab countries similar to Western countries, because the principles underlying a civil society such as liberalism, capitalism, and secularism are Western products and do not comply with the values of Islam.
Others oppose this view; we find Sohail (2008) opposes the perception of Magdy Hammed, and sees that those values do not conflict with Islamic ones because the Islamic concepts, such as preserving religion, self-preservation, and preserving the mind are all agreed upon without controversy. According to Aberle (2011), the civil society acts as a soil where the roots of citizenship and democracy grow, as it enhances the free gathering of individuals to promote their common goals.

**Global Civil Society**

Some civil society organizations have become a third global force, their activities are not limited to the local level, but on a global level, such as charities concerned in human rights. Based on this new phenomenon, there has been a so called “global civil society.” The global civil society plays an important social and political role in contemporary societies. So whenever an interconnected global civil society exists, it supports weak and poor individuals, contributes to the progress in the field of human rights and the rule of law; to the development of many developing countries; and encourages the existence of equal citizenship and social justice. Global civil society is like a third sphere behind the official policy, or at least the area which consists of civil initiatives, which mixes vigorously with the market and interacts with the state (Keane, 2003). Most of the global civil society organizations are located in Western countries and play their roles on the basis of their policies and goals. So the majority of the world's population are not their goals (Baker, 2002). A global civil society is based on a growing number of political influences and interactions carried out by a group of actors outside the state and economic institutions (Thomas, 2001; Boli & Thomas, 1997). These institutions are trying to be liberated from the bureaucracy of states, with their roles extending beyond the international borders. Many voluntary and religious organizations become a part of the global community because they are based on human values and principles which enable them to provide their voluntary services for individuals, regardless of their religion or their race (Casanova, 1996; Kaldor, Anheier, & Glasius, 2003). There are many NGOs, especially in the southern countries, that need the necessary resources and budgets in order to take part in many activities. This, in turn, limits the global role of these organizations. Such organizations need the United Nations (UN) to provide assistance to those organizations, and empower them, so as they can take part in the globalization network and relationships (Katz, 2006). The World Bank has cared, for many years, about international development issues, but human rights issues were not among its priorities due to political considerations. However, since 1989, the international organization has recognized that human rights are a very important part of the development process. According to the World Bank Report, the development of human resources leads to the development of human rights. Members of the United Nations declared, in 2000, the commitment to promote the development by improving social and economic conditions of a global society through the development goals by 2015. These countries stressed the promotion of human rights which acts as standards guidelines for the most developmental organizations to achieve the main objectives such as the appropriate level of living, the right to work, right to education, women's right for equality, the right of health, and economic and social rights (Herberston, Thompson & Goodland, 2010)

**Methodology**

This study adopted the qualitative approach because of its importance in confirming the truth (Baker, 1999). Ethnographic interviews, especially, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were used as instruments for the study. In Qatar, there are 27 professional and cultural non-governmental organizations and associations. Therefore, out of these associations, the researcher chose four institutions as a representative sample of civil society in the State of Qatar. Two of these institutions operate in charity and humanitarian fields — Qatar Charity association and the Sheikh Eid charity foundation; one institution operates in the field of social development — the social development center; and one institution operates in the field of human rights — the national Commission for Human rights.
Semi-Structure Interview
Institutions and Associations Managers
The semi-structured interview was applied to four people, representing the upper administration or executive directors of these associations, to find out their views about the following: 1) the meaning or the concept of civil society; 2) The basic objectives of the institution or association; 3) the achievement of the institution objectives by giving some examples; 4) the administrative and financial autonomy; and 5) the intervention of official authority in the institution polices.

Intellectuals
The researcher chose ten Qatari intellectuals — a university professor, and higher education graduates. They were divided into two groups of five each, one for males and other for females and they were asked the following questions: 1) what is the concept or the meaning of civil society? 2) there are many non-governmental institutions in the State of Qatar (Example) What do you know about the objectives of these institutions? 3) Do you think that these institutions represent the civil society institutions? 4) To what extent, do you trust the objectives and roles of these institutions? 5) Do you think that the Qatari society is qualified for the existence of a civil society institutions? 6) Do you think that there is a civil society in the State of Qatar?

Second, the Focus Group as follows:
Youth
The researcher chose ten students of Qatar University and divided them into two groups of five each, one for males and the other for females, in addition to two groups of eight males from outside the university and asked them the following questions: 1) What is the concept or the meaning of civil society? 2) There are many non-governmental institutions in the State of Qatar (Example) What do you know about the objectives of these institutions? 3) Do you think that these institutions represent the civil society institutions? 4) To what extent, do you trust the objectives and roles of these institutions? 5) Do you think that the Qatari society is qualified for the existence of a civil society institutions? 6) Do you think that there is a civil society in the State of Qatar?

Findings
In Qatar, there are 27 professional and cultural non-governmental organizations and associations. Therefore, out of these associations, the researcher chose four institutions as a representative sample of civil society in the State of Qatar. Two of these institutions operate in charity and humanitarian fields — the Qatar Charity Association and the Sheikh Eid Charity Foundation; one institution operates in the field of social development — the social development center; and one institution operates in the field of human rights — the national Commission for Human Rights.

Qatar Charity Association
The Qatar Charity Association (QCA) was founded in 1984 as a non-governmental organization. It is managed by a board of directors who are elected by the General Assembly of Qatar Charity in order to contribute to development, and to humanitarian efforts locally and internationally. The QCA focuses on sustainable development, fighting poverty, and disaster relief in the case of emergency. Thus, Qatar Charity Association operates in several fields including health, education, social care, income improvement, and economic empowerment, in addition to facing disasters locally and globally (TCIA, 2010). The QCA operates in more than 25 countries around the world, and has field offices in 17 countries. The QCA has been a member of the United Nations Economic and Social Council-ECOSOC since 1997, and a member of the Founding Conference of the Arab Network for NGOs in Cairo since 1999. The QCA has more than 500 local, regional and international partners, including more than 200
local civil society organizations implementing some of Qatar’s charitable projects (TCIA, 2010). The mission of the QCA is assisting the most needed categories to achieve human dignity and social justice. Not surprisingly, the QCA operates in twenty-five countries in Asia, Africa and Europe such as Qatar, Palestine, Sudan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Niger, Mauritania, Somalia, Burkina Faso, Comoros, Mali, Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Morocco, Egypt, Chad, Iraq, Jordan, Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, India, and Sri Lanka (TCIA, 2010). The Qatar Charity Association implements its projects directly through its official field offices registered in the country in which it operates, through its representatives, or through its local partners in the same countries. As such, it has set field offices in several countries such as Qatar; Palestine; Sudan; Pakistan; Bangladesh; Landon; Syria; Niger; Maurittania; Somalia; Burkina Faso; Comoros; Male; Albania; Bosnia; Kosovo; Morocco; Egypt; Chad; Iraq; Jordan; Yemen; Lebanon; Syria; India; and Sri Lanka (TCIA, 2010).

Also, The basic orientations in the field of education and culture are focused on basic education, literacy, vocational training and rehabilitation, and youth work. Projects in this field include building and operating schools, building, operating and managing centers for teaching the Holy Qur’an, providing sponsorship for students and teachers, establishing and operating youth centers, and building mosques and Islamic centers (TCIA, 2010). Tasks carried out by the QCA in this field include family care, social and economic empowerment for women, child protection, adoption of orphans, providing aid, building houses for poor families, building hospitals, and the providing medical services (TCIA, 2010).

Sheikh Eid Charitable Foundation

The Sheikh Eid bin Mohammed Al-Thani’s Charity Foundation (SEMCF) was founded November 1, 1995. It is one of the Qatari humanitarian organizations that cares for needy persons in Qatar and abroad. It is also working on developing communities for the poor through small and medium developmental projects. The foundation operates its services in 57 countries, through 122 associations and local institutions, and has adopted nearly 41,000 orphans and families. The institution has implemented 2,654 projects to benefit the poor since it was established, in addition to 7,000 converted to Islam through Qatar’s guest’s center (TCIA, 2010). The vision of the SEMCF is to achieve excellence in charity work, both locally and globally. At the local level, the foundation is working to spread the social and cultural awareness and increase resources to be among the three top institutions locally and globally. The foundation also works to spread charity and developmental services. The SEMCF seeks to achieve the following objectives: providing aid, charitable and humanitarian services, aids to provide a relief to the affected, the needy, the displaced, and victims of famines, war and natural disasters. The association also supports educational and missionary institutions of poor Muslim communities that lack the financial abilities to build schools, mosques, and religious centers. It provides financial or in-kind aid to some Qatari families, and residents of Qatar through providing annual aids, or monthly stipends. This institution aims at achieving social solidarity within the Qatari society. It receives donations and grants and then distributes them to beneficiaries (TCIA, 2010). It has built nearly 5000 mosques, 250 Islamic centers, 141 Qur’an teaching centers, 270 schools, 55 orphanages and 485 houses for the poor. In addition, it has drilled approximately 12,000 wells, and provided 1,488 water tanks. It has led campaigns to aid areas affected by natural disasters or wars, such as Syria, Pakistan, Somalia, Burma and others (TCIA, 2010). The foundation consists of several departments and branches. The Orphans’ Adoption Department uses the most recent trends in providing the service for orphans, the Sheikh Eid’s Media Center and the Sheikh Eid’s Social Center provide social assistance for the needy using international quality standards. The foundation also includes the center of Qatar Guest Center, the evening branch and the Sheikh Eid’s Cultural Center.
Social Development Center

The Social Development Center (SDC) is a developmental social non-profit organization founded in 1996. In line with the vision of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, the Social Development Center aims at developing society through caring for the family and developing human resource through training, rehabilitation, care, and awareness. The organization provides multiple social and economic services. As a result of the important role of the Social Development Center, it has become a member in the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, the Arab Network for NGOs, and the global family Organization (TCIA, 2010). The SDC offers a variety of services, including programs to support family, orientation programs, and professional training. It also provides interest-free loans to needy families, and conducts various awareness programs and campaigns. The center works to achieve sufficiency and well-being through rehabilitation, economic, and social empowerment. The social services department studies the economic and social status of families facing social and economic challenges, and then helps them appropriately (TCIA, 2010). The objectives of the SDC include the development the family role in society and maintaining its economic and social stability, raising the economic level of poor families and empowering them to find jobs through the development programs. The center studies social phenomena in Qatari society in order to make suggestions for decision-makers to find appropriate solutions, to preserve popular and traditional heritage, and to revive and develop traditional Qatari handicrafts. Finally, the center aims at raising community awareness regarding the effects of from social and economic change (TCIA, 2010). The SDC provides, through its Training and Projects Department, many programs and economic activities, which aims at training and qualifying young men and women for the labor market, whether through developing their abilities or by helping them to set up their small businesses projects. The center provides support and financial grants in the field of basic education to support some needy families. The center has set up a headquarters aimed at developing small projects in collaboration with organizations such as the International Labor Organization and the Qatar Telecom and Commercial Bank of Qatar, in order to provide assistance for Qatari individuals to establish their own small and medium projects with non-interest loans through the endowment fund (capital) (TCIA, 2010). The SDC realized the importance of endowments in the social and economic fields; and the center collected donations to help needy families, followed by the Al-Balsam project, which was established in 2004. The Al-Balsam charitable project is designed to take advantage of the public donations to provide financial and health assistance to patients — particularly kidney disease patients — by completely covering their therapeutic expenses. In addition, the Al-Bir in-patient residential complex was established in 2006 as an endowment project to benefit the center to support developmental projects (TCIA, 2010). Based on official reports of the Social Development Center, 367 girls and women are beneficiaries of the training and rehabilitation programs; 130 girls in the Sheikha Haya bint Nasser sewing factory are beneficiaries of the center developmental projects; 205 females, in association with the state institutions, have benefited from the job opportunities program; 10 families were recipients of the self-initiatives fund, totaling 50,000 Qatari Riyals (US $13,732.05); 600 limited income families benefited from the Modern Family Project; 161 kidney failure residents were admitted to the kidney treatment program, among them, 62 patients received kidney transplants; and 2,547 families benefited from seasonal aid. In basic education, 149 residential students received financial support, and 17 outstanding residential students received university scholarships. The center services are not limited to the educational field in Qatari society; it provides its services to some members of poor Islamic societies, such as hosting 43 Comoros students (TCIA, 2010).

National Human Rights Committee

The National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) was established by law, (380) in 2002, as a real guarantee for the preservation of human rights. As a result of the recent development in the State of Qatar, the NHRC was reorganized by law (17) in 2010, which made it an independent corporate identity
with an independent budget, and headquartered in the city of Doha. The law also defined its objectives and specialties. At the international level, the NHRC has been categorized as an “A” institution by the International Coordinating Committee (ICC), which includes all national human rights commissions in the world. The NHRC is a member of the subcommittee for accreditation in ICC, which accredits and classifies national committees all over the world. It also represented the national human rights commissions (Asia Pacific Forum) for three years, from March 2012. The vision of the NHRC comes from its beliefs that the human rights issue is one of the most important issues in the national society in particular, and the international community in general. There is a commitment towards the political, social, civil and cultural rights and whether those rights are individually or collectively are given justice, freedom and human dignity for all human beings without discrimination. There is a controversy surrounding the nature of the National Human Rights Commission in the State of Qatar, as it is an NGO, and legally, it is not one of the civil society. It is a national official committee of a special nature. It permanently provides advice about human rights for national authorities and administrative agencies in the state through investigating individuals or groups’ complaints. The commission’s mission is to protect and promote human rights for each of the citizens and residents under the jurisdiction of the State of Qatar; and in order to achieve this mission, the commission seeks to raise awareness about these rights, provide the necessary protection and support for individuals, and develop their abilities.

The Main Objectives of the Commission
1) Educating members of the community about the basic rights guaranteed to them under international conventions for human rights and national laws; 2) Training and empowering individuals using different programs to identify important rights for them and instructing them on how to complain and claim rights and working to ensure respect for these rights; 3) Strengthening relations with organizations concerned with human rights locally and internationally; 4) Documenting violations that contradict with human rights; and 5) Providing legal information and social support to victims of human rights violations; and 6) Spreading human rights culture.

The Commission Specializes in
1) Promoting and pursuing the objectives related to international human rights conventions and treaties in Qatar, and joining other international conventions and treaties; 2) Providing consulting and suggestions for concerned authorities in human rights; 3) Reviewing and the studying any human rights violations, and working on solving complaints with concerned parties and choosing the most effective ways to address them; 4) Submitting proposals for official and civilian agencies about legislation and laws, and their compatibility with international human rights conventions; 5) Writing reports about human rights conditions in the country and submitting them to the cabinet with recommendations and suggestions; 6) Refuting arguments that have been published about human rights in coordination with the concerned authorities against the state of Qatar; 7) Writing national reports submitted by Qatar to the international human rights organizations in which Qatar is a member; 8) Cooperating with international, regional and national organizations concerned with human rights and freedoms, and participating in the international forums related to them; 9) Spreading awareness about human rights culture in society; 10) Monitoring human rights through inspection visits to jails, detention places of labor gatherings, of the labor, health and educational institutions; 11) Cooperating and exchanging experiences with the institutions concerned with human rights in the state; and 12) Organizing and holding conferences, seminars and courses about human rights.
Interview Findings

Semi-structure Interview

The first interview was with the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Qatar Charity Association. Results revealed his awareness of the importance of civil society in general and the importance of the Qatar charity association, in particular. The CEO indicated that work in this association evolved from the simple work done by a group of ordinary voluntary people in institutional work which applied the latest international standards for humanitarian work, not only in Qatar but all over the world. The CEO indicated that the charity laboratory has become the third or the fourth force affecting the economic, political and social fields of communities. The association began as an institution to adopt the orphans, but now it operates in many other areas. In terms of administrative autonomy, interview results show that there is a partial autonomy where the elected General Assembly members appoint the association’s board of directors, and the board appoints the CEO of the QCA. The administration of this association is not based on election, but rather, on appointment. As for members and directors of departments in the association, some of them are appointed to fixed positions in return for some financial returns. There programs are called which attracts the Qatari competencies of retirees, who have the qualifications. The work is done voluntarily, but if the volunteers are in need of financial aid, the association can support them. Regarding financial independence, results of the interview indicate that the financial report is not presented to the General Assembly until it is reviewed and accredited. The CEO of the QCA indicates that, after the establishment of the censorship and charity work authority in Qatar, and the fear that the financial aid would go to extremist groups, supervisory legislation was issued to control the flow of financial resources of the association. However, in terms of interference of political authority within the association's policies, results show that the state, through the censorship authority, monitors the financial sources of the association, but does not interfere in the association's policy. As for donations and guiding the association, the CEO indicated that the association cooperates with the State in some common campaigns, such as the campaign to support the Syrian people, as well as the Palestinian people in Gaza. The results show that the Qatar Charity Association, as seen by the United Nations, is in first place in the world regarding its charitable role in Syria, Somalia and Gaza. According to its president, the QCA provides assistance and charity for needy persons especially in time of humanitarian disasters, regardless their religion, gender, and ethnicity. A good example of this is the association’s role in Philippines and Japan.

The second interview with the CEO of the Sheikh Eid Charitable Association. This CEO was asked the same questions as those asked of the previous CEO. Based on the interview results, the CEO explained the meaning of civil society as the work outside the scope of the state by a group of people without reference to the official association as in the Sheikh Eid Charitable Association. According to the analysis of results, the objectives of this organization is serving humans everywhere in the fields of economic, educational and health empowerment. As for of administrative and financial autonomy, the CEO pointed out in his interview that “the state does not interfere in our policy only through the surveillance of financial budgets.” As for the administrative autonomy, the SEMCF is managed by its founder, so he appoints whom he believes has the required qualifications and the love of charity work. Thus, the CEO believes that this association has autonomy and its relationship with the state is a partnership relationship, that is the state may participate with this institution in carrying out aid to countries such as Darfur, Sudan. The Third Interview With the Leaders of the Social Development Center; National Human Rights Commission. Results of the interview show that civil society is based on volunteering, charity work and the work that was not managed by the state as in political parties and institutions. The manager of the center indicated that the center has achieved most of its objectives. In the past years, many projects, which aimed at social and economic empowerment for the society, had been established. As for the autonomy, there is no complete independence, despite the existence of a board of directors. The manager of the center shows that there are administrative impediments that hinder the speed of decision-making.
and the appropriate selections of competencies in the center. The SDC programs cannot continue without
the financial support of the state, as represented in the Qatar Science Foundation.

As for the interview with the president of the National Human Rights Commission, the results show that
he believes that civil society is made up of non-governmental and non-profit organizations, which aim at
serving the community. He points out that civil organizations in Qatar are organized by the law no.14
issued in 2004 and the law of 2006 for private institutions with general benefits. The NHRC relies on the
principles of Paris in 1991, which regulates the international human rights organizations and associations.
According to the General Assembly in 1993, these institutions are viewed as “special character”
institutions, and are considered as an intermediate between the government and society. The Qatari
National Human Rights Commission cannot be considered a governmental institution, nor an independent
one. This applies to all 107 human rights organizations in the world, as the state is committed to provide
guarantees for financial and administrative independence. Its objectives are the protection of human rights
in Qatar. Specialties of the committee include monitoring and visiting places of detention, and health and
educational institutions to assess the level of human rights in those places. As for achieving objectives,
the results show that the National Human Rights Commission is keen on applying the Paris principals
which set standards on which all human rights organizations and committees must be based. Thus, the
International Committee of Accreditation (ICC) set Levels A, B, and C for accreditations. As such, the
National Human Rights Commission in Qatar was evaluated with level “B” in 2006 and “A” in 2010, and
this signifies that all objectives in the Paris principals have been achieved and applied. As for autonomy,
the results of the interview with the chairman of the national human rights commissions show that there is
administrative and financial independence for the committee, and there is no supervision form the state.
As for the administrative independency, there is no complete independency, as the CEO of committee is
appointed by the state. The committee forms different subcommittees that reflect different academic and
religious segments of the society. The chairman of the national human rights commissions indicates is
that the state does not interfere in committee activities as the representative of the state does not have the
right to vote in policies and laws of the committee. The role of the state differs according to the type and
size of the rights violations, as in cases of granting citizenship or withdrawing it. Thus, the committee
cannot impose its will against the state; therefore, its role is rather limited to counseling. The state must
be responsible for protecting citizens and residents’ political, economic, and educational rights.

Intellectuals & Civil Society
The researcher conducted interviews with ten Qatari intellectuals of both genders, academics and officials
in the state. This sample was selected based on academic levels and as such, five members of Qatar
University staff, males and females were selected in addition to other five male and female members from
different disciplines of the state. Results of qualitative interviews showed that there is a difference in
interpreting the meaning of civil society among the sample members. Academics in engineering and
science were not able to provide a clear explanation for the civil society; in contrast, social sciences and
international relations specialists gave a definition and explanation for the meaning of a civil society.

Ahmed (pseudonym), a professor of sociology, provided a scientific explanation for the society as non-
governmental organizations and institutions that occupy the space between the state and civil society.
These institutions represent a segment of the community with specific objectives, and do not aim at
personal interests, but at collective targets related to community service. Some of sample members did
not realize the actual meaning of civil society, so they believed that all institutions that provide social or
humanitarian services represented the modern civil society. Therefore, they discussed topics relating to
some disability centers and youth centers as a representation for the features of civil society in Qatar. As
for the sample awareness of institutions and organizations in Qatar and their roles in the society, the
results showed that most of the academics and intellectuals knew a group of famous charity institutions
and associations, such as Qatar Association and Eid Charity Foundation. Five members of the sample
were members in some of those institutions such as the development center or the previously known Supreme Council for the Family, or had a connection with other institutions, and were aware of their objectives and roles in the community.

Results of the qualitative interviews showed that most respondents do not trust that the institutions and associations in Qatar are representative of the civil society, as they are not independent and do not have the ability to operate alone without getting their projects approval by the Qatari government. Two of the participants — academics and former members of the Supreme Council and the Family Association, and still connected to some charity institutions and associations in Qatar — said that a civil society in Qatar does not exist. When they were members in these associations and they had personal interests, such as financial benefits and communication with official authority, they glorified such associations and institutions; but after leaving these institutions, they began to criticize them. This shows that there is no freedom of opinions and public criticism for these associations, as this is considered a criticism of the authority.

Focus Groups
This researcher utilized the focus group approach with two groups outside the university, and through the councils. Participants were 16 males and females, aged between 20 - 30 years old and constituting different educational levels. Discussion sessions methodology was applied to ten male and female students from different disciplines at Qatar University. Each discussion group consisted of five members. The objective was to discover from these groups their perceptions and opinions about the civil society. The first discussion group, consisted of eight young Qataris of different ages, and different educational levels and disciplines. Results for this group showed ambiguity about the knowledge of the concept and meaning of civil society. Most members of this groups pointed out that civil society was civility or modern society; thus showing that the concept of civil society is only realized by the elite group of the educated and the specialists. However, after the researcher provided a definition for the concept of civil society, it was discovered that members of the group knew some of non-governmental institutions and associations in Qatar. One of the group indicated that by the nature of his work, he contacted the National Human Rights Commission and the shelter center and discovered cooperation and transparency regarding the cases and violations about which he had inquired. While another group member indicated that by the nature of his work, he contacted the National Human Rights Commission and found some barriers and lack of transparency when he inquired about some information. One of the participants stressed the importance of voluntary work in Qatar. Kamal (pseudonym) indicated that, he “joined Qatar Charity Association, and gained many experiences the most important of which is building social relationships with many volunteers in other institutions.” As for trust of these institutions and associations, most of the group members had a medium trust. One of the participants ascribed that to the lack of knowledge and awareness about these institutions; that Qatar is a welfare state with low population and problems; and that resorting to these institutions by the society members is not common. The conclusion reached by this group indicated that there are many institutions and associations in Qatar that do not represent the genuine civil society in the Western concept.

The second discussion group consisted of eight young people from various tribal backgrounds, educational and professional levels. Most members of this group related the meaning and the concept of a civil society with tribal societies. Mohammed, one of the participants, indicated that “civil society is a society that consists of a group of homogenous tribes in one state and governed by the state.” Three of the participants stated that the social society is the society which depends on customs and traditions. Two participants in this group introduced an appropriate definition for a civil society as a group of non-governmental institutions that serve the community and depend on popular participation and elections. After clarifying the scientific definition and the meaning of the civil society, all members of the group agreed that there are no such institutions in Qatar as they are represented in the West, but individuals in
our communities rely on family, tribe and sect. So, the tribe, in the Arab countries in general and in Gulf countries in particular, play the roles of institutions in contemporary societies. The conclusion of this group was that there was a medium knowledge of the existence and the role of these non-governmental associations and institutions in Qatar. Therefore, only two of participants in this group talked about these associations, such as the National Human Rights Commission, and Qatar Charity. The results show that the communication between these youths and those associations and institutions was weak. Results also indicate that confidence in these associations is also very weak, especially some charity organizations and the National Human Rights Commission. Kamal, one of the participants in this group, indicated that “all associations, institutions and private organizations, which care about human rights, the Arab Gulf countries, implement the state policies more than international laws and do not have independency.” One of the participants indicated that the state is dominating these institutions and therefore, the national human rights commission’s laws are not obligatory for the state. He also indicated that the developed countries are violating rights and freedoms, so it is not surprising that there will be irregularities in Arab countries; that there are sovereign issues that cannot be addressed by the National Human Rights Commission such as citizenship issues, and deportation of some individual for several reasons. All members of this group confirmed that there is no civil society as in democratic countries, but the state is central, and based on tribal values that have been instilled in individuals since childhood. As for the results of the discussion groups which consisted of ten male and female students at Qatar University, the first group consisted of five male students. The second group consisted of five female students of different disciplines. The results of the female students showed a disparity in the knowledge of civil society according to their disciplines. The two female students of engineering and sciences did not understand the concept of civil society; this was due to the nature of their specialties which does not cover such social issues. While the other four female students of sociology, international relations and law, realized the concept of social society, especially that related to charity associations and organizations, and that this was due to information in their curriculum and applied studies. During the debate about the meaning of civil society, answers were focused on civil society as it applied to charity. Most members of this group indicated the work of the Qatar Charity Association and the Sheik Eid Charity Foundation, both inside and outside Qatar. Regarding the communication with those institutions and associations, three members of the group had already communicated with the developmental center and the QCA in order to gather information for their university studies. One female student indicated that she had joined the SEMCF and participated in then voluntary programs in Qatar. Layla (pseudonym) indicated that she had participated in a voluntary program that cared for needy families in Qatar, and that that experiment was the best experience she had had so far. Most of the group members agreed that their confidence in the existing association and institutions was poor because these institutions are not administratively or politically independent. As such, we find that the National Human Rights Commission cannot solve some violation cases or demands for some individuals, as this committee is not independent, but subject to the state. The conclusion for this group was that four members agreed that there is no civil society in Qatar as in western countries. During the debate, Alyaa (pseudonym) mentioned that if the civil society was defined as in her sociology curriculum, there is no civil society in Qatar as institutions and associations are not independent and subject to the state, and most of these institutions are interested in charity. Results of the second group, which consisted of five students, of different disciplines at Qatar University, indicated that there is a medium knowledge about the meaning of civil society. Through debate, there was a general knowledge, but not full knowledge about the concept of civil society. Therefore, most of the group confirmed that a civil society is the unconventional community, which consists of non-governmental institutions, and are characterized by independency. Responses varied according to different disciplines, as with the female student group. Thus, we find students of media and international relations are more familiar with the definition of a civil society. Ahmed, a specialist in international relations, indicates that the civil society is a society that consists of a group of independent non-
governmental organizations such as political parties and trade unions, but such unions or political parties do not exist in Qatar. Results from this group indicates that their communications with non-governmental associations and institutions in Qatar are very weak. None of the participants ever communicated with any associations so they did not realize the goals and roles played by these associations except for the charity role. Results also show that confidence in those institutions is poor because they are not independent, and most of the work is addressed to the charity field, and do not represent all the individuals of society. Results of this group indicate that there is not a civil society in Qatar, nor in any of the GCC states. Joseph, a student in media, indicated that Qatar did not have unions or independent human rights associations, and even if they did, they would be subject to the authority of the state.

Conclusion
By reviewing foreign and Arab studies and theories related to the concept of civil society, the results of the study indicate that there is a debate and disagreement about the meaning of civil society; this controversy is a result of differences between the intellectuals and thinkers interested in this issue. As for Arab studies in civil society, the results show that most of the books, in this regard, adopted the definition of civil society as reported in Western studies. The concept of civil society has not been used until recently. But historically, the Arab Muslim cities had known, since the Middle Ages, professional organizations that may be considered as a kind of community organization. The concept of the state and society are a new concept in modern Arab political thinking. The state was mentioned in ancient texts, but it is not related at all to the concept of the modern state. Instead, it is known that the Islamic regimes have, at different times, been called Caliphate, Imamate, the Emirate and the Sultanate. As for the concept of civil society in some Arab countries, it is noted that it is completely non-existent in some countries, and that it was used as a political tool, and used as a weapon to resist the authoritarian state. As such, there was a deficiency in studying this concept of a civil society until it was rooted in the Arab world. As for the knowledge of the leaders of charities and social associations in Qatar, it seems that everyone has some knowledge about the meaning of civil society and its role in society, but that knowledge has been linked to the role and specialty of the association overseen by them. So, we find that leaders’ charity institutions such as Qatar Charity Association and since the Middle Ages, limit the civil society in the aspect of the charity work only. The Chairmen of National Human Rights Commission and Social Development Center focus on the social and legal work. Results of these interviews show that they do not realize the importance of other aspects of civil society such as political associations or trade union, which lead to political empowerment. However, they are aware of the charity role, which has become a third force that plays a developmental role in societies. Therefore, we find that the QCA and the SEMCF play an important role in the field of charitable work, locally or domestically. Results show that there is no administrative and financial independence in these associations and institutions. Therefore, we find that, even when the election of QCA board of directors takes place, it is a routine practice; as for the SEMCF, the board is appointed by the founder of the institution. These associations and institutions are based on the financial support from their owners such as with the SEMCF, and from the state and donors such as with the QCA. Additionally, these institutions are subject to the censorship of Qatar authority for charitable activities, which was established by the state in 2004 to monitor the charity work and to ensure that sources and funds and are spent legally, and not on financing terrorism. The SDC played an important role in the social and economic empowerment in Qatari society, but it is subject to Qatar Foundation for Science, one of the state institutions, so it is not financially and administratively independent, and relies on staff appointed, not elected, by the foundation. The association also depends on the financial support of the government, without which the SDC cannot continue to provide its services. The National Human Rights Commission, as seen by its chairman, is in between the state and society, and this is supposed to comply with the meaning of civil society institutions; however, in fact, it is a legal and advisory institution, and is not financially or administratively independent. Based on the chairman’s
interview, references, and reports issued by the committee, one can conclude that it is ideal and complies with its international role. Results also show that it succeeded in improving some levels of human rights in Qatar, such as increasing awareness of human rights and resolving simple problems such as labor disputes. Due to the dependency of this committee, it is unable to solve crucial issues that concern Qatari citizens such as the citizenship issue, whether helping a citizen to restore his citizenship or giving it to whom it is worthy. These issues are considered sovereign for the authority of the state, as is the case in many Arab countries. Nevertheless, the existence of the National Human Rights Committee is important due to its role in raising awareness in the field of human rights and following-up international complaints against Qatar. Results show that not all intellectuals are aware of the meaning of civil society, but some political sociology and political science specialists are. During the interviews, the intellectuals and some engineering and science specialists did not realize the meaning of a civil society. Some indicated that non-governmental institutions and organizations are part of civil society. This is due to the lack of knowledge of many individuals and intellectuals of the social and political role of a civil society. Results also show that most Qatari intellectuals who know the concept of a civil society assert that there is no civil society in the State of Qatar. Results of discussion groups — whether with Qatar university students or with community members — showed that there is a disparity in knowledge of the concept of civil society. This concept was known only by specialists. Most of the study participants confirm that the charity association and the social development center play an important role not only in Qatar, but also in the Arab and Muslim countries. In addition, they agreed that the National Human Rights Commission cannot protect Qatari domestically because it is not independent, and is subject to Qatari government regulations. After the researcher had clarified the scientific concept of civil society at the end of each interview or discussion, he repeated the question regarding the meaning of a civil society, and most of the respondents agreed that there is no civil society in Qatar.

Finally, there is still a deficiency and ambiguity in the knowledge of the civil society concept. Even researchers in the Arab world defined the concept and the meaning of a civil society as is stated in sociological literature of the west. In this regards, the researcher believes that each community has its own nature that differs from the other communities, and that a civil society consists of certain pillars, which are the political, economic, and social aspects, and that a civil society cannot exist without the existence of these aspects. The Qatari charitable and social associations play an important role in the social and economic empowerment locally and globally, and as a result, the Qatar Charity Association grew to the level of the so-called global civil society which extends its activities across the continents in the case of humanitarian disasters, such as that which occurred in Japan in previous years. These charity associations and organizations are not independent and are subject to the directives of the state. These charity associations are commonly used as a soft power by Qatar to polish the Qatari role in front of Arab, Islamic and international communities. However, in the absence of independent associations and trade unions, which lead to political empowerment, there is no civil society which leads to a democratic state. Therefore, we find that the conditions and laws of founding associations, in the State of Qatar, reject any organization that aims to exert any political activity or action.

References


Bio

Dr. Alshawi works as an Assistant Professor since 2002 in Qatar University, Qatar. He received his B.A. in Sociology from Qatar University in 1990. He completed his M.A in Sociology in Western Michigan University in 1994. Then, he received his Ph.D. in Political Sociology from Mississippi State University in 2002. Dr. Alshawi’s research interests are in the areas of political sociology, especially in political socialization, political participation, and tribal loyalty, citizenship and identity and civil Society. Throughout his research, he has examined the Tribal Loyalty in the Arabian Gulf: Qatar as a case study.